

## **EXPERIENCES – WITNESS – INTERVIEW – REPORTS**

### **THE PROCESS OF SCREENING, SELECTION AND ADMISSION OF CANDIDATES FOR RELIGIOUS LIFE AND THE PRIESTHOOD (PART II): MY MEMOIR OF INITIAL FORMATION MINISTRY**

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#### **ABSTRACT**

*This article explores my personal experience and struggle of saying “yes” to be an instrument of God in preparing candidates for religious life. This “yes” has led me to a deeper experience of God and to personal conversion in the realization of my mission as a Christian which is to “give the people of God an impression of who Christ is”. We are called to live an interior life in Christ and to be witnesses of Christ to others. Essentially, this defines the basic meaning of our Christian life. Priestly/Religious life, for the one called, is our way of responding to the call to be witnesses. Thus, the formator must have the ability to make real contact with the beginner and his/her attitude may facilitate or inhibit this witnessing. The formator must be disposed to treasure the value of on-going formation by updating himself/herself in everything relevant to human, spiritual, intellectual and apostolic life. This updating is essential because we live in a constantly changing society.*

#### **INTRODUCTION**

In an earlier article entitled, *The process of Screening, Selection and Admission of Candidates for Religious Life and the Priesthood*, published in an earlier volume of this journal,<sup>1</sup> we discussed, at length, the process of final selection of candidates into the formation programme. This second instalment reflects further on my experience in formation ministry. The article begins with an introduction and then discusses the Formation environment, conversion/transformation, formation for personal responsibility, the programme and the team. As already indicated, I have been involved at all levels of formation – from vocation promotion to ongoing formation, however, my

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<sup>1</sup> Josephine Enenmo, OLA, “The Process of Screening, Selection and Admission of Candidates for Religious Life and the Priesthood”, in: *The Catholic Voyage*, Vol. 15 (2019) 107-123.

focus in these articles continues to be initial formation. In this present article I share my personal experience as Directress of Novices.

Formation presupposes that from among the options for living the Christian faith within the Church open to the candidate, he/she chooses to pursue and to explore further the already growing conviction that the Lord is calling him/her to the Priestly or Religious life. It is on this choice that formation builds because formation assumes that there is adequate indication that a vocation to the Priesthood or Religious life is present. The criteria for determining this has already been discussed in the previous article mentioned above. I wish to emphasize here that a vocation is not something which is suddenly manifested and accepted. Awareness of a vocation develops gradually to maturity. When a candidate presents himself/herself and is found suitable, the vocation exists, in “bud” form and one could argue that the work of the whole programme of formation is to develop to maturity the potentialities contained in that “bud”. I worked with two assistants on the Novitiate formation team. We were to accompany candidates in this growth process. Always before us was the primary objective of the formation process, which 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.”

## **FORMATION ENVIRONMENT**

Continuing with our analogy of vocation at this stage as a “bud”, one could safely assume that seeds when planted in the right environment and nurtured, grow. Like seeds, our candidates need the right kind of “climate” to grow and the formator has a special role, from the very beginning of formation, in developing such climate in the group. The formator needs to be constantly attentive to the needs of the individual and that of the group so that a certain level of trust is established. Building trust, openness and honesty between the candidate and the formator and between the candidates themselves is a critical element for formation. This is why there is need to break-down the foreseeable obstacles to trust and build up all the means that lead to trust. Unless there is a spirit of mutual respect and acceptance, candidates will not be free to learn, to rethink their old ways and opinions, to change and grow or to share their thoughts, feelings and experiences. This whole process is one which cannot be done without the candidate's conscious and free participation as well as great openness on the part of formators. Building trust especially at the beginning, in the candidate, in the formator and in the group, is essential for the openness needed for the one to one personal meeting with the formator and for faith sharing with the group.

Postulants arrive at the Novitiate with many stories from peers and Professed Sisters/Brothers about the “difficult life” lived in the Novitiate and sometimes with the warning “to be careful of the formators so as not to be caught and chased away from religious life”. This gives the impression that the period of formation is just a “weeding out period” and I must say that this is a very sad

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situation which does no one any good. How can a novice be available for the work that formation process demands with these external influences? Formation must be viewed as a positive process, as a concrete aid to those trying to discern their call to the Priesthood or Religious life and should not be designed or perceived as a “weeding out” system. If the process is perceived in this negative light formation will be ineffective.

