

Introduction

The Updated Philippine Program of Priestly Formation (UPPPF), completed and published in 2006, provides for the rationale and guide for the renewal of formation at ICST. Bishop Mylo Hubert C. Vergara, D.D., stressed in the Preface to the UPPPF,

“But renewal of the clergy is first achieved if there is renewal in seminary formation...We are indeed blessed because we finally have this updated program with the Vatican stamp that bishops, priest-formators and all those involved in formation work can use to form future ordained servant-leaders of the Church.”

It is with confidence, therefore, that ICST continues to journey towards renewal, being guided by the approved national program of seminary formation. It has been four years since the renewal of formation in ICST was first talked about. Since then, many things transpired towards the conception and articulation of a renewed formation program. Concept papers were written (by Abbot Santos Rabang and Fr. William Antonio), consultations with seminarians, priests and bishops happened.

From these, the so called “paradigm shift” was proposed. This proposal was guided by the FABC recommendations on Priestly Formation.

“Whenever large number of seminarians exists in seminaries, immediate steps should be taken for the formation of small groups. The BEC could be taken as a model. Members of the staff should be given special courses to guide groups in authentic community living. Buildings for new seminaries should be constructed on the campus for these groups who could come together for common services to maintain a sense of community. However, in this milieu, within the group, seminarians should be formed in such a way that they can later live alone as demanded by the situation in most countries in Asia. Formation within a group also helps the future priests to build communities later on”.(*V Plenary Assembly, FABC, July 1990, Bandung, Indonesia.*)

This was further articulated by Rectors and Spiritual Directors of Asia. They said:

“Big numbers in our major seminaries are not conducive to personality growth and formation. Hence, we recommend that where big numbers exist, the seminary community be divided into small groups (BECs, Moderator Group Systems, etc.), so that seminarians can receive personal attention and guidance and can develop human relation skills. Thus, they will grow in the ability to relate with others and to work in a team later on as priests.” (*“The Formation of Priests in Circumstance of Present Days Asia: Seminar for Rectors and Spiritual Directors of Asia,” Maryridge, Tagaytay, October 15-28, 1991.*)

Guided by the UPPPF and the statements of Bishops, Rectors and Spiritual Directors in Asia, we are able to articulate the essential features and characteristics and shape of the renewed formation, as also envisioned by the many proponents of the renewal of formation in ICST.

The Characteristic Features of the Formation Program in ICST

1. The formation program is both rooted in Tradition and the Signs of the Times.

The program of formation in ICST will be faithful and reflect the teachings of UPPPF, The Second Plenary Council of the Philippines and Vatican II and other church documents on seminary formation. At the same time, it will be open and responsive to realities-as globalization, ecological concerns, social concerns, information technology, etc.

2. Community of Disciples, Option for the Poor and Mission towards Renewed Integral Evangelization are the Core Values of Seminary Formation enshrined in the vision-mission statement of ICST.

“Any understanding of priest’s ministry and life carries with it an understanding of the Church, and vice-versa...A presentation of the vision of the Church in the Philippines and its corresponding view of ministerial priesthood is therefore a necessary horizon within which the various aspects of seminary formation are to be suited.” (UPPPF, p.4) The three pillars of PCPII ecclesiology are the core values of ICST’s present Vision Mission Statement. The formation program will be clear and connected with its vision-mission.

3. It is Contextualized and Inculturated

The formation program will respond to evaluations of seminary formation in the recent years, the situation of the clergy in Northern Luzon. It will also value experience pedagogical. As such, method in theological reflection will be valued and made part of regular seminary life. Culture will be appreciated as source in theological reflection.

4. It is Balanced, Integral, Interactive and Interdisciplinary

The formation program will take careful attention that all aspects of formation will be treated in such a way that they are integrating and interacting. The human formation, which is the foundation of all priestly ministry; the spiritual, which unifies all aspects of formation; the intellectual, seen in its totality – all these are geared to the pastoral formation. All these aspects integrate and interact in the context of community living. (UPPPF, xxiii). The contribution of other disciplines/sciences will be valued.

5. The Agents of Formation collaborate because formation is continuous

Formation is continuous (UPPPF, xxii.), not just from the minor seminary all the way to theology but from the family to the membership in presbyterium/diocese. The

formation program will increasingly recognize the role of family and the clergy and the diocese in the formation of the seminarians.

6. It is rooted in Christ who was totally connected with the Father, filled with the Holy Spirit and poured out for the Proclamation of the Kingdom of God.

Formation is growing is discipleship in Christ, to be like Him who is totally given to the Father and to the people. He will be at the center and the highest of the concerns of formation.

The Objectives of Formations in ICST

The objectives of formation for the priestly life and ministry are set by the UPPPF. It presents the objectives per area of formation. ICST takes these as the guidelines of the formation program.

A. Human formation

ICST aims at forming men of virtue, of human excellence and goodness of character, founded on psycho-emotional integration, and modeled in Christ's example of authentic humanity.¹

B. Spiritual Formation

The seminary aims at forming men whose lives find their center in personal and transformative communion with God in Christ, and who seek to unite themselves with God's saving will in all aspects of their lives, especially through the participation in the mission of Christ as an ordained minister of the Church.²

¹ See pastores Dabo Vobis, 43-44

² Ibid, 45-50

C. Intellectual Formation

Seminary formation aims at forming men with a deep understanding of the mysteries of the faith, a capacity for ongoing theological reflection, and pastoral skills and competence, in the context of church and society in the Philippines and Asia, for the sake of the mission of evangelization.³

D. Pastoral Formation

The seminary aims at forming men with a deep commitment to and competence for pastoral leadership and service, especially of the poor and suffering, in union with Christ, the Good Shepherd, and the Shepherds in the Church, towards the building of the local church in communion and mission.⁴

