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HUMAN FORMATION IN MAJOR SEMINARIES
Seminar cum Workshop
10-13 February 2017
Dharmaram College, Bangalore

Dharmaram College, on the occasion of the Diamond Jubilee of its foundation in Bangalore in 1957, conducted a four-day national level seminar cum workshop (10-13 February, 2017) on “Human Formation in Major Seminaries,” to appreciate and celebrate the gift of priesthood and to evaluate the effectiveness of human formation, and its relation to the intellectual, spiritual and pastoral formation, so that we have ‘shepherds after the heart of the Good Shepherd.’ It was a providential coincidence that the seminar began on the birthday of St Kuriakose Elias Chavara who gave pioneering services in the field of priestly formation, beginning with the foundation of a seminary in 1833 at Mannanam, even before the community was canonically established in 1855.

The Concept

The Church has always considered the formation of future priests as one of its most demanding and important tasks. This task has become all the more challenging in the socio-cultural context of today, marked by new and rapid changes. It is a demanding task for the formators to understand the changing dimensions of the culture and the candidates coming from that culture, and to accompany them in the process of becoming shepherds after the heart of the Shepherd. Formation involves various dimensions, namely, human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral.

Pastores Dabo Vobis as well as subsequent documents of the Church has highlighted human formation as the basis of all priestly formation: “The priest, who is called to be a ‘living image’ of Jesus Christ, head and shepherd of the Church, should seek to reflect in himself, as far as possible, the human perfection which shines forth in the incarnate Son of God and which is reflected with particular

liveliness in his attitudes toward others as we see narrated in the Gospels... In order that his ministry may be humanly as credible and acceptable as possible, it is important that the priest should mold his human personality in such a way that it becomes a bridge and not an obstacle for others in their meeting with Jesus Christ the Redeemer of humanity" (Paragraph 43). Moreover, they are to be inculcated in the capacity to relate with others, and to attain affective maturity, which involves an education in true and responsible love (paragraphs 43, 44). Pope Francis has reminded us that, "Human formation is therefore a necessity for priests so that they learn not to be dominated by their limitations, but instead to build on their talents" (November 2015). He has repeatedly emphasised the importance of cultivating human qualities of compassion, understanding and mercy, and thus to become "shepherds with the smell of the sheep."

Many formators feel that human formation of the candidates for priesthood must be given more attention. Although formation is an ongoing process which may never be complete at any given point of time, it is felt that even at the time of the major seminary studies, the level of human formation achieved by many is below the ideal presented and expected. This seminar cum workshop was, therefore an attempt to respond to this need, with special references to the Indian situation.

Organization

This seminar was organised under the guidance of Rev. Fr Paul Achandy, CMI, our Prior General. In spite of his busy schedule, he was personally involved in the selection of the theme and the planning. Moreover, Fr Prior General participated in the whole seminar. The organisation of the seminar was entrusted to Rev. Fr Thomas Aykara, the Rector of Dharmaram College. Although the plan was to have 80-100 participants, more than 140 priests from 46 major seminaries in India participated in the seminar.

Advisory Committee: This seminar was organised in collaboration with other major seminaries in India. Accordingly, the Rectors of a few major seminaries were invited to join the advisory committee of the seminar. The members of the Advisory committee: Edward Mudavassery, SJ (Rector, *De Nobili College, Pune*); Joy Ainiyandan (Rector, *St Thomas Apostolic Seminary, Vadavathoor*); Mathew Illathuparampil (Rector, *St Joseph Pontifical Seminary, Aluva*); Joseph Felix Michael (Rector, *Sacred Heart Seminary, Poonamallee, Chennai*); Joseph Mathias, SJ (Rector, *St Peter's Seminary, Bangalore*); James

Kadankavil, SDB (*Rector, Kristu Jyothi College, Bangalore*); Shaji Thomas Manikulam (*Rector, St Mary's Malankara Seminary, Trivandrum*); Linus Neli (*Rector, Oriens Theological College, Shillong*); Anicento Pereira (*Rector, St Pius College, Mumbai*). The Advisory Committee members offered their whole hearted support, giving suggestions and guidelines in the planning and execution of the programme.

