

Formation within the Franciscan tradition: Its concepts and consequences

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ABSTRACT

Today formation is a much-debated subject in Religious circles. Its defining principles vary within different Religious Orders, though the general meaning is similar. Formation is usually thought of from the perspective of forming a candidate in Initial Formation as taught or something to be completed. Hence there is a definite danger to think formation can be finished. This thesis seeks to contribute to a greater understanding, viz. that formation is a continual process and its on-going nature requires even more care, which should be embraced radically and challengingly. Chapter 1 surveys the overall view of formation; its definition and meaning with the general observation of the development of the physical world in line with the development of the human growth process. It traces certain explorations with Christian formation and analyses the Religious perspective of formation beginning with Genesis chapter 1:1 as the bedrock of formation and connecting it to creation which begins with and in God. Chapter 2 propounds the historical background on the development of Religious Life in different eras and its key features and touches on the theme of Franciscan formation and its history. Further, this study examines the evolution of standardised formation in the Church by searching through the Code of Canon Law as well as the early and later Church Councils. In addition to this the Second Vatican Council documents and several recent encyclicals are explained and drawn out for the purpose of understanding the on-going meaning and extension of formation. Chapter 3 deals with the theological perspectives of Franciscan formation. The researcher presents the formative content of Francis's pedagogy as a lived pedagogy. Chapter 4 analyses the different concepts of Franciscan formation which are highlighted through primary Franciscan sources and theology. Chapter 5 presents a systematic study in order to establish the consequences of Franciscan Formation with an analysis of formation as the 'Schooling of the Gospel'. Thus, this thesis contributes overall views on Franciscan Formation and its radical elements, especially the 'Gospel Life', as the formative basis for every Franciscan. Chapter 6 draws conclusions from the study and reflects on possible implications for the practice of the radical nature of Franciscan Formation. There are also some suggested applications from the findings in this study. This thesis introduces Franciscan Formators to Franciscan Formation literature in order to develop a dynamic intuitive knowledge of theological and theoretical Franciscan Formation. It answers the

fundamental question: 'Who am I becoming?' rather than: 'What am I learning?' In this way formation engages the candidate to the mission of the Church in the contemporary world.

KEY WORDS

Francis of Assisi, Franciscan Formation, 'Gospel Living', radical formation, Jesus Christ, Thomas of Celano, Bonaventure.

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CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION (RESEARCH PROPOSAL)

1.1 FORMATION

1.1.1 Formation: definition and meaning

The word 'formation' is in common usage today, 'The Oxford English Dictionary' states that the origin of the word is from the Latin '*formationem*' and defines 'formation' as, "the action or process of forming; a putting or coming into form; creation, production" (The Compact Edition of The Oxford English Dictionary, 1979:1060). This dictionary explains that the definition is expanded in its usage by the poet, Abraham Cowley, in 1656, "The Formation of the Body in the Womb." However, in this thesis the word 'formation' will be used as it is in Christian discourse as the 'process' by which a human being becomes both 'fully human and fully alive'.

1.1.2 Human Formation

Formation is at the heart of this planet, whether it is the development of the physical earth, or the development of human beings. This development is a continual process and is at the heart of human development; from the moment of conception and being formed in the womb to how the child and adult grows and develops through its genes, its nurture and within its environment. This journey of growth continues throughout a person's life. The process of a child growing into maturity is a process of formation. He/she grows not only physically but also in all the dimensions of life including psychologically and socially. Thus, formation also means the process of growing into a well-functioning member of a group. 'The Gift of the Priestly Vocation, *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis*' states that Human Formation is the foundation of all formation (cf. Congregation for the Clergy, 2017:93).

The word 'formation' is unavoidable, although it can cause confusion. A lump of clay can be moulded and formed, but with human beings it is, as will be shown, far more complex.

1.1.3 Christian Formation

Christian Formation begins with baptism. Pope Francis states in his Apostolic Exhortation, '*Evangelii Gaudium*', "in all the baptised, from first to last the sanctifying power of the Spirit is at work, impelling us to Evangelisation" (Pope Francis, 2013:62). Pope Francis, in writing about adults who have been baptised, continues by emphasising that "in virtue of our baptism, all the members of the people of God have become missionary disciples (cf. Mt. 28:19)" (Pope Francis, 2013:63). Pope Francis highlights that "Evangelisation is the task of the Church" (Pope Francis, 2013:58) and that "The salvation which God offers us is the work of his mercy. No human efforts, however good they may be, can enable us to merit so great a gift. God, by his sheer grace, draws us to himself and makes us one with him" (Pope Francis, 2013:58). The 'Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults' (RCIA) explains, "The rite of initiation is suited to a spiritual journey of adults and varies according to the many forms of God's grace." The document expresses this in three ways: "The free co-operation of individuals, the action of the Church, and the circumstances of time and place" (both quotations from RCIA). Baptism is the gateway to becoming a Christian; babies and young children who are baptised will take on the promises their godparents made on their behalf at their confirmation.

Therefore, the spiritual dimension of a person is forming, developing, and changing throughout their life alongside the physical and mental development. It must always be remembered that the first formator is God, our creator "that is: it is God who calls each person to a particular way of life and a particular mission. God alone has the right to tell a person, 'Come follow me'" (Parappully & Kutianimattathil, eds., 2012:717). This call to follow is one of discipleship: "Jesus said to them, 'Follow me and I will make you

become fishers of men” (Mk. 1:17).¹ Jesus calls the fishermen to follow him offering them a programme of discipleship, saying he will “make” them fishers of men. The fishermen then are called ‘disciples’, which in Greek and Latin means an apprentice, a student, a pupil, a learner; this is Formation with its end product of becoming an apostle after Christ’s resurrection when they are sent out. In the Old Testament to be ‘called’ is the same verb as to be ‘sent’; the verbs are interchangeable.

A divine call always includes formation this can be well illustrated in Moses: first the meeting of God with Moses (Ex. 3:2-6), which is followed by the purpose God has for Moses (Ex. 3:7-10), then the call itself, “Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring forth my people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt” (Ex. 3:10). There is then the rejection of the call, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh” (Ex. 3:11), this is repeated by Moses in Ex. 4:10. The rejection is a result of a fear element which is present in these call narratives (Ex. 3:6b). God gave Moses three signs (Ex. 4:1-9) to prove that his message is from God. God gives Moses assurance that “I will be with you” (Ex. 3:13) and “‘I AM WHO I AM.’ And he said, ‘Say this to the people of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you’” (Ex. 3:14). One of the common features is obedience to the call which leads to formation in the purpose God has for the ‘called’. In the New Testament Formation is clearly set out in the call of the apostles, as already shown, “Immediately they left their nets and followed him” (Mt. 4:20). This is also clearly illustrated in the New Testament by Mary, “Behold I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word” (Lk. 1:38). This obedience comes from the freedom that God gives human beings; they have a choice. Pope John Paul II declared the importance of freedom as a constituent element of human dignity, “Human freedom belongs to us as creatures; it is a freedom that is given as a gift, one to be received like a seed and to be cultivated responsibly...Within that freedom there is an echo of primordial vocation whereby the Creator calls man [men and women] to the true good” (Pope John Paul II,

¹ All biblical texts are referenced from the Revised Standard Version – RSV (Bible, 1979).

1993). Joseph Chinnici concludes that this, “has significant implications for the times in which we live” (Chinnici, 2005:ix).

1.1.4 Religious Formation

In the Jewish and Christian perspectives, formation began with “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1) and “let us make man in our image” (Gen. 1.26), in other words to form man (in the generic meaning). Formation is a natural phenomenon and is therefore an important facet of the Religious Life² in serving the Church and the world. The basis of Religious Life has not changed; it is a particular part of Christian discipleship and service, which is a response to God’s call; the decree ‘*Perfectae Caritatis*’ states: “Since the final norm of the Religious life is the following of Christ as it is put before us in the Gospel, this must be taken by all institutes as the supreme rule” (Flannery, 1975:546).

Religious Formation is an engagement with the process of becoming a disciple of Christ through a life-long commitment to a Religious Order.³ Discipleship is a response to God’s call by the individual, submitting to him,⁴ and being open to his grace; for Religious, discipleship is an on-going life-long process that can neither be a static reality nor an end product. According to *Ratio Fundamentalis* “ongoing formation is a reminder that the one experience of discipleship of those called to priesthood is never interrupted”

² The terms ‘Religious’ and ‘Religious Life’ begin with an upper case ‘R’ to distinguish them from religious and religious life in general. ‘Religious Life’ is particular to the way of life a Religious Brother or Sister lives in their particular Congregation by committing themselves through the Evangelical Counsels (Poverty, Chastity and Obedience) and in living a life of holiness by following Jesus Christ. The Code of Canon Law states: “Life consecrated through profession of the evangelical counsels is a stable form of living, in which the faithful follow Christ more closely under the action of the Holy Spirit, and are totally dedicated to God, who is supremely loved.” (The Code of Canon Law, 1983:105) and also the statement from the Vatican Council II document, ‘Decree on the Up-to-date Renewal of Religious Life’: “the final norm of the Religious Life is the following of Christ as it put before us in the Gospel, this must be taken by all institutes as the supreme rule” (Flannery, 1975:546).

³ God is referred to in the generic sense, i.e. He, His or Him throughout this thesis.

(Congregation for the Clergy, 2017:76). This document continues to highlight the nature of on-going formation as a “process of gradual and continuous configuration to Him, in his being and his acting, which constantly challenges the person to inner growth” (Congregation for the Clergy, 2017:76). Hence, on-going formation is a journey of conversion in order to rekindle the gift received at ordination or Religious consecration (cf. Congregation for the Clergy, 2017:76). This ‘journey’ is further explained by the Congregation for the Clergy, “The task of formation is to help the person to integrate these aspects, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, in a journey of faith and of gradual and harmonious maturity, avoiding fragmentation, polarization, excesses, superficially or partially” (Congregation of the Clergy, 2017:41).

There is an engagement in the working together of the divine and human dimensions; “Follow the pattern of the sound words you have heard for me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 1:13) and “becoming like him in his death” (Phil. 3:10b)⁵, which is the true meaning of Religious Formation. This does not mean that Formation is imposed upon a person, but rather that which is undertaken willingly by a baptised person in a wide vocational sense, as well as in the particular case of the Religious. Philippians 2:5-11 emphasises what Jesus undertook, “[He] emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men” (Phil. 2:7). This passage comes from an earlier hymn, being almost certainly pre-Pauline because the terms, ideas and concepts are not consistent with Paul (cf. Beasley-Murray, 1972:986); it shows how advanced Christological thinking was independent of Paul. The nature of this ‘kenosis’ (emptying) is expressed in the verses that follow verse 7. Beasley-Murray describes the triumph as, “the manifestation of messianic Lordship, attained as the result of the incarnation, not the assertion of the inherent glory of the divine Christ” (Beasley-Murray, 1972:987). These verses are rooted in the divine kenosis of God in creation and in covenant-making which are present in the tabernacle of the Jewish Temple. Religious Formation is similarly a kenotic process, which means that this

⁵ See also 2 Cor. 3:18.

passage from Philippians is of great importance to the Religious who should deeply reflect upon them for their on-going Religious Formation. There is a requirement for continual forming and developing into a new form by allowing God to transform the person. Consequently, a Religious should develop, mature, and grow into being more and more Christ-like. Many disciplines are involved in Religious Formation, including the physical, psychological and spiritual; these result in a personality that is uniquely formed in each individual. Therefore, the study of Religious Formation requires an integrated examination, which considers the totality of human nature, anthropology and spirituality.

