CHAPTER 4

Special Fields in Formation

Introduction

One of the characteristics of the SVD Society is its international ethos. The formation of its members is geared towards the universal mission of the Church as spelt out in the Constitution: "The pluriformity of formation programs and structures must still emphasise the oneness of our religious missionary vocation and the enriching quality of our Society’s internationality. It shall not restrict our universal availability."

Accordingly, regency that is part of the formation is very special in the Society and is specially discussed in this chapter. Another aspect in the formation is the training of formation personnel. The Society with its manifold apostolates is engaged in specialised apostolates, and the training of personnel for these is very essential. The formation programmes in the Society are coordinated by a formation board at the generalate level as well as the provincial/inter-provincial level. These aspects are also briefly dealt in chapter 4.

408Constitution, n. 504.1
4.1 Regency/OTP

After the Second Vatican Council (1962-65), several changes were introduced in the formation of clergy in the Church. One such programme is known as 'regency'. Society’s Constitution no. 516.4 defines regency as: “an extended period of supervised apostolic ministry.” Over the years following the Council, two concrete programmes of practical preparation for mission have been developed in different provinces of the Society as a part of basic formation: Regency and Overseas Training Programme or Cross-Cultural Training Programme (OTP/CTP).

4.1.1 Regency

Regency is a supervised ministry programme within one’s own province or country. The emphasis was, and is, on supervised ministry or supervised professional work, pastoral for clerics and technical for brothers. Usually it lasts one or two years, and does not involve a formal transfer to another province. 409

4.1.2 Overseas Training Programme (OTP/CTP)

The Overseas Training Programme (OTP) began as an experience of “overseas”, i.e., of a country and often a continent other than one’s own. In some provinces it is called Cross-Cultural Training Programme (CTP). The main elements of the OTP programme are the learning of a new language and experience of a new culture and supervised ministry. The programme lasts for two to three years and involves a

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formal transfer to another province. These programmes are supervised ministry, and offered only two or three years after the first vows.  

From the time of the founder, the formation of members was oriented towards foreign missions. As the Society grew rapidly and spread to different countries and continents, formation houses were established in those countries. International formation, i.e., formation in another country, especially study of theology, was introduced at a very early stage. This necessitated the study of new languages and exposure to different cultures.

Following the new Constitutions in 1983, the practice of a year of Regency became very common; at the same time, more attention was paid to the development of OTP. Hence the general chapters that followed directly addressed the OTP programme. The 1988 General Chapter affirmed the value of longer periods of supervised ministry as part of the formation process. This Chapter declared that study of theology and professional training (for brothers) abroad is an acceptable alternative to the OTP programme.

The 1994 General Chapter once again reaffirmed the value of OTP and directed that “OTP be recognised by all provinces as a valuable experience for students in initial formation.”

410 Ibid.

411 Ibid., pp. 13-14.

412 Ibid., p.17.

413 Following the Word n. 5, September 1994, p. 27.
The 2000 General Chapter recommended a strengthening of the CTP/OTP programme by “delineating guidelines that will serve as minimal requirements for provinces who want to offer a CTP/OTP programme” and providing “the training of CTP/OTP directors and on-site mentor.”

The objectives of CTP/OTP are to:

1) Discern and deepen one’s religious, and missionary identity and commitment.

2) Develop individual talents and skills related to our mission.

3) Deepen one’s personal faith, 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.

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414 In Dialogue with the Word. n.1, September 2000, p. 55.
9) Achieve an early start in language study and inculturation CTP/OTP demands greater readiness to tackle the challenge of inculturation, including the learning of the language and ways of the people.

10) Introduce formandi\textsuperscript{415} 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 our formandi to the 'fourfold prophetic dialogue'\textsuperscript{416} of the Society in a practical way.\textsuperscript{417}

4.1.3 Regency/OTP in India

In India, cross-cultural formation begins after the minor seminary. At the Juniorate, the aspirants of diverse languages and varied cultures from all over the country are brought together under one roof—Catholic Ashram, Palda, Indore, in Central India. Regency is the stage of formation between Philosophy and Theology. Recruitment and formation of Indian members started in 1951, and regency was introduced with the fourth batch in 1959. In the beginning, the nature of regency was not very clear. The regents were sent to formation houses or hostels as helpers. In 1984, regency took a new turn when two Indian scholastics were sent to Taiwan as OTP (Overseas Training Programme) candidates, marking the beginning of Indian participation in Overseas Training Programme. The problem of obtaining a residential visa prevented OTPs

\textsuperscript{415}Formandi=those under formation, (Latin).