Besides the heads of various units of Dharmaram, the deans and heads of DVK, the rectors of the CMI seminaries in North India, namely, Davis Varayilan, CMI (*Rector, Samanvaya Theology College, Bhopal*), Sebastian Alackappally, CMI (*Rector, Darsana Philosophate, Wardha*) and Antony Puthanangady, CMI (*Rector, Carmel Vidya Bhavan, Pune*), were invited to join the steering committee of the seminar.

The Proceedings of the Seminar

The inaugural session, which was attended also by the students of DVK, took place at 11.00 am on 10 February 2017 in the BJTM Hall at Dharmaram College. The session began with a prayer led by the brothers of third year theology. Fr Thomas Aykara, CMI (*Rector*) welcomed the gathering, highlighting the CMI-Dharmaram legacy in priestly formation. In the inaugural address, Moran Mor Baselios Cardinal Cleemis, President of the CBCI and Catholicos of the Syro-Malankara Church, reaffirming the foundational importance of human formation, said: "Priestly formation without the basic human qualities and virtues will remain merely an academic exercise." Rev Fr Paul Achandy, CMI (*Prior General, CMI Congregation*), in his presidential address reminded the participants that the art of parenting is a matter of education and training. Both the seminarians and the formators should remember that "I cannot be a good priest and religious, if I am not a good human being," said Fr Prior General. We need to focus on the emotional quotient to face the challenges of VUCA by CMI: Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity of the contemporary society where we live and serve demands Contextualised Multiple Intelligence (CMI) – that was the message of Thomas C. Mathew (*Vice-Chancellor, Christ University*). The inaugural session was concluded with the vote of thanks proposed by Fr Anto Amarnad, CMI, followed by Dharmaram Anthem.

In the first session with Rev Fr Joseph Mathias, SJ (*Rector, St Peter's Seminary, Bangalore*) at the Chair, the orientation paper on Human Formation was given by Rev Sr Katarina Schuth, OSF who has

academic excellence and long years of service in the field of priestly formation in the US. The human formation programme in the seminaries is to enable the seminarians to grow in emotional maturity, to become men of integrity with a sensitive moral conscience leading to admirable moral behaviour. She also presented the year-wise, Organization and Implementation of Human Formation Programs at St Pauls Seminary Minnesota, US. Rev Fr Linus Neli (*Rector, Oriens Theological College, Shillong*) presented a paper on the Human Formation in the magisterial documents of the Church. Referring to 21 documents from the magisterium on priestly formation, Fr Linus insisted that both the formators and the seminarians should know the mind of the church and fulfil it in the local context as they participate in the great gift and task of priestly formation. Rev Frs Joy Philip Kakkanattu, CMI & Sebastian Mulloparampil, CMI (*DVK-Dharmaram College*), made it clear that Jesus in the Gospels is the model for human formation both for the formator and the seminarian. As formation is fundamentally a process of configuring to the person of Jesus, we need to learn and practice the human qualities of Jesus. The day concluded with a Bible service led by the third year theology students, followed by a dinner hosted by DVK.

On Saturday, 11 February, 2017, His Grace Bernard Moras, Archbishop of Bangalore, presided over the Eucharistic celebration and preached on the theme of Good Shepherd and reminded the participants the importance of priestly formation.

There were three papers on different aspects of human formation in the third session, chaired by Fr Joseph Felix Michael (*Rector, Sacred Heart Seminary, Poonamallee, Chennai*). Fr George Manalel, VC (*De Paul Institute of Counselling and Clergy Affirmation Centre, Ernakulam*) spoke on Developing Human Qualities, reminding that it is not the instinctive pleasure principle that should guide us in formation but reality principle. Fr Mathew Illathuparampil (*Rector, St Joseph Seminary, Aluva*) presented an excellent paper on Formation of Conscience in the Seminaries. Fr Ittoop Panikulam, SVD (*Gyan Ashram, Inter-Spiritual Dialogue Point, Mumbai*) dwelt on Ongoing Human Formation of Formators. The papers were the result of their academic research and experience from the field, and were followed by clarifications and discussions.