1.1.5 Formation in today's society

Stuart Kauffman writes: "Across the globe about half of us believe in a Creator God." He understands God as "a natural creativity in the universe" (Kauffman, 2008:xii). This creativity is sacred, it is developed in all human beings and is an essential part of Religious Formation. It works through the Religious sphere as an inner divine force in Religious Life. The result is that the training and appointing of Formators⁶ by Religious Superiors⁷ is more essential than ever before to benefit Religious Orders, the Church, and people in general. "A first consideration must be theological in nature, since the vocation to priesthood is rooted and finds its *raison d'être*, in God and in his loving plan" (Congregation for the Clergy, 2017:42). The Congregation for the Clergy also has important words to say about Initial Formation:

Initial formation can be further subdivided into four principal stages...: the 'propaedeutic stage', the 'stage of philosophical studies' or 'discipleship stage', the 'stage of theological studies' or 'configuration stage', and the 'pastoral stage' or 'stage of vocational synthesis'. One is always a 'disciple' throughout the whole of life, constantly aspiring to configure oneself to Christ, by exercising pastoral ministry" (Congregation for the Clergy, 2017:62).

⁶ Formators are teachers who lead candidates in the process of Initial and On-going Formation.

⁷ A Religious Superior is an elected member of the Religious Congregation who has a particular responsibility of leadership.

There was a remarkable increase in Religious vocations in the 19th century, which has subsequently dropped in the 20th and 21st centuries. This is having an impact in the West and is beginning to have a similar impact in the East. The statistics speak for themselves.⁸ This recent decline in Religious numbers has heightened the attention of Religious Formation in the Church, so that in the Church today there is an even greater interest in Formation. It is illustrated by the many courses on the subject and especially the numerous conciliar documents and post-conciliar documents produced. Examples of conciliar documents include two of the principal documents of Vatican Council II, '*Lumen Gentium: Dogmatic Constitution of the Church*' and '*Perfectae Caritatis*' (Flannery, 1981:350-426 and 611-655 respectively). Pope John Paul II's papacy produced several post-conciliar documents on Religious Formation including: 'Directives for the Mutual Relations between Bishops and Religious in the Church' (1978); 'The Contemplative Dimension of Religious Life' (1980); 'Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, to the Bishops, Clergy and Faithful on the Formation of Priests in the Circumstances of the Present Day' (Pope John Paul II, 1992); '*Vita Consecrata: The Consecrated Life and its Mission in the Church and the World*' (Pope John Paul II, 1996); 'Starting Afresh from Christ: A Renewed Commitment to Consecrated Life in the Third Millennium' (Pope John Paul II, 2002); and 'Directives on Formation in Religious Institutes' (Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, 1990). The relevant documents will be referred to in chapter 2.

⁸ Between 1977-2005 the number of Religious priests in Europe dropped from 64,803 to 59,787 and in the same period lay Religious men fell from 24,460 to 19,574 and Religious women from 388,693 to 322,995. In Oceania, the loss is 40%. However, at the same time Religious Life has grown in Africa by 46.1% and in Asia by 60.4% (but in recent years it is on the decline). For further details of these figures see O'Murchu, *Reframing Religious Life*, [O'Murchu, 1998] and in the official Vatican newspaper, *L'Osservatore Romano* on 4th February 2008 the worldwide decline is stated to be 94,000 (10%) from 2005 until 2008 and the correction of the figure the next day in *L'Osservatore Romano* (Anon., 2008) to a more realistic decline of 7,230 in the previous year. It is interesting to note that in the same article out of the 945,210 Religious individuals in the world 753,400 are women.

There is still, though, a belief that Religious Formation is completed⁹ at the initial stage of a Religious vocation. The special interest of this thesis is Religious Formation as an on-going process in life. It will mean touching on many aspects of human life, which will necessarily widen the scope of the research. Because of this, the subject matter has been limited to the Catholic Church and its Franciscan movement to enable the thesis to be manageable. It should be emphasised that there is a general need for “re-thinking Formation of Religious men and women” to formulate “theological thinking” (both quotations from Pope John Paul II, 2002: section 11) in supporting the nature and thrust of an on-going process. It is an integrated model consisting of human and Christian Formation. There will be a special emphasis in this thesis of the on-going nature of Franciscan Formation.

The Franciscan Formation that was part of the early Franciscans has naturally changed with changing times, attitudes, social milieu and increased understanding of human nature over the centuries. It goes hand-in-hand with our understanding of human development both physically, psychologically and socially. The environment and culture will make a difference in the attitude of the Formator. In the early days many of the brothers and sisters came from the upper/affluent/learned classes (for example Clare of Assisi). This continued into the subsequent centuries. However, today in developing countries there are far more candidates joining from poorer areas; this is particularly true in Asia and Africa. Although many of these countries have colonial histories the style of teaching is mirrored from the ‘mother’ country there are still certain cultural and social differences which should be taken into account. Alongside this, Christianity is no longer an important part of society in most Western countries and in other countries Christianity is in the minority (for example in India Christians are a mere 2.9% of the population). However, the Christian influence is still important in education and health care; although this is gradually being eroded by governments taking control of these responsibilities.

⁹ Even ‘The Code of Canon Law’ states: “Formation must be completed” (The Code of Canon Law, 1983:120).

Formation is an integral part of Religious life. There is, though, the danger of its continuity not being kept alive within the Religious Life because it requires a constant and conscious formation. Though its continuity is being “talked about a lot, but that very little is actually done” stated Pope Francis (Pope Francis, 2017:41). Hence, organising theoretical and spiritual themes for On-going Formation is not enough. There is an urgent need to develop a culture of “permanent formation” (Pope Francis, 2017:41). According to His Holiness, Pope Francis invites Religious people to cultivate an “ability to review and verify the real lived experiences within the community” (Pope Francis, 2017:41). This would certainly provide an On-going Formation of the community as well as individuals which would enable them to understand Formation as ‘becoming’ and the need for change and growth according to the given circumstances and culture. This aspect of review and renewal is essential and central for all times and cultures. Hence, Formation would take place in the living context on a daily basis. To this end serious initiation is required to create Formation as a continuous Formation, otherwise the on-going process of formation is improvised and “carried out improperly and incompletely” (Pope Francis, 2017:41).

It must also be remembered that there are persecuted Christians in many Eastern countries, mainly from fanatics. In India Hindu extremists have burnt down churches and convents. They kill people after burning down Christian villages. The same is true in Africa and elsewhere in the world. This will have an influence on the style and method of Formation in those countries.

All of these issues have to be taken into account when creating a Formation for the future, emphasising that Formation is also dependent on the personality and culture of the individual.

1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Formation for the Christian begins at baptism and is a part of life for all baptised Christians; to witness and proclaim Kingdom values. Chapter 3 of *Evangelii Gaudium*

emphasises this in its title, “The Entire People of God Proclaims the Gospel” (Pope Francis, 2013). Hence it is a “growth, assimilation and integration of values and experiences” (Kaminsky, 1985:11). This means that a Formator’s task is to help an individual to become aware of both human and Christian growth. Christian Formation is a maturation of faith in order to bring about a personal union with the Father through the Son by means of the Holy Spirit, thereby nurturing the experience of the Church within the community of faith and love. As such, Christian Formation is Trinitarian.¹⁰ It is a process of conversion and also a development of concepts through grace and holiness, enabling a person to live out her/his life gracefully in the world, facilitating being in the world more joyfully and compassionately. Accordingly, formation is integral in the development of every human being, which includes harnessing the physical, psychic, moral, and intellectual talents of the person in their spiritual and charismatic dimensions.

Religious Formation, as for any Christian, is an invitation from God to be a disciple of Jesus and is a matter of assisting the formee to re-arrange and re-form their life. As learners, disciples accompany Jesus as he accompanies them. Jesus often teaches his disciples by using a question-and-answer method, for example the ‘confession’ at Caesarea Philippi “‘Who do men say that I am?’” which is followed by a discussion with the disciples in which Jesus finally asks, “‘Who do you say I am?’ Peter answered, ‘You are the Christ’” (Mk. 8:27b-29). The divine in Peter acknowledged Jesus as the Christ. Human Formation is involved as well, “Francis¹¹ understood humanity as good and uniquely beloved of God. Bearing the divine image and likeness and an inviolable dignity from the moment of creation” (Nothwehr, 2005:9). Francis explains this in his Admonitions, “He created and formed you to the image of His Beloved Son according to the body and to His own likeness according to the Spirit” (Francis of Assisi, 1999m:131).

¹⁰ Trinity is particularly relevant to Bonaventure’s theology, which will be examined in this context later in this thesis.

¹¹ St. Francis of Assisi was the Founder of the Franciscan Order, born at Assisi in Umbria, Italy (c.1182-1226). He stressed poverty and minority by living the way of the Gospel. His Order was approved by Pope Innocent III in 1209. St. Francis of Assisi is referred to in this thesis as ‘Francis’, St. Francis or St. Francis of Assisi.

Religious Formation is a way of forming an individual into the particular way of life, which the person chooses and it is usually connected with an Order that has certain Rules and commitments. In recent years Congregations¹² are beginning to accept more readily and appreciate more fully On-going Formation¹³ in their Religious commitment. It involves a constant reassessment of what a person is becoming and how they are progressing, as well as dealing with any problems or issues on the way. The goal of Religious Formation is not the fulfilment of a moral system, but becoming fully human, as Christ was fully human and perfect in his Manhood and Godhead. Earlier the Formation to Religious Life had too strong an emphasis on Spiritual Formation which led to exemplary individuals who were faithful to their Rule, but from the outside they were often seen as immature.¹⁴ The goal in becoming a Franciscan enables the Franciscan formee¹⁵ to be more fully human and more fully Christian which, as creatures, is what our Creator requires of all Franciscans. The Church Document, *Gaudium et Spes* (1968), states: “Whoever follows Christ the perfect man become [sic] himself more of a man” (Flannery, 1975:941), which means Formation is to help in developing the personality, placing Christ the perfect man as the source and model (cf. Congregation for the Clergy, 2017:92).