\textsuperscript{416}Fourfold Prophetic Dialogue: 1) Dialogue with people who have no faith community, 2) with people who are poor and marginalised, 3) with people of different cultures, 4) with people of different faith traditions and secular ideologies.

coming from outside into India, with exceptions. In 2000, the SVD Formation Board took a major policy decision with regard to regency. In order to make formation more responsive to frontier situations, the Board decided to make regency as a year-long exposure-immersion programme (EIP).\textsuperscript{418}

**Goals of Exposure Immersion Programme**

The basic objective of this programme is to help the young member of SVD to launch himself into the global mission of the Church as explained in the *SVD Formation for Mission*:

1) He is enabled to do so not simply by some academic exercise but through a *lived experience* of prophetic dialogue, characteristic of SVD life and ministry.

2) Hence the programme (EIP/OTP) aims at helping him to *broaden his horizon*. For it will enable him to see that God is at work even before he, the missionary, has arrived at the scene to announce the Good News. It is evangelisation in the reverse process, one may say. For he will find himself not so much a *preacher of the Word* to the people as a *discoverer of the Word* among the people.

3) EIP is specially oriented to enable the young SVD to look at *life and reality* from the angle of the poor, sharpening his sensitivity to the poor, and thus heighten his *social consciousness*.

4) EIP helps the candidates to revise and/or deepen his understanding of and attitude to *faith and spirituality, community and mission*.

\textsuperscript{418}SVD India Formation for Mission, National Formation Secretariat, (Mumbai, 2003) p.3.
5) Immersed into the lot of the marginalised, he is called upon to respond creativity to the ever changing, challenging situations, thus awakening his dormant qualities of initiative and leadership.

6) OTP/EIP aims at fostering SVD/fellowship at national and international levels on the one hand, and human solidarity irrespective of status, class, caste, creed, etc., on the other.

7) It aims at early initiation (for the outgoing OTP) into the language of his future ministry as well as cultural studies.

8) As for incoming OTPs, the programme aims to help them with the rich cultural and religious heritage of India, and to help enrich themselves through their presence in the communities.

9) OTP/EIP aims at his vocational maturation, for it enables the candidate to see his vocation as a unique privilege and onerous responsibility, and so to take charge of his own formation, nurturing his SVD identity.

10) OTP/EIP aims at providing a new meaning and purpose, impetus and plan, as also focus and direction, for the remaining years of his formal theological missionary formation.

11) Thus this formative programme sets him on the road to becoming a frontier missionary, capable of providing inspirational leadership to the missionary Church.

\[419\]Ibid, pp. 11-12.
India offers only a modified version of OTP because of the problem of long-term residential visas and residential permits for the foreigners. The formation board envisages the following programmes for the OTP course:

**Cross-cultural Exposure and Experience**

1) Three weeks of initiation/orientation, giving an overview of Indian culture and religious contemporary Indian society, Church in India today and yesterday, Indian spirituality, etc.

2) Introduction to and practice of *Yoga* and *Vipasana*.

3) Ashram experience (*Anjali Ashram* in Mysore, or Kulithalai in Trichy).

4) Participation at social and religious festivals (e.g., *Dasara* in Mysore; *Rathayathra* of Lord Jagnath at Puri, *Onam*, *Puram* and Boat-race in Kerala).

5) In addition, those who opt for sociology/anthropology will have opportunities for field-studies, which will bring them in direct touch with the life of ordinary people.

**Ministry-Experience**

1) OTP students in Mumbai could be involved in youth/pastoral activities of SVD parishes (St. Theresa’s Church, Bandra and Sacred Heart Church, Andheri).

2) They could be involved further in the socio-developmental activities at Urban Community Development Centre, Bandra.

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3) For all, especially those at Mysore, guided experience may be arranged at Sarva Seva Sangh, Pune, and/or at Community Welfare Society, c/o Janssen Bhavan, Rourkela, during long vacations.

4) Guided trips to places where the Society members serve the cause of Good News can be organised to acquaint young member with the life and ministry of men in action.

Language-Learning

There are facilities for foreign students to learn English at the universities. The classical language, Sanskrit, and any other regional languages, especially Hindi, can be learned in the Language Institutes or by employing a tutor.

Academic Pursuits

This is the fourth and additional component of OTP in India. Taking up some academic courses at any of the Indian universities is a must. For it entitles a student to secure a valid visa and a residential permit, which requires yearly renewal.

4.2 Training of Formation Personnel

Pope John Paul II in his Apostolic Exhortation Pastores Dabo Vobis on the ‘Agents of Priestly Formation’ writes: “The first representative of Christ in priestly formation is the Bishop.”

