

Community Life: A Salesian Perspective for Initial Priestly Formation

Sanjit Kumar Kujur

Institute of Formative Spirituality and Counselling, DVK, Bengaluru

Abstract

The author of this article explores the significance of community life in initial priestly formation from the perspectives of the Salesians of Don Bosco. It examines the principles and values derived from the teachings of St. John Bosco, the founder of the Salesian order, emphasising the importance of a vibrant and supportive community in shaping the holistic development of future priests. It explores the practical implications of community living, such as fostering fraternity, mutual support, and collaboration, while also highlighting the formation of authentic relationships and the cultivation of virtues. By emphasising community life, this paper advocates for nurturing a strong and cohesive initial priestly formation, empowering individuals to grow spiritually, intellectually, and emotionally in their journey toward priesthood in the community.

Keywords: Community Life, Initial Formation, Psychology, and Salesian Perspectives

Introduction

In the context of initial priestly formation, the theme of Community Life from a Salesian perspective holds significant importance. The Salesian approach to community life is deeply rooted in the teachings and charism of St. John Bosco, the founder of the Salesians of Don Bosco (General Chapter 25, 2002, p. 7). This unique perspective emphasises the formation of a vibrant and inclusive community that

fosters the holistic development of individuals preparing for the priesthood. At the heart of this perspective lies the belief that genuine and meaningful relationships within the community play a pivotal role in nurturing future priests' spiritual growth and personal transformation (General Chapter 21, 1978, p. 245).

The Salesian understanding of community life for initial priestly formation revolves around creating an environment of fraternity, solidarity, and collaboration. Salesian communities are characterised by a sense of belonging, where each member is valued and respected for their unique gifts and talents. This perspective recognises that the journey towards priesthood cannot be undertaken in isolation but requires a supportive and nurturing communal setting. Within such a community, young men preparing for the priesthood are encouraged to grow spiritually, intellectually, and emotionally, fostering a strong sense of self-awareness and personal responsibility. By living and sharing their lives in the community, they learn essential virtues such as humility, patience, and compassion, which are vital for their future pastoral ministry (*The Project of Life of the Salesians of Don Bosco*, 1987, pp. 783–786). Therefore, the Salesian perspective on community life for initial priestly formation highlights the importance of building authentic and transformative relationships that prepare future priests to serve and accompany others with love and understanding.

General Understanding of Community Life

Community life encompasses the interactions, relationships, and shared experiences among individuals residing in a specific area or sharing common interests. It revolves around the principles of unity, cooperation, and support (Messner, 1967, p. 80). In a community, people build connections, foster a sense of belonging, and work collectively towards common goals. Community life involves social, cultural, and economic participation, promoting social cohesion and a shared identity. It includes community organisations, events, and initiatives that address local needs, promote inclusivity, and facilitate collaboration. Through community life, individuals develop a sense of responsibility, engagement, and mutual support, creating a thriving environment that enhances its members' overall well-being and quality of life (Messner, 1967, p. 81).

Etymological Understanding of Community Life

The term ‘community’ originates from the Latin word ‘*cum-unitas*.’ The term ‘*cum*’ means with and conveys the idea of being together in multiple ways. ‘*Unitas*’ signifies unity, and the suffix ‘*tas*’ represents an abstract notion of togetherness (Puthiadam & Selvaraj, 2008, p. 166). Therefore, a community is formed when several things or individuals come together in a sense of unity (BS, 2017, p. 246). However, it is essential to note that a community requires more than just multiplicity; it necessitates a common thread that unites the many. For example, we refer to neighbourhood communities bound together by geographical proximity. We are also familiar with Christian, Hindu, and specific caste communities, where members are connected by shared religious beliefs or caste affiliations (Puthiadam & Selvaraj, 2008, p. 166). Additionally, we can speak of political communities, where diverse groups are united by common objectives, goals, or affiliations. Throughout the world, numerous communities are formed and maintained through various bonds (Messner, 1967, p. 80).

