CHAPTER 3

Formation of Divine Word Missionaries (SVD)

Introduction

Formation in the religious-missionary family of the Society of the Divine Word draws its inspiration from the call of Jesus Christ to his first disciples: “Come, follow me.” (Mt. 4:19). It is a call from the part of the Master and response from the disciples. Jesus called his disciples, and before sending them out he asked them to set aside a period of time for formation. The purpose of such formation was to develop a relationship of deep communion and friendship with himself. During this time they received the benefit of a catechesis that was deeper than the teaching he gave to the people (Mt. 13:11). In the care for priestly vocations, the Church in every age constantly draws inspiration from Christ’s example.\(^\text{292}\)

This chapter has been dealt under the following five heads:

1) Formation according to the Church documents, especially in the light of the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation of Pope John Paul II *Pastores Dabo Vobis.*

2) Formation according to the Charter of Priestly Formation for India.

3) Formation according to the Constitutions and other documents of the Society.

3.1 **Priestly and Religious Formation: *Pastores Dabo Vobis***

The process of formation for the priesthood and the quality of priestly life has become an important theme in recent times, says the Pope in his Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*:

> The new generation of those called to the ministerial priesthood display different characteristics in comparison to those of their immediate predecessors. In addition, they live in a world, which in many respects is new and undergoing rapid and continual evolution. All of this cannot be ignored when it comes to programming and carrying out the various phases of formation for those approaching the ministerial priesthood.\(^{293}\)

The Pope in his exhortation looks at the different areas of formation: the human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral as well as the settings and the persons responsible for the formation of candidates for priesthood.

### 3.1.1 Human Formation

Human formation is the basis of all priestly formation, and the ministry of a priest has to be credible and acceptable. For this he should mould his human personality as a

\(^{293}\) *Ibid*, n. 2.
bridge for the people in their meeting with Jesus Christ. In order to achieve this goal, a candidate to priesthood should cultivate virtues, such as love of truth, loyalty, respect for every person, sense of justice, adherence to their word, genuine compassion, integrity and above all a balance in his judgment and behaviour. The exhortation continues with another aspect of priestly formation—that a candidate must have the capacity to relate to others. This capacity expects that “the priest not be arrogant, or quarrelsome, but affable, hospitable, sincere in his words and heart, prudent and discreet, generous and ready to serve, capable of opening himself to clear and brotherly relationships and of encouraging the same in others, and quick to understand, forgive and console.”

Human maturity also includes affective maturity, the exhortation continues, and education for affective maturity of the person is essential for those called to celibacy. This education helps to bring human relationships of serene friendship, deep brotherliness and a strong, lively and personal love for Jesus Christ. “A love for Christ, which overflows into a dedication to everyone, is of the greatest importance in developing affective maturity. Thus the candidate, who is called to celibacy, will find in affective maturity a first support to live chastity in faithfulness and joy.”

3.1.2 Spiritual Formation

Human formation leads to, and finds its completion in, spiritual formation. For a priest, spiritual formation is the core that unifies and gives life to his being a priest and
his acting as a priest. “Without spiritual formation pastoral formation would be left without foundation,” and spiritual formation is “an extremely important element of a priest’s education,” the exhortation states.

Quoting the Council’s Decree, Optatam Totius, the exhortation continues:

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.

**Intimate Union with God**

The exhortation continues to speak of the value and demand to live intimately united to Jesus Christ. This union is rooted in baptism, and it must be radically renewed

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and nourished each day with the Eucharist. The need for this unity is brought in the allegory of the vine and the branches: "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser...for apart from me you can do nothing." (Jn.15: 1, 4-5).

**Search for Jesus**

The second theme of spiritual value, taken from the Council document, is the search for Jesus. In a genuine search for Christ, three fundamental values and demands of the spiritual path are suggested to be trodden by the candidate for priesthood:

1) Faithful meditation on the word of God  
2) Active participation in the Church’s holy mysteries  
3) Service of charity to the “little ones”

The Pope exhorts, quoting the Second Vatican Council document, that it is by humble and loving listening to God in the Word of God that one’s own vocation can be discovered and understood, loved and followed. In other words, an essential element of spiritual formation is the prayerful and meditated reading of the word of God:

All clerics, particularly priests of Christ and others, who, as deacons or catechists, are officially engaged in the ministry of the word, should immerse themselves in the Scriptures by constant sacred reading and diligent study. For it must not happen that anyone becomes an empty preacher of the word of God to others, not being a hearer of the word of God in his own heart.

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299 *Pastores, Dabo Vobis, op. cit.*, n. 46.  
Prayer is the best manner to respond to the Word of God. The genuine meaning of Christian prayer, according to the Exhortation, is a living and personal meeting with the Father through the only begotten Son under the action of the Spirit, a dialogue that becomes a sharing of the filial conversation between Jesus and the Father. An important mission of a priest is to be a ‘teacher of prayer’. He will only be able to train others in this school of Jesus at prayer, if he himself has been trained in it and continues to receive its formation.

Eucharist is the high point of Christian prayer. The Pope emphatically exhorts the seminarians—the future priests—on the daily celebration of the Eucharist:

It is fitting that seminarians take part every day in the Eucharistic celebration, in such a way that afterwards they will take up as a rule of their priestly life this daily celebration. They should moreover be trained to consider the Eucharistic celebration as the essential moment of their day, in which they will take an active part and at which they will never be satisfied with a merely habitual attendance.301

The third form of spiritual formation is the service of charity to the “little ones”. Formation should aim at giving oneself generously and freely to the service of others. A priest is called to be a manifestation and image of the Good Shepherd who gives life. A priest is to be “a man of charity” and is also called to educate others according to Christ’s example and the new commandment of brotherly love. Formation for the

priesthood must necessarily involve a proper training in charity and particularly in the preferential love for the "poor" in whom our faith discovers Jesus, and a merciful love for sinners, exhorts the Pope.\(^{302}\)

Another important dimension of spiritual formation is the call to live a celibate life to be totally at the service of others. The formation programme should pay particular attention to prepare the future priest in this virtue so that he may know, appreciate, love and live celibacy according to its true nature and according to its real purposes, that is for evangelical, spiritual and pastoral motives, says the document.\(^{303}\) The Pope, approving the recommendations of the 1990 Synod of Bishops, authoritatively sets down the criteria to be followed in formation for chastity in celibacy:

Let the Bishops together with the rectors and spiritual directors of the seminaries establish principles, offer criteria and give assistance for discernment in this matter. Of the greatest importance for formation for chastity in celibacy are the Bishop’s concern and fraternal life among priest. In the seminary, that is, in the programme of formation, celibacy should be presented clearly, without any ambiguities and in a positive fashion. The seminarian should have a sufficient degree of psychological and sexual maturity as well as an assiduous and authentic life of prayer, and he should put himself under the direction of a spiritual father. The spiritual director should help the seminarian so that he himself reaches a mature and free decision, which is built on esteem for priestly friendship and self-discipline, as well as on the acceptance of solitude and on a physically and psychologically sound personal

\(^{302}\) *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, *op. cit.*, n. 49.

\(^{303}\) *Ibid*, n. 50.
state. Therefore, seminarians should have a good knowledge of the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, of the Encyclical Sacerdotalis Coelibatus and the "Instruction for Formation in Priestly Celibacy" published by the Congregation for Catholic education in 1974. In order that the seminarian may be able to embrace priestly celibacy for the Kingdom of heaven with a free decision, he needs to know the Christian and truly human nature and purpose of sexuality in marriage and in celibacy. It is necessary also to instruct and educate the lay faithful regarding the evangelical, spiritual and pastoral reasons proper to priestly celibacy, so that they will help priests with their friendship, understanding and cooperation.\footnote{Ibid.}

### 3.1.3 Intellectual Formation

Intellectual formation is a necessary expression of both human and spiritual formation. It is a fundamental demand of man's intelligence by which he "participates in the light of God's mind" and seeks to acquire a wisdom, which in turn opens to and is directed towards knowing and adhering to God.\footnote{Gaudium et Spes, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the modern Word, Second Vatican Council, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 213.} The new challenges, such as religious indifference, widespread mistrust regarding the real capacity of reason to reach objective and universal truth, fresh problems and questions brought up by scientific and technological discoveries, \textit{et al} demand priests and candidates for priesthood to have qualitative intellectual formation in their education and pastoral activity, the Synodal Fathers emphasised.\footnote{Pastores Dabo Vobis, \textit{op. cit.} n. 51.}
Intellectual formation, according to the Exhortation, helps to have a deeper understanding of man and the phenomena and lines of development of society and the study of human sciences such as sociology, psychology, education, economics and politics, the science of social communication are some of the vistas that help a candidate for priesthood to give a deeper understanding and assimilation of philosophy and theology.\textsuperscript{307}

The Pope also highlights certain problems facing theological formation:

1) Relationship between statements issued by the \textit{Magisterium} and theological discussion.