E. The integration of the formation goals will be in the context of community living.

The goals are interrelated and have to be integrated in the person of the future priest who is authentically human, centered in God, filled with faith's wisdom and committed and competent to minister to God's Holy [people in the local church he is called to serve. When these goals are met, then the diocesan seminary formation will have served as the Holy Spirit's instrument in the raising up of priests who are agents of renewal in the Church and in Philippine society.⁵ (*The details of the formation program will be tackled together with the formators who will come. They should participate in the designing of the programs-activities, schedules, rules and regulations, evaluations, etc.*)

³ Ibid, 51-56

⁴ Ibid, 57-59

⁵ UPPPF, 22

On The General Organization and Structure of Formation in ICST

In order to achieve the envisioned renewal of formation in ICST, some changes in the organization and structure of the seminary are necessary.

1. ICST will mainly be a school of Theology to attend to the academic/theological formation of the seminarians. The School of Theology's continued growth to excellence will depend mainly on professors who will teach in the seminary for many years and not just come and go.

ICST is envisioned to grant graduate degrees in Religious Studies. It will mean ICST to be registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) and with the Commission on Higher Education (CHED). Will these be pursued in the new set-up?

2. The big seminary community will be divided into four (4) smaller, regional formation communities to ensure better personal/individual accompaniment of every seminarian. The smaller formation communities will attend to the Human, Spiritual and Pastoral aspects of formation, giving equal attention to these, with important focus on community life as a key to integration of these aspects. There will be a general formation program to be implemented by the various communities.

The communities are: a) Ilocandia Formation Community (Nueva Segovia, Laoag, Bangued and San Fernando); b) Montanosa Formation Community (Baguio, Tabuk and Bontoc-Lagawe); c) Pangasinan Formation Community (Lingayen-Dagupan, Urdaneta and Alaminos); d) CAVISA Formation Community (Tuguegarao, Ilagan, Bayombong and Batanes-Babuyan)

3. The four communities will stay within the campus of ICST. The seminary has enough facilities to accommodate the four communities, with minimal renovations. The formators of ICST have already identified the facilities the four communities will occupy.

4. At least two formators for each formation community are needed, one for the external forum and one for the internal forum. They take care of the Human, Spiritual, Pastoral and Community life of the formation community. They are primarily formators, not teachers.

5. The Rector, the Procurator and the Dean of Studies will perform administrative roles in ICST. The Pastoral Coordinator, the Spiritual Director and Coordinator and the Prefect will be roles that will be assumed by formators in the formation communities.

6. The role of the family and the presbyterium in the formation of the seminarians will be increasingly recognized.

7. The Spiritual Formation Year (SFY) program will continue to be part of the formation in ICST. A year especially spent for intensive human and spiritual formation remains to be necessary.

8. There will be sufficient shared/common activities to ensure socialization and community life among formation communities.

The Profile of the Formator in the Formation Community

Knowledge:

1. Familiarity with stages of human and spiritual development.
2. Familiarity with the church documents on priestly formation
3. Familiarity with dynamics of community life and community building.

4. Sound theological/pastoral orientation
5. Familiarity with realities of clergy and seminarians in the region
6. Sufficient exposure and experience in pastoral work

Attitudes:

1. love of formation work
2. human maturity/self-transcendence
3. no authority hang-up
4. simple lifestyle
5. sexually integrated
6. lively prayer life
7. integrated person/balanced

Skills:

1. capacity for listening
2. capacity to affirm and bring out the best in people
3. skill to facilitate meetings
4. skill to process feelings and experiences
5. skill to facilitate collective decision-making/consensus
6. the capacity to stay home and be with the seminarians day to day
7. the skill and creativity to foster community consciousness
8. the capacity for theological reflection
9. capacity for leadership and management

** these are traits drawn from workshops with seminarians and priests formators.*

The Formation Team in ICST

The Formation Team in ICST is composed of the Rector, the Procurator, the Dean of Studies, the fulltime faculty, the SFY Director and Spiritual Director, the Formators in the Formation Communities. The formation team is tasked to:

1. meet monthly to oversee the implementation and evaluation of the program.
2. The formation team will be responsible in doing the final evaluations of the seminarians for their promotion to the next year or to ordination. The suggested process/steps are:
 - a) Seminarians in the formation community provide their evaluations to one another.
 - b) The external forum formator in the formation community will make his evaluation, in consideration of the evaluation of the seminarians.
 - c) The evaluation Team (The Formator in the Formation Community, Rector, Dean of Studiers, Procurator and Full-time Faculty) will deliberate on the evaluations presented by the Director of Formation and make decisions.
 - d) The Rector writes the Bishop about the final evaluation.

The Rector

1. The rector will oversee the various formation communities, as well as the school of theology.
2. He will ensure community life in the big seminary community.
3. He will assume the other traditional roles of the rector.

The Dean of Studies

1. He will lead the School of Theology towards registration and accreditation with CHED (when approved by the Bishops of Northern Luzon)
2. He will look into how the academic training is meeting the vision and mission statement of seminary formation in ICST.
3. He will take on the traditional roles of the Dean of Studies of the Seminary.

The Procurator

1. He will oversee the financial operations of the seminary.
2. He will oversee the distribution of funds for the needs of the formation communities.
3. He will take on the traditional roles of the procurator of the seminary.

The SFY Director

1. He will direct the SFY program. He will be in the external forum.
2. He will take on the established roles of the SFY Director

The SFY Spiritual Director

He will attend to the spiritual needs of the SFYers. He will be in the internal forum.

The Formators in the Formation Communities

(The roles of the formators in the formation communities will have to be defined together with the formators who will be coming in.)