Psychological Understanding of Community Life

Psychology encompasses diverse perspectives on human maturity, including community life. Positive psychology highlights factors that foster human well-being, particularly in the context of Community (Thurackal, 2023, p.240). It explores the positive impact of a supportive community, positive relationships, and a sense of belonging, leading to increased happiness and life satisfaction (Zheng and Huang, 2020). Humanistic psychology emphasises personal growth, self-actualisation, and subjective experiences, emphasising how nurturing communities promote self-esteem, well-being, and a sense of purpose (Anatharackel, 2001, pp. 32–38). Developmental psychology studies psychological changes throughout life, focusing on socialisation, attachment, and peer interactions as crucial factors in shaping individuals’ development, social skills, and community functioning at different life stages (Thurackal, 2023, 236). Adler emphasises social interest, empathy, goal-setting, and personal responsibility as essential for human maturity. Individuals can lead meaningful lives and contribute positively to society by developing these qualities (Adler, 1994). In summary, psychology sheds light on the significance of community life, underscoring the role of supportive environments and interpersonal connections in enhancing individual well-being and societal harmony.

Origin of Religious Community

When we trace the origins of religious life, we discover that the monastic life led by the desert fathers and mothers served as the source and foundation for religious institutes. These devoted individuals primarily led lives of solitude, often residing in caves. Over time, these monks began to congregate, thus fostering the growth of community living (Peters, 2014, pp. 1–2). However, their communal existence initially lacked a firm structure. St. Pachomius provided a definitive form and practice to community life during this period (Smith, 1967, p. 290). The emergence of this monastic tradition during the second century consequently laid the cornerstone for present-day religious life centred around communal living. In the Western world, St. Benedict promoted community life as an essential spiritual lifestyle. Following Pachomius, St. Augustine further developed the monastic life in a communal fashion in the East. During this era, the spirituality of religious life predominantly revolved around community living, with the spiritual growth of individual members intricately connected to the well-being of their community and vice versa (Peters, 2014, p. 11).

Old Testament Understanding of Community Life

Community life was important in the Old Testament and central to ancient Israel's religious and social fabric. It explores how the OT presents various aspects of community life, including communal worship, shared responsibilities, covenant relationships, and the community's pursuit of justice and righteousness.

Communitarian Creation

Communitarian creation plays a vital role in the basis of community life in the Old Testament. God shows that people need community in the creation story (Gen 1: 26 and 2:18). God's plan for humans includes a strong desire for connection and relationships. When God made Eve as a partner for Adam, He revealed His intention for people to have essential and connected relationships (Marangathu, 2023, p. 21). It reflects God's nature as a Father, Son, and Holy Spirit community. From the start, God made the community an essential part of human life, stressing the significance of friendship, support, and shared experiences (CCC, no. 234).

Divine Covenant and Faithful Partner

The covenantal relationship is one of the most essential aspects of the communitarian basis in the OT. God forms a covenant with the Israelites, highlighting their shared responsibility and accountability within the community (Valles, 1984, pp. 7–9). This covenant is more than a personal agreement; it unites the community, binding them together in their relationship with God and one another. The covenant establishes a mutual commitment and loyalty, emphasising the communal nature of their relationship with God. It accentuates the importance of collective obedience, worship, and care for one another (Ex 19:5; 24: 7–8; Deut 7:6, and 7:12–26). This covenantal bond fosters a sense of unity, shared identity, and a shared destiny. It shapes the Israelite Community, emphasising their interconnectedness and the significance of their collective faith journey (Karakkadayil & Puthanpurackal, 2014, p. 21).

Compassionate Justice in the Community

The OT consistently highlights the significance of love and justice in human relationships. The book of Leviticus says, “Love your neighbour as yourself” (Lev 19:18). It highlights the commandment to treat others with compassion and care. Again, in Micah, the word of God repeats this sentiment, calling for the practice of justice, kindness, and humility (cf. Mic 6:8). Throughout the prophetic literature, there is a constant appeal to uphold justice, protect the vulnerable, and seek righteousness. It calls for fairness, equality, and doing what is right. Love and justice go hand in hand, as love motivates acts of justice, and justice ensures that love is expressed in equitable treatment for all. It establishes a moral framework for community life, emphasising the value of love, fairness, and compassion as essential pillars for harmonious and just relationships (Marangattu, p. 28–29).