2) Relationship between high scientific standards in theology and its pastoral aim. This problem is faced mainly when seminary formation is entrusted to academic institutions.

3) The third problem is the demand for the \textit{evangelisation of cultures} and the \textit{inculturation of the message of faith}.\textsuperscript{308} More details are given under ‘Formation Programme in India’.

3.1.4 Pastoral Formation

The whole formation given to candidates for priesthood aims at preparing them to enter into communion with the charity of Christ, the Good Shepherd. Hence the formation must have a fundamentally pastoral character, as stated in the \textit{Decree on Priestly Formation}:

\textsuperscript{307}\textit{Ibid}, n. 52.

\textsuperscript{308}\textit{Ibid}, n. 55.
The whole training of the students should have as its object to make them true shepherds of souls after the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, teacher, priest and shepherd. Hence, they should be trained for the ministry of the word so that they may gain an ever increasing understanding of the revealed word of God, making it their own by meditation, and giving it expression in their speech and in their lives. They should be trained for the ministry of worship and sanctification, so that by prayer and the celebration of the sacred liturgical functions they may carry on the work of salvation through the Eucharistic sacrifice and the sacraments. They should be trained to undertake the ministry of the shepherd, that they may know how to represent Christ to humanity, Christ who ‘did not come to have service done to him but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for the lives of many’ (Mk. 10: 45), and that they may win over many by becoming the servants of all.309

Pastoral formation should not be reduced to a mere apprenticeship but should initiate the candidate into the sensitivity of being a shepherd, says the Pope in his Exhortation. With regard to the places and services for the pastoral experience, the parish is proposed to be the best place because the parish is a living cell of local and specialised pastoral work. With regard to the nature of works, there are a number of concrete examples, such as visits to the sick, caring for immigrants, refugees and nomads, social work, etc.310

309 Optatam Totius, Decree on Priestly Formation, Second Vatican Council, op. cit.
310 Pastores Dabo Vobis, op. cit., n. 58.
3.2 Charter of Priestly Formation for India

The Catholic Bishops’ Conference of India prepared a Program of Priestly Formation for India in 1971. At its Nagpur Meeting of 1984, the Conference decided to revise the Program and to write it in the form of a Charter. The First Charter of Priestly Formation for India was approved by the Conference in April 1988. An Apostolic Visitation of the Major Seminaries and the Institutes of the priestly formation was conducted from 1997 to 1999. The purpose of the visitation was to examine the progress of reforms and renewals made in these institutes in line with the Apostolic Decree Optatum Totius and other documents of the Holy See, which deal directly with seminary formation. In the light of the General Norms and Recommendations given by the Holy See, the revised Charter of Priestly Formation for India was approved by the Decree of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, Prot. No.1902/04 dated 20th April 2004. The Catholic bishops of India, gathered at St. Paul’s Seminary, Trichy from the 15th to 19th January 2003, promulgated the Charter. 311

The Charter treats the ‘Priestly Formation in India’ under different titles, various aspects and at various stages. The Charter is binding on all houses of formation, both religious and secular. Since the formation of Divine Word Missionaries in India is treated later in this chapter, only a brief survey on the Charter is given below. The Charter treats the formation of priests under the following six titles:

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The above titles are treated in detail in the third part relating to the formation programme of the SVDs in India.

3.2.1 Dimensions of Formation

The dimensions of the formation of priests in India are treated briefly under the following nine heads:

*Personal Formation*

- Fully Human
- Acceptance of Self
- Acceptance of Others
- Listening and Communication
- Leadership
- Responsibility
- Self-Reliance
- Community Life
- Staff-Seminarian Relationship
**Fully Human**

The formation must aim at making a seminarian fully human. He should be a leader of the people. He should cultivate virtues, such as gentleness, kindness, openness, and readiness to listen, cheerfulness, patience, honesty, and truthfulness to his word. Further, he must be a man of self-respect, sincerity and courage, constantly concerned for truth and justice, unafraid to take decisions and persevering in carrying them out.

**Acceptance of Self**

A seminarian should develop in his formative years the ability to know, accept and respect himself with all his strengths and weaknesses. He will develop a positive self-image, which enables him to face criticism and failure without self-pity, discouragement or resentment.

**Acceptance of Others**

A seminarian has to grow in his approach and attitudes to others, as each one is unique with differences and limitations. He should be able to work with and cooperate with others in living and handling conflicts if and when they arise.

**Listening and Communication**

Seminarians should develop the capacity to listen with empathy and to be sensitive to the views of others; they should be able to communicate their ideas and perceptions with clarity, tact and firmness. It is also important that they should acquire and cultivate virtues, such as politeness, good manners, gentleness and consideration.
Leadership

A priest is to be the leader of a community, and so the seminarian should be formed to lead the community in areas, such as pastoral council, basic Christian communities, etc. He should have the initiative, drive, organising ability and the capacity to inspire confidence in others. He should be resourceful in developing new ideas and finding fresh ways of exercising his ministry.

Responsibility

A seminarian should develop qualities to think for himself free from peer group pressures. He should be encouraged to take decisions for himself and exercise responsibilities.

Self-Reliance

During the formation period, a seminarian must learn to become self-reliant, and to appreciate the dignity of labour and the value of money. In order to develop these qualities, he must in some way contribute both financially and through labour, towards the maintenance of the seminary education.

Community Life

A healthy community life is essential for integral human growth. The seminary should cultivate basic virtues, such as love, understanding, forgiveness, mutual concern, and discipline that are necessary for a Christian community.
Staff-Seminarian Relationship

A healthy relationship between students and staff members is to be based on genuine mutual love, trust and respect for one another. In the exercise of authority, responsible freedom and enlightened obedience are to be fostered in the context of a community of faith keeping in mind the right of the superior to take the final decision.

3.2.2 Spiritual Formation

The Charter treats 'Spiritual Formation'\textsuperscript{312} under the following eleven heads:

1) Following Christ
2) Apostolic Spirituality
3) Inner Freedom
4) Growth in Prayer
5) Liturgy and Common Prayer
6) Poverty and Simplicity
7) Celibacy
8) Obedience and Authority
9) Concern for the Poor
10) Spiritual Direction
11) Quality of Life

Following Christ

The Spiritual formation of a seminarian is a progressive process and it is the work of the Holy Spirit. The seminarian during his formation should cultivate and grow in the

\textsuperscript{312} Ibid, pp. 13-18.
virtues of faith, hope and love. He should achieve this goal by listening to the word in Scripture, drawing life from the sacraments, and seeking Christ in others.

**Apostolic Spirituality**

Right from the initial stages of the seminarian's formation, he has to be oriented towards the apostolic, priestly spirituality. This goal is achieved by faithful fulfillment of his priestly exercises, the Charter says.

**Inner Freedom**

A priest should be free from undue personal anxieties and ambitions, as well as from group pressures; moreover, he should be disposed to obey the will of God in everything. This goal is concretely revealed to the seminarian by inner promptings of grace and directions of superiors. The seminary formation should aim at achieving this goal.

**Growth in Prayer**

A priest is considered to be first of all be a man of God, and in order to be a true man of God he should cultivate deepening of his life of prayer, both personal and communitarian. His prayer life has to be nourished by daily meditation and interior silence. Yoga and aspects of *ashram* life have to be encouraged during the formation period.
**Liturgy and Common Prayer**

A seminarian should participate regularly in the prayer of the Church, and common spiritual exercises. Special stress is to be given to the daily Eucharist. He has also to cultivate the habit of celebrating and receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary and saints also are to be encouraged in seminary formation. Of special importance is the practice and promotion of inculturation in the liturgy in the spirit of *Ecclesia in Asia* (nn. 20-22).

**Poverty and Simplicity**

Simplicity of life-style and Christ-like poverty should be encouraged during the formation period in seminaries. The great Indian tradition and value of renunciation of even legitimate things should be encouraged to share with the needy in the spirit of Christ.

**Celibacy**

A seminarian must learn and appreciate the apostolic character of celibacy as a special source of spiritual fruitfulness in the world and witness to the eschatological dimension of the Kingdom. He should learn to enable and marshal all his physical, emotional, and spiritual energies for a proper love and total apostolic availability to all. Community life is a stronger safeguard of preserving chastity, and therefore healthy friendships and team spirit at work should be encouraged during the formation period.
Obedience and Authority

Authority in the Church is founded and modelled on the authority of Jesus Christ who came to minister to people in loving service, so that he could lead them into communion with the Father. The service of authority is not that of domination but of total love, and is exercised more by example of life than by commands and impositions. During formation, obedience needs to be practised in a spirit of mutual trust and dialogue between superiors and seminarians so that the will of God may be more easily discerned.