Vocation discernment requires openness and attention to one’s interior movements, especially in prayer, and an honest disclosure and reflection during Spiritual Direction and Accompaniment sessions. These attitudes of openness and honesty cannot exist in the kind of fear and threat which a “weeding out” approach inevitably produces. Furthermore, such an approach focuses too much attention on external requirements that need to be met in order to survive or make it to final commitment. Such a preoccupation with “making it” can seriously jeopardize the integrity of the candidate’s discernment process. Experience has shown that it is helpful to assure the candidates, at the very beginning, that having been admitted into the Novitiate they will be supported and accompanied in their ongoing discovery of what the Lord is inviting them to embrace. Some candidates, as they build trust in the formation process, have taken the risk to be honest and shared their struggles of going beyond “being careful” having experienced the beauty of transparency and transformation that flowed from such risks.

One occasionally comes across the startling view among some candidates that the formation offered in the period of initial formation is only for a while as “I can do what I like after final profession or ordination”. This is clearly exemplified in an experience I had in April this year. On the way to Mass, we met a young Seminarian and the Sister with me asked him how he was finding his formation programme. His response: “I am managing for the time being”. I interrupted and asked what he meant and he responded “it is only for a while”. I asked, so what happens afterwards? He hesitated and then began to use some logic to explain the notion of one day at a time and trust in God. I gently told him that formation is about living now as he intends to live after initial formation to enable him discern his vocation properly. His response was that ‘God understands me’. Sometimes some candidates see this life as between them and their God. While this is true, formation is not a task exclusive to God and the candidate. The candidate must also maintain a relationship with the formator who is helping him/her to seek God’s will in his/her life.

Many candidates for Priestly/Religious life, at the initial phases of formation, do not understand immediately how everything in the Priestly/Religious life of his/her Institute fits together. I realized that when postulants arrived in the Novitiate they had little or no knowledge of how to build on the foundation already laid in the Postulate. This necessitated the introduction of at least one week orientation programme for the benefit of both novices and formators. During this week of orientation it is important to explain to the postulants that the Novitiate is a continuation of the programme already begun in the Postulate. Moreover, details of the programme should be given as

regards what is expected of the candidates and what the expectations of the programme are. They should also be given the opportunity to share their experience of the previous stage of formation just completed.

## **CONVERSION/TRANSFORMATION**

Pope St. John Paul II, in his Post-Synodal Exhortation *Vita Consecrata* reminds us that “formation should have a profound effect on individuals, so that their every attitude and action ... will show that they belong completely to the Lord.” Formation aims at the transformation of the person, a conversion, and precisely because of this, the work of formation never ends. For me, this was a slow and challenging journey. It took almost two years of the beginning of my ministry as a formator for me to grapple with this reality – my call to conversion and to discipleship, the expectations of myself and of others. Within these years I learnt, slowly but steadily, a lot that transformed my life and mission. The first thing I realized was that the world the novices come from, at that time, was completely different from my own era. Given the evolution taking place in many areas of life, social, economic, political and family life etc. and its implications, some of which have been described in the previous article mentioned above, one can argue that “new wine must be put in new wineskin”. An interesting insight I got was that the formation of the novices that I had to work with then, required a revision of certain elements in formation accepted from past practice. Little things that one expected the candidates to know or do appeared strange to them. There were a lot of regulations in the novitiate – a few handed down by word of mouth by the Second years of various groups – and one thought these rules would make the routine of daily living easy – but even with that, many of the novices would simply not take on the values being presented or do as they were told – I suppose today we would say they were being assertive but even in that assertiveness they were not thinking properly about the outcome of their actions.

Reflecting on my experience of formation, I can say that in this ministry everything has meaning. My responsibility as an adult, candidate or formator, is to keep asking myself what is the meaning of this or why have I chosen to act this way? Then to reflect further whether or not the reason for acting in a particular way still holds good? In many ways, most of the novices just followed whatever was suggested by their peers without questioning. Sometimes, items were broken or damaged and no one would own up. Most disturbing was that they covered up for each other even in serious matters – an unfortunate situation to be in. A simple question like “who left this flower vase here?” elicited no response or at best the response was “I don’t know”. Although no one was ever punished for “doing wrong” the expectation that they be forthright with information was not being met.

