CHAPTER V

THEORITICAL BASIS OF FORMATION OF RELIGIOUS

5.0. Introduction

The future of a religious Congregation is in the hands of its young members. Consequently giving a proper formation is the primary concern of all the religious Congregations. “Formation is a process in which mutual exploration of the charism of the institution and of the individual take place. It is a lifelong work and part of painful purification” \(^{42}\). All the formation that the candidate take in, the training in various fields they receive and the spiritual nourishment they get, should help them to grow in the spirit of Christ, in His mission and in the charism of the founder.

The objective of this chapter is manifold: (a) firstly understand the concept of formation, and in particular the different stages in the formation of religious women, (b) secondly, look at formation in terms of the contribution of social sciences like psychology, sociology etc which play a vital role in the life of religious women (c) thirdly search into Bible and Church teachings on the one hand, and examine the model of formation proposed by a few Congregations that have charisms pertaining to women religious on the other; (d) and finally highlight a few theological reflections that serve as the basis of sister’s commitment for the cause of the oppressed people.

5.1. Definition of Formation

The term ‘formation’ comes from the Latin word ‘formare’ meaning ‘forming’, ‘being formed’, ‘the way in which something is formed or arranged’. In Christian point of view

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\(^{42}\) Charles Serrao, *Discernment of Religious Vocation, Formation Towards Transformation*(2010). Bangalore: Dhyanavana Publications. 28
formation is the change happening in the soul of an individual where the person is transformed, in proportion to the co-operation of the soul, to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The intuition of Spirit has no aim other than helping the formees to get united with the mind of Jesus. This purpose of Christian discipleship is well articulated by St. Paul who says in the letter to the Ephesians, “The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ”\textsuperscript{43}

In \textit{Vita Consecrata} (1996), Pope St. John Paul II affirms the same when it says, “formation is a dynamic process by means of which individuals are converted to the Word of God in the depths of their being and, at the same time, learn how to discover the signs of God in earthly realities”\textsuperscript{44}. This is reaffirmed by the document \textit{Perfectae Caritatis}, when it says, formation primarily aims at assisting men and women religious realize their unity of life in Christ through the Spirit, by means of the harmonious fusion of its spiritual, apostolic, doctrinal, and practical elements\textsuperscript{45}.

The above definitions emphasize the spiritual or divine aspect of Christian formation. Along with that there is a human dimension in formation. Adrian Van Kaam in his book on \textit{Formative Spirituality} says that formation is the developmental dynamic essence of human life. Formation is the development of the whole person, a process in which the person is always emerging without being never static. The experiences of the formees are to be deepened, developed and integrated within new horizons, and this process happens not only during the years of formation but throughout the whole of religious life\textsuperscript{46}.

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\item \textsuperscript{43} Ephesians 4: 11-13
\item \textsuperscript{44} John Paul II(1996). \textit{Apostolic exhortation Vita Consecrata}, 68, 123
\item \textsuperscript{46} Adrian Van Kaam(1983). \textit{Formative Spirituality}, Vol.I. New York: Crossroads. 66
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The human formation will be effective only when formators become humane. Formators need to help the candidates to know themselves well, the world around and assume personal responsibility for the choice of religious life. They should be helped to maintain a balance in life and to acquire new attitudes necessary for religious life. Charles Serrao articulates this idea by saying, ‘In human formation maximum respect should be given to the person. The candidates are to be helped to remove the blocks that hinder human growth and develop all their potentialities at the service of the brethren. They are to be enlightened to deepen their self knowledge. In order to foster the human maturation of the candidates, nothing is more helpful than to create a family atmosphere of friendship, trust, enthusiasm, mutual respect and dialogue between the religious and those in formation. In the human formation the candidates must be trained to apprehend that the beauty of the human nature consists in gentleness, in bounty, in fidelity, in sincerity, in honesty, in maintaining promises, in mastery over the actions and words, in the respect for others, in the patience, in the obedience to the laws of God, in the spirit of reflection, in the right intention of action, in the free and personal choice of good, in the mastery over the proper will and of the senses, in the aversion for every form of duplicity, in cultivating all the natural virtues, and in knowing to govern oneself’.

5.2. Religious formation

The formation of sisters is not just like general Christian formation. It has something more. “The primary objective of the religious formation process is to prepare people for the total consecration of themselves to God in the following of Christ, at the service of the Church’s mission”.

The Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and for Societies of Apostolic Life in the document *Potissimum Institutioni* teaches that, the primary end of formation is to permit candidates to the religious life and young professed, first, to discover

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and, later, to assimilate and deepen that in which religious identity consists. Only under these conditions will the person dedicated to God be inserted into the world as a significant, effective and faithful witness. The aim of religious formation is to become disciples of Christ. Religious formation must promote rootedness in the very mission of Jesus, through a gradual identification with Him in His total self-giving to the father. Formation aims at the permanent growth of the person to put on the mind of Christ. In the process of formation, the formee is the active agent or subject. It is self-transformation. As Pope John Paul II says, “precisely because formation aims at the transformation of the whole person, it is clear that the commitment to formation never ends.”

Religious life is a consecration of one’s life to God through Christ, the goal of one’s life becomes expressed in the uniqueness of the charism of the institute. One is gradually and progressively integrated in and around this nucleus, by forming, conforming, transforming, and reforming in the mind of Jesus Christ [ICor.2:16, Phil 2:5]. The inner experience of Christ is the very ideal of religious life or sannyasa, greater the intimacy with the person of Jesus Christ, stronger the fascination for His mission. In the formation, a person must focus more on his or her being and become fully human having the mind of Christ [Phil 2:5]. Thus the essential elements in the religious life are public profession of the Evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience. Religious formation takes place in various stages and in the responsibility of various persons. It is the duty of the Congregations to promote genuine, motivated and enthusiastic vocations to religious institutes.

The religious formation has a number of preparatory stages. The various stages are the following.

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49 Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and for Societies of Apostolic Life, Potissimum Institutioni 6
50 John paul II, Apostolic Exhortation Vita Consecrata 65
a) **Candidacy:** Candidacy is the time of the first experience, “...come and see” [Jn. 1:39], which prepares a candidate to be initiated to religious life by the effective availability to break away certain habits of her past and adapt a new style for a mature vocational attitude\(^{51}\). The aim of candidacy is to give a candidate an opportunity to come in direct contact with religious way of life and apostolate so as to discern her vocation to the particular Congregation. In this period of formation she learns to open herself to the action of the Holy Spirit and to accept in faith the means of grace offered by the Lord and the Church\(^{52}\) [VC 65].

b) **Postulancy:** Postulancy is the next stage of formation after the period of candidacy. In this period of formation, the person is guided into a personal love for Jesus Christ as the apostles who followed Christ. The basis for such a period of formation can be seen in the Gospel of Mark: “And immediately they left their nets and followed Him” [Mk. 1: 18]. The Constitution of the Congregation of Teresian Carmelites (CTC) explains the merit of this formation as follows: ‘In the present situation a formee comes from a great variety of settings, levels of personal maturity, experience of life, faith and cultural backgrounds and family atmosphere. Therefore this period of formation is to strengthen the seed of the Carmelite vocation sown in her through intellectual, psychological and spiritual maturation’\(^{53}\).

c) **Novitiate:** The third stage in the formation of religious is novitiate. This is a period of time exclusively set apart for the religious formation. Hence they are not allowed to make studies which are not directly linked to formation. The Code of Canon Law gives the following direction about the novitiate period: ‘It is the responsibility of the directors of novices to discern and test the vocation of the novices, and help them to lead the life of perfection which is proper to the institute. Novices have to develop both human and

\(^{51}\) Congregation of Teresian Carmelites(2015). *Constitutions and Directives* No. 64, Edappally. 33

\(^{52}\) Ibid 64.1

\(^{53}\) Ibid 65
Christian virtues. Through prayer and self-denial they are to be introduced to the way of perfection. They are to be helped in contemplating the mystery of salvation, and in meditating on the Sacred Scripture. They are to learn how to lead a life consecrated to God and to their neighbour in Christ through the evangelical counsels. They must know the character and spirit of the institute, its purpose and discipline and its history and life. Novices are to cooperate consciously and actively with the director of novices, so that they may faithfully respond to the grace of their divine vocation. By the example of their lives and by prayer, the members of the institute are to ensure that they do their part in assisting the work of formation of the novices\(^54\).

d) **Juniorate**: After the novitiate the candidate receive the habit of the Congregation and makes the first profession. Juniorate is a period between first profession and perpetual vow. Temporary profession is for a period of five years. A junior sister or a temporary professed sister shall not be assigned to apostolic task immediately after the temporary profession. Her religious, apostolic, doctrinal and technical training shall, rather be continued, as is deemed appropriate, in suitable establishments. She shall acquire whatever degrees she needs for the apostolate. The purpose of the juniorate is to lead the junior sister towards deeper human and Christian maturity which will enable her to consecrate herself to God definitively and conscientiously with complete liberty. The junior sister shall make every effort to acquire an interior life proper to the Congregation through personal friendship with Christ and by living the vows\(^55\).