Concern for the Poor

Growth in prayer and the practice of apostolic poverty, celibate chastity and loving obedience should lead a seminarian to meet God in everyone, especially those who are less privileged. A deeper sense of mission will result in an increasing concern for the poor and the marginalised and a firmer commitment to their struggle for freedom and justice.

Spiritual Direction

Great emphasis is given on the need for regular spiritual direction which, according to the Guidelines on Formation in Major Seminaries, is an “indispensable means to spiritual maturity.” A seminarian is to seek spiritual direction at regular intervals from competent spiritual directors who have been approved.

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Quality of Life

In the final analysis, the test of spirituality in the life of a seminarian, the Charter says, is manifested in his exercise of human and Christian values, such as readiness to forgive, sensitivity to the feelings of others, ability to empathise with them, the practice of honesty and justice, respect for the rights of others, and zeal for selfless service.

3.2.3 Intellectual Formation

Intellectual formation during the seminary years for the future priest is very essential, especially in the modern world. He has to face and interact with the laity of the contemporary society and prove his intellectual maturity as a leader of the community. The Charter treats this section briefly under the following twelve heads.

1) Faith Vision

2) Cultural and Social Situations

3) Inter-Faith Dialogue

4) Ecumenical Spirit

5) Integration of Philosophy and Theology

6) Philosophical Studies

7) Theological Studies

8) Inter-Ritual Studies

9) Spirituality: Diocesan and Religious

10) Inter-Institute Collaboration

11) Faculties of Theology

12) Medium of Instruction
The above aspects of intellectual formation are discussed in the section on the formation of Divine Word Society in India.

3.2.4 Pastoral Formation

The emphasis on formation in the Indian seminaries is primarily aimed at grooming good pastors according to the heart of the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ. The formation of Divine Word seminarians has a different orientation since they are primarily missionaries intended for universal missions. The Charter on Priestly Formation for India covers this section under the following eleven subtitles:

1) Life-Giving Principle
2) Pastoral Slant to Courses
3) Reality-Based
4) Mission Orientation
5) Formation in Small Christian Communities
6) Pastoral Theology
7) Ministry
8) Vacation
9) Regency
10) Diaconate Ministry
11) Philosophy and Theology
3.3 Formation of Divine Word Missionaries

3.3.1 Introduction

The formation program of the Society began with the foundation of the Society itself. For the members of the Society, the founder, St. Arnold Janssen, envisaged a missionary formation from the very start. Candidates were admitted to minor seminaries, similar to other houses of formation. The system continued without major changes until the Society’s Eighth General Chapter in March-April, 1958. The question of formation in the Society came up strongly in the Chapter, namely whether the Society was primarily a missionary or a religious congregation, because the formation after all should be directed at one or the other accordingly. This thorny question was carried on until the Second Vatican Council. The Council challenged the religious Societies to revise and update their rules and constitutions in the light of the Council, necessitating the Society to call the Ninth General Chapter in 1967: “If the religious-missionary polarity was the cause of certain tension before or during Vatican II, the period of questioning is now over. The acceptance of both dimensions has become a driving force for our community: we are religious who are missionaries and we are missionaries prompted by our religious consecration.”

The Ninth General Chapter of 1977 and the Twelfth Chapter of 1982 revised and adopted the provisional constitutions and directory of 1968, and the Holy See officially

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314 A General Chapter is the highest decision making body of the Society; it meets at regular intervals according to the Society’s constitutions.

approved them by its Decree of 19th October 1983, on the anniversary of the founder’s beatification.

The Thirteenth General Chapter of 1988 discussed and formulated many factors that affect formation and the impact that good formation programmes could have on the province itself and on the Society at large. First of all, the Chapter defined that the formation is the concern of the entire SVD membership and not limited only to a few who are formally named as formators. The Chapter further formulated the following Seven Guiding Principles of SVD Formation:

1) The SVD formation is a contemplative-active journey to the Father, in the company of the Son, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
2) Formation is, in the spirit of the founder, a missionary discipleship of Jesus, the Incarnate Word, who transforms and unifies.
3) Formation is realised in a community that fosters mature relationships, characterised by self-giving openness in both dialogue and life-style.
4) Formation fosters and develops the fundamental religious-missionary basis of our one vocation.
5) Formation is open to the world, especially to the non-evangelised, the marginalised, the poor and the oppressed.

316 Following the Word, Nr. 1 – August, 1988, p. 63.
317 Ibid, pp. 64-66.
6) Formation enables a confrere to develop a model of learning that integrates creative academic study with a critical ability to reflect on and learn from experience.

7) Formation enables a confrere to channel his enthusiasm for, and commitment to, mission into first accepting his own cultural and ethnic identity, so that he can fully enter into and appreciate other cultures.

The Formation Programme in India began in 1951, and the first Indian members of the Society pronounced their vows on 21st December 1953, feast of St. Thomas the Apostle of India.

The Society consists of both clerics and brothers and the formation of brothers also has undergone considerable changes in the history of the Society. When the vocations to brotherhood are rapidly declining in several parts of the world, India has a good number of vocations to join the brotherhood. The various stages of formation are well coordinated by the Formation Board consisting of all Provincials and a National Formation Secretary.

In this third part of the Chapter, the formation programme of the Society is treated in detail in the light of the Constitutions and other guideline documents of the Society. Mutatis mutandis the formation program of lay brothers in the Society is treated separately in the third part. The formation programme in India is guided by the ‘Charter of Priestly Formation for India’ prepared by the CBCI Conference for Vocations, Seminaries, Clergy and Religious and approved by the Conference of the Catholic

3.3.2 The Beginning

From the beginning of the Society’s foundation in 1875, the founder, St. Arnold Janssen, clearly stated his vision of a priest as he published it in the *Little Sacred Heart* Magazine:

The Church of God has a two-fold task: Firstly, to preserve the true faith of the Christian people and educate them in Christian morals and virtue. Secondly, to spread the true faith further and further, also among pagans, and where possible among the heretics.” For this double task of the Church there was a corresponding double priestly vocation: “An ordinary priestly vocation for the people in the home country and a so-called apostolic vocation as a missionary for people in distant lands. [...] In line with this we need two two kindsof educational establishment: 1. The ordinary, traditional colleges and seminaries for the preparation of priests in the home country. [...] 2. Apostolic schools to prepare missionaries for foreign countries.

The seminary formation he wanted was of the later type and he reasoned:

1) A missionary often needs different knowledge and abilities from those of the usual priest.

2) The missionary must be trained more in a spirit of generosity, dedication and sacrifice so that he can better persevere in his difficult calling.

3) An essential characteristic of apostolic schools is that students who have been tried and tested, but are completely facing in
financial resources, are accepted and given full board and lodging, even during the holidays.\textsuperscript{318}

The Society’s Constitution 501 has the following as its goal of formation for its members:

The goal of all formation and education in our Society is growth by the power of the Holy Spirit into unity with the Incarnate Word of the Father and into a missionary community comprising members from many countries and cultures. This growth is a lifelong task, a shared responsibility to be faced both by the individual and the community. In this way we become capable of carrying out the missionary task of our Society: to be witnesses of the gospel of Christ to all by our personal lives, our community living and our preaching so that Christian communities may be built up.\textsuperscript{319}

3.3.3 Guiding Principles of SVD formation

The Society’s Constitution 502 lists five constitutive elements to develop fully the religious missionary vocation of a member in the society. They are:

- Formation must be integral
- Formation and one’s own culture
- Formation for community life
- Formation and apostolic service
- Formation and the basic spirituality of the Founder\textsuperscript{320}

\textsuperscript{318} Joseph Alt, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 131.

\textsuperscript{319} The Constitutions of the Society of the Divine Word, \textit{op. cit.} p. 49

\textsuperscript{320} Ibid.
A sixth element has been added in recent years, namely that the formation must be according to the fourfold prophetic dialogue.

**Formation must be integral**

An integral formation should consist of human maturity, professional competence and committed faith. "The whole work of priestly formation would be deprived of its necessary foundation if it lacked a suitable human formation."\(^\text{321}\) Pope John Paul II exhorts priests, whose ministry is 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, to be a living image of Jesus Christ and as far as possible to aspire for human perfection. Quoting St. Paul (Phil. 4: 8-9), the Pope enumerates some of the qualities of a priest: love for truth, to be loyal, 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.\(^\text{322}\)

\(^{321}\) Pastore Dabo Vobis., *op. cit.* n. 43.

\(^{322}\) Ibid.
**Formation and one’s own culture**

The Second Vatican Council document *Gaudium et Spes*, speaks of culture as one of the properties of the human person by which he can achieve true and full humanity. A “culture means the specific way in which human beings belonging to a given people cultivate their relationship with nature, with each other and with God in order to arrive at an authentic and full humanity,” reads the final part of the *Puebla* document. The ‘Guiding Principles of SVD Formation Today’ states that members should first accept their own cultural and ethnic identity. Only then can they fully enter into and appreciate other cultures.