My strategies for determining who was responsible for whatever went wrong were getting exhausted and so was my patience. I learnt from the very beginning of this ministry that it is

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important to emphasize that each person has responded as an individual to follow Christ in this way of life so each person is challenged to make this his/her personal journey. That though we are a community each person, in the end, will be accountable for the way he/she has responded to and lived the call of Christ. According to *Vita Consecrata* “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.” If this was emphasized from the beginning some of the difficulties experienced as a result of peer pressure would have been avoided.

Amidst the frustration of settling down to a new assignment with no “maps” I felt challenged to dig even deeper, as it were from nowhere, to find resources that would enable the candidates take responsibility for their actions. To compound issues my personal experience of my initial formation, the strategies of implementation of the values of formation that I inherited or added and my preconceived ideas of how things are done were not working out as desired. I was convinced of the call to conversion, but how best could I engage these young women in this process? This reflection enabled me to see that I was leaning more on the traditional model of formation where everybody was expected to do what they were told. I also discovered that I was expecting the novices to behave as adults without much preparation, thereby putting myself, and to a great extent the novices, under such pressure. I looked up to the heavens, “from where shall come my help?” The Document *New Wine in New Wineskins* states that there is a great need to watch “the temptation to adjust oneself tactically in order to avoid the continuous challenges of the conversion of the heart.” As I write this, I think this was the temptation for me at that time – to adjust and accept things as they were.

On the verge of giving up the struggle and just letting things and people be, the Lord intervened – after all, it is the Lord’s work. I was to see how the Lord leads us to springs of living water though in a less dramatic way than I expected. I chose the book, *As Bread that is Broken* for group Spiritual reading for the Second year novices. This day, the title of the Chapter was “Give them an impression of who I am”. That title stood out for me. I couldn’t drop the book even after we ended the exercise. I continued to read till I completed the Chapter. This title gave me a theme for my life as a formator – a sort of mission statement: “Give the novices an impression of who Christ is”. Then questions: What does this phrase mean to me? How can I do this? This was a long journey made possible by my disposition to explore this during my personal retreats. I availed of peer supervision, learnt a lot from other formators as well as from friends who were also on the same journey and from Seminars organised by Formators Association of Nigeria (FAN). Gradually I began to articulate my responses to these questions. My focus changed. To give people an impression of who Christ is (witnessing to Christ) – is my Christian vocation. The need to help novices realize that this is our common call became important to me. I would sometimes remind them that we are first Christians before responding to the call to live out our Christian

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vocation as religious. Yes, this is true. But, sometimes candidates, and dare I say formators, forget that Christian formation has begun before entry into Religious formation. The challenge, sometimes, is how Christian formation can be continued so that in all facets of formation the candidate experiences that Religious vocation is a development of the Christian vocation, not a replacement.

The candidate who feels called to religious life is called to “put on Christ and act from this centre”. As one welcomes a candidate into a formation programme our call as formators is not to superimpose on the candidate the personality that we think they ought to have as members of our particular Religious community. Only God makes people in his own image and likeness. What we do is to evoke from the candidate with his/her own characteristic human and Christian endowments and the potentialities of his/her God given vocation, an ever deeper response to the vocation.

The candidate has to understand that formation introduces a new context of meanings and values. We, formators, must keep this original sense of proposing a new way of being alive in our programmes. According to the document *New Wine in New Wineskins*,

The Lord Jesus’ word helps us assume the challenge of a newness which demands not only acceptance but also discernment. It is necessary to create structures that are truly capable of safeguarding the innovative richness of the Gospel so that it can be lived and put at the service of all while preserving its quality and goodness.

Only with this in mind can the new person really be born, otherwise we shall continue to have people who go through formation from Postulancy to Final profession or from Spiritual year to Ordination, without letting themselves be touched by formation at all, without changing anything, without even being renewed in their Christian life. As “a renewal which is incapable of affecting and changing structures – as well as the heart – does not bring about real and lasting change.”

Christian conversion implies patiently and persistently wanting to make every fragment of life revolve around Christ. This desire, if not already present in the candidate, should be awakened by the formator through various means available – Prayer, Faith sharing, Spiritual Direction, regular Accompaniment, Spiritual Reading etc. The candidate feels the need for conversion to the measure in which he/she senses the newness of his/her vocation precisely because the ideal to which he/she is called to does not correspond with what he/she actually is.

