

## MISSIONARY FORMATION

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There are multiple dimensions of Missionary formation simply put missionary formation is to contemplate and then to go out into the deep proclaiming what has been contemplated, namely Jesus Christ. In order to proclaim Him we must know Him, and be able to communicate His message authentically. Missionaries giving their life to spread the Good News and the Kingdom of God can be likened to those in religious formation; such as novices and seminarians. The Church has focused this religious formation on four main pillars: human, spiritual, theological and pastoral.

This formation is not limited to those in formal formation but a requirement for all the faithful. The Church states, "Formation is not the privilege of a few, but a right and duty of all."<sup>1</sup> Let us briefly examine each pillar of formation.



Human formation involves forming the whole humanity of a person, including personality through patterns of life. A missionary is presenting the Good News of Jesus Christ and this requires that he or she has the basic formation of respect and integrity for themselves and others. Formation is a total shaping of the person, which is why formation must begin with human formation

Spiritual formation is also a necessity for all members of the Church but more specifically for those called to mission. "There is no doubt that spiritual formation ought to occupy a privileged place in a person's life. Everyone is called to grow continually in intimate union with Jesus Christ, in conformity to the Father's will, in devotion to others in charity and justice."<sup>2</sup>

Theological studies and doctrinal formation serve two purposes: first understanding the mysteries of God and second enabling the missionary to communicate and "give reason for their hope" to integrate these mysteries into their lives. The study of these mysteries should be communicated to others in a modern language, drawing others into the mystery of God, encouraging further contemplation and study.

Pastoral formation includes the practical steps to mission and ministry necessary to prepare the missionary for the challenges that they may face in their unique ministry and culture.

As missionaries the foundation of mission must be rooted in identity. "One must not put mission before identity but our mission is the fruit of identity."<sup>3</sup> For example the identity of a priest as another Christ must be the foundation of their ministry. Formation is a lifelong process it is more than simply studying, although study is necessary. To conclude formation contains many dimensions, "From all this (formation), they will be well taught to dedicate themselves wholly to the service of the Body of Christ and to the work of the Gospel."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Vocation and the Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World *Christifideles Laici* (30 December 1988), §63, at [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va).

<sup>2</sup>*Christifideles Laici*, 60

<sup>3</sup>Mother Adela Foundress of SCTJM, Class with Mother on Mission,

<sup>4</sup>Second Vatican Council, Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity *Ad Gentes Divinitus* (7 December 1965), §16

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