e) **Ongoing Formation**: Due to human limitations, the consecrated person can never claim to have completely become the “new creature” who, in every circumstance of life, reflects the very mind of Christ. Hence continuous formation is an intrinsic requirement on every one’s

\(^{54}\) Collins, *The Code of Canon Law*, TPI, Bangalore, 652, 118

\(^{55}\) Congregation of Teresian Carmelites (2015). *Constitutions and Directives* No. 87, Edappally. 41-42
part to let themselves be formed every day of their lives. It will be very important for every Institute to provide, a precise and systematic continuing formation. The chief purpose of this plan is to provide all consecrated persons with a programme which encompasses their whole life. None are exempt from the obligation to grow humanly and as Religious; by the same token, no one can be over-confident and live in self-sufficient isolation. According to D.S. Amalorpavadass “formation should be considered as a continuous search, with inner deeper and personal discovery, and with growing personal convictions; in an atmosphere of freedom with education to freedom”.

f) **Formation for Community Life:** The natural ambient of vocational growth is the community, perceived as the communion of persons, bound together with reciprocal love. The community-life creates a dynamic force of mutual confidence and co-responsibility, complimenting the lacuna in persons, structures and in material things. The daily community life in itself has a formative character. Reciprocal responsibility in the community makes candidates more ‘other centred’. Construction of community life demands a continuous sacrifice from the part of the candidates. It includes the training for confidentiality, responsibility, commitment to attendance, punctuality and active listening. As Vita Consecrata says, ‘Since formation must also have a communal dimension, the community is the chief place of formation in Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. Through the fraternal life each one learns to live with those whom God has put at his or her side, accepting their positive traits along with their differences and limitations. Each one

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learns to share the gifts received for the building up of all, because "to each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good' (1 Cor 12:7).  

5.3. Different aspects of Formation  

We saw that formation of religious is spread over a few stages before taking the perpetual vow and that it continues all through life. There are also different aspects of formation which is our next object to study.  

5.3.1. Intellectual  

Intellectual formation is a fundamental aspect of one’s formation by which he/she 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. The purpose of the intellectual formation is to enable the formee to acquire an extensive and solid learning in the sacred and secular sciences that can give a firm foundation to her faith. The prophet Hosea accuses the leaders, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge, because you have rejected knowledge, I reject you from being a priest to me” [Hos. 4:6].  

According to Pope John Paul II, ‘the youngsters of today are the morning watchmen of the Third Millennium. This millennium is entrusted into their hands, they are the builders of the Millennium Church of the world, - the whole universe is in their hands’. His repeated exhortation was “put out into deep”. He said, “dear young men and women! Trust Christ; listen attentively to his teachings, fix your eyes on His face, persevere in listening to his Word. Allow him to focus your search and your aspiration, all your ideals and the desires of your heart”

59 John Paul II(1996), Vita Consecrata, 67  
60 John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation Pastores Dabo Vobis 51, 140  
61 John Paul II, Message for World Day of Prayer for Vocations, 6-7
The intellectual formation does not mean acquiring purely abstract knowledge of God. John Paul exhorts that intellectual formation has to be experiential. “To be pastorally effective, intellectual formation is to be integrated with a spirituality marked by personal experience of God. In this way a purely abstract approach to knowledge is overcome in favour of the intelligence of heart which knows how ‘to look beyond’, and then is in a position to communicate the mystery of God to the people”\(^{62}\). Thus experience based knowledge can cultivate in the candidate a real meaning of life. As Pope St. John Paul II said, a philosophy which no longer asks the question of the meaning of life would be in grave danger of reducing reason to merely accessory functions with no real passion for the search for truth”\(^{63}\).

5.3.2. Psychological

Psychology, as a science of human behaviour views human personality as the way a person interacts with the world within oneself and the world outside of oneself. Each personality is unique and is endowed with a system of psycho-physical, emotional, intellectual, social and spiritual potential. A person’s self concept or self image is formed by one’s adjustment to his/her environment. Self-concept is the pivot for psychological growth and personality development. Insights gained from Depth Psychology which integrates the value system of the person has contributed greatly to the development of the dynamic principles and structures existing in the religious\(^{64}\).

A well constructed formation programme includes a professionally conducted ‘Personality evaluation’ programme as an important ‘moment’ of vocational discernment. Such Psychological testing is essential to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of an individual’s personality and the way in which these elements are at work within and outside the person on

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\(^{62}\) John Paul II, *Instrumentum Laboris of Pastores Dabo Vobis* 39

\(^{63}\) John Paul II, *Encyclical Fides et Ratio* 80

whom God acts. This process conducted during the pre-novitiate stage by professional clinical psychologist, preferably a religious, can help discover the various dimensions of the person’s life: religious and personal ideals, actual attitudes and behaviours and underlying motivations. The psychological report will help the formees to identify the various inconsistencies that exist between these dimensions. Such reports are a great help also for the formators at different levels to facilitate the vocationer’s spiritual growth and human maturity.

The psychological awareness is not an end in itself. It is to facilitate the formees to grow in Christian values. The formators are supposed to help the formee as an aspirant and in later stages to objectify values through the practice of prayer and reflection, learning and interacting. Formators should encourage the formees to choose and nourish natural values that meet with basic needs such as pleasure, work, social skills, culture and study as well as to integrate and develop vocational and self-transcendent values that will help the person to grow in holiness and the evangelical way of life. The growth in the Christian values will take place only through conscious efforts and spiritual means offered to seek union with God through prayer and other spiritual exercises. The values need to be constantly reinforced by the formator with an aim of helping the vocationer consistently to live by the values one is convinced of despite one’s limitations.

The task of formation is to assist the vocationer to discern the underlying reason why he or she entered religious life, and to adopt the attitudes and values of both the institution and the Gospel. The person will gradually learn to internalize values. This discernment is seen as indispensable in a formative environment, since only internalised values will nourish and sustain the vocationer in moments of desert experience, darkness, uncertainty, loneliness, hurt

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65 Ibid 29
66 Ibid 31-33
and confusion. This would help a person to remove the difficulty in self-transcendence in the ongoing formation and in active ministry.

5.3.3. Sociological

The social context has also a great role to play in the formation of religious as their commitment has to be lived out for the growth of God’s reign in the society. The document, ‘Religious and Human Promotion’ says it as follows: “Changed social and political contexts create new and unexpected situations. The traditional expressions of religious life are bound to face difficult challenges in their manner of presence and in their apostolic works. The need for greater solidarity with their contemporaries, especially the poor and the underprivileged, compel religious men and women to become more actively involved, sometimes even in the working world and in politics”.

Formation in social context pertains to the formation of the mind. The mind has to be imbued with the motivation. In a fashion similar to that employed by Jesus while he told Peter “follow me and I will make you fishers of men” [Mt. 4:19], or when he told Martha, “Mary has chosen the better part” [Lk. 10:39], the formator has to shape the mind and motivation. Here the material of active formation is the living dynamic products of contemporary culture at the time; not only in the particular locality but also in the particular strata of society.

The hierarchy of priorities prepares candidates to share the prevailing life form of the community and the Congregation on the one hand and to initiate new life forms in accordance with needs of the people of God and the new changes of socio-cultural structures.

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67 Ibid 34-35
on the other. Correct choices of social value system are of great help for the candidates to develop professional skills in areas that pertain to the specific activities of the Congregations.

During the period of initial formation, Institutes of Consecrated Life do well to provide practical experiences which are prudently followed by the one responsible for formation, enabling candidates to test, in the context of the local culture, their skills for the apostolate, their ability to adapt and their spirit of initiative. It is important for consecrated persons to gradually develop a critical judgement, based on the Gospel, regarding the positive and negative values of their own culture and of the culture in which they will eventually work. This day-to-day life during formation should be lived in dialogue of life with people of other religions, ideologies and cultures. This is more than sporadic, academic and artificial dialogue with a few intellectuals in the urban area. This will develop dynamic interpersonal relationships and facilitate an ambient of genuine love. This will call for an education to love.

5.3.4. Spiritual

The candidates for religious life, have to be considered from the angle of their spiritual aspiration. The monastic side has to be attentively and affectionately groomed in order to make them aware that their deepest yearnings can be fulfilled only by God and in God. The religious life is all about God whether their Congregation is contemplative or active or mixed. Prayer, intimacy with God, inner solitude, and all that is conducive to the practice of habitual union with God has to be stressed at all stages of formation. Faith in God must lead candidates to an unwavering and unshaken conviction of God’s love for them. Thus, they will be taught to build the house of their character on rock. All other activities and training

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70 John Paul II, Vita Consecrata 67
for the specific apostolate of the Congregation take second place to this basic demand of the religious life but in no way it is to be neglected. It is necessary that the correct hierarchy of priorities be maintained in religious communities and particularly in the houses of formation\textsuperscript{72}.