If the desire and motivation to change from the old way of being or to continue in the growth process are not stimulated, formation cannot be effective because no transformation can happen. This desire cannot be taken for granted. It must be communicated to the candidate that it is God who asks for this conversion, not the formator. The candidate needs to understand that he/she does no favour to anyone by changing from his/her old ways and accepting the new life that Christ offers, nor is he/she called upon to suffer an imposition “for a while”. It is rather the project of

God that calls us to holiness and to commitment to our Christian life. When seen in this light, the prospect of internalization, living out what the candidate believes whether or not the formator/superior is there, becomes a reality. The journey to internalize the values revealed by Christ becomes an essential journey that each candidate is called upon to undertake.

### **FORMATION FOR PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY**

How can I assist the novices in this journey – a journey that involves growth in personal responsibility – to be the best they could be at any given moment, in relationship with God, with others, and with life for the sake of the mission of Christ? In dialogue with the Novitiate formation team, we decided to make essential changes to the daily schedule and to the programme. Since formation is not something a person submits to passively, our team became obliged to emphasize the need for each candidate to be an active participant in her formation. Novices were given the opportunity to tell their story, individually and in their own words, offering their opinion and ideas. In various ways they were challenged to develop the habit of reflecting on their actions and asking themselves why they acted the way they did. During accompaniment sessions, as they shared their experiences, they were encouraged to reflect on these with an eye to what insights and knowledge they can glean from these experiences. In my humble opinion, the capacity to learn from experience is possibly one of the most significant signs of an individual taking personal responsibility for his/her life. We, therefore, considered as essential, training the novices in self-awareness and in personal responsibility.

Personal responsibility could be described as individual acceptance of the consequences of his/her actions or decisions. Charles Serrao considers personal responsibility “one of the goals of the formation process.” This is rightly so because at the end of initial formation Priests and Religious are expected to continue to take responsibility for their own growth and development in ongoing formation. A sign that the candidate is taking personal responsibility for his/her life would be his/her understanding of the necessity to develop a habit of personal prayer (spiritual formation) and also the determination and self-discipline actually to carry it out even when the formators are not around. The same applies to the process of growing in relationship with others as well responsibility with money, entertainment (human formation) and his/her attitude as regards apostolic sphere (apostolic formation). These are areas requiring high degrees of personal responsibility, that is, to respond and positively with initiative in any given situation, always under the guidance of the formators.

Various opportunities as described below were given to enable the novices make personal decisions about the choices that they face daily – for the weekly meetings (reviews), two novices took turns to chair the meeting or to be secretary. Then, each month or so, two novices were elected by other novices to act as their representatives and at the end of the period these two were

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evaluated and then another pair elected. The two novices planned the group's community work and other activities and they learned from the process. I joined them as appropriate. Planning of feast days and celebrations was their best time together as it took more than an hour to plan the menu, and, each time, they ended up with the same menu – Jollof rice and plantain and ICE CREAM!!!

The OLA Novitiate in Ibadan is an international Novitiate. One of the ways we tried to form the novices for community life was through the means of community dialogue and meetings. During these gatherings the novices were helped to process, individually and as group, the internal experiences of intercultural living so as to be able to cope with the richness as well as the challenges of a multicultural and diverse community. Our celebrations were something to look forward to as the novices reflected one another's culture in drama, song and dance. It is good to note that they had difficulties at times and they struggled to resolve these on their own without reference to any formator. Nevertheless, if one was observant, one would notice the tense atmosphere. It became the custom, that, before lectures I would carry out a quick check-in to see how they were and then try to negotiate with them the cause of any tension. Lectures on Anger and conflict management, how to give and receive feedback and opportunities to share in pairs following such lectures provided the opportunity to form the novices for community life. In all, the novitiate team was available for Accompaniment at stipulated times, and we were also attentive when a particular novice needed specific moments of Accompaniment.

In this process I learnt how to genuinely encourage and affirm the novices for the efforts made even if not up to my standard, and to challenge as necessary. The desire to grow was awakened in them and we began to make more progress. Suddenly, it was like a home coming, I became more at ease with myself and with formation. Like an elder sister I accompanied my sisters and kept their confidential stories just as required and they knew it. I moved from wanting to get it all right, to letting things be and then working with whatever I was presented with. I learnt to be compassionate and transparent in my dealings with them. The novices, I am quite certain, must have noticed the change. They began to trust, understand and relate with me like an 'elder sister' and to tease me. I learnt to apologize when I made mistakes. They forgave readily and we moved on.