¹² Congregations base their Religious Life on the Rule of a particular Order (in this thesis, the Franciscan Rule), but have various adaptations to the Order for their own Charisms (the grace from God that the founders received for a particular social need). Charism(s) has an upper case ‘C’ because it does not refer to general charisms (as in charismatic) but is a term used [as above] for the essential essence and foundation mission and purpose of a Religious Order/Congregation. Congregation also has an upper case ‘C’ to denote that it is a Religious Congregation that is being discussed.

¹³ ‘On-going Formation’ is a common term in Religious Communities. It relates to Formation beyond Initial Formation and continues throughout a Religious’s Life. ‘*Vita Consecrata*’ affirms these facts, but uses the term “Continuing Formation” (Pope John Paul II, 1996:123-124). The term ‘On-going (or Ongoing) Formation’ is used by the ‘Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life’ in two recent documents: ‘Directives on Formation in Religious Institutes’ (section 66:1978) and ‘Starting Afresh from Christ, A Renewed Commitment to Consecrated Life in the Third Millennium’ (Pope John Paul II, section 11:2002).

¹⁴ This statement comes from personal experience and in discussion with several older Brothers at the Franciscan International Study Centre (Canterbury) and others of different Religious Orders who have informed this writer of this assessment after some years of reflection.

¹⁵ The term ‘formee’ is used as a general term for those in Religious Formation.

All Formation courses, from the Initial¹⁶ onwards, are reliant on a leader (Formator) and his¹⁷ formees. All leaders are trained because even those with a natural ability will require their resources to be channelled in the right direction. Thus, teaching both didactically (cf. intellectual formation: see, Congregation for the Clergy, 2017:106) and experientially (cf. pastoral stage: see Congregation for the Clergy, 2017:108) are of the utmost importance; there is a constant need to nurture the nature within, to keep a constant adaptive adjustment without eroding the essential Religious nature within (allowing for freedom of the spirit). Formation leaders have responsibilities and they should realise that they are in an exemplary position of trust (cf. Faber, 1991:60). Their task is to allow the candidate to grow and discover the meaning of their calling.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

In the past Formation was, and in some areas still is, regarded as teaching and disciplining candidates in the Novitiate.¹⁸ Initial Formation is illustrated by the fact that the post-Vatican Council II documents ‘Directives on Formation in Religious Institutes’ (1990:sections 9, 12, 14, 15 and 16) and ‘Starting Afresh from Christ: A Renewed Commitment to Consecrated Life in the Third Millennium’ finds it necessary to stress the need for Formation to be an on-going process in order to integrate the dynamic of growth, fidelity to God’s call and to the people of God, “One of the first fruits of a path of on-going formation is the daily ability to live one’s vocation as a gift which is always new and to be accepted with a grateful heart” (Pope John Paul II, 2002:section 16). Both the aforementioned documents assume that Formation in the present day requires the human element in it rather than simply the traditional way of having a programme to

¹⁶ Initial Formation is the first stage towards becoming a Religious and takes place during the period called ‘Candidacy’, “Beginning with Reception and ending with Profession this period aims at setting the candidate on the way to attaining full maturity in three dimensions: the human, the Christian, and the Franciscan.” (The Presidency of the International Council of the Secular Franciscan Order, 1992:3).

¹⁷ The masculine form is used throughout in the generic sense for male or female.

¹⁸ This is illustrated in Pre-Vatican Council II, as well as Post-Vatican Council II documents. Vatican Council II was called by Pope John XXIII in October 1962 and closed by Pope Paul VI in December 1965.

fulfil the requirement of being in the Religious Life. Traditional Formation was a formal procedure wherein disciplines and doctrines were introduced and concluded. It is now necessary for On-going Formation to consist of systematic learning from training; adapting it to the socio-cultural contemporary situation. There is a need to question, analyse and challenge the system of Formation discipline; Formation is an instructive programme, but it requires adaptation because it requires a systematic interpretation of life and a consistent understanding within the framework of the entirety of human dynamic relationships.

Before Vatican Council II, there was a certain 'specialness' in the concept of Religious Life which led itself to spiritual dynamism, so that even now there is a belief that once Life Profession¹⁹ has taken place Formation is regarded as complete.²⁰ There was a tendency to emphasise holiness and spirituality to the detriment of Human Formation. The dimension of humanity and its entire process of maturing can be seen as an essential to be incorporated into Religious Formation. It is necessary to balance the human and spiritual dimension by placing it within a process because human beings change, adapt and mature through their life experiences and relationships (see Pope John Paul II, 1996:123-124). This is a continuous process, without which problems can occur, even scandals.²¹ These scandals lead to a lack of trust by Church people and the public at large, and when trust is lost it is very difficult, if not impossible to regain it.²² The errors are not simply of a sexual nature, but in a Congregation, they can be caused by emotional trauma at any age in the mission (schools etc.) or through innumerable ways of contact with the public. It is essential that Formation involves a fresh

¹⁹ 'Life Profession' is sometimes referred to as 'Solemn Profession' or 'Final Profession'.

²⁰ This is the reason for *Vita Consecrata*'s statements, summed-up here from Pope John Paul II, 1996:123-124. It should be noted that when examining the Church documents [see chapter 2], there is nothing regarding Religious from the Council of Nicæa (325) to the Council of Trent (1545-63) which was a reaction by the Counter Reformation to the criticisms by the Reformation.

²¹ Murray Bodo, states that "the Catholic Church is racked with sexual scandal and cover-ups" (Bodo, 2011:16).

²² Joseph O'Hanlon stated in his *Ex Corde* lecture: "In my opinion this lack of a formulated On-going Formation could be one of the catalysts for the scandals that have rocked the Church worldwide" (O'Hanlon, 2020: lecture).

understanding for basic human development, growth and behaviour patterns. This Formation will have to include a basic teaching of psychology, personality and morality²³ which will enable the candidate to use these skills to draw out their own abilities in Formation to be fully human. In the past Formation was not properly addressed and it is even the case today. It is often used as a tool to 'mould' candidates into a particular shape for a Religious Order which can lead to depression or manic behaviour or even have suicidal tendencies.²⁴ It is important for Formators to understand that their task is to 'draw out' the gifts that an individual has been given by God which can be used within their Order.

The contention of this thesis is that the whole system of Formation should be grounded in an 'open process' with a healthy exchange of views and attitudes. It is paramount that this is addressed if Religious are to progress and the Institutions are to follow their founders' Charisms and missions into the 21st century. This makes it necessary to formulate a systematic Formation with regards to Franciscans in understanding the formative elements of the Franciscan charisms and traditions.

1.4 AIM

Religious Formation is the starting point for this thesis and therefore the study is based upon the teachings of the Church and the way it has affected the Franciscan charism. Consequently, the aim of this dissertation is firstly to examine the relevant Church Councils that play a part in guiding Franciscans to form its members according to the demands of the social milieu and spiritual requirements.

²³ The Jesuit, John Hardon, states that there is "a great deal of crisis in religious (*sic.*) communities due to lack of sound education, adequate information or factual knowledge in principle and practice" (Hardon, 1999:9).

²⁴ The ratio for suicides or suicidal tendencies has not been surveyed. However, this is an area that is encountered in the Religious Life. The reason, from observation, is that the Religious are not helped to deal with their human problems. Counselling without being made to feel guilty or a failure should be fundamental in all Religious Houses. In this way Religious, can make healthy mature decisions about their life and growth in the faith.

Secondly, this thesis aims at presenting Francis as a model for Franciscan Formation. Hence the study will include an analysis of the sources and writings of Francis and the hagiographies by Thomas of Celano²⁵ (Thomas of Celano, 1999 and 2000) and the legends and sermons about Saint Francis by Bonaventure, primarily in his 'The Major Legend of St. Francis' (Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, 2000: 525-683). These references will present Francis as the model formator.

Finally, the thesis will discuss the radical nature of Franciscan Formation.

1.5 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this research are centred on Franciscan Formation within the Franciscan tradition. This thesis will seek to demonstrate Franciscan Formation through the life and teaching of St. Francis of Assisi's Christian vision. In the background, the dissertation will be answering the question: how is Franciscan life a witness, in terms of being in the world as disciples of Jesus and engaging with the charism and mission of a particular Institute?²⁶ In order to answer this question, fundamental principles of the ideals, spirituality, and life of St. Francis will be drawn upon. The emphasis here is to connect Franciscan virtues to the Formation of the members of the Franciscan tradition for Franciscan Formation leaders. This will include Franciscan ideals and its process in the Formation of Franciscans.

²⁵ Thomas of Celano's life (1185-1260) spanned most of St. Francis's (1181/2-1226) which makes him very much a prime source.

²⁶ The Code of Canon Law (no. 607) states that a Religious Institute is "a society in which, in accordance with their own law, the members pronounce public vows and live a fraternal life in common" (Coriden et al., 1985:470); "their own law" means the Rule and the Constitution of a particular Institute. 'Institute' is given a capital 'I' where it denotes a Religious Institute.

There are a variety of Franciscan Orders within the Franciscan tradition.²⁷ Different Franciscan Congregations have different definitions of Formation.²⁸ However, all tend to look inward with both a limited definition and minimal theological analysis of Formation.²⁹ The aim of this thesis is to widen the scope of the 'ghetto-mentality Formation' which is epitomised in certain Institutes (see Davis, 1970:119-123). It is important to widen the concept of Formation in order for Religious movements to understand their vocations and the divine initiative therein; in this thesis Franciscan Formation.

1.6 CENTRAL THEORETICAL ARGUMENT

The central theoretical argument addresses the definition of the problem (1.3 above) by arguing that Formation is on-going and must be addressed in the context of Franciscan Formation. Nevertheless, the Formation process is not comprehended as on-going; hence the importance that on-going Formation is given throughout this thesis. It will involve learning and re-learning in order to develop a person's vocation within their Franciscan way of life. The on-going process of formative education seeks to ensure that the effectiveness of commitment is maintained in an ever-changing world by engaging with the individual's gifts, personality and cultural background. The argument would demand a serious undertaking of this process and apply its richness to

²⁷ There are three Orders within the Franciscans. The First Order is composed of three separate branches. The Order of Friars Minor [OFM] was the original Order founded in 1209 with their mission amongst the rural poor and keeping a solitary lifestyle. The OFM Conventuals (living in convents) who desired a stricter lifestyle and had a mission living amongst the urban poor remained a part of OFMs until their eventual split in 1517. Later, the OFM Capuchins (1528) developed from the OFM Conventuals with the desire to revert back to the simple lifestyle and mission of St. Francis. The Second Order was founded in 1212 by St. Clare (1194-1253) following St. Francis's Rule and is composed of women living a contemplative lifestyle in prayer, silence and work. St. Clare eventually founded her own Rule which was approved by the Pope on her deathbed in 1253. The Third Order Regular of St. Francis (known as Franciscans, T.O.R.), is a Religious Community of priests, brothers and sisters dedicated to God. They are made up of over a hundred congregations, basing their Rules on that of St. Francis. The origin goes back in the penitents of the Middle Ages; people who were seeking holiness in their daily lives. The Third Order of St. Francis has since become an international Religious Community serving God's people throughout the world.