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⁴²¹Pope John Paul II, Pastores Dabo Vobis. op. cit., n. 65.
On the selection of formators, the document reads:

For this ministry, priests of exemplary life should be chosen, men with a number of qualities: human and spiritual maturity, pastoral experience, professional competence, stability in their own vocation, a capacity to work with others, serious preparation in those human sciences (psychology especially) which relate to their office, a knowledge of how to work in groups.\textsuperscript{422}

Writing in ‘Inter-Institute Collaboration for the Formation of Formators’, the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and for Societies of Apostolic Life has the following to say: “Formators must come to know the world of the young and should develop pedagogical ability to accompany and guide those being formed. Theirs is a service marked by the mystery of the Trinity; formation then is a sharing in the work of the Father who, through the Spirit, fashions the inner attitudes of the Son in the hearts of young men and women.”\textsuperscript{423} The same document gives instructions on the choice and preparation of formators:

Major Superiors, as their primary responsibility, should choose future formators carefully so that a religious family has available members qualified for such a ministry. The criteria for choosing, the qualities required, the preparation and updating should be defined by the norms proper to each institute and developed in the \textit{Ratio Institutionis}. Major Superiors should offer the formators

\textsuperscript{422}\textit{Ibid}, n.66.

programmes and opportunities, which assure the necessary theological and pedagogical formation, spiritual formation, competence in the human sciences, and specific training for the tasks to the carried out on the journey of formation. Formators should be expert particularly in the matters, which refer to the spiritual patrimony of the founder or foundress.\textsuperscript{424}

The Charter of Priestly Formation for India prescribes a period of probation for the prospective formators before they are deputed for specialised studies:

Before being deputed for higher and specialised studies, prospective formators need to spend a period of probation in the seminary. During this period, the duration of which will be determined by each seminary, both the seminary (staff and students) and the prospective formators have an opportunity of initially testing and evaluating the latter's suitability for the field which will be in future their special competence.\textsuperscript{425}

The same Charter also prescribes the nature and place of training, appointment and evaluation of the formators.\textsuperscript{426}

The Thirteenth General Chapter of the Society held in Rome in 1988 expressed great concern on the shortage of formation personnel in the Society and of inadequate training of the formators. The Chapter recommended that the formation personnel should be experienced and mature and should also have experience in cross-culture training:

\textsuperscript{424} Ibid, 24.


\textsuperscript{426} Ibid, p. 31.
“Those entrusted with the formation of future missionaries should be experienced and mature persons who can lead by example. They should be able and ready to awaken and promote a sense of responsibility and creativity. As much as possible they should have experienced another culture by means of the OTP or by work outside their own culture.”

Writing on the urgent need to prepare young members for formation in the Society, the Superior General observed in 1992:

The necessity to care for our young confreres in formation confronts us with a responsibility, which cannot be postponed. There is in fact a permanent demand for formators. On one hand, those who are actually serving will have to be replaced after some years. On the other hand, the multiplication of formation communities both big and small requires each time a formation staff.

Formation of the formators, in fact, is the concern of the entire Church. Pope Paul VI reminded the religious that whatever the variety of ways of life and of charisms, all the elements of a religious life should be directed toward the building up of the “inner man.” If the “inner man” is not formed properly he cannot guide the “inner man” of another one. Jesus himself underwent formation with his Heavenly Father as well as the

428 Following the Word, n.4, The SVD in the Year 1992, Rome, p.73.
earthly family God chose for him. A formator has to undergo formation after the pattern of his "Sat-guru". 429

Writing on the 'formation of the formator', Manuel Ezhaparampil, continues:

A formator should be a man well versed in sacred scriptures. He is the one who has assimilated the spirit of the Gospel and who can move the heart of the people with the power of the Spirit. He should be a newly born person [who has] overcome sin and evil selfish desire and cravings, [and] who is freed from pride and vanities and so on. 430

4.3 Advanced Studies/Training of Specialists

The SVD Constitution 517 gives guidelines for the specialised education of its members. The Society's diverse fields of activities call for its members to undergo specialised studies. The need and goals of the Society should be the criteria to select someone for specialised education. The Handbook for Superiors 431 gives the characteristics of a member who is considered for advanced studies, as also other details, explanations and interpretations of SVD Constitution 517 regarding advanced studies.


430 op. cit., p. 170.

4.3.1 Selection of Candidates

Pope John Paul II in his Apostolic Letter *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*\(^{432}\) challenges the new generation of missionaries. He writes: "The future of the world and the Church belongs to the younger generation, to those who, born in this century, will reach maturity in the next, the first century of the new millennium. Christ expects great things from young people, as he did from the young man who asked him: "What good deed must I do, to have eternal life?" (Mt. 19: 16)."\(^{433}\)

The same Pope in his Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*\(^{434}\) challenges the missionaries to be true disciples of Christ:

Associated with the Bishops in the work of proclaiming the Gospel, priests are called upon at ordination to be shepherds of the flock, preachers of the good news of salvation and ministers of the sacraments. To serve the Church as Christ intends, Bishops and priests need a solid and continuing formation, which should provide opportunities for human, spiritual and pastoral renewal, as well as course on theology, spirituality and the human science. People in Asia need to see the clergy not just as charity workers and institutional administrators but as men whose minds and hearts are set on the deep things of the Spirit.\(^{435}\)


\(^{433}\)Ibid, p. 70.