\textbf{5.3.5. Gender Sensitivity}

In the Workshop on the Training Programme for Religious Formators, the CRI (Conference of Religious in India) has taken up the issue of gender sensitivity very seriously, and has tried to facilitate an attitudinal change in the formators and in the formees from the initial stages of formation. This workshop envisioned concrete objectives and means to tackle the issues related gender inequality at different levels. The following data unveil the measures taken by the formators in this regard.\textsuperscript{73}

\textbf{(i) Personal dimension of Gender sensitivity in formation.}

- Help the formees to come out of socially constructed taboos and irrational believes.
- Promote self-esteem and self-work and help them to take personal decisions.
- Liberate them from their woundedness and teach them gender equality.
- Give positive affirmations and boost their self–worth.
- Encourage them to engage in group discussions, and to contribute in decision making.

\textbf{(ii) Relational dimension of gender sensitive formation}

- Give chances for the formees to relate with the peer group in healthy manner.
- Teach the formees to make use of the modern media effectively.
- Cultivate self-awareness and promote creative friendships.
- Person centred formation must be given by knowing the family background, culture and environment of the formee.

\textsuperscript{72} ibid
\textsuperscript{73} CRI(2005). \textit{Gender Sensitive Church}. New Delhi : CRI House
(iii) **Structural dimension of gender sensitivity formation**

- Academic and professional studies must be arranged in mixed groups. Give chances to attend the gatherings of the formees of different Congregations.
- Invite learned persons and arrange interactive sessions in the formation houses.
- Arrange discussions and debates and construct strategies for formation.
- Engage in inter-religious dialogue.

(iv) **Practical suggestions**

- Introduce inclusive language in liturgical and para-liturgical celebrations.
- Introduce eco-spirituality
- Inculcate gender sensitive values.
- Give an awareness of the patriarchal system in family, church, politics, education, media, neighbourhood and other structures of society.
- Encourage the formees to study, read, and equip themselves with knowledge and moral power.

5.3.6. **Cultural**

Culture is a way of life of a group of people – the behaviours, shared beliefs, values, customs, life-style and symbols that they accept and that are passed along by communication and imitation from one generation to the next. In religious formation, Cultural formation is a very important aspect since a person is the product of his /her cultural background.

In the article number 90 of the document *Potissimum institutioni* (PI) we get the definition of culture. Quoting the Pastoral constitution, *Gaudium et Spes*, PI says, the word ‘culture’ indicates all those factors by which man refines and unfolds the manifold spiritual and physical qualities that enable him to master his condition and his destiny. This is why culture

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74 Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and for Societies of Apostolic Life, *Potissimum Institutioni*, nn. 90,91
may be said to be that by means of which the human person becomes more human, and that it is always situated in an essential and necessary relationship with what the human person is. The profession of the evangelical counsels by the religious does not constitute an obstacle to the true development of the human person, but by its nature is supremely beneficial to that development. There consequently exists an affinity between the religious life and culture.

The document continues in article no, 91 that concretely this affinity between the religious life and culture calls our attention to certain points. Jesus Christ and his Gospel transcend all cultures, even if they are entirely penetrated by the presence of the risen Christ and of his Spirit. Every culture should be evangelized, that is to say, purified and healed of the wound of sin. It will therefore be good, in every region: to be attentive to the level of general culture of the candidates. Those responsible in formation cannot neglect being concerned with this in their guidance of those who have been entrusted them. Since it is a question of personal education in their faith and of its taking root in the life of the whole person, they cannot forget that the Gospel frees the ultimate truth of the values contained in a culture, and that the culture itself expresses the Gospel in an original manner.

5.4. Formation in the Holy Bible

Formation is neither the work of formator nor of the formee alone. There is a third actor, God. Formation takes place through the dialectical interaction of triple agents; God, formator and formee. Articulation of the roles of these agents is to be done effectively for the success of formation. Normally the formator facilitates action of God takes place in the formees and the formees let God act through the progressive openness he/she shows to God and formator. The following pages will show the role of God in the formation.
5.4.1. God the formator in the Old Testament\textsuperscript{75}

To cull out the concept of formation we take only one example from OT, that of Abraham, the central figures in history of salvation. In the book of Genesis, chapters 12, 15, 18, 21, and 22, explain how God the formator lead Abraham through the different stages and made him a matured believer: the call, the covenant, the bargain for Sodom and Gomorrah, the sending away of Hagar and the son and the sacrifice of Isaac. Like Abraham, the journey of a formee begins in total insecurity. Only the one who has the readiness to take the risk of entering the thick darkness can become a formee. God asked Abraham to leave the country without telling him exactly where to go. The destination was revealed only in the course of journey. Abraham had only the Word of God to cling to. Thus the power of a called person is God alone. The clarity of call will come in the course of formation. What is required at the start is the openness to take the risk of stepping on the path and to be on the way. The formee sets out on the power of faith. Only then God can freely act on him or her and make him or her blessing.

Abraham was anxious about his future since he is childless. There was no inheritor for his possessions. God the formator helps him to come out of his narrow vision of realities and situations. God demands Abraham to ‘come out’, to look up into the sky, and count the stars. Abraham’s reply was “can not”. Through the invitation to ‘come out’ God was asking him to transcend the walls he had built around himself. It was a call for self-transcendence. God was taking him beyond the sensual and rational levels of existence to the open horizons of the Spirit. God is opening up to Abraham an aspect of his own existence where infinite possibilities are hidden because that is the transcendental and divine realm.

\textsuperscript{75} Augustine Mullur(2002). \textit{Formation: Biblical Perspective and Paradigms in Transforming formation} by John F. Sequeira (ed). Mysore: Dhyanavana Publications. 53-68
The second demand was to ‘look up’. By showing the starry sky God reminded Abraham vertical dimension in life which was ignored, forgotten or covered up in the self-centered limited vision. As a third step God asked Abraham to count the stars; but he could not. Thereby God was giving him the awareness that the things that man cannot achieve by himself could be made possible with the help of God. This leads Abraham out of himself and he begins to depend upon God. This is similar to the way God teaches Job also (Job 40:1-5, 42:5-6).

Even though God is the one who initiates the call of a religious, the latter has to appropriate it through his or her active participation. In Genesis Chapter 18, Abraham dares to confront God and bargains on behalf of the possible good people, not to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah. God lets himself be confronted by Abraham and it helps the latter to go through another experience of formation. Abraham proposes the number of just men, reduces it each time and thereby becomes aware of his own nothingness, emptiness and unworthiness which is simultaneously the acceptance of the sovereignty of God. At the end of dialogue God goes his way, the cities are destroyed and Abraham submits himself to God’s decision. Freedom to confront in the atmosphere of dialogue, and readiness to submit are two expressions of deeper faith resulting from formation.

The formative journey of Abraham reaches the peak point when he silently obeys God’s command to sacrifice the son of promise, Isaac. In the all embracing existential agony Abraham did not in any way fail in his original relationship with God. In such a crucial situations, Abraham clinged to God, and decided to suffer for the option of obedience he made. Abraham had a conviction about the basic value that pervaded all his actions, reactions and words.
Another instance where we see God the formator is in his relationship with the Israelites. God undergoes tremendous struggle in the formation of Israelites. His task was to make them people of God. Similarly, the process of formation is an experience of terrible tension and conflict for the Israelites. It is the struggle between the temporary, transient values and permanent, lasting values. Formator accompanies the formee, on their journey and participates in their fates. God behaved like a formator who opted for the well being of the formees. He acted selflessly like an authentic patron. While crossing the Red Sea, their temptation to yield to the enemy was turned out to be a celebration of Faith in God. Providing bread from heaven in their hunger, God gave the conviction that, God who could provide bread today could provide everything tomorrow too. It was a conviction about things not seen, that emerges from faith and trust. During Sinai Covenant, people opted for a definitive relationship; they reached the phase of maturity at the moment of their confession, “All that the Lord has spoken we will do and we will be obedient’ (Ex, 27, 4). Worshipping the golden calf was a regress to in their growth and consequently they had to face the punishment. The acts of selection, rejection, punishment, and forgiveness, all are parts of the formative experience. Formation of a religious goes through the stages the Israelites also underwent in their journey towards Canan.

We may conclude the brief look at formation in OT with an interesting comment from the reputed Biblical Scholar Augustine Mullur. According to Augustine Mullur, the Exodus Event can be taken as a pattern of formation. The three important moments are, coming out, wandering through the wilderness, and entering the Promised Land. The coming out from Egypt symbolises an exit from one’s self and ego. Wandering through the wilderness means depending on God, going through all difficulties to discern the vocation and commit oneself
to undergo formation. Entering the promised land is the goal. Clarity of the goal is important during formation.  