**Formation for community life**

Living in community is an integral part of the vocation of Divine Word missionaries. The capacity for such community living has to be a requirement of admission to the society. The ‘Guiding Principles of SVD Formation’ states: “Formation is realised in a community which fosters mature relationships, characterised by self-giving openness in both dialogue and life-style.”

Formation should develop basic companionship which stems from shared experiences and a shared commitment. This sense of brotherhood comes from having

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323 II Vatican Council *Gaudium et Spes*. n. 35. Chapter II of this document (paragraph n. 53-62) is on *The Proper Development of Cultures*.


325 *Following the Word*, n. 1 -, SVD Formation Today, August 1988 II, p. 66.

experienced one’s personal value within the community and an appreciation of the values of the other members. Constitution 301 states: “Through our vows we are caught up in the mission of the Son and the Spirit sent from the Father to the world. This draws us into deeper bonds of unity with one another and so enables us to proclaim the message of salvation more effectively.”

**Formation and apostolic service**

The formation of the Divine Word Missionaries is to be shaped by the needs of humanity, especially to the non-evangelised. As followers of the Word Incarnate, the members’ formation should affect the life-style, attitude of service to others and sensitivity to the needs of the poor and oppressed, says the ‘Guidelines’. Formation is intrinsically apostolic because our vocation finds its realisation in missionary service, and missionary service is the integrating principle in our formation. Constitution 506 states: “Readiness to serve identifies us as disciples of the Lord who came not to be served but to serve.”

**Formation and the basic spirituality of the Founder**

The spirit of the founder is the missionary discipleship of Jesus, the Incarnate Word, who transforms and unifies. St. Arnold Janssen harmoniously blended the contemplative and active dimensions of Jesus Christ. A thorough introduction into the

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327 SVD Constitutions, n.301.
328 Ibid, n. 5.
spirituality of the founder as well as the history and charism of the Society are essential parts of the formation programme of the members.329

**Formation and prophetic dialogue**

Prophetic dialogue is a more recent terminology giving a new vision to missionary activities. In the Fifteenth General Chapter of 2000, the term ‘prophetic dialogue’ was officially accepted as the characteristic dimension of the Society. The same chapter redefined the vocation of a Divine Word Missionary and summarized it in the following three affirmations:

* We give witness to the universality and openness of the Reign of God…

* …through a fourfold prophetic dialogue…

*…marked by four characteristic dimensions of our missionary response.330

The fourfold prophetic dialogue that the Society is charged with includes:

1) Dialogue with people who have no faith community or religious affiliation

2) Dialogue with people who are poor and marginalised

3) Dialogue with people of different cultures

4) Dialogue with people of different faith traditions and secular ideologies.331

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The formation programme of the society is being redefined and geared to prepare its members for these new challenges.

3.4 Formation Programme of the Society in India

Recruiting programme and formation of candidates to the Society was one of the priorities of the Society soon after its arrival in Indore, Central India, in 1932. During the General Visitation of 1937-38, the Visitator General, Fr. Rosenbaum, had stressed the importance of establishing a central house and training centre of the candidates for the Society at Indore. All plans had to be shelved because of the start of World War II.\footnote{In Dialogue with the Word, n.2, (Rome: SVD Publications 2001) p. 6.}

The post–Independent India introduced a ban on foreign missionaries' entry through two legislations passed in 1952 and 1956. The promotion of Indian vocations and their formation became urgent since it was a question of survival for the congregation. Regional Fr. V. Zimmermann's historic and controversial decision to recruit vocations from the south, particularly from the Syro-Malabar Church, to which the Latin church was not very sympathetic in those days, changed the face of the SVD in India...One of the secrets of the fast growth of the Divine Word Missionaries in India, in comparison to other

\footnote{Clarence Srambical, Divine Word Missionaries in India, (Indore: Ishvani Publications, 1988) p. 233.}
congregations, is the establishing of minor seminaries in all the states from where most of the vocations were recruited.  

3.4.1 Vocation Promotion

The Second Vatican Council explicitly speaks of the responsibility of all members of the Church to foster and look after vocations: "The duty of fostering vocations falls on the whole Christian community, and they should discharge it principally by living full Christian lives." The bishop, assisted by his presbyterate (governing body), seeks and fosters vocations: "It is the priests' part as instructors of the people in the faith to see to it that each member of the faithful shall be led in the Holy Spirit to the full development of his own vocation."

The Council calls on the Christian family to play a pivotal role in fostering vocations by virtue of the Sacrament of Matrimony where the parents share in a unique way in the educational mission of the Church, teacher and mother. Schools, especially Catholic schools, catechists, teachers, educators and youth ministers also have a great responsibility in promoting priestly vocations.

The witness of priests is a major factor in promoting vocations: "Priests in the ministry at parish, diocesan and regional levels, who are imbued with the spirit of prayer, 

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service, simplicity of life, austerity and true paschal joy will always be powerful role models and the best inspiration for promoting vocations.\textsuperscript{336}

Formation is one of the major concerns of the Society in India. It involves more than 70 members serving in 20 formation houses of the Society with about 600 students at various stages of formation.

Coordinating the various stages of formation is the ‘Formation Board’ consisting of all provincials (5) and a national secretary and representatives from provincial councils, and missionaries totalling about 28 members. The Board has formulated the SVD identity in the following seven constitutive elements: \textsuperscript{337}

1) Spiritual
2) Communitarian
3) Religious
4) Academic
5) Affective
6) Missionary
7) Physical

\textsuperscript{336} Charter, \textit{op. cit.}, 2.1.3, (d), 4.

These elements are given due importance in all stages of formation. It is envisaged that by deepening these elements, the individual can gradually become a total, integral Divine Word missionary.

3.4.2 Stages of Formation

A candidate who joins the Society has to go through the following ten stages during his formation:

1) Selection
2) Minor Seminary
3) Juniorate
4) Graduation/Postulancy
5) Novitiate
6) Philosophy
7) Regency/OTP
8) Theology – Final Vows
9) Pastoral Course
10) Ongoing Formation

A detailed study was made with the help of a questionnaire and personal interviews with candidates on the different stages above (2-8). The result of this study and research analysis is given in chapter 5. A brief introduction to each of the stages is as follows:

3.4.3 Selection

George Vanchipurakal in his ‘Reflections on Priestly Formation’ writes:

Candidates to the priesthood are to be carefully selected. The most important areas to look at during the selection of candidates are: the family and educational backgrounds, their spiritual life, their motivation for, understanding of, and commitment to the priestly ministry, their physical and mental fitness and their emotional maturity. A suitable method of psychological assessment would normally be used to help with the overall process of selection.\(^{339}\)

The SVD Constitution No.510 lays down the responsibility of winning young men for mission work on every member of the Society. “It is the responsibility of each individual and of every community in the Society to win young men for the missionary ideal by living our vocation in a convincing way, as well as by earnest prayer and active effort.”\(^{340}\)

The following seven criteria are considered for the selection of candidates:

• Physical and mental health
• Sound family background
• A religious spirit in keeping with their age
• Necessary motivation, aptitude and talents for the religious-priestly, missionary life


\(^{340}\)SVD Constitutions, n. 510.
• Sociability

• Active participation in the life of the Church

• Concern and openness for the missionary ideal and vocation.$^{341}$

The means of investigation include personal dialogue, personality tests, written personal history stressing the above points, school reports and medical fitness certificate. A team that is adequately competent to assess the above characteristics of the candidates makes the selection. The candidate is given sufficient information about the Society, its heritage and uniqueness, its challenges and demand, the scope of its various ministries, its vision as a religious congregation, the main thrust of its apostolic activities, its special charism, and its mission.$^{342}$

3.4.4 Minor Seminary

The Second Vatican Council, in the Decree Optatum Totius, outlines the role of the minor seminary:

The students under the fatherly supervision of the superiors, the parents too playing their appropriate part, should lead lives suited to the age, mentality and development of young people. Their way of life should be fully in keeping with the standards of sound psychology and should include suitable experience of the ordinary affairs of daily life and contact with their own families.$^{343}$

$^{341}$Ibid, n.511.4.

$^{342}$SVD Formation, p. 26.

$^{343}$Optatum Totius, Decree on Priestly Formation op. cit., n. 3.
“The minor Seminary is an institution for candidates (both diocesan and religious) who have completed their XII Std. or equivalent and show signs of a priestly vocation. It is a place where they can reflect on and discover more deeply their vocation and arrive at a free and responsible decision concerning it. It is an orientation institute.”