\(^{435}\)Ibid, n. 43, p. 119.
The Society's Sixteenth General Chapter in 2006 has reviewed the mission of the Society in the world and taken up the challenges ahead for the 21st century in the light of the fourfold prophetic dialogue. Besides the traditional parish, educational, anthropological, social communications, biblical ministry, promotion of human rights and dignity, the empowerment of the poor, especially of women, the members are called upon to accept new challenges. These include ministry among the migrants, HIV/AIDS victims, the youth, substance addiction, street children, and urban poor. Selection of the candidates for advanced studies/specialisation needs to be done under these guiding principles and requirements.

4.3.2 Conditions for Permission

A candidate for advanced studies should apply to the competent authority and an exact plan for his studies is to be worked out and presented. This should include:

- What and where the member plans to study
- Purpose and goal of his studies
- Expected duration and cost of the proposed studies
- Agency underwriting study expenses

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4.3.3 Permission for Advanced Studies

The competent superior with the consent of his council may grant permission to a member for advanced studies. As regards studies outside one's province, the details of the study programme (e.g., lodging, finance, accountability, length and place of studies, possible changes in the original study programme) should be mutually agreed upon by the sending and receiving provincials.438

4.3.4 Place of Advanced Studies

With regard to the place of advanced studies, the Handbook prescribes:

• A university that enjoys a good reputation in the area of specialisation should be chosen, provided that costs are not exorbitant.

• Choice of university should be dictated also by proximity to an SVD community, in which he can live during his studies.

• If possible and suitable, specialised studies should be undertaken in that country where a confrere is or will be working.439

4.3.5 Payment of Expenses

The Handbook gives guidelines for the payment of expenses for advanced studies as follows:

1) The sending provinces are responsible for all the expenses of its members sent for advanced studies.


2) When a confrere submits his request for permission for advanced studies, he should present a detailed list of the costs involved, including travel, lodging, tuition, books and other personal expenses. He is to draw up this list after consultation with the university and with the superior delegate or provincial superior of the country where the studies will be done.

3) For larger expenses beyond the approved amount, the explicit permission of the paying provincial is required. The student concerned is to submit his request along with the recommendation of the superior delegate or the provincial superior of the province where his studies are being done.

4) The paying province must include the study expenses for the coming year in the annual budget.

5) In the case of higher studies pursued in North America or in Europe, the expenses of those confreres coming from outside these areas will be channelled through the mission office of Techny (USA) or of St. Augustine’s (Germany) respectively. The mission offices will charge the paying province.

6) For studies undertaken in Rome, the generalate will pay the expenses and charge a fixed amount to the respective province. For courses in Nemi Renewal or Biblical courses, a fixed amount for tuition, board and lodging will be charged to the respective provinces.

7) Money received by students from Mass stipends, pastoral work, personal gifts or other sources should be reported to the local superior, the superior delegate or the provincial superior (where there no superior delegate),
who, except in the case of Rome, will credit the amount to the paying province.  

4.4 Formation Board

4.4.1 Background

The Society’s Constitution 522.2 states:

Since the conditions and demands of education and formation in our Society vary greatly from country to country, the application of the respective constitutions must be regulated as far as possible on the provincial, inter provincial or national level. To facilitate this, provincial or inter-provincial education/formation boards shall be set up; they are directly accountable to their provincial superior and keep in contact with the secretary for formation and education at the generalate. Within the range of their competence they supervise the education, formation, and ongoing formation at all levels. In the case of an interprovincial board its statutes are to be approved by the superior general with the consent of his council.\(^\text{441}\)

The Handbook for Superiors gives further guidelines regarding the statutes of, and basic elements for, the Formation Board:

Each province/country is encouraged to establish a formation board with statutes relevant to its own situation. In case of an inter-provincial formation board statutes are to be approved by the

\(^{440}\) Ibid., pp.106-107.