### 5.4.2. Jesus and the Twelve in the New Testament

Any investigation on any topic in relation to NT cannot bypass the perceptions of Jesus because he is the centre of revelation in NT. The process of formation in New Testament lays particular stress on commitment to the person of Christ and service to the poor. “Jesus called the disciples, [Mk. 1: 16-20] challenged them [Mk. 1: 35-39], gave them special formation and sent them with the mission. The disciples were not able to comprehend the full importance of everything Jesus said and did. Hence the formator Jesus had to constantly struggle to make them on the right path. In the election [Mk.3,13-19], Jesus revealed the basic value system of his formation and education. The special formation [Mk 4, 10 f.], meant direct personal contact of the formator with the formees. Sharing of his mission and authority with disciples is also part of formation [Mk, 6. 7-13]. The teachings about the new vision in the healing of blind man [Mk.8:22-26, 10, 46-52], was a part of formation. Way of the Cross, betrayal, denial etc., came in the final phase of the formative journey, centered on the passion of Christ.  

When we analyse the style of formation of Jesus, S. J. Anthonysamy would say, “Jesus kept his disciples with him all the while, and thus gave an opportunity to them to learn for themselves at first hand who he was, particularly to the poor and the needy. After having built up an image about himself [Mk. 8: 27-31], as a victorious messiah to the total gratification of all concerned, Jesus made known the essential truth about him, namely that his mission would imply suffering and death. With unambiguous clarity He told the disciples...

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77 ibid
that their discipleship to serve would mean a participation in his sufferings. Jesus followed a radically different programme of formation, with a view to make known his real Messianic character as the ‘Servant’ rather than the ‘Master’ and also to enlist their own participation in this distinctive Messianic quality. Servant would suffer in the service of the nation even to the extent of sacrificing his life.78

Referring to the healing of Barthimeus by Jesus [Mk. 10: 46-52], Augustine Mullur says, the formation process experienced by Barthimeus has the following elements, desire, knowledge, prayer, overcoming obstacles, encounter, dialogue, transformation, and dynamism of life. The following are the stages in the transformation of the Samaritan woman [Jn. 4: 1-42]; she was separated from the community, she had openness to enter into dialogue with Jesus, she expressed her desire, she was challenged by Jesus to self-awareness, she took initiative in spiritual matter worship, she had willingness to learn, she accepted Jesus as Messiah, freed from all inhibitions and fear, she shared her experience, she became totally transparent and left the people to meet Jesus.79

The example of Jesus and the disciples of Emmaus [Lk. 24: 13-35], shows the pattern of formation where the formator Jesus accompanies the formees. Jesus joined the disciples on the way and accompanied them. He questioned them, entered into dialogue with them and listened to them. He confronted and challenged them revealed the meaning by breaking the Word. He respected their request, broke the read and revealed himself. Transformation happened and they travelled from self to Spirit.80

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80 ibid
5.5 Formation in various traditions

The mind and vision of Christ cannot be fully taped out of the Bible because the latter does not contain everything Jesus said and did. There are many other sources which translate the fundamental experience of Christ outside Bible as it is timed by people of different kinds and ages. Among them include the founders of religious Congregations. Their programmes of formation are indeed important in forming the framework for the religious formation.

5.5.1 Formation in Benedictine Tradition

Benedictine order is one of the most ancient religious societies originated in the West. It was founded by St. Benedict of Norcia in the sixth century at Subiaco and Monte Casino in Italy. Many of the monastic orders originated later adopted the rule and life-style visualised by St. Benedict. With the spread of monasticism the monasteries following the rule of St. Benedict also spread all over Europe and in many other countries exercising great influence in the material, cultural and spiritual life of the people. The *ora et labora* (pray and work) is one of the best known slogans of the Benedictine life-style. The Benedictine life integrates in itself both contemplation and action. There are various groups of Benedictines with their own specific charism and distinctions, basically following the rule of St. Benedict. Here we introduce the formation programme of the Sylvestro-Benedictines founded by St. Sylvester Guzzolini (1177-1265).

The goal of Formation: Benedictine formation programme is aimed at attaining the ability to follow a life of intense personal prayer coupled with recitation and chanting of the Divine Office as well as manual labour and intellectual works. The formees have to integrate community life, community prayer and work..

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The Formation Programme: The formation of the Sylvestro-Benedictines has the following stages: a minimum of one year period of orientation, one year Novitiate, three years of Philosophy cum degree, one year regency in one of the Monasteries, and four years of Theology and Pastoral training and ordination for those who have vocation for it. At all stages of formation a respective ‘Master’ of Formation, like the master of aspirants, master of novices and master of junior monks is put in charge of the formees. These masters are immediately responsible for the formation of their formees. They are to organize the actualization of the formation programme adopted by the Priories in accordance with the rules and the Constitutions. During these various stages of formation the candidates are encouraged to have a personal spiritual director, besides the masters of formation.

During the period of orientation, a candidate is given faith formation, courses in languages and a practical experience of monastic life and prayer in one of the monasteries. During Novitiate the candidate is initiated into monastic life with clear explanation of the rule of St. Benedict, the Sylvestro-Benedictine Constitutions, the Directory which gives more practical application of the rule and the Constitutions, and the Statutes which are the special directives of a Priory. Courses are also given to the novices in Holy Scripture, Liturgy, and the History and Spirituality of monastic life. At the completion of novitiate, candidates discerned fit for monastic life make the simple profession and receive the monastic habit.

Juniorate is the time of basic formation from the first profession to the solemn profession, during which the junior monks undergo philosophical and theological training. At the same time the young monks will have a regular monastic life in the community. Solemn profession can take place any time after three years. Young monk aspiring for priesthood will have made the solemn profession before deaconate. Since formation is a life-long process, it never stops but still continues even after the ordination to priesthood. Hence an on-going formation
programme is also envisaged by the order which may include higher studies and periodic refresher courses undertaken by monks as and when required.

5.5.2. Formation in Carmelite Tradition

The Carmelite Order is started on Mount Carmel, Israel, in the middle of the 12th century. The first members were former crusaders, nobles, and pilgrims, both clerics and laymen, all from Europe who came to Palestine and settled down on Mount Carmel to revive the Eliyanic prophetic vocation in the Christian context. They took Blessed Virgin Mary’s life as the perfect Christian expression of the prophetic vocation. The monks who lived on Mount Carmel spent their time in a life of prayer, silence, solitude and contemplation. Their life was a calling to witness the Gospel mystery of interiority. In the 16th century St. Teresa of Avila, a Carmelite nun reformed the Carmelite Order and thus Discalced Carmelite Order came to existence. The Congregation of Teresian Carmelites (CTC) is a Carmelite Congregation.

**Stages of Formation:** The formation programme entitled as the “Ratio Institutionis” which was published by the Generalate of the Order of Discalced Carmelites in 1992, considers formation as an ongoing process which centres on the student in his actual situation. The Ratio stresses the need to develop a sense of responsibility in the candidates for their own formation, together with the co-responsibility of the educators. It aims at fostering and developing formation in freedom and for freedom by giving the candidates a sense of personal responsibility. The Ratio underlines the principal task of formation as the imitation of Jesus Christ in all things and to behave as he would in every situation.

The process of formation is to help the formee to become a mature Carmelite religious. In the Carmelite tradition this is realized in the quest for friendship with Christ and in devotion

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to Mary. According to the Ratio, the fundamental elements of the Christian personality of the Teresian Carmelite are friendship with Christ and imitation of his way of prayer and of his way of relation to the Father. It is with this vision and perspective that formation is carried out in various stages from the initiation period to postulancy, novitiate, solemn profession, and the process continues as the ongoing formation. Two elements are given special emphasis in the Carmelite tradition of formative spirituality, they are deep prayer life and deep speculative knowledge of spirituality. Prayer for a Carmelite is the very oxygen of his/her life. Contemplation in itself is Action. In every stages of formation, there is the need to cultivate a taste for reading.

**Initiation Period** is the initial stage of formation, which is a process of forming right motivation and gradual identification with the person of Christ. The formees are introduced to prayer life and the Carmelite spirituality, as lived and taught by St. Teresa of Avila, St. John of the Cross and St. Little Flower.

**Postulancy** is the second stage of formation, where the forme is introduced to religious life, community life, prayer life a little more deeper and a life of Carmelite asceticism. The forme will be introduced to contemplative prayer life and a life of virtues. They practise humility, charity, detachment and obedience to grow in prayer life.

**Novitiate** is a stage of two years’ period where the formees come into close contact with the way of Carmelite life. They practise silence, quietness, order and solitude. A life of poverty, hard life chastity and obedience and a close following of the poor, is the nature of novitiate life. The formees are introduced to the apostolates proper to the charism of the Congregation by the end of the novitiate.