Candidates, who are selected normally after passing their SSLC (Secondary School Leaving Certificate) or higher examinations, are admitted to the minor seminary of the respective region. The Society has established minor seminaries in the States of Kerala, Tamilnadu, Mangalore, Goa, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Orissa. Here the candidates are given an orientation course and also attend PUC, PDC, or Plus Two course, whichever is applicable. The students experience the transition from the home environment to a religious community life. Much care is taken to ensure that the youngsters are helped to overcome the tensions of separation from home. Specific goals to be achieved during this time include:

1) Introduction of the candidate into spiritual life and enabling him to perceive Christ as his model.
2) Help the candidate to live together in a community.
3) Help the candidate to clarify and appreciate his vocational aspirations and tendencies.
4) Provide the candidate with opportunities for academic studies and develop individual talents.

344 Charta, op. cit. 2. 3. 6.
5) Enable the candidate to get acquainted with the missionary character of the Society.

6) Enable the candidate to accept and appreciate his body as God’s gift and to grow as a physically healthy person.345

3.4.5 Juniorate (SIS-Spirituality Integration and Study)

Juniorate is a year-long intensive formation period. Candidates from various minor seminaries are assembled together under one roof and helped to grow further in spiritual life and initiated into an inter-cultural, inter-state, community life. Here the students are always available at the seminary without any studies outside, and this phase is a period of intensive formation. The students are helped to strengthen in their spiritual life, learn to live together harmoniously in a community made up of individuals from various cultures and different ethnic backgrounds, to improve the standard in English, Hindi and other relevant subjects, and to develop talents, and above all for the superiors to study and scrutinise the candidates. The Juniorate is located at ‘Catholic Ashram, Palda’, near Indore, Central India. The goals aimed at during the Juniorate are:

1) Strengthening the candidate’s spiritual life and his relationship with Christ.

2) Enabling the students to appreciate and live together harmoniously in a community made up of individuals from various cultures and different ethnic backgrounds.

3) Helping the student to discover his values, test his priorities and to become aware of his motives and attitudes.

345 SVD Formation, p. 30.
4) Improving the students’ standard in English, Hindi and other relevant subjects and developing talents.

5) Helping the students to establish healthy friendships and cope with the emotional demands of their age.

6) Enabling the student to accept and appreciate his body as God’s gift and to grow up as a physically healthy person.\(^{346}\)

3.4.6 Graduation

The Charter for Priestly Formation in India prescribes: “A University degree or a corresponding technical or professional qualification is desirable for priests in India.”\(^{347}\)

In March 1972, the ‘All India SVD Formators’ meeting held in Poona had decided that the candidates of the Society should possess a university degree before they are admitted to the Novitiate.\(^{348}\)

After one year of Juniorate Course, the candidates are promoted for their graduate studies either at Chennai or at Mysore where they attend reputed colleges. The candidates for brotherhood go to ‘Vidyodaya’ in Indore, where they are guided to choose the branch of studies in some technical or professional area according to their aptitudes, talents and the needs of the Society, and attend colleges in Indore for their graduation. During this period, normally consisting of three years, the candidates are exposed to the challenges from their university studies and from the competitive consumer tendencies

\(^{346}\) Ibid., p. 36.

\(^{347}\) Charter, op. cit. 2. 4.7. 8.

\(^{348}\) Puthumana, History of the SVD South Indian Province, op. cit., p. 57.
of the secular milieu. Studying in coeducational institutions helps the students to become more mature, especially in their dealing within their formation.

Special goals set to achieve during this period include the following:

1) Deepening of one’s own love for the person, vision and mission of Christ.
2) Strengthening one’s identity as a brother/priest in the Society of the Divine Word.
3) Internalisation of the values of brotherhood/priesthood.
4) Integration of academic studies into one’s life as an SVD brother/priest, and a reflection on the socio-political realities in one’s surroundings.
5) Enabling the individual to accept himself as an adult and to give and receive love.
6) Deepening one’s dedication to the mission of Christ in and through the Society of the Divine Word.
7) Enabling the candidate to accept and appreciate his body as God’s gift and to grow as a physically healthy SVD brother/priest.349

3.4.7 Postulancy

Postulancy (Pre-Novitiate) is a time of preparation that precedes novitiate, lasting normally six months. The goal of postulancy is to help the candidates to better understand the nature of the Christian religious, missionary, priestly vocation and to grow to a higher level of human Christian maturity. It also aims at a greater self-knowledge and self-acceptance of others. This would enable the candidates to make a free and responsible choice with regard to their vocation. Postulancy is done in the respective houses of

349 SVD Formation, p. 42.
3.4.8 Novitiate

The Society’s constitution defines the novitiate thus:

Novitiate is the period to mature and clarify a vocation. It provides a basic introduction to the following of Christ as outlined in the life and spirituality of the Society and in our Constitutions; thus it leads one to follow him in an ever-deeper way. Through a living union with the Divine Word and through life in the community, a novice should come to understand himself more clearly and know the Society better so that he may make a mature and responsible decision about his vocation.

During this phase of formation, a novice comes to a definite choice to live his life as a Divine Word missionary. A responsible and mature decision is made in the Holy Spirit through an ongoing discernment process by the novice, the Novice Master, and the Novitiate Community. The Novitiate House is in Catholic Ashram, Khurda, in Central India. It is common for candidates to priesthood and brotherhood.

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350 Ibid., p. 47.
351 SVD Const., 512.
352 cf. SVD Formation, p. 50.
3.4.9 Philosophy

A crucial stage of intellectual formation is the study of philosophy. It leads to a deeper understanding and interpretation of the person, and of the person’s freedom and relationships with the world and with God. A proper philosophical training is vital, not only because of the links between the great philosophical questions and the mysteries of salvation that are studied in theology under the guidance of the higher light of faith, but also vis-à-vis an extremely widespread cultural situation that emphasises subjectivism as a criterion and measure of truth. Only a sound philosophy can help candidates for the priesthood to develop a reflective awareness of the fundamental relationship that exists between spirit and truth—the truth which is revealed to us full in Jesus Christ.353

Philosophy helps the students to acquire a deeper understanding of reality, and the ability to discern truth wherever it is found. It should be taught in such a manner ‘that the students are led to acquire a solid and coherent understanding of man, of the world and of God’ (OT 15). Philosophy creates in them a sense of purpose in life, personal convictions and the maturity of mind, which is required for the understanding of contemporary issues.354

The Society’s focus during the two years’ period of philosophy is the intellectual exploration of the threefold reality of God, the world and the human being, and their inter-relationships. This pursuit aims to purify and enhance one’s religious-missionary-priestly motivation and identity. The course is open to candidates who opt for priesthood

353 cf. Pastores, op. cit., no. 52.
354 Charter, op.cit., 3. 2. 3. (f) 19.
and is held at ‘SVD Vidya Bhavan’, *(Institute of Philosophy and Religion)*, in Bhopal, Central India.

The goals aimed at during the philosophy course are:

1) Deepening the candidate’s spiritual life and his love for the person of Christ.

2) Deepening one’s commitment to the community by transcending the divisive elements of individual cultures.

3) Deepening one’s appreciation of the vowed life.

4) Acquiring a solid and coherent knowledge of the human person, the world and God through philosophical studies and a process of integration intended to imbibe the values gained from such studies.

5) Enabling the candidate to relate to others with greater emotional maturity and freedom.

6) Deepening the candidate’s love and appreciation for the missions.

7) Enabling the candidate to accept and appreciate his body as God’s gift and to grow as a physically healthy person.\(^{355}\)

**3.4.10 Regency/OTP**

Regency is defined as a period of at least one year in duration when the seminarian lives outside the seminary, in order that he may acquire a greater maturity, and thus be enabled to make a definite option for priesthood. Regency should ordinarily be done before the study of Theology.\(^{356}\)

\(^{355}\textit{SVD Formation}, \text{ p. 56.}

\(^{356}\textit{cf. Charter}, \text{3.2.4. (i) 24.}
The Society's Constitution 516.4 defines regency as an extended period of supervised apostolic ministry where it is feasible and seems suitable, and this period can be spent profitably in another country or culture. A member who is assigned to a foreign mission ordinarily has the regency as Overseas Training Program (OTP) or also called as Cross-Cultural Training Program (CTP); it has developed in the Society over the past several decades and has, by and large, provided participants with an enriching intercultural experience. The regency within the country ordinarily is only of one year whereas OTP is for a minimum of two years.

The specific objectives of CTP/OTP are to:

1) Discern and deepen one's religious-missionary identity and commitment.

2) Develop individual talents and skills related to the Society's mission.

3) Deepen one's personal faith and commitment to Christ, to the Church, and to the people of God in the SVD way of missionary service.

4) Develop positive attitudes of self-criticism, and deepening self-awareness in relation to the missionary role.

5) Develop theological reflection and professional competence.

6) Provide focus, discretion, enthusiasm and critical interest in studies and professional training during the remaining years of formation.

7) Create a closer bond of collaboration in the formation of future missionaries, between members of the Society in the sending provinces and the receiving provinces.
8) Strengthen the sense of international mission awareness in formation houses and to promote a more fruitful exchange of experiences from a variety of cross-cultural or overseas churches.