\(^{441}\) SVD Constitution, 522.2.
superior general with the consent of his council. The formation board is provincial or inter-provincial body created by the provincial superior/s with his/councils to plan and evaluate, coordinate and integrate policies and programmes of formation at all levels and phases in the province/s. The basic function of the formation board is to oversee formation of confreres and candidates. It facilitates the application of pertinent constitutions to the varying situation of the province/s and maintains contact, through its chairman, with the secretary for formation and education at the generalate.\textsuperscript{442}

4.4.2 Formation Board in India

The Regional Chapter held in the Divine Word Seminary, Pune on Thursday 14\textsuperscript{th} November 1968 under the chairmanship of Fr. E. Zeitler has the following resolution on formation:

Along with the whole Assembly this Chapter unanimously calls upon all three Regionals: (a) to make this joint responsibility a reality, even at the cost of personal sacrifices, (b) to request the generalate to make for India, the necessary changes in our Constitutions and to provide for us a firm constitutional basis for the departure from the general SVD policy which is vital for the future development of the SVD in India.\textsuperscript{443}

An extraordinary All India Formators’ Meeting was held in Pune in March 1972. The General Consultants, Frs. Karl Mueller and Anton Verchur and the three regionals, Frs. Klöpper, L. Horsefall and E. Zeitler, deliberated on formation issues and a new

\textsuperscript{442} Handbook for Superiors svd, op.cit. p. 102.

\textsuperscript{443} Puthumana, J., History of the SVD South Indian Province, op. cit., p. 70.
Education Board was proposed and constituted with executive powers. The board, named as SVD Education Board, would consist of the three regionals and a secretary. This board came into existence in June, 1972 with the appointment of the first secretary in the person of Fr. J. Puthumana, who was working in Our Lady of Grace Church, Papady, Vasai. Ever since its formation the board has played a vital role slowly but steadily in the formation of Indian members of the Society. The Secretary, Fr.J. Puthumana, visited almost all major formation houses and major seminaries in India and studied their formation programmes and called the first All India SVD Formators’ Meeting in Andheri, Mumbai, in December 1972. This meeting took important decisions of far reaching consequences, chief among them being that all should do their graduation before novitiate and that each region should make arrangements for the same in their respective region and the period of novitiate should be reduced from two years to one. The establishment of ‘Vidya Niketan’ in Mysore in 1974 was the result of this resolution.444

The secretaries who served on the Education Board include:

1) Fr. J. Puthumana 1972 -1975
2) Fr. J. Thottapilly 1975 -1980
3) Fr. P. Vattakeil 1980 -1982
4) Fr. Joy Thomas 1982 -1983
5) Fr. P. Vattakeril 1983 -1984
6) Fr. T. K. Kuirian 1984 -1988
8) Fr. S. Christopher 1991 -1996
9) Fr. P. A. Jose 1996 -1999

444 Ibid.
10) Fr. Mathew Kanjirathunkal 2000-2004
11) Fr. Anto Poruthur 2004-2005

The statutes of the SVD Formation Board in India, as revised in August 1996, and approved by the Generalate on 29th October 1996, are:

1) To make decisions and formulate policies in the light of the deliberations of the Formation Board.

2) To give concrete guidelines to the Formation Secretary with regard to the execution of the policies and decisions, and to give him directions for further planning and study on important issues concerning formation, as and when such a need is felt.

3) The Chairman of the Governing Board conducts the consultative ballot preceding the appointment of the Secretary of the Formation Board, Rectors of the major houses of the formation, Novice Master, Deans of theology and philosophy faculties, and inter-provincial Director of Brother Formation.

4) In the light of the consultative ballots, the Governing Board proposes suitable candidates for the above posts, and the appointment is given by the respective Provincial Superiors.446

445 Ibid. p. 71.
4.5 Ongoing Formation

The Second Vatican Council (1962-65) made distinct marks in the history of the Church. Its Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen gentium*), the Decree on the Renewal of Religious Life (*Perfectae Caritatis*) and the Decree on Priestly Formation (*Optatum Totius*) gave the doctrinal principles and general norm for formation of the clergy. Regarding ‘Ongoing Formation’ the documents have the following directions:

- *Lumen Gentium* (no. 47): “Let each of the faithful called to the profession of the evangelical counsels, therefore, carefully see to it that he persevere and ever grow in that vocation God has given him.”

- Document *Perfectae Caritatis* (no. 18) emphasises the need for continuing education and ongoing instruction in arts and sciences along with religious formation in order to achieve a meaningful adaptation of religious life to the needs of the present day.

- *Optatum Totius* (no. 21) says that priestly formation should be pursued and perfect even after the completion of the course of studies in seminaries.\(^{447}\)

- Pope John Paul II in his Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis* cites Paul’s letter to Timothy—“I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you” (2Tim. 1:8)—and emphasises the need for the ongoing formation of priests and religious.\(^{448}\)

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\(^{448}\) Pope John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, n. 70.
The Pope continues:

The 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 which aimed at ordination...there is an intrinsic link between the formation before ordination to the Priesthood and formation after ordination, the document says. 449

The Exhortation continues that ongoing formation is not a repetition of the formation acquired in the Seminary but a continuation. It involves relatively new content and 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. 450