In the following session, Sr Virginia, SAB (*Bangalore*) spoke 'Perspectives of a Religious Sister' on human formation in major

seminaries, in the light of her experience, especially as a visiting professor in various major seminaries. With great respect for the gift of priesthood, and expectations of the people of God, she pointed out some aspects where the formators and priests should pay greater attention to be gender sensitive and inclusive in their attitudes and actions.

The papers in the afternoon session examined further into aspects of human formation and personality development. Fr Dinesh Braganza, SJ (*JDV, Pune*) spoke on Affective Maturity; Fr Gabriel Mathias, OFM (*St Anthony's Friary, Bangalore*) on Psycho-Sexual Formation, and Sr Katarina Schuth, OSF on Integrating Sexuality, Celibacy and Intimacy. The papers were well studied with practical suggestions for improving the human formation programme, taking into account the rich resources in psychology and counselling. They pointed out the need of helping seminarians achieve affective maturity, and addressed the issues of sexual misconduct and sexual abuse by the clergy, and suggested methods to curb such incidents in future by focusing on attaining sexual maturity during the formation.

During the evening session chaired by Fr Sebastian Alackappally, CMI (*Rector, Darsana Philosophate, Wardha*) Mr Sibichen K. Mathew, IRS (*Commissioner of Income Tax; St Thomas Parish, Bangalore*) and Dr Olinda Tims (*St John's Research Institute; Francis Xavier's Cathedral Parish, Bangalore*) gave the laity's perspectives on human formation in seminaries. The sharing was particularly useful, as it was important to know the mind of the lay people and there was consensus that more lay people could be involved in the seminary formation. The day concluded with a meditation singing bhajans led by Fr Anto Amarnad, CMI, and the brothers of the first year philosophy, followed by a dinner hosted by Christ University.

On Sunday, 12 February, 2017, Bishop Mar Antony Kariyil (*Bishop of Mandya*) presided over the Eucharistic liturgy and spoke on the differences between the formation during the pre-and post Vatican II periods. Narrating his own experiences, he highlighted how the formation in the post-Vatican II period has become more person-centred.

In the ninth session chaired by Fr James Kadankavil, SDB (*Rector, Kristu Jyothi College, Bangalore*), Fr Viju Painadath, CMI (*Christ University-Dharmaram College, Bangalore*) and Wilson Chakkyath, CMI (*DVK-Dharmaram College, Bangalore*) spoke on Relationship with One's Own Seminary Community based on a survey of over 400

seminarians. Fr Konrad Noronha, SJ (*JDV, Pune*), basing on an online survey among seminarians, expanded the dynamics of Relationship with One's Own Family, with the Pastoral Community and with the Wider Society. Msgr Tomy Tharayil (*Auxiliary Bishop Designate, Changanacherry*) spoke on the Impact of Internet, Social Networking Sites, etc. on Human Formation based on his studies and experience with seminarians.

In the afternoon session the presentations were on other aspects of priestly formation and their relation to human formation. Rev Fr Aniceto Pereira (*Rector, St Pius College, Mumbai*) chaired the session. Fr Jose Mariadas, OIC spoke on Intellectual Pursuit and Human Formation, Fr Ajoy Fernandes, SDB (*Prafula-Matunga, Mumbai*) on Spiritual Life and Human Formation, Fr Jacob Parappally, MSFS (*Tejas Vidya Peeth, Bangalore*) on Human Formation and Leadership Skills, and Fr Joseph Thannickal, SDB (*OGFC at Nitika Don Bosco, Kolkata*) on Formation to Maturity through Fuller Experiencing: Exploring Formative Potentials in Adversities, Failures and Sufferings.