Sacred Gatherings and Collective Celebrations

In the Old Testament, communal worship and festivals held a significant place in the life of the Israelite Community. They are instructed to gather for communal worship and observe festivals together. In Exodus, God commands us to come to Him three times a year (Ex 23:17). In Leviticus, God says, “These are the appointed festivals of the Lord that you shall proclaim as holy convocations, my appointed festivals” (Lev 23:2–4). It includes celebrations of the Feast of Passover (Ex 12:14), the Feast of Weeks (Leviticus 23:15-16), and the Feast of Tabernacles (Lev

23:34). These gatherings provided an opportunity for the community to express their devotion, offer sacrifices, and give thanks to God as a unified body (Ps 122:1). These gatherings not only strengthened their relationship with God but also deepened their bonds as a community, creating a sacred space for collective worship and celebration (Peter, 2015, p. 112).

Communion Learning and Growth

The book of Proverbs offers valuable wisdom for communal living, emphasising the significance of seeking counsel, listening to advice, and learning from the experiences of others. It states, “Where there is no guidance, a nation falls, but in an abundance of counsellors there is safety” (Prov 11:14). Again, it continues, “Without counsel, plans go wrong, but with many advisers, they succeed (Prov 15:22) These verses highlight the importance of seeking and heeding wise counsel within the community. Proverbs 27:17 also emphasises the role of community in personal growth. People can learn, grow, and become wiser through communal interaction. In short, it is in the ways of a communal approach to wisdom, recognising the value of shared knowledge, advice, and learning from the experiences of others to live wisely and harmoniously (Kaitholil, 2001, pp. 13–41).

New Testament Understanding of Community Life

The NT offers a profound understanding of community life, highlighting the Gospel’s transformative power in shaping relationships and fostering unity among believers. It explores the fundamental principles of New Testament community life, such as love, fellowship, mutual support, spiritual gifts, and the call to serve and bear witness to the world.

Building a Christ-Centered Community Through Unity and Love

Unity and love are fundamental principles in the New Testament for community life. It underscores the indispensable role of unity and love within the community of believers, vividly observed in the early Christians who wholeheartedly dedicated themselves to fellowship, communal sharing, and collective worship, exemplifying a cohesive and affectionate community (Acts 2:42–47). Their resolute unity in purpose and selfless love bore witness to their unwavering commitment to Christ.(Varickasseril, 2015, p. 302) Moreover, Jesus, in His profound command, urged His disciples to exhibit a love akin to His own, encapsulating the depth of His sacrificial love on the cross

(Jn 13:34–35). This altruistic love, mirroring Christ’s unparalleled act, is an undeniable testament to their genuine discipleship. These verses exemplify the foundational significance of unity and love in cultivating a thriving and impactful community that radiates the very character of Christ.(Paredes, 2017, p. 131)

Nurturing Spiritual Growth Through Exhortation and Teaching in Community Life

Exhortation and teaching are vital in community life, promoting mutual edification and spiritual growth. In his letter to the Colossians, St. Paul teaches and admonishes one another with wisdom, utilising psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (Col 3:16). It fosters a rich environment of encouragement and guidance. In the letter to the Hebrews, the believers are urged to gather together, offering mutual support and motivation in love and good works (10:24-25). These exhortations and teachings are significant in the community as they contribute to the development and strengthening of its members. Through sharing wisdom, encouragement, and spiritual instruction, believers uplift and edify one another, fostering a thriving and spiritually nourishing faith community.(Paredes, 2020, pp. 141–145) Moreover, the community member possesses unique spiritual gifts and service bestowed by the Holy Spirit to serve the body of Christ. Therefore, they must be shared for the common good in the community (1 Cor 12:12–27; Rom 12:4–8).

Communion Through Forgiveness and Reconciliation

Forgiveness and reconciliation play crucial roles within community life. In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus presents a blueprint for believers to seek reconciliation and address conflicts among fellow community members (Mt 18:15–17). Similarly, St. Paul exhorts believers to mirror God’s forgiveness by displaying kindness, compassion, and a forgiving spirit towards one another (Eph 4:32). Additionally, believers are encouraged to bear with one another and extend forgiveness, just as the Lord has graciously forgiven them (Col 3:13). Furthermore, Jesus highlights the connection between forgiveness and receiving God’s forgiveness (Mt 6:14–15). we can say that community life highlights the immense significance of forgiveness and reconciliation in nurturing healthy relationships, fostering unity, and embodying the mercy and grace bestowed upon believers through Christ. By embracing forgiveness, the community can experience healing, restoration, and strengthened bonds

of love (Mullahy, 1955, p. 146). Hence, forgiveness and reconciliation are vital pillars of community life.