²⁸ Other Religious Orders also have a variety of Formation syllabi.

²⁹ All Religious rules by their very nature are somewhat inward-looking, as they look to their own rule rarely examining it in the context of others.

Franciscan life by allowing the candidate to imbibe Francis's life, teachings and writings for the benefit and development of each person's true identity and calling from God and by God's grace.

1.7 METHODOLOGY

The research will be determined by the purpose to stress the on-going nature of formation in general and in particular to the Franciscan tradition. As a result, attention will focus on how the Church does or does not understand, support and guide Formation through its Councils. Formation must be based in the 'real' world rather than simply theorising; Formation is about people and therefore should be adaptive and able to change as it hopefully improves. Formation is not an exercise to go through and complete, like a course of study, but a way to search for God's revelations in an individual's life. The ways in which the Catholic Church's Formation can be more realistic and effective in the modern world with all its changes and pressures will be shown within the Franciscan context.

The aspects of Francis's way of forming himself and his friars will be researched from his writings and sources of recent translations (primarily Armstrong et al, 1999, 2000, and 2001). Further, copies of journals from the Franciscan International Study Centre, Canterbury will be used and the library of the Order of Friars Minor [OFM] in Kerala and Bangalore will also be used in research as well as computer-based data collection and an e-library (NWU).

1.8 LITERATURE

The literature sources for this thesis were guided by the structure of Francis's life and thought, as well as by the available documentary sources. These sources include the writings of Francis of Assisi himself such as his Rules, Testament, the keeping of church vestments, keeping churches clean and tidy (Francis was deeply conscious of reverence in these matters). The major sources are the latest translations by Regis Armstrong's three volumes: 'The Saint' (volume 1), which contains texts attributed to St.

Francis from 1205 to 1240, 'The Founder' (volume 2) from 1240 to 1272 and 'The Prophet' (volume 3) from 1272 to 1365. The memoirs of his companions, which are in the last two volumes will also be of assistance in this research. Armstrong's volumes with other translations³⁰ will constitute ample literature to draw out the guidelines, for strengthening the research arguments, and presenting the assortment of Franciscan Formation elements and concepts for today.

The *Legenda Maior* (The Major Legend of Saint Francis) of Bonaventure was approved in 1263 by the General Chapter of the Friars Minor held in Paris. It is the work of Bonaventure, a renowned master, whose intellectual integrity and devotion to Francis highlights the importance of Franciscan theological Formation. Bonaventure accentuates a theological and mystical interpretation of historical facts which can be used for supporting an integrated Franciscan spiritual formation. There are many other secondary sources: the most important of which are by Thomas of Celano and those of Francis's companions which were the sources for Bonaventure's work. Thomas of Celano's works are: 'The Life of Saint Francis' (1228-1229); 'The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul' (1254-1260); and 'The Treatise on the Miracles of Saint Francis' (1250-1252).

It is the intention of this research to discover the ideas and theological intuition of Francis prior to the later systematic development of the Franciscan sources. Therefore, Francis's writings are paramount to this research. These primary sources, few as they are, will be analysed using his writings as a unique literary source and to highlight the use of the relevant material for a continuous On-going Franciscan Formation. The secondary sources (hagiographies) will be critically examined with a realisation that they will contain biased views. Research will be done of the fundamental elements of Francis's faith formation journey. Church documents will be examined, particularly Vatican Council II and papal documents post-Vatican Council II for relevant statements on Formation.

³⁰ The latest translation being by Sweeney (Francis of Assisi, 2013).

1.9 PROPOSED CHAPTER DIVISIONS AND SUB-HEADINGS

1. INTRODUCTION (RESEARCH PROPOSAL)

1.1 Formation

1.1.1 Formation definition and meaning

1.1.2 Human Formation

1.1.3 Christian Formation

1.1.4 Religious Formation

1.1.5 Formation in today's society

1.2 Background of the study

1.3 Problem statement

1.4 Aim

1.5 Objectives of the study

1.6 Central theoretical argument

1.7 Methodology

1.8 Literature

1.9 Proposed chapter division and sub-headings

1.10 Schematic presentation of the correlation between A (1.3); B (1.4 and 1.5); C (1.7)

2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO RELIGIOUS LIFE AND FORMATION

2.1 Development of Religious Life towards Formation

- 2.2 History of Franciscan Formation
 - 2.2.1 The foundation of the Order
 - 2.2.2 Narbonne Constitution and its requirements
 - 2.2.3 Standardised formation in the Church
 - 2.2.4 Vatican Council II, and its call to return the Orders to their original charism
- 2.3 Church documents and their contribution to Religious Formation
 - 2.3.1 The Code of Canon Law
 - 2.3.2 Councils prior to Vatican Council II
 - 2.3.3 Vatican Council II
 - 2.3.4 Post Vatican Council II
 - 2.3.5 Conclusions to the documents

3 FRANCISCAN FORMATION

- 3.1 Introduction: The theological perspective of Franciscan Formation
- 3.2 Francis – A model for Franciscan Formation
- 3.3 Formation: A search to re-build, re- fashion and re-form
- 3.4 God-ward Formation
 - 3.4.1 The Franciscan encounter with God
 - 3.4.2 Christ is the pattern and model for Formation
 - 3.4.3 The Spirit of God in Formation

3.4.4 The Trinitarian nature of Formation

4 CONCEPTS AND CONSEQUENCES OF FRANCISCAN FORMATION

4.1 Identity in Franciscan Formation

4.2 Franciscan Formation is Freedom

4.3 'Christ-likeness'

4.4 Learning and holiness – A Franciscan perspective of Formation

4.5 Bonaventure (1221-1274)

4.6 Asceticism in Franciscan Formation

4.7 Consequences of Franciscan Formation

4.8 Practicalities of Franciscan Theology

4.9 Penitential and conversion dynamics of Formation

5. FRANCISCAN FORMATION IS SCHOOLING IN THE GOSPEL

5.1 The Gospel Life in Formation

5.2 Franciscan Formation is ecclesial

5.3 The social nature of Franciscan Formation

5.4 Prayer-centred nature of Franciscan Formation

5.5 Franciscan Formation for the practice of virtues

5.6 Franciscan Formation for perfect joy

5.7 Franciscan Formation for peace

- 5.8 Franciscan Formative theology of the dying and death
- 5.9 Conclusion
- 6. CONCLUSION
 - 6.1 Radical Formation
 - 6.2 Further research
 - 6.3 Application of the life of Francis of Assisi for the guidance of Franciscan Formation
 - 6.4 Suggested application from the findings of this research
- 7. **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

1.10 SCHEMATIC PRESENTATION OF THE CORRELATION BETWEEN A.B.C.

A. PROBLEM QUESTION	B. AIM AND OBJECTIVES	C. METHODOLOGY
How should Franciscan Formation be evaluated in respect to the dogmas of the Church and of Franciscan life?	The main aim of this study is to analyse Formation within the Franciscan Tradition.	Examining the various dogmas of the Church and their influence on Franciscan Formation within the Franciscan Tradition. Primary sources will be researched both within the Church's teaching on formation and Francis's own writings and various contemporary biographies.
What are the guidelines that should be drawn from the dogmatic teaching concerning Formation and its correlation to Franciscanism?	To study both Church documents and Franciscan sources.	To study and evaluate the various councils of the Church and teachings of the Church and to interpret its basis for Franciscan Formation within its tradition.
What supportive definitions of Formation are found in the dogmas to influence Franciscans for On-going Formation within Franciscan sources?	To study and evaluate Francis' life, teaching, writings and other sources for an integrated Franciscan Formation within its tradition.	To establish co-relationship between the dogmatic teaching and Francis' intuitive spirituality from the documentary sources of St. Francis of Assisi.
How do Franciscans evaluate Franciscan Formation within the Franciscan Tradition?	To assess Franciscan Formation within Francis' teaching, his spirituality and charism.	To evaluate Francis' influence on Franciscan Formation. The collected data will be examined and analysed.

CHAPTER 2:

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 DEVELOPMENT OF RELIGIOUS LIFE TOWARDS FORMATION

Religious Life is a call from God to live a certain Christian lifestyle. Religious men and women are seekers of solitude, states St. Athanasius (c. 296/8–373), in his biography of St. Anthony (O'Murchu, 1998:18-19). The Christian model of Religious Life originated in Egypt around the year 270 when St. Anthony and St. Pachomius pioneered the eremitical movement for an austere life of prayer and penance.³¹ Their life was motivated by a desire deriving from a deep fascination with the divine. However, the ascetic Syriac movement was already in existence, as too was the Apostolic Church³² and by c.270 virgins and widows were a distinct group in the 'Apostolic Church Order'.³³ Many virgins were annually consecrated in Italy by the C4th. These virgins were well educated, working in charity and spiritual counselling, as well as in the diaconate.³⁴ Some travelled as pilgrims to the Holy Land as an expression of a perfect imitation of Christ (for example Egeria, see Wilkinson, 1971). "What is important about this tradition is that it appears to reflect... the original understanding of discipleship as literal imitation of the poor homeless and celibate Jesus" (Sheldrake, 1989:67). The Edict of Constantine (310) enabled this monastic movement to emerge as the Religious Life

³¹ "Anthony of the Egyptian desert is the first and best example of this type... But these were at best only embryonic communities and had no stable rule. Such a rule, simple and primitive, came from another desert father, Pachomius" (Padberg, 1990:4-5).

³² St. Paul speaks of widows, who were called to certain kinds of church work (1 Tim. 5:9), and of virgins (1 Cor. 7), whom he praises for their continence and their devotion to the things of the Lord (Catholic Encyclopaedia: New Advent). See also Leclercq, 1978:72). All biblical quotations in this thesis are taken from the New International Version (NIV) unless otherwise stated.

³³ The origin of the term 'Apostolic Church Order' originates from the *Didache* (late C 1st or early C 2nd) and is a treatise of the teachings of the early Apostolic Church. The term 'Apostolic' is used in the Catholic Church to denote the teachings from the earliest days of the Apostles.

³⁴ St. Paul appointed "Phoebe, a deaconess of the church at Cenchreae" (Rom. 16:1). Theosebia was also a deaconess in the 4th century Church and is honoured as a saint in the Eastern Orthodox Church. Some believe that she was the wife of Gregory of Nyssa, others that she was his sister and deputised for her brother during his exile (cf. Presbyter Theosebia). There is more information on this subject in Ramelli, 2010: 79-102.

taking its place within the mainstream of Christianity. After the “legitimization of Christianity by Constantine, the fathers and mothers of the desert emerged in strong contrast to the political Christians of the cities who took on the Religious practices of their rulers” (Chittister, 1984:113).

