

# Disciples India

Email ID – [inpddmwebsite@gmail.com](mailto:inpddmwebsite@gmail.com) – 01/01/2024



## THE YEAR OF PRAYER

Consecrating 2024 to Mary, Mother of God and our Mother, let us enter into this grace-filled 'Year of Prayer'. As we eagerly wait to celebrate the centenary of our Congregation, we find numerous reasons to rejoice, give thanks, and reflect on the significance of our life and Mission as PDDM. The proposal of Pope Francis that the year 2024 should be marked as a year dedicated to prayer in preparation for the Jubilee 2025 serves as yet another sign from the Divine Master that even after 100 years, we are very much in the heart of the Church.

When we understand our Eucharistic ministry as a Mission relevant to contemporary men and women, and promote initiatives to remind the people of God of the centrality of both individual and family prayer we, truly live the charism handed down by Bl. James Alberione and Venerable Mother Scholastica.

May this year be fruitful for us as sisters of the Eucharist to deepen our personal, and Community Prayer as well as in the expression of our Eucharistic Mission.

## Meeting for Vocation promoters

Every vocation is a gift from God to humankind, but the vocation to serve God in the priesthood and consecrated life is a special gift. God directs this invitation not to all but to certain chosen people. Finding suitable candidates to serve as laborers in God's field is a modern-day challenge for the vocation promoters and religious formators that encompass planning, discernment, and appropriate strategies. On Dec 6, 2023, the 'Karnataka Regional Commission for Vocations and Formation' had their annual meeting which had 121 participants. Sr Celine Pamai and Sr Kumudini Toppo represented from our province.

Vocation crises are the main concerns for today's church and it is time to pay close attention to the dioceses and religious communities. Why do we need vocations, to run the institute or become church ministers? The number of vocations is dwindling today due to:

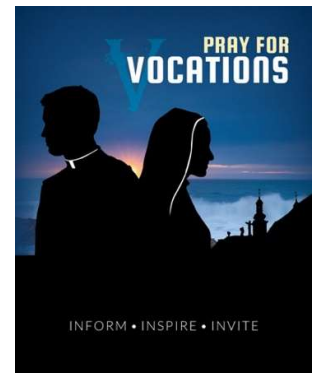
- ✓ Dependency on self rather than on God.
- ✓ Shift from pastoral care to administrators.
- ✓ Becoming professionals rather than persons of God.
- ✓ Negative attitude towards life and mission of the congregation.
- ✓ Lack of good spiritual directors.
- ✓ Lack of sincerity in praying for vocations.
- ✓ No creative programs to welcome the young.

Our founders and foundresses had many followers because they had creative responses to the needs of the time and helped people with God experience.

These are some of the questions we need to ask ourselves: How relevant are we in our context?

Those who come to us, do they find hope, meaning, and purpose in life? Jesus is the role model for every vocation promotion. He was relevant and present to people in their needs, embodying the love of his Father. Love being the intrinsic vocation of every human person, should guide all our endeavours.

**Sr M. Kumudini Toppo**



## National Conference on Priestly and Religious Formation



The National Conference cum Workshop on Priestly and Religious Formation in India today in the light of Pope Francis' Vision was organised by St. Peter's Pontifical Institute, Bangalore in collaboration with the Asian Centre for Cross-Cultural Studies – Chennai, from 4<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> December 2023. The conference was participated by Sr. M. Josephine, Sr. Mary Gracelet, Sr. M. Monisha, and Sr. M. Anjela. Sr. Mary Gracelet was a special invitee by the Organizers of the program, to take care of the Choir with the Seminarians and Students of St Peter's Seminary, during all 4 days.

It was not an ordinary kind of seminar. The participants were: Superior Generals, Provincials, Councillors, Rectors, Formators, and a few formees. The sessions are delivered and moderated by eminent persons and scholars, known at the National and International level, including the Bishops, Priests, Religious, Laity, and Professors having vast knowledge and experience in the field of Formation. The sessions were interactive, thought-provoking, and conscience-pricking. Each scholar spoke from a different perspective. There were a total of 500 participants from different parts of India.