9) Achieve an early start in language study and inculturation, as CTP/OTP demands greater readiness to tackle the challenge of inculturation, including the learning of the language and ways of the people.

10) Introduce candidates to the missionary work of the Society.

11) Reinforce an attitude of commitment to evangelisation, especially in the field of social justice from the perspective of the poor.

12) Introduce candidates to the fourfold prophetic dialogue of the Society in a practical way.\textsuperscript{357}

3.4.11 Theology and Final Vows

The entire formation of priests—that is, the arrangement of the seminary, its spiritual instruction, its curriculum, the common life and discipline of the students, and its pastoral training—should be adapted to the various circumstances of the regions. And this adaptation, since it deals with very important principles, is to be carried out both according to the common norms for secular clergy set up by the Bishop’s Conferences, and in agreement with the rules made by competent superiors for the regular clergy.\textsuperscript{358}

The Second Vatican Council states: “Under the light of faith and with the guidance of the Church’s teaching authority, theology should be taught in such a way that


\textsuperscript{358}(cf. The general statutes joined to the apostolic constitution “Sedes Sapientiae,” Art. 19); qt. in footnote 5 p.438, The Documents of Second Vatican Council.
students will accurately draw Catholic doctrine from divine revelation, understand that doctrine profoundly, nourish their own spiritual lives with it, and be able to proclaim it, unfold it, and defend it in their priestly ministry.\textsuperscript{359}

The Charter of Priestly Formation for India defines theology thus:

Theology is a reflection that seeks to understand God, world and life in the light of faith. The seminarians are to be trained to articulate that faith, derived from the Sacred Scriptures, Tradition, and the \textit{Magisterium} of the Church, in the context of the realities of the society in which they live and work. It is particularly during their study of theology that seminarians need to be helped to critically reflect on their faith and integrate it with their lives. The principle of inculturation which guides this process will permeate the various courses offered in the theological program.\textsuperscript{360}

The SVD Formation Manual summarises the theology programme as follows:

This is a stage of formation where the members learn to take responsibility for their own spiritual life, seeking God's will under the action of the Holy Spirit. Stress is laid on the inner motivation and personal responsibility. It is a time to acquire an adequate knowledge of the Sacred Scriptures, Theology, Comparative Religions and the skills in communicating the faith-vision and Christian hope to Christians and to followers of other faiths. Under planned and guided direction they learn to integrate their

\textsuperscript{359}\textit{Decree on Priestly Formation} Second Vatican Council, n. 16.
\textsuperscript{360}\textit{Charter}. 3. 2. 3. (g), 20.
theological studies and reflections in their total personality so as to arrive at a clear vision of one’s task as a religious missionary.\textsuperscript{361}

The specific goals aimed at during this period are:

1) Deepening one’s understanding and commitment to the person of Christ by profound theological reflections based on Sacred Scriptures and tradition.

2) Leading a community life based on faith and the charism of the Society and learning to build faith communities.

3) Strengthening of one’s religious values and motives leading to total religious commitment in final vows.

4) Theological and scriptural studies in order to understand one’s faith and be able to communicate it to others with authority.

5) Integrating one’s understanding of faith and lived experience of faith in the light of theological studies.

6) Realising and accepting whole-heartedly the identity of a Divine Word missionary.

7) Integration of one’s body and its energies into one’s total personality for one’s religious and missionary commitment.\textsuperscript{362}

Most of the members pursue their theological studies in Jnana Deepa Vidyapeeth, Pune, residing in the ‘Divine Word Seminary’. A few are sent to the theological faculty at ‘Khristo Jyoti Mohavidyaloyo’ at Sason, in Orissa.

\textsuperscript{361} \textit{SVD Formation}, p. 68.

\textsuperscript{362} \textit{SVD Formation}, pp. 68-69.
Brothers in temporary vows have a theology course lasting two years. The purpose of this course is to deepen one's religious convictions and the understanding of one's missionary commitment and not just gaining academic qualification in theology.

3.4.12 Final Profession

The Constitution states: "Confreres spend the time of preparation for perpetual vows in a house of the Society where thorough training and preparations are assured. Preparation for perpetual vows lasts from six to 12 months."

The goals aimed at during this period are to:

1) Strengthen one's religious values and motivations, leading to a total religious commitment in perpetual vows; and to acquire a clear vision about the meaning and relevance of religious vows in the present day situation.

2) Deepen one's understanding, love and commitment to the person and mission of Christ.

3) Prepare oneself more intensely to be a committed Divine Word religious missionary priest/brother; and to refurbish one's commitment to the goals and the life-style of a Divine Word missionary.

4) Strengthen human-spiritual growth and maturity.

5) Enable integration.

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363 Members of the same congregation

364 Const., n. 514.1

3.4.13 Pastoral Course

The whole purpose of seminary formation is to help seminarians become true pastors of the Christian faithful after the example of Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, exemplified above all by Christ himself who lived and served people that they "may have life, and have it more abundantly." (Jn.10: 10). This implies that students will apply themselves to acquiring the knowledge and skills indispensable to the pastoral ministry.\(^{366}\)

The Charter of Priestly Formation further states:

Pastoral theology forms an integral part of Theology. Since effective pastoral action presupposes a close knowledge of the contemporary human situation and of the society to which the Church has to address herself the insights of the Human Sciences will constitute and indispensable input in pastoral theology....The social doctrine of the Church, pastoral psychology, pastoral anthropology, pastoral sociology, pastoral skills, and the religions of the region, dialogue, fundamentalism, and problems connected with contemporary atheism—all these come under the purview of Pastoral Theology.\(^{367}\)

Constitution 518 of the Society gives details about the Pastoral Course for the young members of the Society. The Course is aimed at introducing the deacons to the practical aspects

\(^{366}\)Charter. op.cit. 3. 2. 4 (a), p. 22.

\(^{367}\)Ibid., 3. 2. 4. (f), p. 23.
of their missionary, priestly life. It is envisaged as a programme to introduce them to their province, mission-field, the missionaries working in the area, the people of the locality with their needs and possibilities. The whole programme unfolds itself in five successive stages, lasting about nine months, and is organised by the Pastoral Course Director appointed by the Formation Board. It has five stages:

1st Stage: General Introduction to Missionary-Pastoral Life
2nd Stage: Language Course
3rd Stage: Introducing a member to his own province
4th Stage: Guided exposure to pastoral missionary realities
5th Stage: Evaluation of the Course

3.4.14 Ongoing Formation

Pope John Paul II in his Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation ‘Pastores Dabo Vobis’ takes Paul’s letter to Timothy (2Tim. 1: 6): “I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you” and emphasises the need for the ongoing formation of priests and religious.

Ongoing formation is the natural and absolutely necessary continuation of the process of building priestly personality, which began and developed in the seminary or the Religious House with the training programme that aimed at ordination. There is an

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368 SVD Formation, pp. 78-82.
369 Pastores Dabo Vobis, op. cit., n.70
intrinsic link between the formation before ordination to the priesthood and formation after ordination, the document says:

Ongoing formation is not a repetition of the formation acquired in the seminary. Ongoing formation involves relatively new content and especially methods; it develops as a harmonious and vital process which—rooted in the formation received in the Seminary—calls for adaptations, updating and modifications, but without sharp breaks in continuity...its aim must be that of promoting a general and integral process of constant growth, deepening each of the aspects of formation—human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral—as well as ensuring their active and harmonious integration, based on pastoral charity and in reference to it.  

The Society, since its Thirteenth General Chapter in 1988, has been very earnest in implementing the recommendations of the Council. The resolution of the Chapter emphatically states: “Every province should set up a programme for ongoing formation and report on its structures and the operation to the Generalate....Professed members must respond to the need of the ongoing formation to bring about both their continued personal growth and ever greater fruitfulness in their life and ministry.”

Ongoing formation is a concept evolving from the basic realisation that as individuals we never become perfectly formed. In order to keep our minds focused on the

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370 Ibid, n. 71.

goal, we need a process of periodic evaluation and reaffirmation. Different measures are
taken to facilitate such a reaffirmation:

1) In the first three years after ordination, district/province gatherings are organised
for reflection, sharing and evaluation of experiences twice a year.

2) At the end of the first five years, a gathering of the ordination batch/finally
professed brothers is to be held for sharing of experiences and for a common
retreat.

3) Participation in the regular ongoing formation programmes organised by the
Central Mission Secretary.

4) Taking part in the *Tertiate* programme at Nemi, Rome.

5) Periodic participation in appropriate courses and seminars conducted by different
ecclesiastical institutions in the country for the purpose of keeping oneself up-to-
date in theological and pastoral information and for deepening one’s commitment
to one’s religious missionary vocation.\(^{372}\)

### 3.4.15 Advanced Studies/Specialisation

The Society’s mission with its special ministries and priorities calls for
specialisation; hence higher studies are an essential part of the preparation for mission.
Consequently, superiors should encourage confreres with the required talents and
qualities to seek higher studies.\(^{373}\)

\(^{372}\) *SVD Formation, op. cit.*, p. 86.