John Cassian (360-433),³⁵ who by founding a monastery and nunnery in Marseilles (southern France), brought with him Egyptian monasticism. Cassian’s ideas were used by monastic legislators and Benedict (c. 480-550)³⁶ made him compulsory reading, ordering the reading of Cassian’s ‘Conferences’ after supper. In the early 6th century St. Benedict left what he regarded as a Rome which was too worldly in order to live as a solitary in a cave at Subiaco in Italy. He did not initially want to found a community, but people wanted to follow him and his way of life; so eventually in about 525, after many disagreements, he fled to Monte Cassino and founded an Order there. Benedict wrote a Rule which included prayer and labour internal to the monastery.³⁷ In monastic history terms the years 600-900 are called the First Benedictine Era. The Second Benedictine Era (900-1200) comprises of the Cistercian Order whose Rule attempted to follow St. Benedict’s Rule more strictly. St. Bernard of Clairvaux, its founder, had great influence over the papacy which enabled the Cistercians to be part of the established Religious Life. It is interesting to note that as early as this, women were part of the ordered Religious Life,³⁸ “the Benedictine Rule gradually became almost exclusively the Rule for women Religious and remained so for the next six centuries” (Padberg, 1990:8). Women also joined the Cistercians in 1098 (founded by St. Robert of Molesme in Citeaux) who based their Rule on St. Benedict’s, but in a stricter format. Gradually

³⁵ John Cassian does not inform us of where he was born although it is often presumed to be in Gaul near the River Danube, but there is little evidence of this (Stewart, 1998:4).

³⁶ St. Benedict, born in Nursia, Italy, founded twelve Italian monasteries in Subiaco before moving to Monte Casino (southern Italy) where he died. He is known as the Patriarch of Western monasticism.

³⁷ Coenobitic monasticism is the act of living in community with a Rule, as opposed to the earlier eremitic life, living as a hermit (Padberg, 1990:5-6).

³⁸ As opposed to the earlier Apostolic Church Order which was not an ordered community (cf. Sheldrake, 1989:66).

throughout the medieval period other female branches of the main Orders were founded.

The years 1200 to 1500 are often called the Mendicant Era, although the orders founded at that time were far more radical than the name suggests. The most famous Orders were Dominican and Franciscan; these two Orders were founded respectively by St. Dominic (1170-1221) and St. Francis of Assisi (1181-1226). The Mendicant Movement brought about a significant change to the old style of Religious Life; begging and almsgiving were the hallmark of this Religious Life. The change was not a development of coenobitic monasticism,³⁹ it rather ran parallel to it. The Dominicans emphasised public preaching, whereas the Franciscans emphasised poverty and minority. Poverty has continually created division (from St. Francis until the present day) within the Franciscan Order due to different interpretations of the Rule (see Padberg, 1990:9). Women's Religious Life changed little in structure and activity; the Poor Clares, founded by St. Clare of Assisi (1194-1253),⁴⁰ are "a good example of the new Franciscan spirit contained within many of the old cloistered structures" (Padberg, 1990:9). The Mendicant Orders were in close contact with the people and thus they founded Third Orders which were originally for lay people.

During the Age of Discovery⁴¹ when adventurers and Conquistadors ventured into other lands, Catholic Spain and Portugal sent out Religious to convert the native populations. Various Orders including the Jesuits (the Society of Jesus, founded by Ignatius Loyola in 1534) were used for this purpose because they were founded as an Apostolic Institute.⁴² This missionary period is known as the Apostolic Era (1500-1800), when the papacy was a great supporter of mission, despite Padberg's comment that the "scandalous conduct of the worldly, money-grabbing Renaissance Papacy was utterly

³⁹ "The Rule of St. Benedict discusses coenobitic structures, but its spirituality is still essentially individual." (Sheldrake, 1989:68).

⁴⁰ Women Religious had no option but to live in 'enclosed' communities in the Middle Ages.

⁴¹ The Age of Discovery runs from the 15th century to the start of the 17th century.

⁴² An Apostolic Institute is an institute whose life is centred on missionary activities.

evident” (Padberg, 1990:10). The Jesuits introduced “certain new and unheard-of characteristics and eliminated older elements which had long been regarded as central to Religious. For example, there was to be no obligatory choir or chanting of the divine office” (Padberg 1990:11). In the latter part of this period, after the upheaval of the Reformation in Europe, the Protestant countries of Britain, France, Germany, and the Low Countries were also involved in acquiring lands and wealth and they developed their own Protestant missions.

The Apostolic Era moved seamlessly to the Missionary Era (1800-1965) when many foreign missions and missionary societies were founded in order to convert the native population in the colonies throughout the world by Europeans. Colonial enterprise was a part of this era which combined Christian evangelisation with ‘looting’ the colonies (Jhunibunwala, 2010:71).

2.2 HISTORY OF FRANCISCAN FORMATION

2.2.1 The foundation of the Order

The Franciscan Order began as a group of companions, gathered around Francis. The sources tell us that when they reached the symbolic number of twelve (the same number as the apostles) in 1208/9, the brothers went to Rome where their proposed way of life (*Propositum vitae*) was given oral approval by Honorius III (two of the various sources that mention this are: Julian of Speyer, 1999:383 and Anon., 2000a:95). The brothers intended, quite simply, to follow the gospel life. The *Propositum vitae* marks the beginnings of the Franciscan movement and this small group quickly grew into thousands of members even in Francis’ lifetime. Francis aimed to keep the Order simple, humble and serving, and therefore the brothers came to be known as the Order of Lesser Brothers. When the Order grew it became apparent that a more complex structure was required. In fact, from the earliest years, the brothers worked out their form of life over a period of time, producing two written Rules. One was completed in 1221, entitled ‘The Earlier Rule’, but is still often referred to as the *Regula non bullata*,

meaning a rule without the papal seal of approval. The other Rule received papal approval in 1223 and is known as 'The Later Rule' or *Regula bullata*, that is a rule that has been sealed. Francis was involved in the drafting of both documents.

Francis saw Jesus Christ as the pre-eminent model for the simple 'Gospel Life' on a daily basis (Francis of Assisi, 1999d:63-64). He needed to allow himself to be 'formed' by the Holy Spirit through the Word of God. For his part, Francis was able to recognise the good in each of his Brothers, finding a quality that he could find in each Friar (cf. Sabatier, 2001:333) and Francis received each candidate as a brother whom God had given him, "And after the Lord gave me brothers, no one showed me what I had to do, but the Most High Himself revealed to me that I should live according to the pattern of the Holy Gospel" (Francis of Assisi, 1999a:125). The basic requirement was the sincerity of the 'penitential vocation' (Thomas of Celano, 1999:207 and 245), and the means of proving this was in their service to lepers (cf. Anon., 2000b:123). In a true sense each member of the community saw himself in a 'formative role', i.e., to help one's brother and to find the Lord in everything and everyone.

In 1220 a Papal Bull, *Cum Secundum*, imposed a probationary year for Franciscan Friars,⁴³ this is mentioned in The Earlier Rule of 1221⁴⁴ together with other canonical requirements. This resulted in the admission of novices being restricted to the Minister Provincial⁴⁵ who was to examine the genuineness of their vocation. Candidates were especially required to give up all their property, and if possible, to sell it and give the proceeds to the poor in accordance with the Gospel; the fraternity was not to benefit from this renunciation. The novice wore a different habit from professed friars, whose distinguishing garment was the capuche.⁴⁶ Only when he took his vows did he receive the Orders special habit according to Duncan Nimmo (Nimmo, 1987:23). The Later

⁴³ See section 2.2.2.

⁴⁴ 'The Earlier Rule' was the first Rule written down by St. Francis. It came after the Oral Rule of which had been orally approved by Pope Innocent III in 1209 (Francis of Assisi (b), 1999:63-86).

⁴⁵ An Order is governed by a Minister General and the different geographical areas are divided into Provinces which are governed by a Minister Provincial.

⁴⁶ A capuche is a long, pointed cowl. Today this is worn by Capuchins Franciscan Friars.

Rule is the Orders official Rule and so the canonical basis for the Orders existence, establishing it socially as an “ecclesiastical entity” (Nimmo, 1987:23). At their profession, the brothers bound themselves to observe it. “In a constitutional or legal sense, therefore, the *Regula bullata* (The Later Rule) was the sole foundation of Franciscan living.” (Nimmo, 1987:23). Thus, Franciscan Formation draws its formation principles from the *Regula bullata*.

2.2.2 Narbonne Constitutions and its requirements

Francis used to receive brothers personally. Each one was expected to serve lepers to test the sincerity of their penitential vocation (Anon, 2000b:123). The foundation of the Order (1209) until the papal decree *Cum Secundum* (1220)⁴⁷ which made the novitiate obligatory, insisted on “a year of probation” (Pope Honorius, 1999:561). A probationary year was enforced from 1220. Ministers Provincial examined and admitted novices. Novices gave up their possessions but this had not to be to the benefit of the community in any way. They received the full habit once they were professed. The earliest information on how the novitiate was organised originates from the Constitutions of Narbonne (1260). The canonical age for becoming a novice was fourteen. This was raised by the Constitutions of Narbonne, to eighteen, and later varied from sixteen to eighteen. The problem of young boys being admitted stemmed from the practice of boys being entrusted to Franciscan communities and brought up in the convent. In each custody⁴⁸ there was to be one house (or two if necessary) designated by the Provincial, where all the novices of the area were to be placed until they took their vows.

⁴⁷ “With this bull, the Papacy moved to correct what it saw as deficiencies in a yet highly unstructured religious (*sic.*) brotherhood. Francis was known for accepting all who wished to join him; the simple act of distributing one’s goods to the poor and putting on the habit of penance made one a Lesser Brother. There was no stage of ‘Formation’ which could test those who may have made a hasty unconsidered decision to follow this demanding radical Gospel life; a point which drew criticism from even enthusiasts of the new brotherhood. Furthermore, the total freedom of movement which characterised the itinerant life of the early brothers also came at the cost of undisciplined or idle brothers causing scandal rather than edification” (Pope Honorius III, 1999:560).

⁴⁸ A custody (*custos*) is also known as a ‘Guardian’ who is a Superior and is responsible for the care of the brothers and for their administration.

Their training was the responsibility of “a devout and prudent brother” (Marcil, 1994:78). Who was to teach them to pray the Divine Office, to make frank and frequent confessions, to discipline their private prayer life, to live properly with others, to obey humbly, to maintain purity of heart and body, to watch jealously over most holy poverty and aspire to the summit of perfection in all things. They were forbidden to study throughout the probationary year and could not be received into Holy Orders before their novitiate or hear confessions even if they were already priests. The novices would spend their time reading the Bible and other literature at the direction of the Master of Novices. They were not allowed to speak to secular people or Religious from other Orders without permission. Later legislation was added as the need arose to fill in the gaps of this training scheme.