449 Ibid, n. 71.

450 Ibid, n. 71.

63-71) speaks of continuing formation as an intrinsic requirement of religious consecration. The document lays out the following as stages requiring special attention: "First full years of involvement in the apostolate, middle-age years, stage of maturity and advanced age." The Exhortation finally says that ongoing formation efforts should address all dimensions of religious life—the human and fraternal, the apostolic, the cultural and professional and the dimension of the charism proper to each Institute.\(^{452}\)

In 1990, the Vatican Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life published a booklet entitled *Directives on Formation in Religious Institutes*.\(^{453}\) It devotes an entire section to the topic of ongoing formation (nos. 66-71). Canon 661 from the *Code of Canon Law* says: "Throughout their entire life, religious are to continue carefully their own spiritual, doctrinal, and practical formation, and superiors are to provide them with the resources and time to do this."\(^{454}\)

The document emphasises spirituality as the primary focus of the continued formation. It further suggests special times for ongoing formation: "The passage from initial formation to the first experience of an independent life, religious life after about 10 years in final profession, full maturity, crisis moments due to external factors such as

\(^{452}\) *In Dialogue with the Word, SVD Ongoing Formation*, (Rome: SVD Publications, 2004), n. 4, p.15.


\(^{454}\) Ibid.
failure, feelings of alienation and personal factors such as illness, strong temptations and time of retirement are the special times mentioned by the document.  

In 2002, the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life published an instruction entitled *Starting Afresh from Christ: A Renewed Commitment to Consecrated Life in the Third Millennium*. The document calls attention to the pressing invitation of Pope John Paul II to all the faithful “to cast out into the deep,” which has special relevance for those who live a consecrated life. The document briefly deals with the question of ongoing formation.

This document invites a rethinking on the formation of the religious. The initial formation must be taken as a period during which men and women are instructed to take life itself as a process of never-ending formation. It adds: “Thus it will be important that all consecrated persons be formed in the freedom to learn throughout life, in every age and season, in every human ambient and context, from every person and every culture, open to be taught by any fragment of truth and beauty found around them.”

The Society gives great importance to the ongoing Formation of its members. The Constitution of the Society highlights ‘On going Formation’ as follows:

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455 Ibid.


All should be aware that both our life and our vocation aim at constant growth and maturity. We never reach the goal but are always on the way. Sometimes we are discouraged by disappointments and troubled by doubts. Nevertheless, we remain deeply convinced of the steadfast fidelity of God. Conscious of his presence promised to those united in his name, and trusting in his strength which breaks through precisely in our weakness, we strove together towards our goal that by our unity of faith and our knowledge of the Son of God we grow into the perfect man fully mature with the fullness of Christ himself (see Eph. 4: 13).\textsuperscript{458}

St. Arnold Janssen had the ongoing formation of the Society's members almost from the beginning of the Society. On 3\textsuperscript{rd} January 1900, he wrote in a circular to China:

In religious societies it is generally considered obligatory that in the course of the year the members working in the missions should assemble in a house of the Society for spiritual exercises. By observing an appropriate daily order adapted to their needs and approved by the Superior General, they will renew themselves spiritual, and when necessary, also refresh themselves physically for the work in the mission. I hereby order this to be done for our members in South Shantung in China; I prescribe further that the time set aside for this purpose be not too short. For the priests it should last at least a month.\textsuperscript{459}

In 1898, Arnold instructed the members that after about seven years in perpetual vows, at least the clerics would undergo a time of spiritual renewal for fifty days. At the

\textsuperscript{458}SVD Constitutions, n. 523.

end of this period there would be a solemn renewal of vows. From then on the ‘ongoing
formation’ was put into practice in some form or other in different provinces.460

The Fifth General Chapter in 1920 discussed the topic under the heading
‘recollectio extraordinaria’. In 1922, this resolution was introduced into the constitutions
(174-177). In line with the above constitutions, in 1928 a one-month retreat was arranged
in St. Augustin, Germany. Thirty-nine priests, including the Superior General,
participated in it.461

The Thirteenth General Chapter in 1988 offers a comprehensive treatment of the
topic, which is at the same time an excellent commentary on the pertinent Constitutions
and a stimulus for reflection. The resolution of the Chapter states: “Every province
should set up a program for Ongoing Formation and report on its structures and the
operation to the Generalate.”462

The Fourteenth General Chapter of 1994 prescribed: “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.”463

The Fifteenth Chapter of 2000 emphasised the need to put in practice the existing
norms and directives. It passed a resolution on the “responsible” care of members “with

462 *Following the Word*, n. 1, August 1988, p. 75
serious personality and behavioral problems” and insisted “on providing guidance and assistance for these confreres so that communities are not unduly burdened and that vulnerable individuals, especially women and children, are protected from exploitation.”464

The SVD Formation Manual for India writes on ongoing formation:

‘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 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 organized 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 program 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.