Nourishing Community Strength Through Prayer and Mutual Support

Prayer and mutual support hold immense significance within the fabric of community life. A true Christian community stands united in ardent prayer and offers unwavering support to one another, particularly during times of persecution (Acts 12:5). In this way, the community becomes a wellspring of encouragement and upliftment, continually strengthening its members through prayer and support (1 Thes 5:11). The power of communal prayer and the transformative impact of mutual support become catalysts for deepening the bonds within the community (Karimaloor, 2014, pp. 36–38). Furthermore, communal living fosters an environment of vulnerability and transparency, where individuals can freely confess their sins to one another, leading to healing and restoration (Jas 5:16). The community members humbly present their requests to God through prayer and supplication on behalf of one another (Phil 4:6). Each member is called to actively engage in a joint effort, striving together in prayer alongside their fellow community members (Zollner, 2009, pp. 32–36). Ultimately, the collective experience of community life emphasises the indispensable role of prayer and mutual support in cultivating a united, resilient, and spiritually flourishing Community (Rom 15:30).

Conciliar Understanding of Community Life

LG recognises that religious individuals in religious communities receive substantial support and care, enabling them to commit themselves fully. When bound by brotherly and sisterly communion, they experience lives of faithfulness, security, and joy, continually growing in love and holiness (Vatican II, 1965, *LG*, no. 43). *VC* emphasises that within community life, fraternal communion surpasses its role as a mere tool for mission – it becomes a sacred space where the Risen Lord is present. The love shared among community members, nourished by the Word and Eucharist, purified through reconciliation, and sustained by prayer for unity, establishes a deep communion with God and fosters a sense of genuine fraternity (John Paul II, 1996, *VC*, no. 42). *PC* underscores the importance of common life, prayer, and the cultivation of a shared spirit among religious communities. United in unity and nourished by the Gospel and the Eucharist, these

communities prioritise one another, bear each other's burdens, and find strength in their togetherness. With unwavering faith, love, and hope, they are called to spread the good news of Christ on a global scale, bringing glory to God (Vatican II, 1966, *PC*, no.15 and 25). *RD* asserts that the religious life, rooted in the Gospel and enriched by the Eucharist, embraces a communal and caring nature. Through support and burden-sharing, the unity of believers tangibly manifests Christ's presence. Sensitivity to individual needs and suffering is crucial for an effective apostolate within the Church in today's world (John Paul II, 1984, *RD*, no.15).

Theological Understanding of Community Life

The Holy Trinity is the theological foundation and inspiration behind the concept of community life. The consecrated life is profoundly Trinitarian, rooted in the example and teachings of Christ the Lord. It is a gift from God the Father to His Church through the Holy Spirit. God is one, yet not solitary; He exists as a community of persons, and each person is equal in substance, majesty, and power (Thomas, 2023, p. 194). The Catechism of the Catholic Church affirms that the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity is central to the Christian faith and life, as it reveals the very nature of God Himself. This mystery of the triune God serves as a model for the ideal religious community—a community of love. Such a community is a living expression and privileged fulfilment of the Trinitarian communion, in which the Father desires that men and women participate through the Son and the Holy Spirit (CCC, no. 234). Just as the three persons of the Blessed Trinity are united in love, those specially called, set apart, and consecrated by God should live in love for one another. Love is the essence of God's life, for God is love, and anyone who abides in love abides in God and God in them (1 John 4:16). Therefore, when we love sincerely, we manifest the presence of the Triune God in our hearts. This love, or communion, is nurtured through daily prayer, drawing inspiration from the Word of God, and participating in the Holy Eucharist (Kalathikattil, 2017, pp. 173–180).