\(^{373}\) *Handbook, op. cit.*, C. 23. 1. 0.
The criteria for selection for higher studies include the following:

1) He should be a person with a total commitment to the SVD and its mission, and this commitment must have been evident over his years in the Society.

2) He should be an individual who is psychologically and developmentally mature; he should not have any serious psychological problems.

3) He should enjoy good health.

4) He is to be open and flexible enough to meet and accept other nationalities and cultures.

5) He is to have academic competence and the capability of coping with studies for which he is being proposed.

6) He is willing to pursue these studies in line with province needs and in accordance with the priorities and plans of the Society.

7) He is ready to abide by the regulations of the province in which he will be studying.

8) He is willing to adapt to the cross-cultural situation of the country in which he will be studying.\footnote{Ibid, pp. 103-104.}

Priests are expected to go for specialised studies after two or three years of pastoral/missionary involvement in the missions; brothers do specialised studies in different fields depending on their aptitude and the needs of the Society after their regency/theology course.\footnote{SVD Formation, op. cit., p. 84.}
3. 5 Formation of Brothers

From the beginning of the foundation of the Society in 1875, there were both priests and brothers in the Society. It took more than a hundred years for the brothers in the Society to reach up to a respectable and equal position with clerics (priests). A brief account will help to understand this development.


The brothers are called to carry out the missionary task of the Church, entrusted to every Christian in baptism and confirmation, in the decisive way called for by the religious life. Through their varied services and witness to the gospel, the brothers share in the mission of Christ to renew all things. The better trained they are for their professional, social and pastoral activities, the more effectively they can fulfill their vocation.\(^{376}\)

3.5.1 The Founder and the Brother Question

When Arnold Janssen founded the Society of the Divine Word on 8th September 1875, he had already given serious thought to the possibility of religious brothers. His primary purpose of brothers in the Society was for the various works to be done in the seminary. He also had the intention to send them to the missions. In the spring of 1877, Janssen began to accept applicants who had their sights set on brotherhood. John Bachl, a

\(^{376}\) Constitutions, n. 515.
gardener at the Benedictine monastery of Kremsmuenster, August Keichel, a former Trappist Brother and Frederick Mueller are referred to as the first brother postulants.\textsuperscript{377}

By the summer of 1878, the status of brother candidates became clearer: In connection with the admission of a candidate Arnold Janssen wrote: “I will accept him as a postulant...but I should like to mention that the brothers will not wear a religious habit at first, since the times do not seem to make that advisable. Also he must give up all thought of becoming a priest.”\textsuperscript{378} Four of the first ten postulants—Scwerdtfeger, Elskemer, Goetten and Jurgens—took perpetual vows and died as members of the Society.\textsuperscript{379}

3.5.2 Formation Programme of Brothers

At first the structure of the formation programme for brothers was modelled on that of brothers in other religious orders. The first Constitutions (1885) prescribed the length of postulancy depending on one’s readiness for novitiate—two years’ novitiate, temporary vows, and six months preparation for perpetual vows.\textsuperscript{380} The SVD brother was a consecrated person who dedicated his life to the mission of the Church through his manual work. His training, therefore, rested on the two pillars: spiritual formation and

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{377} Bornemann Frit \textit{op. cit.} pp. 112-113.
\item \textsuperscript{378} Ibid, p. 113.
\item \textsuperscript{379} Ibid, 113-114.
\item \textsuperscript{380} Mc Hugh SVD Peter, \textit{The Development of SVD Brother Formation-The SVD Brother Vocation Today}, eds. Vincent Von Holzen and Peter McHugh, Romae, 1995, p. 74.
\end{itemize}
technical training. Spiritual formation aimed at developing the key virtues of humility, diligence at work, and piety. The 1885 Constitution urged the brothers as follows:

Since every brother is in the service of a great King, he should endeavour to complete his tasks as well and as thoroughly as possible. This implies that each brother should perfect himself in his trade as far as he can, so that he will not be outstripped in this respect by people in the world who for worldly honour or for merely temporal gain make great efforts to surpass others and to complete everything thoroughly.

After World War I, the governments came to demand qualifications and it became a norm for brothers to do the State-recognised apprentice and master examinations. This became the pattern in brothers' education well into the 1960s.

Historian Joseph Alt summarises Arnold Janssen's basic attitude to the brothers in the following words:

A benevolent, patriarchal manner, addressing them for years with the familiar Du-form; respect, when humility and obedience were demonstrated; unqualified appreciation for achievements attained without arrogance; understanding and support when difficulties with priests arose; a willing ear when complaints were made; genuine concern for their spiritual welfare; concern for their physical welfare in keeping with the times and befitting their rank; concern for harmony among the brothers themselves; awareness of

382 *Ibid.* p. 74
the difficulties of being a brother in a religious house and in the world at large. Parallel to the demand that they give of their best wherever they were placed, Arnold promoted and trained the brothers to the extent that it was meaningful for the good of the whole organisation and the individuals concerned.\textsuperscript{383}

The Society grew rapidly under Fr. Janssen and both clerics and brothers shared in this success. In the Golden Jubilee year 1925, there were 1,156 clerics and 914 brothers in vows. The brothers were very much involved in the quick growth of the Society throughout the five continents. The brothers, of whom a good number were masters of their trade, however, had no voting rights, neither active nor passive, and there was no possibility of having any definitive decision-making role.\textsuperscript{384}

With time, two different life-styles developed: the brothers in the huge mission house and the brothers in small mission stations. In the mission house they lived in separate communities. The brothers’ spirituality was practically monastic. In the missions, the number grew more and more into one community for about 90 years.

From the beginning, until 1967, brothers were generally identified with manual work. The Constitution of 1910 says:

\textit{The lay brothers generally work with their hands (c.10) The brothers were and still are, technical people working in the printing}

\textsuperscript{383}Joseph Alt, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 840.

presses, but only very few of them worked on the editorial staff; schools were and are a priority in the Society; some brothers were teachers; but teaching is not one of the priorities among the services of the brothers.\(^{385}\)

### 3.5.3 Second Vatican Council

The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) formulated a series of developments in religious life. The second chapter of *Lumen Gentium*, about the people of God, gives the religious their place in the *communio* of the church. In the same document (No.43) and the *Perfectae Caritatis* (Nos. 8b, 9 and 10a) there are special references to the religious as having full participation in the life and mission of their religious congregation. The same document, in No. 15, speaks of the relationship between priests and laity in ‘mixed societies’. "Institutes which are not entirely lay can, of their very nature, admit clerics and laymen, in accordance with the constitutions, in sacred orders on an equal footing and with equal rights and obligations, apart from those arising out of activities of service, speaks of the lay people."\(^{386}\)

### 3.5.4 New Directions (1965–1982)

The brother’s role in mission, though very important, was always secondary, subordinate to the role of priests. "With the II Vatican Council, the ‘focus’ of the mission changed, and the goal, was not any more to ‘implant the Church’, but to serve the kingdom of God."\(^{387}\) The Council’s insights led to a new vision of the brother’s role in

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\(^{386}\) *Perfectae caritatis, op. cit.*, n. 15.

mission and necessitated a new approach to brother formation and education. Brothers' formation in the Society was updated, introducing a larger spiritual and pastoral formation, besides the professional training.

The Ninth General Chapter (1967-68) decided that the formation of brothers should provide the pastoral and professional training necessary for a missionary brother in the Society. The revised Constitutions of the Society made the following important decision: "Those properly qualified should be given an opportunity for advanced studies in technical and/or academic fields."^{388}

The Tenth General Chapter of 1977 in its section "The Goal and Direction of Formation" spelt out the fundamental principles of SVD formation. The terms 'cleric' and 'brother' were never to be used. Consistent with the changed atmosphere of formation was that the novitiate was to be made in common.^389 Since 1987, there have been no separate canonical novitiates in the Society.

The Twelfth General Chapter of 1982 formulated a document on the brother vocation, which described what had been achieved and gave broad perspectives, and the Chapter of 1988 reinforced the same. According to the Chapter, brother formation programme spelled out three main aspects: (1) human development; (2) missionary and spiritual development; (3) technical training and further education." In addition to courses

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^{388}Constitutions. 513, 7.

^{389}Ibid. 511, 8.
in theology, basic education in the humanities and the social sciences and in missiology was also suggested."