6) Regular medical check up after the age of 45. 465

464 In Dialogue with the Word, no.1, September 2000, p.54.

465 SVD Formation Manual India, p. 86
4.6 Formation for the 21st Century

4.6.1 New Evangelisation

Pope John Paul II in his Apostolic Letter, *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, has challenged the entire Church, especially the clergy, both secular and religious, to cross the threshold of the 21st century and to open the door of history to Jesus Christ. The new millennium is faced with twofold challenges: first the 're-evangelisation' of the ancient churches that are losing their faith and secondly the age-old duty of preaching the Good News among those who have not heard of the redeemer or where the gospel is not sufficiently preached.

Though all Christian faithful have the pressing responsibility for this mission of new evangelisation, priests have this primary duty since they have been specially chosen, consecrated and sent to make evident the presence of Christ. The Pope writes: "It is, therefore, necessary to assist both secular and religious priests in assuming the important pastoral responsibility of new evangelization."

Another important aspect is that new evangelisation needs a new language. The document 'The Priest and the Third Christian Millennium' speaks about the necessity to adapt the terminology to the changing times while keeping to the traditional teaching of the Church: "New evangelisation in fidelity to the doctrine of the faith constantly taught

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by the Church with a strong sense of responsibility with regard to the vocabulary of
Christian doctrine, must discover means of expressing itself to the contemporary world so
as to help it rediscover the profound meaning of these Christian and human terms.\footnote{469}

Inculturation for the new evangelisation is another point the Pope stresses in his
Apostolic Letter Novo Millennio Ineunte:

In the Third Millennium, Christianity will have to respond ever
more effectively to this need for inculturation. Christianity while
remaining completely true to itself, with unswerving fidelity to the
proclamation of the Gospel and the tradition of the Church, will
also reflect the different faces of the cultures and peoples in which
it is received and takes root. In this Jubilee Year, we have rejoiced
in a special way in the beauty of the Church’s varied face. This is
perhaps only a beginning, a barely sketched image of the future,
which the spirit of God is preparing for us.\footnote{470}

Another important element of new evangelisation is ecumenism. The Second
Vatican Council encouraged all the faithful “to take an active and intelligent part in the
work of ecumenism” and to “esteem the truly Christian endowments of our common
heritage which are to be found among our separated brethren.”\footnote{471}


\footnote{471} II Vatican Council, Decree Unitatis Redintegratio, n. 4.
The Pope in his Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* makes an earnest appeal to all Christians to make the prayer of Christ that ‘all may be one’ a reality. He writes: “I look with great hope to the *Eastern Churches*, and I pray for a full return to that exchange of gifts which enriched the Church of the first millennium.” The Pope continues with his appeal to Christians of other denominations also: “A similar commitment should lead to the fostering of ecumenical dialogue with our brothers and sisters belonging to the *Anglican Communion* and the *Ecclesial Communities born of the Reformation*.”

The Pope also highlights other challenges for the new evangelisation, such as ecological crises, problems of peace, human rights violations and lack of respect for the life of every human being, from conception until natural death, and inter-religious dialogue.

### 4.6.2 Teacher of the Word

The Catholic doctrinal tradition sees the priest as a teacher of the Word, minister of the sacraments and leader of the Christian community entrusted to him. Based on this tradition, the teaching of the Second Vatican Council Decrees and the teachings of the Popes, the Congregation for the Clergy in its document ‘The Priest and the Third Christian Millennium’ defines the priests for the 21st century under the following three titles: Teacher of the Word, Minister of the Sacraments and Leader of the Community.

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472 Pope John Paul II *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, n. 48.


Pope John Paul II in his Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, wrote: “New evangelisation needs new evangelisers and these are the priests who are serious about living their priesthood as a specific path toward holiness.”

The Second Vatican Council’s Decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis* states: “It is the first task of priests as co-workers of the bishops to preach the Gospel of God to all ... (so as to)... set up and increase the People of God.” As teacher of the Word, a priest of the new millennium has to be effective in his preaching. For an effective preaching, there is an essential relationship between personal prayer and preaching: “Effective preaching is another fruit of personal prayer. Such preaching is effective not only because of its speculative coherence but because it comes from a prayerful, sincere heart, which is aware that sacred ministers are bound not to impart their own wisdom but the Word of God and ceaselessly to invite all the conversion and holiness.”

4.6.3 Ministers of the Sacraments

The Church is the “universal Sacrament of salvation”. Sacraments are the means of communicating the divine life to humankind, and are at the very core of priestly ministry. Priests, in celebrating the sacraments, act as ministers of Christ and, through the Holy Spirit, participate in His priesthood in a special way.

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477 II Vatican Council, Decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n. 4.