**Tertianship** is the immediate preparation for perpetual vows after simple vows which is taken after the Novitiate. The Temporary professed Carmelite religious are given formation
to get deepened in contemplative prayer and to integrate the life of contemplation with the active life. Academic and spiritual study is intensified in this period. The last one year is spent for the immediate preparation for Solemn vows.

5.5.3. Formation in Franciscan Tradition 83

Franciscan Order is founded by St. Francis of Assisi, in 12th Century, who was a radical follower of the poor Christ. To the Franciscans, formation is a process that makes one more and more conformable to Jesus and his humble servant Francis each day, brought about by the experience of faith and prayer, fraternal life and service, intellectual pursuits and manual labour. Enlivened by the Spirit of God, assimilating and integrating Gospel and Franciscan values into one’s life, one is introduced into a movement of ongoing conversion into the image of the son of God. The formation programme covers three phases, namely Initial formation, which touches the human, Christian, capuchin formation; Special formation, which equips one for one’s specific ministry as a clerical or non-clerical friar, and ongoing Formation, which covers itself with a continuing process of personal and communitarian renewal and adaptation rendering friars capable of living their vocations to the full in a given situation.

**Principal Agent of formation:** The formees as principal architects of their own growth bear the primary responsibility for their formation, which involves every dimension of intellect, will and action and demands the active cooperation of those being formed. The formees are to be diligent in observing the daily horarium and make efforts to advance in the life of prayer and evangelical brotherhood.

**Human formation:** This formation helps one to know the depths of the human heart, to perceive difficulties and problems, to make meeting and dialogue easy, to create trust and cooperation, to express serene and objective judgements. The candidates are educated to love the truth, to be true to their word, to be genuinely compassionate, to be men of integrity and especially to be balanced in judgements and behaviour. They are helped to relate with others which requires that a religious should 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 brotherly relationships and encouraging the same in others, and quick to understand, forgive and console. He is educated in affective maturity, which strengthens brotherly affection and a personal love for Jesus Christ. They are helped to be masters of themselves and to lead a healthy community life, to have a moral conscience to listen to the voice of God and to adhere with love and constancy to His will and to become like Christ the Good shepherd in order to save the Church and the world.

**Spiritual formation:** The candidates are taught to seek Christ, in faithful contemplation on the Word of God and in active participation in the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, the sacrament of penance and in the Liturgy of hours. They are educated in the deep human meaning and religious value of silence, a sense of asceticism and interior discipline, a spirit of sacrifice and self denial, the acceptance of hard work and of the Cross.

**Franciscan Formation and Fraternal Life:** Right from the Aspirancy, the candidates are trained to live brotherhood. They are taught to accept each other as brothers, freely mingle with everybody, respect others, show genuine concern for one another, common life, and to sacrifice personal interest for common good. Also they are provided with opportunities to do manual work, service to the humble, poor and the sick, and the practices to earn their livelihood, etc.
**Intellectual and Pastoral Formation:** In the intellectual formation, the formees are doing an effort to understand the faith. Pastoral formation is to have the training to become good pastors just like Jesus Christ, the good Shepherd. They are introduced into the sensitivity of a shepherd, in the interior habit of evaluating problems and looking for solutions on the basis of priorities the honest motivation of faith and theological perspectives.

**5.5.4. Formation in Jesuit Tradition**

The Society of Jesus is established by Ignatius of Loyola in the middle of 16th century. The members are called Jesuits. Formation in the Society of Jesus is determined by its apostolic end. Everything in the Society is for the apostolate, the mission. The apostolic end of the Society is the service of faith of which the promotion of justice is an absolute requirement. Formation is for this mission of the Society. The Constitutions of the Society speaks of 3 periods of probation: First, Second, and Third Probation. Probation or testing is a necessary dimension of formation.

**First Probation:** The First Probation is a short period of a fortnight or so before beginning the novitiate. Here the candidates are expected to know the information for the candidates and information about the Society from the section ‘Examination of candidates’ of the Constitutions of the Society. Also he comes to know him better. Further, an introduction to Jesuit history, spirituality and prayer is also given during this period.

**Second Probation:** This is the two year period of the novitiate. Here the training is a process integration into the apostolic body of the Society. This process is gradually realized through the different stages of formation. The goal of the novitiate is to verify whether the novices’s vocation is really to the Society. The vocation is tested through various experiments such as

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making the spiritual exercises, working in a hospital – serving and helping the sick, making a pilgrimage without money and even begging occasionally from door to door for love of Christ; being engaged in various lowly domestic chores; teaching Christian doctrine to children, youth and uneducated adults; preaching, and if priests, administering the sacraments.

**A period of Intellectual Formation:** Between the second probation and the third a Jesuit has to spend long years in studies, both secular and sacred. All through these years, attention is given to on-going spiritual formation, community life and to studies. One year of language studies, English and local language, graduation or post graduation, a year or two of regency, philosophy for two years and Theology for four years. The main aim of the formation is to help the formees to respond to the demands of evangelization in our world. The whole formation is conceived and planned as a progressive integration of spiritual and community life, of apostolate and studies, so that the fullness of the inner resources flows into the apostolate which in its turn motivates study and spirituality.

**A time of integration:** Through the years of formation, community life serves as an effective link with the whole apostolic body of the Society. It provides the context for true communication and a sharing of life, even at the spiritual level. Here the sense of belonging which is a necessary pre-condition for apostolic activity in the society is tested and nurtured. Attention is paid to training in dialogue both among themselves and with superiors, in obedience and fraternal correction, all of which foster the ability to opt for what is best with the aid of grace and openness to advice.

**A Time for specialization:** Studies in the Society look to the apostolate. The Society confirms its own distinctive option of a solid academic formation in theology, philosophy, arts, sciences, history, local culture as well as modern media of communication. During the
study, they acquire that skill with the spoken and the written word which will make them effective heralds of the Gospel. In order to employ fruitfully in the apostolate they master audiovisual techniques. Jesuit formation is such that, a Jesuit finds himself at home and on easy terms with the people to whom he is sent, and to be able to share in their sensibilities and values, their history, experience and aspirations, while remaining open to the sensibilities and values of other peoples, traditions and cultures.

**Regency:** The aim of regency is to deepen the spiritual integration and the human maturation of the Jesuit in all its aspects, through serious and responsible commitment to an apostolic activity, with its objective demands of organization, regularity, adequate evaluation of time and means used of collaboration and service to others.

**Third probation or Tertianship:** Tertianship precedes theological studies. The essential contents of this stage of formation are, the Spiritual exercises for a month with deeper understanding of self and of the person of Jesus, study of the Exercises, the Constitutions, the other writings of St. Ignatius, the pilgrim’s Testament and the Spiritual Diary. This study is with the heart.

**Ongoing or Continued Formation:** Continuing formation is achieved especially through a constant evaluation and reflection of one’s apostolate in the light of faith and with the help of the apostolic community. Here, definite periods of time be given to formal courses or simply to private study as required for one’s apostolate. Continuing formation covers the promotion of growth and maturation of the personality through all the stages of life and faith, and the improvement of knowledge and skills required for the fulfilment of the apostolate assignments in the changing circumstances. The apostolic community is the place for continuing formation.
5.5.5. Formation in Salesian Tradition\textsuperscript{85}

The Salesian Tradition is introduced by St. John Bosco for educating youth. Here we introduce the formation programme of Salesian sisters formed by St. John Bosco, at Mornese, Italy. The aim of formation is the maturing of the whole person, in a gradual, progressive putting on of Christ sent by the Father, following the plan outlined in the Constitutions.

**Initial Formation:** Initial formation includes period of assessment and guidance, postulancy, novitiate and the period of temporary vows. In the period of assessment and guidance, the foundations of the formative journey are established. This helps the formee to assess one’s vocational choice and through experience, to ensure that he/she possesses the qualities of Salesian life. During this period, the young person in formation is helped through theoretical input, group dynamics, group therapy, personal study and reflection, active participation and celebration of the sacraments especially Eucharist and Reconciliation in order to grow in knowledge and acceptance of self and others and thus seek God in day today life. Here the formee is initiated to discipleship enabling him/her to understand the demands and challenges it entails, to experience and appreciate the Salesian life and mission and to develop communicative skills.

**Postulancy:** The formative process of this stage aims at ensuring a deep vocational experience. The postulant, while deepening her awareness of God’s call, is accompanied in the challenging journey which will enable personal encounter with Christ and more committed dedication to the mission among young people.

**Novitiate:** During this period the novice learns the meaning of Salesian life, in the spirit of the covenant, following Christ according to the charismatic identity outlined in the

Constitution. With the help of the community and the formator, the novice reaches a deeper awareness of the vocational experience of the founders and internalizes Gospel and Salesian values, gained especially from the life witness that she experiences.