In the evening session, Chaired by Fr Dominic Vechoor (*Vice-Rector, St Thomas Apostolic Seminary, Vadavathoor*) three Newly Ordained Priests – Fr Lancy Dias, SJ (studies in Pune), Fr David Nesan (Chennai) and Fr Jobin Thayil, CMI (Bangalore) – gave a critical appraisal of the human formation that they had received, especially in the light of their present priestly ministry. The sharing was appreciated by the participants as they gave a window to how the young priests look at their long years of formation. The session was followed by a prayer session led by the brothers of D-Section. The day concluded with a dinner hosted at Dharmaram in honour of the participants, and cultural programmes staged by Dharmaram brothers.

The Holy Eucharistic celebration on the final day was in the Syro Malankara rite with Bishop Joshua Mar Ignathios (*Bishop of Mavelikara*) as the main celebrant. In his homily he asked both the formators and the seminarians to be compassionate and merciful in their life and ministry.

In the concluding session, chaired by Fr Francis Thonippara, CMI (*Director, Vinayasadhara, DVK*), Fr Jose Nandhikkara, CMI (*DVK-Dharmaram College, Bangalore*) through his Briefing of the Seminar Sessions refreshed the participants and shared with the DVK student community the proceedings of the seminar. Sr Katarina Schuth, OSF,

in her third and final paper spoke on Human Formation: Challenges Today, and Fr Edward Mudavassery, SJ (*Rector, De Nobili College, Pune*) on Human Formation in the Major Seminaries in India: Challenges and Responses.

The concluding session was held in the John Britto Chethimattam (JBC) Auditorium at DVK. Fr Paulachan Kochappilly, CMI (*President, DVK*) welcomed the gathering, underscoring the contribution of DVK to priestly formation. In his concluding message, His Beatitude Mar George Cardinal Alencherry (*Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church*) spoke especially on the missionary dimension, pointing to the document, *Priestly Formation in the Syro-Malabar Church*. Rev Fr Paul Achandy CMI reiterated the importance of priestly formation and thanked and congratulated Dharmaram community, especially Fr Thomas Aykara CMI, the convenors and others involved in the organisation of a very successful seminar cum workshop. Fr Thomas Aykara led the concluding prayer and the Major Archbishop gave his blessings on the gathering. Fr Shaji George Kochuthara CMI proposed the voted of thanks.

The seminar cum workshop was indeed a great gift of God with over twenty presentations from highly trained and experienced resource people who had direct contact with priestly formation. All the aspects of human formation were systematically examined, presented and discussed. It was indeed a rich experience to see so many Rectors and formators committed to the ministry of priestly formation with love and care. It was also rewarding to see how the sisters and lay men and women look up to priests with love and respect for greater maturity, care and holiness. We hope and pray that this seminar cum workshop and the follow-up would result in enjoyable and fruitful priestly formation and effective and faithful priestly ministry.

We are indebted to all the resource persons for presenting well-prepared papers and for actively participating all through the seminar. We should particularly mention Sr Katarina Schuth who came all the way from the USA, and who presented three papers for the seminar. In each session, after the presentation of papers, 20-25 minutes were allotted for clarifications and discussion on the papers. Besides, the session following each plenary session was dedicated completely for discussion in groups. The reports of the group discussions were presented in the plenary, followed by discussion. The leaders and secretaries of various groups deserve great

appreciation. Fr Jomy George Pantiruvellil, CMI, offered his service as the secretary for the discussions in the plenary.

The brothers of Dharmaram College deserve great appreciation and gratitude for perfectly arranging everything for the smooth functioning of the seminar. Reverend Fathers and Bro. Joseph Muttanolil worked day and night to coordinate all the work. The leadership given by Fr Thomas Aykara, our Rector is praiseworthy. Above all, it was a programme taken up by Dharmaram community with one heart and one soul! A fitting celebration of its Diamond Jubilee!

The papers of the seminar will be published within a few months. Under the leadership of Fr Prior General and Fr Rector, we are also planning to continue this network of major seminaries in India.

To be a priest and to be involved in the priestly formation are indeed God's great gifts and privileged moments of grace. May St Kuriakose Elias continue to inspire and intercede for us so that the formation that we give and receive in the seminaries in India result in mature and integrated priests who follow the Good shepherd knowingly, willingly and lovingly. If only we knew the gift of God!

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