After taking vows, training continued under a master for a period of time that varied, but was generally about three years. Concern for the behaviour of young friars was often expressed at Provincial Chapters. From 1220 to 1240 there were a series of developments which led to the creation of the Magister⁴⁹ as Formator,⁵⁰ who was to prudently discern the presence of a vocation in those he was to train in the novitiate. This requires a capacity to accompany, to welcome and nurture the vocation, which was pertinent because candidates were entering at a young age. In the period between 1240 and 1260 more guidelines were developed to meet new needs until the ratification of the Narbonne Constitutions which added the figure of the Instructor. There was an increase in the clericalization of the Order which led to the requirement for the Friars to be instructed and trained as preachers, teachers, spiritual guides etc. The role of the

⁴⁹ Magister is Latin for Master. “The term Master commonly applies to someone who possesses ideals, knowledge and values and who, whether from natural aptitude or from adequate preparation, is in a position to communicate in a formative manner, proposing a form and providing it with specific shape” (Temperini, 1999:151).

⁵⁰ “A devout and prudent brother shall be assigned for their formation, who shall teach them to confess their sins sincerely and frequently, to pray fervently, to conduct themselves properly, to obey humbly, to preserve purity of heart and body, to be zealous for most holy poverty, and to strive eagerly towards the heights of perfection” (Marcil, 1994:78).

instructor was to provide the intellectual and professional knowledge required of a friar-priest in the challenging context of the medieval city.

2.2.3 Standardised Formation in the Church

Formation was greatly standardised in the Church between 1260 and the 1700s and it was given a strictly juridical basis. This continued to influence Franciscan Formation until Vatican Council II. The judicial dimension led to the observance of the law as a criterion for sanctity (e.g., Rule/Constitutions). In addition, as a result of the corruptions exposed by the Reformation and Counter Reformation Religious life was standardised by the Council of Trent (1545-63).⁵¹ It led, however, to a loss of the specific contributions which the various Charisms had given the Church and eroded the many individual identifying differences between the Orders. This phenomenon retained its impact through the promulgation of the Code of Canon Law (1917) until the time of Vatican Council II.

2.2.4 Vatican Council II, and its call to return the Orders to their original charism

Vatican Council II (1962-65) enabled a return to the inspiration of St. Francis and the early sources. This breathed new life into Franciscan Formation, and thus affected all its formators and formees. The decree *Perfectae Caritatis* opened the door to the challenges of our time and returned Franciscans to the original inspiration of their different Charisms which enabled them to update their Religious Life and face the challenges of the present day.

Subsequently, the development of Franciscan Formation has emerged as a result of different social challenges and to different Church documents throughout history.

⁵¹ See section 2.3.2.

2.3 CHURCH DOCUMENTS AND THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO RELIGIOUS FORMATION

2.3.1 The Code of Canon Law

This section deals with Canon Law (1917), first generally and then particularly, examining the three canons relevant to Formation (canons 659, 660 and 661). These canons explain some of the aspects of Religious Formation.

Canon Law is examined first because it is the most important legal document of the Church; it is “the body of ecclesiastical rules or laws imposed by authority in matters of faith, morals and discipline” (Anon., 1997a:277). These regulations have been made or adopted throughout history by ecclesiastical authority for the government of the various Churches and their members. There are different Canon Laws for the internal ecclesiastical law governing the Catholic Church, the Eastern Orthodox Churches,⁵² and the Anglican Communion.⁵³ The way that such Church Law is legislated, interpreted, and at times adjudicated, varies widely across these three Church bodies. In all three traditions, a canon was initially a rule adopted by a council (from the Greek ‘κανών’, meaning rule, standard, or measure). These councils formed the foundation of Canon Law and were often a means of settling matters of uncertainty and disputes.

The various pronouncements cover both matters of doctrine, and fairly minor issues. A good illustration of this is the way in which the Council of Nicæa made important statements of belief.⁵⁴ However, there were twenty lesser-known miscellaneous canons promulgated at the same Council.⁵⁵ The Council of Nicæa came to possess a certain

⁵² The different Eastern Orthodox Churches each has their own Canon Laws.

⁵³ The different communions of the Anglican Communion have their own Canon Laws, although they are derived from the Canons of the Church of England.

⁵⁴ These statements of belief became so important that they are enshrined in the creed at the Mass.

⁵⁵ Some of the canons attached to Nicæa caused confusion to the extent that people believed that they belonged to the Council of Nicæa, e.g. the canons from the Council of Sardica (343) caused this confusion.

primacy in both East and West, owing much to the unique authority enjoyed by this Council.

The canons from the Code of Canon Law that relate to Religious Formation are canons 641-661, with canons 659, 660 and 661 being directed to the nature of Religious Formation.⁵⁶ Canon 659 states that, “After first profession, the formation of all members in each institute is to be completed,⁵⁷ so that the professed may lead the life proper to the Institute more fully, and fulfil its mission more effectively” (Coriden, Green & Heintschel, 1985: 120). In other words, Canon Law validates the purpose of Formation and the mission of Religious Institutes. The Church invites the Institutes to give sufficient time to prepare their members for a lifestyle which truthfully and effectively witnesses to the mission of the chosen Institute.

Canon 660 explains that Formation is to be “adapted to the capacity of the members [of the Institute]” (Coriden, Green & Heintschel, 1985: 120). This means that Formation is individual, not simply corporal. It is an emphasis that is sometimes overlooked.

Each Institute’s law, therefore, should define the nature and duration of this Formation (cf. Coriden, Green & Heintschel, 1985: 120). The most important requirements are that the needs of the Church, the conditions of the people, and signs of the time are understood and nurtured (cf. Coriden, Green & Heintschel, 1985: 120). Hence, the Church gives a valid freedom to form the members of its Institutes according to its laws as well as each Institute’s own programme of studies cf. (Coriden, Green & Heintschel, 1985: 116). Formation has a collective relationship as well as a unique identity. Canon Law directs the Institute to a universal outline of Formation from its particularity (cf. Coriden, Green & Heintschel, 1985: 120).

⁵⁶ The purpose of all Religious Formation is to enable people to discover, then assimilate and deepen their identity as Religious. The Initial Formator’s task is to help candidates discern their Formation.

⁵⁷ This is another example of the Church understanding Formation as something that can be ‘completed’ rather than ‘on-going’ throughout life (see throughout Chapter I and sections 4.6 and 5.1).

“Formation must be systematic [and] adapted” (Coriden, Green & Heintschel, 1985: 120) to the aptitude of its members. Canon Law also highlights the need for obtaining ecclesiastical and civil degrees and the document directs the members of Institutes to acquire intellectual development as well as theological expertise. It requires Formation to take place in an atmosphere of freedom with no undue responsibilities which may hinder the Formation. During Formation, Formees are encouraged to experience a sense of detachment, therefore time is to be given to deepen the awareness of each Call (Coriden, Green & Heintschel, 1985: 120) and examine the decision to follow the Divine Calling. An emotional response to God’s Call will not help the candidate when times are difficult: “they will require time to consider the theoretical as well as the practical” (Coriden, Green & Heintschel, 1985: 120) issues in their decision-making, so that their lives are radical and authentic.

Canon Law stresses the importance of On-going Formation; canon 661 states: “Religious are to be diligent in continuing their spiritual, doctrinal and practical formation throughout their lives. Superiors are to ensure that they have the assistance and the time to do this” (Coriden, Green & Heintschel, 1985: 120). This appears to be a contradiction to canon 659 [see earlier in this section]. The problem probably derives from an understanding that Formation is ‘completed’ in order for Final Profession to take place, but it probably assumes that Formation continues in a different format as On-going Formation; however, confusion is created. The on-going nature of Formation can be emphasised at the time of Initial Formation and includes a willingness to accept changes in the Church’s understanding of its doctrine, as well as the individual’s spirituality maturing. Religious should fully understand that this ‘on-going’ nature is essential throughout their lives and spirituality. Superiors are responsible to assist and find time for On-going Formation (Coriden, Green & Heintschel, 1985: 120).

Canon Law validates the purpose of Formation and requires Institutes to give time for a systematic preparation for members in a detached atmosphere, stating that On-going Formation is laid down at the time of Initial Formation.

2.3.2 Councils prior to Vatican Council II

The Church formulated a series of councils in its early history to promulgate dogmas in its fight against various heresies which could have caused schisms. There was little concern in the early councils regarding Religious and Formation until the Council of Trent (1545-1563) [see below]. Formation, in more modern times, has been an important concern for the Church and has been communicated through the documents of the Vatican Councils and beyond.

The early councils of the Church have been examined and nothing was found regarding Formation. The councils examined were: Nicæa (325); Constantinople (381); Ephesus (431); Second Council of Ephesus (449) Chalcedon (451); Second and Third Councils of Constantinople (553 and 660-681); Second Council of Nicæa (787) and Fourth Council of Constantinople (869-870) which led to the schism between East and West.

In the Middle Ages the First Lateran Council of 1123 met to affirm the authority of the Church over secular institutions. In 1139 the Second Lateran Council was convened to neutralise the after-effects of a schism between Popes after Pope Honorius II died in 1130. Similarly, the Third Lateran Council (1179) dealt with schisms between the Emperor and the Church in their separate election of Popes. This Council also dealt with the Waldensian heresy⁵⁸ as well as condemning sodomy. In 1215 the Fourth Lateran Council was summoned by Pope Innocent III, “to eradicate vices and to plant virtues, to correct faults and to reform morals, to remove heresies and to strengthen

⁵⁸ The Chronicle of Laon (c.1220) informs that Valdes (some later chroniclers call him Peter Waldo) was a rich citizen of Lyons who was converted between 1170 and 1173 and gave all his wealth to the poor. He and his followers were itinerant preachers. His way of life was approved of by Pope Alexander III at the Third Lateran Council with the proviso that they refrain from preaching except on the invitation of the respective clergy. In 1180 Valdes subscribed to a profession of the orthodox faith in the presence of Cardinal Henry of Clairvaux and Archbishop Guichard of Lyons, but he broke his promise on unofficial preaching and he and his followers were excommunicated in 1182 or 1183 and expelled from Lyons. They were declared heretics at the Council of Verona in 1184.

faith” (Tanner, 1990a:227). At this Council the Cathars⁵⁹ were condemned as heretics. In 1220 the Papal Bull, *Cum Secundum*, corrected certain deficiencies, particularly the lack of a probationary year amongst itinerant Friars. The First Council of Lyons (1245) was convoked by Pope Innocent IV to deal with the poor morality of the clergy and faithful, the danger of the Saracens, the Greek Schism, and the invasion of Hungary by the Tatars. In 1274 the Second Council of Lyons was aimed to bring about union with the Greek Church, the liberation of the Holy Land, and again to try and reform morals (cf. Tanner, 1990b:303-304).