**Period of Temporary Vows:** The aim of this period is to prepare people for total consecration of themselves to God in the following of Christ, at the service of the Church’s mission. It lasts from six to nine years. The temporary professed, involve directly in the educative mission, and is more autonomous and responsible. They develop deeper conviction that consecrated life is characterized by the total gift of self to the God of the covenant, in whom fidelity to the call is rooted.

5.5.6. Formation in Indian Tradition

In Indian culture, religious formation is known as Sadhana. The goal of spiritual quest in the Indian heritage is Moksha, or Mukti which is to realize the true self (Svarupa). That means to exert and discipline oneself for self-realization (Atmasakshatkara) and thus achieve God realization. In sadhana, body-mind-intellect complex is well disciplined and purified in order to merge into the Ultimate Spirit. The process of disciplining is known as citt-vrittinirodha. It is a relentless process where all activities (vrittis) of the mind (Citta) are disciplined. They are meant for exterior and interior purification whereby perfect harmony, quietness and highest perfection is attained.

The system of formation in Indian culture is linked with the doctrine of asramas. The term ‘asram’ is derived from the root ‘srama’ which means to exert oneself for the realization of the Transcendent, Eternal, and Divine Mystery. The four asramas are Brahmacharya, Grahastha, Vanaprastha and the Sannyasa. In ancient India there did not exist a separate

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religious formation apart from the academic education. When the ‘holy men’ or sannyasis settled themselves in asrams or forest hermitages, devotees and disciples used to gather around them to receive spiritual instructions. In the course of time, those asrams became institutions of learning, education and culture. That is how asrams became places of formation for the person or the seeker (Sadhaka) for the attainment of true knowledge of Brahman – Brahma-Vidya. The sannyasis themselves were formed by sadhana. Sadhana turns the human person from egoistic state of consciousness to a higher state of consciousness where he realizes the Transcendent, Divine Mystery.

True seekers went to the God-realized persons called Gurus and lived with them in their asrams. The Guru considered his disciples as his own children and imparted the knowledge of eternal Truth with great care through oral tradition, upadesa. The contact and communication between the Guru and the disciple is in ‘soul and soul’ and ‘heart and heart’. The disciple is able to distinguish between what is eternal and non-eternal and between real and unreal. He gives up all the desires for enjoyment of the Transcendent. He develops the qualities like detachment, patience and power of concentration. Physical and spiritual discipline, hard work, perseverance, and sustained endeavours are urgently in need of to attain self-knowledge, the Divine Truth and the realization of Brahman.

**Undergoing three fold Process of Brahma-Vidya:** Once the aspirant has passed through the process of subduing his senses both external and internal and has undergone proper spiritual discipline, the disciple is disposed to learn the Supreme Reality. The disciple begins to study with the Guru, whom he himself has sought out and looks upon as God, the three fold aspects of Brahma-Vidya.

**Sravana** is listening with care and profound attention to the teachings and instruction of Guru about the supreme Truth which will transform his life totally. The disciple cannot make
demands on the Guru, who will teach only when he is satisfied with his earnestness and that he has the ability to grasp the teaching.

**Manana** is a process of understanding the instructions of the Guru through reasoning and arguing until all doubts are removed and is attained deep conviction about the divine Truth. One has to assimilate the teaching of Guru into one’s life through repeated reflection, reasoning, dialogue and contemplation. The truth heard from the Guru is to be authentically interiorized. Through manana the disciple continues to be a pilgrim, in search of the fullness of that Transcendent Truth which will even remain more than that which has apprehended intellectually from the Guru.

**Nididhyasana** is the repeated meditation of the personally convinced and interiorized Truth which will lead the disciple to the realization of the Supreme reality. This consistent and insistent meditation involves mind, intellect and heart because Transcendent Truth can be known only by the heart. This incessant and repeated meditation leads to attainment of Reality and a profound desire to be shaped and transformed by the Truth. He surrenders fully to the Truth. Intuitive and experiential knowledge of the divine Truth comes to the disciple through nididhyasana. The disciple is impregnated with the Divine Mystery and attains unity and oneness with it.

### 5.6. Formation in the Teachings of the Church

Our itinerary through the different theoretical frames that shape the formation of sisters advances systematically. After examining the formation styles outlined by Jesus and the founders of several Congregations we study what the Church officially teaches us in this regard. Thus the consecrated life is placed in the heart of the Church and the Magisterium is very much concerned with fostering the consecrated way of life and published a number of documents for the formation of future members. There are a number of Pre-Vatican and
Post-Vatican documents on religious formation. We restrict our study to a few Post Vatican documents.

5.6.1. Lumen Gentium (1965)

This Dogmatic Constitution on the Church insists upon the on-going formation. It says, “Post – novitiate formation, adapted to the character of each institute, is absolutely necessary for all subjects not excepting contemplatives. For institutes of brothers and for sisters in institutes dedicated to apostolic work, the formation must normally cover the entire period of temporary vows, as is the case already in many institutes, under the name of juniorate or scholasticate or similar terms. This formation must be given in houses which are suitable for the purpose. It must not be merely theoretical but should be also practical, involving, for their educational value, various activities and duties which fit in with the character and circumstances of each institute. Thus the candidate will be gradually introduced to the kind of life that later on shall be theirs”87.

5.6.2. Perfectae Caritatis, Decree on the Renewal of Religious Life (1965)88

This Dogmatic Constitution on the adaptation and renewal of the religious life includes both the constant return to the sources of all Christian life and to the original spirit of the institutes and their adaptation to the changed conditions of our time. This renewal, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and the guidance of the Church, must be advanced according to the following principles.

a) Since the ultimate norm of the religious life is the following of Christ set forth in the Gospels, let this be held by all institutes as the highest rule.

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87 Paul VI, Perfectae Caritatis, Decree on the Church, Lumen Gentium 35, 36.
88 Paul VI, Perfectae Caritatis(1965). Decree on the Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life, Odt.28th, No.2,3
b) It resounds to the good of the Church that institutes have their own particular characteristics and work. Therefore let their founders’ spirit and special aims they set before them as well as their sound traditions—all of which make up the patrimony of each institute—be faithfully held in honour.

c) All institutes should share in the life of the Church, adapting as their own and implementing in accordance with their own characteristics the Church's undertakings and aims in matters biblical, liturgical, dogmatic, pastoral, ecumenical, missionary and social.

d) Institutes should promote among their members an adequate knowledge of the social conditions of the times they live in and of the needs of the Church. In such a way, judging current events wisely in the light of faith and burning with apostolic zeal, they may be able to assist men more effectively.

e) The purpose of the religious life is to help the members follow Christ and be united to God through the profession of the evangelical counsels. It should be constantly kept in mind, therefore, that even the best adjustments made in accordance with the needs of our age will be ineffectual unless they are animated by a renewal of spirit. This must take precedence over even the active ministry.

The document continues that the manner of living, praying and working should be suitably adapted everywhere, but especially in mission territories, to the modern physical and psychological circumstances of the members and also, as required by the nature of each institute, to the necessities of the apostolate, the demands of culture, and social and economic circumstances.
5.6.3. *Renovationis Causam, Instruction on the Renewal of Religious Life (1969)*

Religious formation comprises two essential phases, the probationary period and the novitiate. A preliminary period of varying duration, obligatory in certain Institutes under the name of postulancy, usually precedes admission to the novitiate. During the probationary period, it is particularly necessary to secure assurance that the candidate for religious life be endowed with such elements of human and emotional maturity as will afford grounds for hope that he is capable of undertaking properly the obligations of the religious state and that, in the religious life and especially in the novitiate he will be able to progress towards fuller maturity.

Religious life begins with the novitiate. The novitiate lasts for a period adapted to the nature of the Institute, during which the members are bound by vows or other commitments. Whatever may be the special aim of the Institute, the principal purpose of the novitiate is to initiate the novice into the essential and primary requirements of the religious life and also, in view of a greater charity, to implement the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience of which he will later make profession, ‘with the help of vows or other sacred obligations which resemble vows in their nature. In those institutes where ‘apostolic and charitable works are essential to the religious life’, the novices are to be gradually trained to dedicate themselves to activities in keeping with the purpose of their Institute, while developing that intimate union with Christ whence all their activity must flow.

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89 Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes(1969, Jan 6). *Renovationis Causam*, Rome, 10,11
5.6.4. *Potissimum Institutioni, Directives on Formation in the Religious Institutes (1990)*\(^90\)

While speaking about The Content and Means of Formation, in article No. 61, the document says, considering the need there is for forming religious to meet the requirements and expectations of the contemporary world. It will be up to the institutes and to the formators to make the necessary adaptations to individuals, places and times. The program will aim at suitably providing a basic philosophical formation that will permit religious to acquire knowledge of God and a Christian vision of the world, in close connection with the debated questions of our time. This document highlights the need for preparing the formees to be dedicated to the needs of the people in the initial stages of formation itself.