### **THE PROGRAMME**

I wish to acknowledge that it is not really possible to construct an ideal and universal formation programme for the different stages of formation for every Formation House. The message of Christ in all its fullness, the unique heritage, Charism of the Founder/Foundress, and Spirituality of each Religious community, as well as its particular Apostolic thrust within the Church, will be decisive factors in the design of an Institute's formation programme. In all, the formation given to

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the candidate should help them to grow in the spirit of Christ and his mission and gradually to grow in the Chrism of the Founder/Foundress until these gradually become part of their existence.

*Vita Consecrata* reminds us that “for formation to be complete, it must include all aspects of Christian life ... human, cultural, spiritual and pastoral preparation which pays harmonious integration of all its various aspects.” To achieve this objective there is need for a well-planned programme which matches the goal of formation, and is fully known and understood by all who are engaged in the formation process. If the programme is integrated, it will make sense to the candidate and he/she will be able to respond and cooperate, as much as he/she is capable, so that at the end, hopefully, he/she will be truly formed as a mature Priest/Religious with a well-integrated outlook on life. This challenges us to review regularly, our formation programme in order to ascertain whether or not it is meeting the objectives of formation and attending to present day reality as regards the evolution of our Institute, the Church and the society in which these novices are called to serve.

The points discussed above were taken into consideration as we planned the Novitiate programme. The novices had lectures at home on the Charism and Life of our Founder, History, Spirituality and Mission of the Congregation, our Constitutions, Community Life, Human Development, and Cosmic Story etc. They were engaged in some pastoral work for example home visitation and hospital visitation. Furthermore, during the Second Year they went for 2-3 months apostolic activity outside the Novitiate community and I visited them during this period. Twice weekly, they attended inter-Novitiate programme as well as occasional seminars with Novices of other Congregations on Sexuality, DELES programme etc. These activities gave them the opportunity to learn from experts of other fields, for example, Scripture, Moral Theology, Vatican II Document as well as to meet and share with peers of other Congregations. Following these lectures and seminars, the team met with the group to reflect further on what they had learnt from these encounters.

To internalise the values of Christian faith, the practice of listening to the Word of God, preparing and participating actively in the Liturgy especially the Holy Eucharist were greatly encouraged. Silence at stipulated times were encouraged and observed. The life of prayer – personal and communal, desert days, monthly recollection, faith-sharing, personal and communal Spiritual reading formed the basis of our Spiritual formation. The candidates were introduced to daily journaling from the very beginning of the Novitiate to enable them keep record of their daily encounter with God, their experiences and insights. Fidelity to journaling enhanced self-awareness and gave them some tool to use at the beginning of Spiritual Direction

Every candidate, at various stages of formation, should be assisted by suitable direction and Accompaniment in order to develop in harmony the human, spiritual, cultural and pastoral

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dimensions of life. What is intended by this process of Accompaniment is the facilitation of the candidate gradually taking charge of his/her life and doing so at all levels without being unduly dependent on his/her peers or formators. It is to be understood from the beginning that this means guiding the candidate to be accountable to himself/herself in the development of his/her strengths. Hopefully, in time, he/she will grow in self-knowledge, self-confidence and self-esteem.

The formation programme should include some form of asceticism. The *Directives for Formation* tells us that “the Paschal mystery should be, as it were, the heart of the programme of formation, in so far as it is a font of life and maturity. It is on this foundation that the new person is formed ...” Candidates come with all kinds of values into the formation house. It is the duty of the formator to help them sort out and rediscover the values of Christ and to drop the values that are in conflict with religious values. The values of Christ need to be presented in a way that is clear and unambiguous. While presenting these values it is necessary that we create a disposition in the candidates to follow Christ in every situation. The demands of the vows, as requiring a certain degree of asceticism and renunciation, should be clearly presented to the candidates. I do not suggest that we set traps or unnecessary obstacles on the path of the candidate to see if he/she can avoid them. No! I speak of letting the candidates face the reality of the life and not over-pamper them or water down values. We, formators and candidates, need to learn to “live simply so that others will simply live”. With the lifestyle of many of us, Priests and Religious, it is a considerable challenge in present day Nigeria to embrace simplicity of life that allows for at least some experience of saying “no” to oneself and to what is supposedly offered by generous donors for “our comfort” rather than for the mission of Christ. “Whom shall I send”, we sing. “Here I am, send me”. Formators, in my humble opinion, are called today to model this simplicity of life for our candidates, and, hopefully, these candidates will learn to make it theirs. Fidelity to some form of renunciation gradually establishes a capacity to make space within oneself for God. This space, a space for God, is essential for living out with integrity the choice of life we have made.