Importance of Community Life in SDB

Community life is vital in the Salesians of Don Bosco. It forms the foundation for their mission of educating and guiding young people (C.no.2). Salesians cultivate a sense of belonging, mutual support, and spiritual growth through a supportive and cohesive community (General Chapter 27, 2014, p. 8). This nurturing environment facilitates

personal and professional development, enabling Salesians to serve youth effectively. Collaborative living promotes sharing experiences and learning from one another, enhancing their mission (C.no.22, 44, and 49). By fostering a sense of family, Salesians create an inspiring atmosphere that nurtures their holistic development and the young people they serve, ensuring a vibrant and fulfilling community life (C.no.16).

Welcoming and Accepting Atmosphere

The Salesians of Don Bosco community is characterised by a welcoming and accepting atmosphere. It embraces individuals from different backgrounds, cultures, and experiences, fostering an environment of inclusivity and understanding (General Chapter 20, 1971, p. 493). This sense of welcome and acceptance creates a space where everyone feels valued, respected, and supported. It promotes a spirit of unity and collaboration, where differences are celebrated and contributes to the richness of the community (General Chapter 20, 1971, p. 487). In this environment, individuals are encouraged to be authentic, fostering personal growth and a deep sense of belonging. This welcoming and accepting atmosphere is fundamental to the Salesian Community, enabling individuals to thrive and create meaningful connections with one another (*The Project of Life of the Salesians of Don Bosco*, 1987, pp. 450–473).

Salesian Community as the Trinitarian Mystery

The Salesian Community beautifully mirrors the Trinitarian mystery. Just as the Trinity embodies a perfect unity in diversity (Vatican II, *LG*, no. 4 and 5), the Don Bosco Salesians exemplify this profound reality through their community. United by their shared mission of serving young people, Salesians form a diverse and harmonious individual coming together. They live in communion, embracing their unique gifts and backgrounds while working together towards a common purpose. This Trinitarian reflection fosters love, collaboration, and mutual support within the Salesian Community. Like the Trinity, the Salesians strive for unity in diversity, creating a vibrant and transformative environment that genuinely reflects the mystery of the Triune God (*The Project of Life of the Salesians of Don Bosco*, 1987, pp. 452–454).

Solidarity and Collaboration: The Heart of Salesian Community Life

The Salesian Community embodies the principles of solidarity and collaboration, fostering a spirit of unity and cooperation (C. no.50).

Through a shared mission and a collective sense of purpose, members support one another and work together to create a harmonious environment (General Chapter 23, 1990, p. 218). By actively engaging in open communication, mutual respect, love, and recognising individual strengths, the Salesian Community thrives on collaboration. This mindset is further nurtured through joint projects, teamwork, and inclusive decision-making processes. By embracing these values, the Salesian Community fosters a culture of solidarity, enabling its members to serve and empower others and positively impact society effectively. (*The Project of Life of the Salesians of Don Bosco*, 1987, p. 455).

Communal Prayer: The Core of Salesian Life

Communal prayer is lively and sustains and enriches the Salesian life. It serves as a unifying force, bringing together the Salesian Community in a shared expression of faith and spirituality. Through communal prayer, Eucharist, personal prayer, and meditation on the word of God, individuals connect with God and one another, fostering a deep sense of belonging and unity (C. no. 85–91, 93, and 95). These sacred practices encourage selflessness, compassion, and a genuine concern for the well-being of others. The community moment of prayer is a transformative experience that nurtures personal growth deepens relationships, and inspires a lifelong commitment to serving others, especially the young people with love and humility (*The Project of Life of the Salesians of Don Bosco*, 1987, pp. 669–726).

Salesian Community: A Eucharistic Community

Rooted in the teachings of St. John Bosco, the Salesians are centred around the Eucharist as a source of nourishment, unity, and inspiration. They gather in fellowship to celebrate the sacraments, especially the Holy Mass, where they encounter the real presence of Jesus Christ. The Eucharist becomes the heart of their communal life, guiding their actions and fostering a deep sense of devotion and gratitude (C.no. 88). With love and service at the core of their mission, the Salesian Community strives to live out the transformative power of the Eucharist in their daily lives, radiating God's love to all they encounter especially the young people (*The Project of Life of the Salesians of Don Bosco*, 1987, pp. 686–687). Don Bosco used to tell his youngsters, “My dear boys, love Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament with all your heart, and you shall be truly happy”(Lemoyne, 1967, p. 317).