480 II Vatican Council, Decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n.5.
Core priestly ministry is to be ‘Ministers of the Eucharist’. The document continues: “Could Jesus have expressed his friendship for us in a more eloquent way than by allowing us, priests of the New Covenant, to act in his name, to act in personal Christi Capitis? This is what happens in all our priestly service, when we administer the sacraments and especially when we celebrate the Holy Eucharist.”

The instruction continues that new evangelisation must also signal a new clarity about the centrality of the Eucharist, the source and summit of the entire Christian life to the faithful: “No Christian community can be built up unless it grows from and hinges on to the celebration of the Most Holy Eucharist because “the other sacraments and indeed all ecclesial ministries and works of the apostolate are bound up with the Eucharist and are directed toward it. For in the most Blessed Eucharist is contained the whole spiritual good of the Church.”

The instruction calls upon ministers to be the agents of reconciliation with God and the Church: New evangelisation calls for renewed efforts to bring the faithful to the Sacrament of Penance. This pastoral task is absolutely indispensable. The Sacrament of Penance “opens the way for everyone, especially those borne down by grave sin, individually to experience mercy, that love which is stronger than sin.”

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482II Vatican Council, Decree Presbyterorum Ordinis, n. 6.

483Ibid, n. 5.

4.6.4 Leader of the Community

The document calls upon the pastors of the new millennium to be *with Christ, incarnating and spreading the mercy of the Father*. The Church is the "trustee and dispenser of the Savior's mercy." This mission essentially distinguishes from other human institutions dedicated to the promotion of solidarity and philanthropy. The mercy of God as offered by the Church, in contrast with secularised concepts of mercy, is to transform man internally, which means primarily forgiveness and salvific healing. Ordained ministers are the living signs and bearers of the mercy they offer, not as though it were their own, but as a free gift from God. They are thus servants of God’s mercy. The instruction continues: “The desire to serve is an essential element of priestly ministry and requires the respective moral disposition of the subject. The priest makes Jesus, the Pastor who came to serve and not be served (Mt. 20: 28), present to men. The priest primarily serves Christ, but that service necessarily passes through the Church and her mission.”

The style of pastoral action needs to be addressed to the demands arising in traditional Christian communities, which have become largely secularised. Here the priest is called upon to exercise his *munus regendi* (duty to govern), which requires a loving exercise of strength on the part of the priest. Authority should not be an oppressive domination but a spirit of and a willingness to serve. The dual aspect—authority and service—is the reference point for the *munus regendi* of the priest who must always

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485 Ibid., n.13c: l.c., p. 1219.

commit himself to a coherent exercise of his participation in the condition of Christ, Head and Shepherd of the flock.487

New evangelisation also demands a renewal of commitment to the pastoral ministry, especially on the part of priests, writes Pope Paul II in His Apostolic Exhortation: “As the Council points out ‘the spiritual gift’ which priests have received in ordination does not prepare them merely for a limited and circumscribed mission, but for the fullest, in fact the universal mission of salvation to the end of the earth. The reason is that every priestly ministry shares in the fullness of the mission entrusted by Christ to the Apostles.”488

Summary

The Society of the Divine Word, in the Formation Programme of its candidates throughout the world, has responded to the needs of the time and accepted the challenge to prepare its members for the various ministries where they are working in the light of the new changes and developments. Some of these challenges have been discussed in this chapter with reference to the formation programmes in India, such as Regency, Training of the Formation Personnel, Training of Specialists, and Continued Education for the 21st Century. There is a “Formation Board” to coordinate the formation programmes of the Society in India at various levels.

Regency/OTP is a concept introduced after the Second Vatican Council. The Overseas Training Programme, also known as Cross-Cultural Training Programme, has been successfully tried and carried out in India. With every growing need and changing situations in the contemporary world, the formators have to prepare tomorrow’s leaders and for this continued training of the formators is necessary. The formation is never ending; it has to be continued after one has left the seminary. This is achieved by advanced studies and ongoing formation. The formation at different levels in different parts of the country has to be meaningfully coordinated and guided. This is done under the aegis of the ‘SVD Formation Board of India’.

Evangelisation in the new millennium requires new evangelizers, and these are the priests who are serious about living their priesthood as a specific path towards holiness. It is important that every priest rediscover the absolute need for personal sanctity. In the words of St. Gregory Nizianzen: “Before purifying others, they must purify themselves; to instruct others they must be instructed; they have to become light in order to illuminate and become close to God in order to bring others closer to Him; they have to be so sanctified in order to sanctify.”489 The formation of the future disciple of Christ should be moulded to enable him to live as another Christ in all the circumstances of his life.

489St. Gregory Nazianzus, *Orationes*, 2, 71: PG 35. 480B.