The Council of Vienne (1311-1312) was summoned by Pope Clement V to deal with the question of accusations against the Templars. The Council also assisted with work in the Holy Land and aimed at reforming the Church (cf. Tanner 1990c:333). The Franciscan issue of poverty was resolved in favour of the more austere party. The Council of Constance (1414-1418) convoked by the Anti-pope John XXIII had the purpose of ending the Great Schism, to reform the Church and combat heresy. In 1431-1449 the Council of Basle – Ferrara – Florence⁶⁰ affirmed the superiority of the decrees of Constance on the superiority of a General Council over a Pope. The Fifth Lateran Council (1512-1517) was convened to invalidate the decree of the Anti-papal Council of Pisa.

The Nineteenth Ecumenical Council was the Council of Trent (1545-1563)⁶¹ which embodied the ideals of the Counter Reformation. This document is the first Church document that deliberates through decrees on regulars and nuns. In this respect it hoped that “the ancient and regular discipline” would “be restored where it has

⁵⁹ The Cathars believed in dualism with the purpose of redemption being the liberation of the soul from the body. They understood Jesus as an angel with a phantom body and rejected all sacraments because they considered all matter as evil.

⁶⁰ The Council of Basle states that this Council was driven from Basle in 1448 to re-convene in Lausanne and lasted until 1449 (cf. Anon. 1997b:169). However, Tanner states that the Council’s dates were from 1431-1445 (Tanner, 1990d:452). This conflict of dates is probably due to the fact that most Catholic theologians now only recognise the first twenty-five sessions before the Council moved to Ferrara and Florence.

⁶¹ For details see Tanner, 1990e:657-799).

collapsed” and encouraged “greater constancy where it has been preserved” (or all three quotations are sourced from Tanner, 1990e:776). The Council ordered that both men and women Religious were to follow their Rules more precisely; particular emphasis was given to the Evangelical Counsels⁶² for the perfection of their various professions. This decree called on the preservation of common life, food and clothing and it enjoined the Superiors to exercise the utmost diligence in General and Provincial Chapters and in their Visitations. All of these had been neglected. Girls at that time were taking vows from the age of twelve; the Council of Trent (Chapter 17) states that this was only done if she has been thoroughly examined by the Bishop or his Vicar to consider whether she has been forced (cf. Tanner, 1990e:781) in which case the Superior is under threat of suspension. Chapter 15 of the council states that girls and boys must be at least 16 years with a year’s probation before he/she can take any vows (cf. Tanner, 1990e:781). This is the first Council that uses the word ‘probation’, although there is still no sign of the actual word ‘Formation’.

In the 19th century the First Vatican Council (1869-1870) makes no mention of Formation, but was summoned by Pope Pius IX to deal with the philosophical problem of faith and reason. The Council was planned to deal with a variety of subjects including faith, dogma, ecclesiastical discipline, Canon Law, Religious Orders, the Eastern Churches and foreign missions, as well as the relationship between the Church and civil authorities.

2.3.3 Vatican Council II

The Vatican Council II (1962-1965) was the first council to articulate the word ‘Formation’ and goes into some depth on the subject, attempting to encompass the Religious within the Church, rather than running alongside one another as in previous times. We see this in the fact that the contents of the past councils’ deliberations almost

⁶² The Evangelical Counsels are the vows of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience taken by the Religious fraternity.

ignored the Religious until Vatican Council II because their case was not relevant to any universal Church problem. There are two relevant documents in the Council in connection with Formation those of *Lumen Gentium* (Flannery, 1975:320-397) and *Perfectae Caritatis* (Flannery, 1975:545-626).

Lumen Gentium is a section from Vatican Council II entitled 'Dogmatic Constitution on the Church' and gave a whole new presentation to the theology and mystery of the Church. It was the first time in history that a Council assigned a place for Religious in the Church. The heart of the invitation of *Lumen Gentium* is a call for Religious to holiness (Formation),⁶³ which is an invitation from the Church to Religious that proposes several promulgations. The foundation of Religious commitment is based on Christ's teaching and example through the self-dedication to God by means of the Evangelical Counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience; taught in Formation throughout a Religious's life. These-, "constitute a gift of God which the Church has received from her Lord and which by his grace she always safeguards" (Flannery, 1975:365) and are commended as an ideal of life by the Apostles and Fathers of the Church, as well as her doctors and pastors (see Flannery, 1975:365).

Religious Life is regarded as a gift of the Holy Spirit and therefore Religious in their Formation are to be "Guided by the Holy Spirit"; "Church authority has been at pains to give a right interpretation of the counsels, to regulate their practice, and also to set up stable forms of living embodying them" (both quotations from Flannery, 1975:365). There are various forms of Religious Life and Formation, for those living in solitude and those living in community. The latter involves "different Religious families coming into existence using a multitude of spiritual resources. These are multiplying through the

⁶³ "Holiness: The state or quality of being holy; perfect moral integrity or purity; freedom from sin; sanctity; innocence. The adjective 'holy', as applied to people, is thus defined: Spiritually whole or sound: of unimpaired innocence and virtue: free from sinful affections: pure in heart; godly: pious: irreproachable; guiltless, acceptable to God" (A Defence of Christian Perfection). It is during formation that Religious learn to cultivate an ever-deeper life of holiness through their teaching, reflection and prayer.

holiness of their members and for the good of the entire Body of Christ” (Flannery, 1975:365).

“Members of these families [Religious] enjoy many helps [*sic.*] towards holiness of life.” Their ordered life enables them to have a stable and solidly based foundation for their Christian life. They receive sound teaching through Initial and On-going Religious Formation. Obedience gives strength within their Christian freedom. This inspires maintaining the Religious Life to which they are dedicated and leads them “on the road of love” through hope, faith and joy (both quotations are from Flannery, 1975:365).

“This form of life has its own place in relation to the divine and hierarchical structure of the Church” (Flannery, 1975:365). Religious are called by God to use the gifts of grace they have received for the life of the Church and contribute to its saving mission. This document sees that the practice of the Evangelical Counsels by vows is to be considered as a sacred tie and that the consecration is wholly to God and His supreme love. The document makes clear that Religious have a “solidly based way of Christian life (Flannery,1975:365). They receive well-proven teaching...They are bound together in brotherly communion” (Flannery, 1975:366). In a special way Religious choose to love, serve and honour God (cf. Flannery, 1975:365). It is implied in *Lumen Gentium* that Formation of Religious is a privilege and should be entered into patiently and seriously.

In *Lumen Gentium*, Religious Life is expressed as a way of living baptismal grace. For this purpose, Religious profession is a commitment within the Church, which has two dimensions: first, “to be set free from hindrances that could hold them back from loving God ardently and worshipping Him perfectly;” and secondly, in order to consecrate himself in a more throughgoing way to the service of God”. The bonds by which they are pledged to the practice of the Counsels show forth the unbreakable bond of union that exists between Christ and his bride the Church” (the above three quotations are from Flannery, 1975c:366). The stability and firmness of these bonds depend on the perfection of their consecration and the quality of their On-going Formation.

Religious Formation aims at being an instrument of love (see Flannery, 1975:366). The mystery of Religious Formation reveals the mystery of the Church; hence, Evangelical Counsels unite those who practice them to the Church and Her mystery in a special way. It follows that the spiritual life of such Christians is dedicated to the welfare of the entire Church. This is done to the extent of their capacities and in keeping with the particular kind of Religious Life “to which they are individually called, whether it is one of prayer or of active labour as well. They have the duty of working for the implanting and strengthening of the Kingdom of God into other souls and spreading it to the four corners of the earth. It is for this reason that the distinctive character of various Religious Institutes is preserved and fostered by the Church” (Flannery, 1975:366,367).

The eschatological⁶⁴ dimension of Religious Formation is found in *Lumen Gentium* in terms of the way the Religious commit themselves to the world. This is done by “bestowing greater freedom from the cares of earthly existence on those who follow the Religious Life” (Flannery, 1975:367). The aim of this is to “simultaneously reveal “more clearly to all believers the heavenly goods which are already present in this age, witnessing to the new and eternal life...” (Flannery, 1975:367). It is acquired through Christ’s resurrection which precludes “our future resurrection and the glory of the Heavenly Kingdom” (Flannery, 1975:367). Hence, “the Religious state also constitutes a closer imitation and an abiding re-enactment in the Church of the form of life which the Son of God made His own when he came into the world to do the will of the Father and which he propounded to the disciples who followed him” (Flannery, 1975:367). This state shows the “transcendence of the Kingdom of God” over the world, bringing to all the “greatness of Christ’s power...and “the infinite might of the Holy Spirit which works so marvellously in the Church” (Flannery, 1975:367).

Lumen Gentium pronounces that the Church’s commitment to Religious Life is to make wise laws promoting the perfection of love (cf. Flannery, 1975:367). Religious

⁶⁴ Eschatology is the doctrine of ‘the four last things’ (death, judgement, heaven and hell), being the final destiny of all people and of the created order.

Formation's response to this should be to devote time to a deeper understanding of this perfection of love. The Church also "uses its supervisory and protective authority to ensure that Religious institutes are established all over the world for building-up the Body of Christ so that they may develop and flourish in accordance with the spirit of their founders" (Flannery, 1975:367).

Subsequently, Religious Life is raised to the dignity of a canonical status:

The Church sets it forth liturgically as a state of consecration to God. The Church shares the virtue of Her God-given authority; receiving the vows of those who profess this form of life, asks aid and grace for them from God in their public prayer, commends them to God and bestows on them a spiritual blessing, associating their self-offering with the sacrifice of the Eucharist (Flannery, 1975:368).

The Religious are urged to show Christ through themselves with ever increasing clarity to believers and unbelievers alike:

Christ in contemplation on the mountain, or proclaiming the kingdom of God to the multitudes, or healing the sick and maimed and converting sinners to a good life, or blessing children and doing good to all men, always in obedience to the will of the Father who sent him (Flannery, 1975:368).

Religious Life promotes freedom and Formation assists in discovering the true nature of freedom through the profession of the Evangelical Counsels, which "involves the renunciation of material things that undoubtedly deserve to be highly valued; it does not constitute an obstacle to the true development of the human person, but by its nature is supremely beneficial to that development" (Flannery, 1975:368). The Counsels are "willingly embraced in accordance with each person's personal vocation," (Flannery, 1975:368) they then "contribute in no small degree to the purification of the heart and to spiritual freedom" (Flannery, 1975:368). The Evangelical Counsels promote an "ardour in the life of love; and above all they have the power to conform the Christian man more fully to that kind of poor and virginal life which Christ the Lord chose for himself and which his Virgin Mother embraced also" (Flannery, 1975:368). Therefore, Religious Life is rooted-, and patterned in Christ and Mary. Hence, the central aim in formation is to form oneself to Jesus and Mary.

Religious Life does not alienate Religious from society, rather Formation encourages Religious to a deeper way to be present in the heart of Christ and co-operate with society spiritually: "So that the building up of human society may always have its foundation in the Lord and have him as its goal. Otherwise, those who build it may have laboured in vain." (Flannery, 1975:369). It can therefore be deducted from *Lumen Gentium* that the Church places Religious Life at the heart of the world, seeing its commitment as a means of building-up the contemporary world, promoting the holiness of the people of God. Thus, Religious Formation leads both young and old to strive after holiness for the sake of the whole human family. Hence, Religious life and its formation programme should aim at promoting the social effect of Religious commitment and to witness holiness of life and being.