The Salesian Community: A Family-Bound Spirit

The Salesian Community embraces a unique and vibrant spirit that binds its members together as a family. Within this tight-knit community, individuals foster genuine relationships, mutual support, and a shared sense of belonging (C.no. 51). Guided by the principles of St. John Bosco, Salesian members cultivate an atmosphere of warmth, compassion, and respect, mirroring the nurturing qualities found within a loving family (*The Project of Life of the Salesians of Don Bosco*, 1987, p. 465). They celebrate one another's joys, stand united during challenges, and offer unwavering support in personal and spiritual growth (General Chapter 24, 1996, p. 91). This family-bound spirit permeates every aspect of community life, creating a welcoming environment where individuals feel valued, accepted, and encouraged to live their fullest potential (General Chapter 20, 1971, p. 499). In the Salesian Community, family bonds inspire and sustain the collective journey towards holiness and service (*The Project of Life of the Salesians of Don Bosco*, 1987, p. 465).

Community Life and Initial Priestly Formation: Salesian Perspectives

Community life plays a vital role in the initial priestly formation from a Salesian perspective. It explores the significance of community life in shaping the formation journey of priestly candidates. It delves into key elements such as the Praying Community, the Inspirational Journey of a Formator, Fostering a Strong Family Spirit, Acceptance of Individuals as they are, and Sacramental Values.

Praying community

The SDB constitution strongly emphasises the significance of a praying community (C. no. 85–91, 93, and 95). It resonates with the early Christian community, where prayer was central, fostering a communal prayer life akin to the SDBs. The essence of a praying community is also evident in the *PC* and *VC* documents, both of which emphasise communal prayer as a means for religious communities to attain the perfection of the Gospel (*VC*, no. 42, and *PC*, no. 15 and 25). Therefore, the formation community must become a praying community as it responds to the current need of the hour. By elevating the practice of prayer, the formation community can embody a transformative environment, enabling individuals to grow holily and wholeheartedly to serve God's people (General Chapter 20, 1971, p. 681).

Inspirational Journey of a Formator

SDBs journey alongside the young, assuming roles as mentors, educators, and guardians. Their compassionate presence inspires hope, ignites passion, and empowers the young to realise their full potential. This transformative journey entails selflessness, resilience, and unwavering faith as Salesian community members strive to bring God's love to the marginalised, offering them a brighter future. Similarly, God establishes a covenant in the Old Testament and forms the Israelite Community (Karakkadayil & Puthanpurackal, 2014, p. 21). Therefore, formators serve as inspirations to formees during their formative years. With dedication and love, they sow seeds of spiritual and intellectual growth, witnessing vocations flourish. They guide, shape character, instil virtues, and foster a deep communion with God and His people (Mathias, 2017, p. 37 and OT, no. 5).

Fostering Strong Family Spirit

The Salesian Community expresses a profound sense of family spirit, as envisioned by Don Bosco. He ardently desired that every individual within his establishments would experience a genuine sense of belonging, hospitality, and shared responsibility for the common welfare. In such an atmosphere, one finds the remarkable presence of mutual trust, daily acts of forgiveness, and a joyful disposition towards sharing life. Consequently, united in fraternal communion, they embark on a collective journey towards holiness and selfless service (Lemoyne, 1966, p. 250 and 4: 474). Along the same lines, *LG* emphasises the importance of religious communities fostering a shared journey marked by trust, friendship, communion, and joy, ultimately aiming for sanctity. Therefore, to ensure a relevant and comprehensive priestly formation in today's context, the formation community must foster a familial spirit encompassing the virtues of sharing, support, care, friendship, joy, and optimism throughout every aspect of the life of the formees (Parappally, 2021, pp. 5–14).