The 1885 Constitution stated: "In the division of ministries the physical and the external are generally to be assigned to the brothers, the spiritual to the priests."\(^{391}\)

The mission decree of the Second Vatican Council, *Ad Gentes* (1965), No.25 gave official sanction to the brothers to serve as formators, counsellors, catechists, and to work in the biblical apostolate, in the media, and in similar 'spiritual' fields. No. 26 speaks of the studies required:

Their doctrinal training should be such that they understand both the universality of the Church and the diversity of peoples. This holds for all the studies, which prepare them for their future ministry, and indeed for other sciences in which they might usefully be instructed so that they might have a general knowledge of peoples, cultures and religions, not only with regard to the past but also with respect to the present time. Whoever is to go among another people must hold their inheritance, language and way of life in great esteem. It is very necessary for the future missionary that he undertake missiological studies. A special and ordered apostolic formation should be imparted, both by means of instruction and practical exercises.\(^{392}\)

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\(^{391}\) Alfonso, Berger, *Brothers’ Convention India*, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

\(^{392}\) Abbot M. Walter, *op. cit.*, p. 615.
3.5.5 Further Developments

The formation programme of brothers in the Society progressed very rapidly, and the Chapter of 1988 in its treatment of “SVD Formation Today” envisaged it as equally valid for both clerics and brothers.\(^{393}\)

Another area in brother formation is the Ongoing Formation. Though the Chapter stated that brother formation programme should be concerned with “further education,”\(^{394}\) the 1988 Chapter stresses that the ongoing formation and education are the basic duty of every SVD brother and priest.\(^{395}\)

The Thirteenth General Chapter of 1988 clarified that SVD formation is explicitly envisaged as equally valid for both clerics and brothers “unless the context indicates otherwise.”\(^{396}\) Quoting Constitution 104, the Chapter spelled out the basic idea in the following words: “In the Society we all share a common religious-missionary vocation, and the community of lay and clerical men constitutes one of the characteristics of our charism. The absence of a brother in an SVD community is an impoverishment of our religious-missionary witness.”\(^{397}\)


\(^{394}\) Ibid.

\(^{395}\) Ibid, pp. 74-75.

\(^{396}\) XIII General Chapter 1988: Following the Word, n. 1, p. 68.

\(^{397}\) Ibid.
The Fourteenth General Chapter of 1994 in the section “Major Concerns for Communion” explicitly referred to the brothers:

The Society of the Divine Word, as a fraternal community of religious missionaries, inspired by the same calling, reaffirms the intrinsic value of the religious missionary brother. All members share one common religious life and the radical commitment to the missionary task as desired and sanctioned in our Constitutions. Adequate formation of all brothers remains the responsibility of each province so as to assure the attainment of that human, spiritual and professional growth, necessary for the full and fruitful realisation of their religious missionary calling.\textsuperscript{398}

Further, the Chapter resolved: “The general chapter reaffirms that all offices in the Society should be open to all confreres in perpetual vows and asks, therefore, that the general council, through the procurator general, continue its efforts in this regard and that it collaborate with other religious communities in urging the Vatican Congregations to grant this request.”\textsuperscript{399}

The Chapter also made the following recommendations:

1) That the provincial programs of brother formation be reevaluated every three years according to the demands of the Constitutions, the past general chapter and the needs of the times, in order to secure their full implementation.

\textsuperscript{398}Following the Word XIV General Chapter, (Rome: 1994)p. 22.

\textsuperscript{399}Ibid.
2) That provinces see to it that an adequate number of brother formators be prepared to be involved in the various phases of SVD priesthood and brotherhood formation and to take their place on SVD formation boards.

3) That all superiors, while accepting the principle of unity in diversity, confront any existing situations, structures or mentalities which cause or perpetuate unacceptable divisions or inequalities among members within the Society.

4) That all provinces continue to seek clearer understanding of the vocation of the religious missionary brother and take positive steps to conscientise the public about this vocation and, at the same time, actively foster brother vocations in the Church of today.

5) That provinces, while recognizing the value of the tradition of work and services of the brothers, also train brothers in new areas of mission specialisation required by the needs of our times and provide programs to develop leadership skills.

6) That when new mission areas are being studied for acceptance, the province/generalate should consider, wherever possible, assigning teams of brothers and priests to work together in them.\textsuperscript{400}

The Fifteenth General Chapter (2000) made the following statement about brothers:

Knowing the importance of Brothers in our society, we recommend that all levels of administration continue their efforts to foster knowledge about the brother vocation and promote its development in the Society. We recommend further that brothers

\textsuperscript{400}Following the Word, n. 5, XIV General Chapter (Rome: SVD Publication, 1994) pp. 22-23.
be encouraged to choose, and to become professionally competent in, ministries which are directly part of the fourfold prophetic dialogue (1-Dialogue with People who have no Faith Community and with Faith-seekers, 2- Dialogue with People who are Poor and Marginalized, 3- Dialogue with People of Different Cultures and 4- Dialogue with People of Different Religious Traditions and Secular Ideologies) and of the characteristic dimensions of our SVD commitment.  

This Chapter confirmed the resolution of the Fourteenth General Chapter of 1994 “that all offices in the Society be open to all confreres in perpetual vows and therefore, that the general council through the procurator general, continues efforts in this regard and collaborate with other religious communities in urging the Vatican Congregation to grant this request.”

3.5.6 Recruitment and Formation of Brothers in India

Recruiting and training of vocations to brotherhood started in 1951, simultaneously with candidates to priesthood. When the first four clerical candidates were preparing for their investiture in Mhow, five brother candidates were doing their postulancy in Jharsuguda, Orissa and together they started the novitiate in Palda, Indore, on 21st December 1951. They are: clerics, George Anathil, Jacob Arackal, Joseph Puthumana and John Plammoottil and brothers, Andrew Kiro, Christopher Bilung, Herman Lakra, Vincent Tirkey and Regis Chittilappally. In the following years,

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401 In dialogue with the Word, n.1. Documents of the XV General Chapter, 2000, n. 104, p. 45.
402 Ibid.
403 Puthumana, op. cit., p.13.
candidates were recruited from Kerala, but they left after a year since there was no clear formation programme, except that they had to work in the farm, press, garage, laundry, bakery, etc. Candidates were regularly recruited from the SVD missions in Orissa. In 1956, Fr. K. Ritz was appointed novice master for brothers and overall in charge of brother formation.

In 1961, the Visitor General, Fr. R. Pung, recommended that the basic educational standard for the candidates should be matriculation passed and consequently the candidates were shifted to Hamirpur in Orissa for high school education, without proper planning or study and the result was disastrous. Not one survived to tell the story to the next generations.\footnote{404}

In 1961, when St. Charles Seminary was established in Trichy, Tamilnadu, Fr. K. Ritz was appointed as the rector and vocation promoter. He took great interest in recruiting vocations to brotherhood and his early recruits included Martin Sabas, Blasé and James (all three became priests later).\footnote{405}

The South Indian Provincial Chapter in 1968 recommended for stricter selection of the candidates, specialised training in line with the teachings of Second Vatican Council, and fixed places for their training (Changanacherry and Trichy). In the Chapter of 1980, held in Poona, a major decision was taken: “The chapter unanimously decided that a brother should be in charge of the formation of brothers. The place of formation

\footnote{404}{ibid, p. 14.}

\footnote{405}{ibid.}
could be for the time being Shenkotta." The Chapter also recommended that the candidates should pursue their graduation with other students in Mysore with some basic course in Philosophy, Scripture and Catechetic.\textsuperscript{406}

After prolonged and protracted 'trial and error' experiments, a house was purchased, renovated and on 10\textsuperscript{th} March 2001, Most Rev. M. Joji, Archbishop of Hyderabad blessed the new 'Brother Formation House' at Alwal, Secunderabad in the presence of many SVD members and other well wishers and neighbors and the same was inaugurated by Very Rev. Fr. Augustine Kanjamala, the Provincial.\textsuperscript{407}

The Central Indian Province and the East Indian province have their separate formation houses at Indore and Bagdehi, respectively. There is a 'Brother Formation National Coordinator' who is in charge of the overall formation of Brothers in India.

\textbf{Summary}

The SVD Society gives great importance to the formation of its members. About 25\% of the total members are in formation. More than half of the budgetary subsidies provided by the Generalate go for formation. From the beginning of the Society's foundation in 1875, formation of its members was one of its priorities. The members consist of priests and brothers and the formation programmes are common for both groups, wherever applicable. Formation for the missions to preach the good news to all

\textsuperscript{406}Ibid, p. 15.

\textsuperscript{407}Ibid, p. 17.
creation according to the commandment of Lord Jesus Christ was of paramount importance to the founder, St. Arnold Janssen.

In this chapter, the formation of the Society's members has been treated under the following heads:

1) Formation according to the Church documents, especially in the light of the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation of Pope John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*.

2) Formation according to the Charter of Priestly Formation for India.

3) Formation according to the Constitutions and other documents of the Society.

4) Formation Programme in India.

5) Formation of Brothers.

A detailed scientific study was also made with the help of a questionnaire and interviews on the formation programmes of the society in its various stages. The findings are processed and incorporated in chapter 5.