### **THE TEAM**

The task of formation in all its dimensions (human, spiritual, cultural and pastoral) is the work and responsibility of a multiplicity of people namely the Major Superior, the Seminary Rector or Director of formation or Directress of Novices/Postulants/Temporary Professed, other members of the team or lecturers, Spiritual Directors, members of the community. We must remember that all these, no matter what stage they are involved in, carry a common responsibility. What is necessary is that there be good understanding and cooperation among the team members. Each of these persons must know what his/her work is and how to do it and they must be given the support they need to function effectively. Furthermore, it is essential that each member of the team makes adequate use of his/her personal Spiritual Direction and/or Supervision.

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From my personal experience, I can argue that an integrated team is essential for formation. I worked with three different teams during my time in the Novitiate, and in each team my assistants were older both in age and in years in religious life so I could tap from the wealth of their knowledge. That is not to say that there were no challenges in our working relationship. However, where the candidates were concerned, we had a clear objective for formation. We remained loyal to each other, to the Congregation and to the mission entrusted to us. The Novitiate team met very often, at least weekly and whenever necessary, to reflect upon the programme, its impact on the team as well as on the novices. We also had a twice yearly meeting with the formation team of the Province – namely the Vocation Animators, Directress of Postulants, Directress of Temporary Professed Sisters, and the Sister responsible for initial formation on the Provincial team. During these meetings, we reflected on and evaluated the programme of each stage of formation, important information about candidates, and suggestions made to enhance the formation process. In all discussions and reviews of our formation programme, we tried to reflect on the goals of formation and the outcome of the process adopted in accompanying the candidates.

These meetings were very life giving for all involved in initial formation as we had a common vision even when we challenged the process of implementation. Should it happen that a formator or others responsible for the different aspects of formation do not have a clear and unified concept of the goal towards which the whole programme of formation tends, there would be no continuity in terms of values offered or expected to be lived out by the candidates. Very often the candidates learn or imitate the formator more than any subject taught in the classroom. This seems plausible as books and talks are necessary for learning opinions, but to learn values we need reference models. The candidates have to see all the essential elements of Religious life or Priesthood in the daily life of the formators and in the life of the community members. It is important to note that only those who have walked the road can accompany others. Therefore, we (formators) are challenged to reflect on the quality of our life and the quality of what we are offering our candidates. The document *New Wine in New Wineskins* puts this beautifully:

In the end, we can ask ourselves if what we are savouring and offering to drink is truly *new wine* – full-bodied and wholesome. Or is this wine, notwithstanding good intentions and praiseworthy efforts, watered-down to make up for the acids it contains because of a bad harvest or poorly pruned vines?

It is my belief that one of the significant ways that we can keep our formation programmes current to the trends of Priestly/Religious life today is by reflecting on these challenges raised above in *New Wine in New Wineskins*.

## **CONCERN FOR FORMATION**

As I reflect on my past experience of being involved in initial formation I see some concerns which have been expressed in some quarters in the past and which exist still in our country. These could be listed as:

1. Large number of candidates in our formation houses
2. The quality of preparation that is offered to those who are accepted into formation.
3. The quality of formators
4. Inadequate preparation of formators
5. Unclear Congregational or Diocesan policies on formation.
6. Unplanned programme of transition between phases of formation.
7. Inadequate preparation of local Communities to welcome someone in initial formation.
8. Inadequate process of discernment of suitability and readiness to progress.
9. Interferences from the communities/wider community/church

## **CONCLUSION**

Priestly/Religious formation, in the widest sense of the term, is the preparation for the actual living of priestly or religious life. It includes everything that pertains to the life that the candidate is to live as a priest/religious – it includes formation for personal responsibility, individual and communal prayer, asceticism, vows and a life in community with others. This formation also includes preparation of the candidate to participate in a special way in the Church's mission through the Congregation's Charism and Apostolate. Priestly/Religious life is a call to live radically the Gospel values. In saying yes to this call the candidate continues the Christian journey of transformation. This transformation cannot be forced as simply forcing change, no matter how generously done, can lead to rejection.