5.6.5. *Fraternal Life in Community (1994)*\(^91\)

This document of Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life speaks about development within society. It says in article No. 4 that society is in constant evolution and men and women religious, who are not of the world, but who nevertheless live in the world, are subject to its influence. Movements for political and social emancipation in the Third World and a stepped up process of industrialisation have led to the rise of major social changes, with particular emphasis on the "development of peoples" and, in recent decades, on situations of poverty and misery. Local Churches have reacted actively in the face of these developments. Religious communities have been profoundly affected by this; many were led to rethink their presence in society, in view of more direct service to the poor, sometimes even through insertion among the poor. The overwhelming increase of suffering on the outskirts of large cities and the impoverishment of rural areas

\(^{90}\) Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and for societies of Apostolic Life(1990, Feb 2nd). *Potissimum Institutioni*, No. 61

\(^{91}\) Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and for societies of Apostolic Life(1994, Febb 2nd). *Fraternal Life in Community*, No. 4
have hastened the "repositioning" of a considerable number of religious communities towards these poorer areas. Everywhere, there is the challenge of inculturation. Cultures, traditions, and the mentality of a particular country all have an impact on the way fraternal life is lived in religious communities. Moreover, movements of large-scale migration in recent years have raised the problem of the co-existence of different cultures, and the problem of racist reactions. All of these issues also have repercussions on pluri-cultural and multi-racial religious communities, which are becoming increasingly common.

Demands for personal freedom and human rights have been at the root of a broad process of democratisation, which has favoured economic development and the growth of civil society. In the immediate wake of the Council, this process, especially in the west, quickened and was marked by moments of calling meetings about everything and rejection of authority. The Church and religious life were not immune from such questioning of authority, with significant repercussions for community life as well. A one-sided and exasperated stress on freedom contributed to the spread of a culture of individualism throughout the west, thus weakening the ideal of life in common and commitment to community projects. We also observe other reactions which were equally one-sided, such as flight into safely authoritarian projects, based on blind faith in a reassuring leader.

The advancement of women, which according to Pope John XXIII is one of the signs of our times, has also had many repercussions on life in Christian communities in various countries. Even if in some areas the influence of extremist currents of feminism is deeply affecting religious life, almost everywhere women's religious communities are positively seeking forms of common life judged more suitable for a renewed awareness of the identity, dignity and role of women in society, Church and religious life. The communications explosion, which began in the 1960's, has considerably, and at times dramatically, influenced
the general level of information, the sense of social and apostolic responsibility, apostolic mobility and the quality of internal relationships, not to mention the specific life-style and recollected atmosphere which ought to characterise a religious community.

Consumerism and hedonism, together with a weakening of the vision of faith characteristic of secularism, in many regions have not left religious communities unaffected. These factors have severely tested the ability of some religious communities to "resist evil" but they have also given rise to new styles of personal and community life which are a clear evangelical testimony for our world. All of this has been a challenge, a call to live the evangelical counsels with more vigour, and this has helped support the witness of the wider Christian community.


According to this exhortation, the primary objective of the formation process is to prepare people for the total consecration of themselves to God in the following of Christ, at the service of the Church's mission. To say "yes" to the Lord's call by taking personal responsibility for maturing in one's vocation is the inescapable duty of all who have been called. One's whole life must be open to the action of the Holy Spirit, accepting in faith the means of grace offered by the Lord and the Church. Formation should therefore have a profound effect on individuals, so that their every attitude and action, at important moments as well as in the ordinary events of life, will show that they belong completely and joyfully to God.

If the very purpose of consecrated life is conformity to the Lord Jesus in his total self-giving, the document reminds that the manner of preparing for it should include and express the

92 John Paul II(1996). Vita Consecrata 65
character of wholeness. Formation should involve the whole person, in every aspect of the personality, in behaviour and intentions. Precisely because it aims at the transformation of the whole person, it is clear that the commitment to formation never ends. Indeed, at every stage of life, consecrated persons must be offered opportunities to grow in their commitment to the charism and mission of their Institute. For formation to be complete, it must include every aspect of Christian life. It must therefore provide a human, cultural, spiritual and pastoral preparation which pays special attention to the harmonious integration of all its various aspects. Sufficient time should be reserved for initial formation, understood as a process of development which passes through every stage of personal maturity — from the psychological and spiritual to the theological and pastoral.

5.6.7. Witnesses of Joy (2014)

Pope Francis encourages the youngsters by his words, “I would especially like to say a word to those of you who are young. You are the present, since you are already taking active part in the lives of your Institutes, offering all the freshness and generosity of your “yes”. At the same time you are the future, for soon you will be called to take on roles of leadership in the life, formation, service and mission of your communities. This Year should see you actively engaged in dialogue with the previous generation. In fraternal communion you will be enriched by their experiences and wisdom, while at the same time inspiring them, by your own energy and enthusiasm, to recapture their original idealism. In this way the entire community can join in finding new ways of living the Gospel and responding more effectively to the need for witness and proclamation”.

5.6.8. Rejoice (2014)

This document speaks about the discipleship as an interior pilgrimage. It says, “The interior pilgrimage begins with prayer. The first thing for a disciple is to be with the Master, to listen to him and to learn from him. This is always true, and it is true at every moment of our lives. If the warmth of God, of his love, of his tenderness is not in our own hearts, then how can we, who are poor sinners, warm the heart of others. This is a life-long journey, as in the humility of prayer the Holy Spirit convinces us of the Lordship of Christ within us. “The Lord calls us to follow him with courage and fidelity; he has made us the great gift of choosing us as his disciples; he invites us to proclaim him with joy as the Risen one, but he asks us to do so by word and by the witness of our lives, in daily life. The Lord is the only God of our lives, and he invites us to strip ourselves of our many idols and to worship him alone”.

5.6.9. Vultum Dei Quaerere (On Women’s Contemplative Life) (2016)

This Apostolic Constitution of Pope Francis says that, Consecrated persons, by virtue of their consecration, “follow the Lord in a special way, in a prophetic way”. They are called to recognize the signs of God’s presence in daily life and wisely to discern the questions posed to us by God and the men and women of our time. The great challenge faced by consecrated persons is to persevere in seeking God “with the eyes of faith in a world which ignores his presence”, and to continue to offer that world Christ’s life of chastity, poverty and obedience as a credible and trustworthy sign, thus becoming “a living ‘exegesis’ of God’s word”. From the origins of the life of special consecration in the Church, men and women called by God and in love with him have devoted their lives exclusively to seeking his face, longing to find and contemplate God in the heart of the world. The presence of communities set like cities on

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94 Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, Rejoice 6.
95 Francis (2016). Apostolic Constitution Vultum Dei Quaerere (On Women’s Contemplative Life), No. 2
a hill or lamps on a stand (Mt 5:14-15), despite their simplicity of life, visibly represent the
goal towards which the entire ecclesial community journeys.

5.6.10 New Wine in New Wineskins (2017)

This document says, For formation to be effective, it must be based on a strictly personal
pedagogy and not limited to just one solution for all values, spiritualities, times, styles and
ways. Again it says, , New wine requires the ability to go beyond the models we have
inherited in order to appreciate the newness brought on by the Spirit, to accept it with
gratitude, and to guard it, not just temporarily, but until the fermentation has finished. Even
the new cloak that Jesus speaks about on the same page of the Gospel has been sewn up
through the various phases of adaptation, and the time has come to wear it with joy among
the believers.

5.7. Theological Reflections

In our attempt to formulate the theoretical framework which has to serve as the background
for making a new proposal of formation in the following chapter, we have already explored
the model of formation that was outlined by Jesus, founders of various Congregations and
magisterium of the Church. Before concluding this chapter we will look into a few
reflections that lay the basis for the commitment of religious to the cause of abused women.

5.7.1. Christian Discipleship

The following of Christ is the determining factor in Christian existence. All Christians are
supposed to imitate the disciples of the historical Jesus who are the prototypes of the Church.

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96 Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, New Wine in new Wineskins 16,
97 Ibid 56
Claret Centre for Resources in Spirituality. Chicago: Religious Life series, Vol. 2. 18-25
To follow Christ means to have a total attachment to the person and message of Jesus. One encounters God revealing himself to human beings in Jesus as love and salvation. According to Vatican II the common vocation of Christians is to attain the Gospel perfection, which exhorts all to follow the footsteps of Christ (LG, 40). The founders of various forms of Religious life were disciples of Jesus who followed Him very closely. There are different forms of following, among the disciples of Jesus. There were many who accepted Christ’s message but unlike apostles remained in the society. Jesus called a few to follow Him in a special way. Religious are Christians who are asked to imitate Christ in a unique manner. They have to embody the ideal of discipleship proposed by the Gospel.

