

VAIHARAI

(The Dawn)

A Theological Half-Yearly

Vol.12 No.1

Jan - Jun 2007

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Priestly Formation

“The formation of future priests, both Diocesan and Religious, and life-long assiduous care for their personal sanctification in the ministry and for the constant updating of their pastoral commitment are considered by the Church one of the most demanding and important tasks for the future of the evangelization of humanity”, says John Paul II in his Post Synodal document on Priestly Formation, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*¹. It is only right, therefore, that the Church in India invests so much in terms of human, financial and material resources as no other organization today in a developing nation.²

An important question that one must ask is, “Does that all yield the expected results?” The experience today pushes many to give out an answer in the negative. Even the studies made question the effectiveness of the long years of formation. For Example, Fr. Paul Parathazham observes that in the study made among the formees, a vast majority of those interviewed “rated the people of their age in the world outside significantly higher on all the qualities. Not even on a single quality did they feel that they were equal, let alone superior, to their peers on the world.”³

¹ *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, No. 2.

² It has been estimated that annually more than 350 crores of Rupees are spent in the maintenance and education in all the formation houses of India, both in Seminaries and Formation Houses, men and women. This information was shared by Fr. Paul Parathazham in the meeting of Rectors of Major Seminaries of India, held in Delhi in November 2006.

³ Paul Parathazham, “Vocation and Formation of Priests and Religious in India: An Empirical Study” in Kurian Kunnumpuram, SJ, Ed., *Shaping Tomorrow's Church*, Mumbai: Society of St. Paul, 2006, p. 37.

It is then not only understandable but also commendable, that Vaiharai decided to dedicate the present volume to the all important topic of Priestly Formation. The readers will be happy to observe that all the contributors are persons in the field of formation. That keeps their deliberations down to earth and concrete far from the danger of being bookish or theoretical. We have tried to be integral in the choice of themes for the articles, but I must confess that we have not been comprehensive. Is it possible to be all-inclusive in the subject, or in any subject for that matter?

It is hoped that the present number of Vaiharai will shed further light on issues involved in the formation of future priests in India today. We expect that these essays are best read first of all by the candidates themselves, who are "primarily responsible" for their own formation.⁴ The volume will have served its purpose if, further, these articles are studied and discussed in formation of formators which is one of the areas of concerns in the issue of priestly formation⁵.

Fr. John Kulandai
Guest Editor

⁴ *Charter of Priestly Formation in India*, 4.1.

⁵ Statement of ARMS (Association of Rectors of Major Seminaries), Delhi, 16 Nov. 2006, No. 4.