Acceptance of Individuals as they are

The Salesian Community embraces every member wholeheartedly, accepting them as they are and nurturing their journey towards maturity. It allows them to utilise and cultivate their natural talents and spiritual gifts. The community ensures their well-being and supports them during uncertainty, fatigue, and physical ailments. They welcome fraternal correction with humility and offer their selfless contributions

to the communal life and endeavours (C. no. 52). The OT speaks in line with the community's responsibility towards the individual member (Prov 27:17). In the NT, the community helps the individual to grow in maturity and supports the member during the trials and tribulations (Heb 10:24-25; 1 Cor 12:12-27; Rom 12:4-8). Acceptance of individuals by the formative community is essential for the formation of future priests. Understanding their unique backgrounds, experiences, and qualities fosters a nurturing environment. This inclusivity nurtures personal growth, strengthens bonds, and cultivates empathy, which helps them to serve others with understanding and compassion (Kannanthanam, 2006, pp. 80-81).

Sacramental Values

The Salesians of Don Bosco Community emphasise the sacramental life as fundamental to their spiritual formation. They actively engage in various sacred practices, including regular participation in the Eucharist, the liturgy of the hours, and frequent moments of introspection known as recollections. They diligently partake in the sacrament of confession on a monthly or tri-monthly basis, recognising its role in fostering spiritual growth. The community holds a profound reverence for the Blessed Mother, particularly under the title of Mary Help of Christians, and venerates her through the Rosary's recitation. Personal prayer, communal meditations, spiritual readings, and visits to the Blessed Sacrament are also integral to their spiritual practices. These sacramental endeavours bear immense significance in guiding and nurturing individuals along the path of Christian discipleship (*The Project of Life of the Salesians of Don Bosco*, 1987, pp. 668-762). Both the Old and New Testaments provide in the same lines some examples of sacramental practices employed to cultivate a closer union with God (Ex 19:5; 24:7-8; Deut 7:6, 7:12-26; Ex 23:17; Lev 23:2-4; Ex 12:14; Lev 23:15-16, 23:34; Acts 2:42-47; Mat 6:14-15). Furthermore, the teachings of the Church underscore the vital role of the sacramental life within religious communities. Consequently, to foster Christ-like growth, future priests can receive training in the diverse array of sacramental practices observed by the Church (Maciel, 1992, pp. 91-103).

Conclusion

The study analyses comparative and analytical studies on community life in the context of initial priestly formation from Salesian

perspectives. It highlights the crucial role played by the community in this process, with comparable significance in other religious and consecrated communities. The first part emphasises vital aspects of community life, such as deep communion between individuals, fostering fraternal bonds, and embracing forgiveness and genuine love. Communal worship strengthens the community's spiritual foundation. The second part focuses on unique aspects within the Salesians of Don Bosco, like loving kindness, a joyful spirit infused with Trinitarian love, and a strong family spirit. They actively engage in holistic development, extend a welcoming environment, and emphasise prayer and the Eucharist to foster profound communion with each other and with God. Overall, community life plays a pivotal role in Salesian Community living. After knowing the significance of community life, we can apply the following measures for the initial priestly formation in today's context.

First, today formators need to be role models after the example of Jesus in the formation settings. They need to acquire communitarian qualities. The essential attributes a formator can develop are genuineness, unconditional positive regard for the candidates, empathic listening, and understanding of whatever the candidates are expressing. Loving accompaniment from the part of the formators is the need of the time. Under the influence of the warmth and communion of understanding, mutual trust and faith, the candidates may open themselves to the formators and expand themselves positively towards maturity into Christ-like.

Second, During the initial stages of formation, to develop their spiritual life, it will be necessary to lead the candidates to prayer by way of sacramental life, especially confession, communion, and daily holy Mass, the liturgy of hours, familiarity with the Word of God, mental prayer, spiritual reading, spiritual direction, and acquaintances with the Christian doctrines. During the initial stages of formation, the candidates should be provided with these opportunities of supernatural means to grow in love with the Lord and be firm in their vocation.

Third, optimism, joy, openness, cordiality, and family spirit characterise Salesian community life, providing a nurturing atmosphere for candidates. During the initial stages of formation, genuine love and kindness from the formation team help candidates adapt to the new environment and build trust. Creating a family-like setting encourages openness and dialogue, enabling effective formation.

In short, we can say that in the communitarian formation aspects, during the initial stages of formation, the candidates can grow deeply in their priestly vocation.

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