Religious life has its origin in the community of believers born from the death and resurrection of the Lord. Religious life, a life of poverty, of celibacy and of obedience is one of the vocational charisms which the Lord distributes among the members of the Church for the welfare of the entire community (Rom. 12: 4-8, I Cor. 12: 4-11). Sacred Scripture states that such a vocation is an authentic calling from the Risen Christ (I Cor. 7:7). A life of celibacy is the radical and characteristic trait of Religious Life. The other characteristics originate from it and insert themselves into it. Renunciation of property, or common possession of goods existed in the primitive community of believers immediately after Pentecost (Acts. 2:44-45, 4:32-35). St. Paul was celibate like Jesus, he and other missionaries lead a rootless life in service to the Gospel. Their life was inspired by the impulse of the Spirit to adhere to the Lord and His interests. Thus Religious life is a life of Christians inspired by the Holy Spirit, dedicating themselves in an exclusive way, renouncing every other obligations of life, recalling the memory of Jesus through the inspired Word. Consequently, religious have to understand that to commit themselves for the cause of marginalized women is essential to their discipleship.
5.7.2. In the Service of God’s Kingdom

There is an inseparable connection between discipleship and the service of the Kingdom of God. St. Mark suggests the connection when he places the call of the first four disciples directly after the summary of Jesus’ preaching about the Kingdom and his invitation to conversion (Mk. 1:16-20, 1:14-15) St. Luke also expresses the relationship when he speaks about the call of the rich man where Jesus speaks about the reward that is reserved for those who have left all “for the sake of the Kingdom of God” (Lk.18:29). For Jesus and his people, the Kingdom was, the free and definitive intervention by which God would break into history, destroying and creating a new, profoundly modifying the order of things in order to save people.

Religious life, a life inspired by the dedication of Jesus and his disciples to the Kingdom is certainly a life entirely projected towards the future. The religious are called to place themselves, in the service of the Kingdom, becoming personally involved in the dynamics of God’s saving will, announcing it constantly, inviting all to conversion, and battling evil here and now. Through the religious Jesus wants to bring outcasts to share in the love of God, and to put God on their side. The Kingdom of God thus appears to be a utopia that generates both struggles against oppressive evil and actions benefiting the human race. The commitment of the women religious to the liberation of marginalized women is part of realizing God’s reign in this world.

The message of God’s Kingdom was communicated in the Bible through parables and parabolic actions. For example, Jeremiah bought a linen loincloth and hid it in a cleft by the Euphrates until it rotted (Jer. 13: 1-11), on another occasion, Jeremiah bought a field in Anathoth and sealed the deed of purchase in an earthen jar (Jer. 32: 7-15). In the New

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99 Ibid 25-30
Testament, Jesus performed parabolic actions such as washing of his disciple’s feet during the Last Supper, banquets shared with tax-collectors and sinners which is a distinctive trait of his ministry. In the Bible there are also parabolic types of life; the celibate life of Jeremiah (Jer.16:2-4) and Hosea’s marriage to a prostitute (Hos. 1:20). From the parabolic actions of the Prophets and Jesus, we can say that a parable is a metaphor that flows out of the prophet’s own experience and is aimed at drawing the minds and hearts of their listeners toward something that is not expressible in concepts. In Jesus’ case, everything points toward the symbol of the reign of God. Jesus puts his hearers within reach of this symbol by his stories, his actions, and his own life\textsuperscript{100}.

Religious life is a parable because, it is created by the Spirit of Jesus in order to go on confronting all of his disciples with this symbol of the reign of God. In its very nature, it is metaphorical, that is, it points to something else beyond itself. This ‘something else’ is the very core of Jesus’ message and is, by that very fact, the core of the spirituality of religious life. The distinctive note of the religious life does not reside in the fact that it has a distinctive content, but rather in the fact that it is a concrete, symbolic expression of the Gospel in a metaphorical form of life. Religious life is a Prophecy. It is a visionary commitment to the betterment of the human condition as ‘prophetic’, regardless of the source or context of the commitment. Two basic conditions for prophecy are religious motivation and ecclesial location. Religious men and women are having religious motivation for all their projects and activities. For the religious, the Gospel provides the vision, and the primary means for the realization of that vision is the being and activity of the Church in the world\textsuperscript{101}.

Numerous are the teachings of Religious and Human Promotion (Plenaria of the Sacred Congregation for Religious and for Secular Institutes, 25-28 April 1978) that highlight the

\textsuperscript{100} ibid 123-135
\textsuperscript{101} ibid 128-135
prophetic dimension of religious life. Religious are called to give singular witness to the prophetic dimension\textsuperscript{102}. The activities and "social works" which were always part of the mission of religious bear witness to their constant commitment to integral human promotion. Schools, hospitals, charity centres and initiatives on behalf of the poor and for the cultural and spiritual improvement of people not only retain their relevance but, suitably updated. They have to be the privileged means of evangelization, of witness and of authentic human promotion\textsuperscript{103}. The same document explains that religious, by their choice of life, limit their participation in secular structures, but it does not mean to alienate themselves from the actions of the other members of the Church in building the secular city as a place capable of receiving the kingdom of God (LG 46). However, they are present to it in their own special way, not by substituting for other groups in the Church either in duties or methods, but by becoming an increasingly radical sign of an evangelical way of life and of involvement through the public witness of their profession which is carried out communally in all its dimensions\textsuperscript{104}.

Three images that capture well in the three-fold role of consecrated women are: “mother” to give birth to a new culture, mystic to contemplate God in all of reality and prophetess to construct an alternative future for the Church and Society. By being fully who they are, consecrated women build up the Church and Society. “These sisters fully consecrated and fully women are the true, authentic answer to the challenge of the present day.”\textsuperscript{105} Being reminded of the words of St. Bernard, Bishop Peter Abir says, “I admire them all. I belong to one of them by observance, but to all of them by charity. Indeed, in a world of self-centeredness / selfishness, a life consecrated to Christ and hence to society, and specially, to

\textsuperscript{102} Sacred Congregation for Religious and for Secular Institutes(1978, April 25-28). \textit{Plenaria Religious and Human Promotion.} Introduction

\textsuperscript{103} Ibid 6

\textsuperscript{104} Ibid 23

\textsuperscript{105} John paul II(1996), \textit{Apostolic Exhortation Vita Consecrata} , 79
the poor and the marginalized, is to be revered. As we understand consecrated life, it is not an occupational enterprise or a service organization like the NGO. Also, a consecrated religious is known not by his/her mission or service, but by his/her life. What counts most is not what religious do, but what they are as persons consecrated to Jesus”.

5.8. Conclusion

Religious formation is to prepare the formee for the total consecration of themselves to God in the following of Christ, at the service of the people. It is to permit the candidate to the religious life to discover and to assimilate the religious identity. Various formation stages are to assist the gradual growth of the formee to the perfection of religious life in being and acting. Formation is also intended to prepare the formee to live in a community and to do the activities specific to the charism of the Congregation. The formation must be in various aspects such as human, psychological, spiritual and sociological. Social context also has great influence in the formation. Gender sensitive formation and cultural formation are also having great impact in the formation programme.

Formation in the Holy Bible is pointed out as a model for the formation of religious women. In the old Testament God, the formator prepares the people of Israel to dedicate themselves for the mission they are entrusted with. The process of formation in the New Testament lays particular stress on commitment to the person of Christ and service to the poor. Formation in various traditions too insists on preparing the formee to lead a life of contemplation and action. Formation to lead a life of prayer, a life of dedication by profession of vows, life in a community and a life of selfless service are the essential elements in every Congregations. Formation in Indian tradition is focused on interiorization. This Asram formation is through

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Sravana, Manana and Nididhyasana. In this tradition, the disciple is impregnated with the Divine Mystery and attains unity and oneness with God.

The teaching of the Church is very important in all the times. The consecrated life is placed at the heart of the church by a number of documents. The *Lumen Gentium*, the Dogmatic Constitution of Vatican Council II on the Church recommends the gradual introduction of the candidate to the peculiar life–style of the religious Congregations. The Decree on the *Renewal of religious life* exhorts the need of returning to the original spirit of Congregation. The Instruction of the Renewal of religious life, *Renovatini Causam* is also a basic text in the formation of religious life. *Directives on formation in the religious institutes* given by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and for Societies of Apostolic Life considers the need to form religious so as to meet the requirements and expectations of the contemporary world.

The post-synodal exhortation of Pope John Paul II, *Vita Consecrata* reminds that the very purpose of consecrated life is conformity to the Lord in his total self-giving. In the document, *Witness of Joy*, Pope Francis exhorts the entire community to join in finding new ways of living the Gospel and responding more effectively to the needs of the time. For formation to be effective, it must be based on a strictly personal pedagogy and not limited to just one solution of values, spiritualities, times, styles and ways.

Christians and very specially religious persons have to embody the ideal of discipleship proposed by the Gospel. There is an inseparable connection between discipleship and the service of the Kingdom of God. By being fully who they are, the consecrated women build up the church and society. Formation of women religious must be person oriented, society oriented, and marginalized oriented.