In his Presidential address, the Archbishop, Most Rev. Dr. Peter Machado, the Chancellor of St Peter's Pontifical Institute, emphasized 4 points: 1) Synodal formation- which involves listening to others. 2) Gracitudinal formation- which enables us to be thankful for the gift of our vocation. 3) Incarnational formation-rising ourselves to the level of God. 4). Experiential formation-the experience of pain in our lives, to live our past failures, which helps us to understand the pain of others.

The Vice-Chancellor Most Rev. Dr. Lawrence Pius, Bishop of Dharmapuri addressed the gathering with Pope Francis's words: "Formation, is to integrate human weakness with Divine grace. Humbling ourselves to be gazed at by Jesus. The formator's job involves sacrifice and availability and it is very challenging as the formators are holding the clay pot – the Formees who need to be guarded and treasured.

### **Some of the insights:**

The formees in the seminaries and convents of the present time belong to the Z generation (Gen-Z). The generation of digital-brained and techno-based. This is the apt time we were involved in deep discussions on the mode of formation to Priesthood and Religious in the Indian context. The socio-economic climatic and cultural challenges have so much of an impact on them, with their problem-solving skills and cognitive patterns.

### **Here are some valiant points:**

- Formation should make the formees to get intense God experience and experience of people.
- Formation must aim at the integral growth of the formees.
- Formation means the formation of the Will.
- Formation needs to be in the context of the mission to the people in the Periphery.
- Candidates for Priestly and Religious Life and Ministry must be solidly Contextualised in the Cultures to which they are called to witness Christ and his mission.
- Go to the existential peripheries where the pastors must live by the smell of the sheep.
- Synodality is the legacy of Pope Francis. "Power is given, not to rule but it is to take up the peripheries."
- Formation must take place among the people in general. Candidates should participate in the struggle of the Subaltern people.

### Challenges of Priestly and Religious Formation:

- Formation is cut off from the realities of the world.
- Formators most often are educated and formed in the Western milieu.
- Lack of role models as pastors, missionaries, and mentors both in the seminaries and formation houses and fields.
- Power, position, and privilege that go with priestly and religious life are hard to resist. The quest begins at the seminary and formation house.
- Lack of teamwork and integrated lifestyle remains a model in want, for the trainees.

### Possibilities:

- Explore the possibilities of providing a global, personalized, integrated formation.
- Enable the formees to integrate one's brokenness with the brokenness of people.
- Lead the formees to understand and accept the reality that the mission of Christ is collaborative and to give a central place to the youth, women, and faithful.
- Formation towards communitarian, participatory, and missionary.

### Crafting a Roadmap for future action:

Formation is accompaniment. Jesus walks with both the Formators and the Formees. In the context of the Spirit-led leadership of Pope Francis, calling for a synodal, witnessing, and compassionate Church, that encounters the Word and engages with the world. Pope Francis calls the Church to go out, as the Good News of Jesus, to 'surge forth to the peripheries', a Church that is poor and for the poor,'. The heart of formation is the formation of the heart, leading to transformation into Christ. Forming priests and religious to be mystics and prophets of this new vision of the Church requires not just ornamental changes in our existing system of formation, but rather a deep and ongoing inner transformation of all concerned persons, systems, and structures.



Preparing persons who can articulate and witness to the world who they are, why they are and the vision of the Reign of God, for global solidarity, persons who can enter into the digital world and transform it from within, with the gospel values, with ecological awareness, readiness to move from a comfortable 'first-world lifestyle' to a radical, simple, eco-friendly lifestyle. There is a need for a shift in the perspective from a 'Western way of religious life to an authentically Asian way of religious life where we are seen and experienced as women and men of God and not "foreigners" and powerful owners and managers of institutions and good works. This shift in perspective will open the door to a new way of being evangelically effective religious and priests in this new millennium.

We are grateful to our Provincial Sr M. Celine Cunha for giving us this opportunity to attend this National Seminar.

Sr M. Josephine Rodrigues

**Time** is a treasure that all of us possess, yet we guard it jealously, since we want to use it only for ourselves. In the new year, let us learn to share the blessing of time for God and for our neighbour, with those who are alone and suffering, those who need someone to listen and show concern for them.

**“The heart of the Lord began to beat within Mary; the God of life drew oxygen from her. Through Mary, we encounter God the way he wants us to: in tender love, in intimacy, in the flesh.”** - Pope Francis

**“Every time we open our hearts to Jesus, God’s blessings enter our lives, blessings are received in order to be given”**