Religious who are called to the consecrated Life:

...take earnest care to preserve and excel still more in the life in which God has called them, for the increase of the holiness of the Church, to the greater glory of the one and undivided Trinity, which in Christ and through Christ is the source and origin of all holiness (Flannery, 1975:369).

Hence, the document *Lumen Gentium* calls Religious to constantly seek holiness of life through their commitment in order to contribute to the holiness of the Church. Religious Formation, then, is a Formation to holiness. This document, although mentioning "the human person" (Flannery, 1975c:368) does not develop any Human Formation, as it does with Christian/Spiritual Formation.

Lumen Gentium understands the Religious Life as an invitation to live a holy life and that is a gift of the Holy Spirit. It is integral to the Church because of members living in baptismal grace. *Lumen Gentium* perceives Religious Life as an instrument of love spreading the Good News of the Kingdom to all parts of the world. In order to be free to obey this calling, Religious Life promotes freedom through the Evangelical Counsels. Therefore, Religious are not alienated from society, but rather through their seeking of holiness they are able to present Christ to society and the world.

Perfectae Caritatis is a section from Vatican Council II entitled 'Decree on the Up-to-date Renewal of Religious Life' (Flannery, 1975:545-599) and deals directly with the Religious Life. *Perfectae Caritatis* categorically states that renewal of Religious Life begins from the novitiate. This renewal varies depending on the formation of its members. The following diagram has been devised in order to explain the components required for the renewal of the Consecrated Life:

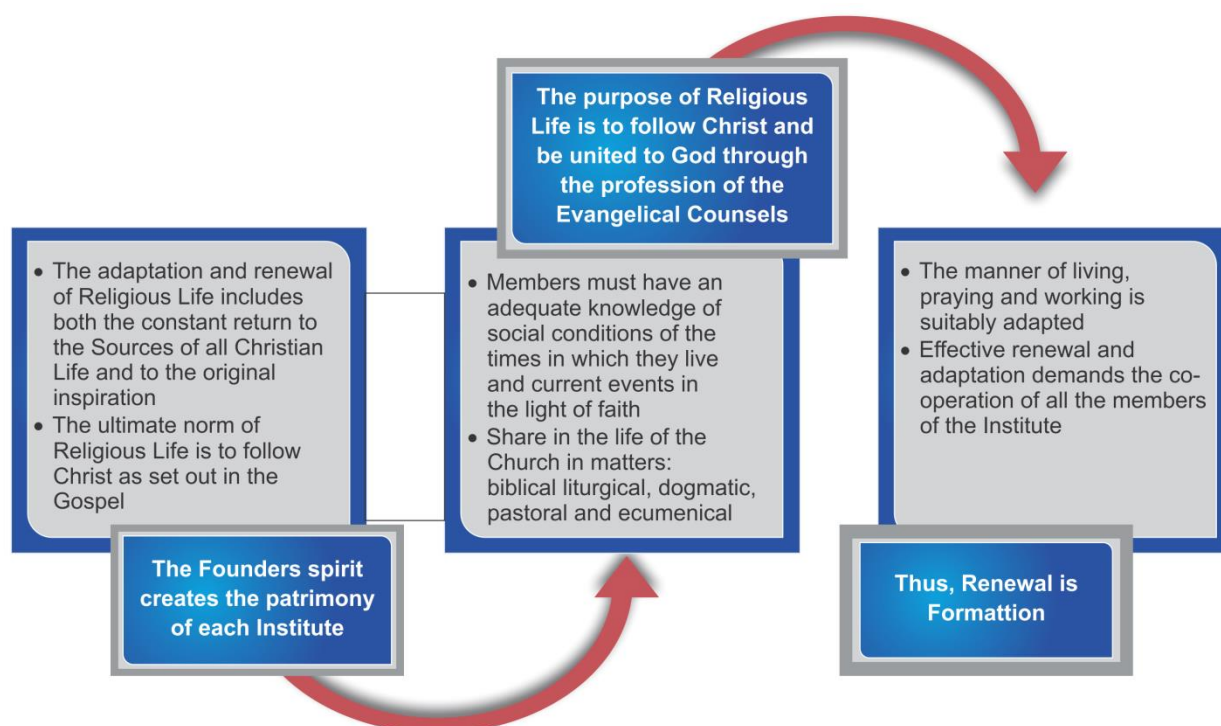


Diagram 1.1 : Components for the renewal of consecrated life

According to *Perfectae Caritatis* each Institute not only has to re-write its Constitution and all its books of rules and regulations, but they are invited to study the question of Formation in the light of the constrictions and specific Charism of each Congregation⁶⁵ (Flannery, 1975:547). Hence, this invitation by the Vatican Council II gives supportive Formation guidance to the members of each institute, despite the amount of work

⁶⁵ A Congregation in this sense is 'a Religious Institute' (meaning a Catholic Congregation).

involved in following the recommendation. This document was a turning point for Religious Life, bringing renewal, adaptation and wholeness to Religious Formation.⁶⁶ As a result, Religious Life has the potential to bring about openness and freedom to Christian commitment within a 'human-centred' Formation.

In *Perfectae Caritatis* the various Charisms are recognised, but they are understood as all being directed towards the building-up of 'the inner man'. In this, each Institute has to re-write its Constitution and study again their Formation. This document has had a radical effect on Religious Life, bringing Religious onto the path of renewal and returning them to the original Charism of their Institutes. Although it states that Formation should be seen more in human and divine terms, a systematic explanation on Formation with an integrated method is not given.

2.3.4 Post-Vatican Council II

Directives on Formation of the Institutes (1990) highlights the purpose of Religious Formation and defines that "the proper renewal of Religious Institutes depends chiefly on the Formation of their members" (Directives on Formation, 1990: section1). This document is primarily directed at the Major Superiors of Religious Institutes⁶⁷ and to their Formators; it is a guideline for all to create their own programmes on Formation within the parameters given. The document defines the primary aim⁶⁸ of Formation when candidates to the Religious Life and the young professed are enabled to discover, to assimilate and deepen their own Religious identity. "Pope Paul VI reminded Religious that, whatever the variety of ways of life and of Charism, all the elements of Religious Life should be directed towards the building-up of 'the inner man'" (Directives

⁶⁶ This document appears to demand of Religious to engage in Formation and to be continually adapting their life to the contemporary situation as a way of forming the inner life to live more fully their evangelical commitment.

⁶⁷ 'Major Superiors' is a term used for Minister/Mother Generals (those in charge of and responsible of for an Order) and Provincials (those in charge of and responsible for a Province within an Order).

⁶⁸ This document translates the Latin word as "end" instead of 'aim'; 'aim' has been used here in order to depart from the notion of Formation being 'ended' or 'completed'.

on Formation: section2). This document outlines at length the need for Formation to be both spiritual and human. It also maintains aspects of sexuality during Formation for a healthy understanding of the celibate life, but nothing negative is portrayed or discussed.

Religious Life is the consecration of the whole person of those who profess the Evangelical Counsels. It is therefore a total dedication to God who is love and this dedication becomes a continuous worship of God in love (Directives on Formation: section17 and 18). The vocation to the Religious Life is inexplicably a part of the love of God for the person and is therefore gratuitous, personal, and unique. It is illustrated in Mk. 10:21a (“Jesus looked at him and loved him”). This love embraces the person to the extent that one no longer pertains to oneself, but to Christ. This love is of a nuptial character in a very real sense of being willing to be one “whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it” (Mk. 8:35b).

The response to God’s Call is not simply by the intellect, but by the whole of life and is not an end in itself, but is rather a dichotomy between the individual Religious Life with the Institute and the consecration to God in the mission to the world.

The following diagram has been devised to explain the way in which the document enables the Religious to develop their humanity. This helps the Religious to understand and co-operate in the construction of human society.

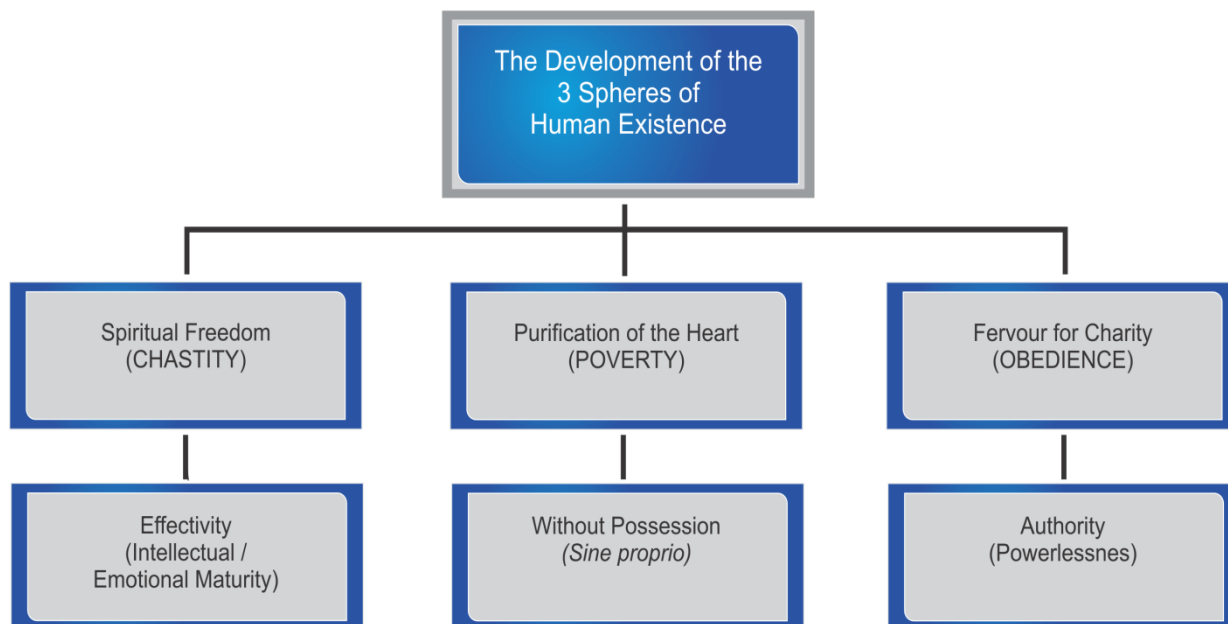


Diagram 1.2: The development of human spheres in spiritual perfection

In view of the above it is important that care and attention be given to initiate candidates for the Religious Life into the methodology and life of the three vows. Thus, a deep analysis of the vows makes Religious more human than holy. In this way, holiness is grounded and makes Religious understand that holiness is part of the process of becoming human. This is a two-way process of the theoretical and the practical which enables Religious Formation to find greater and more valuable insight. This document expresses humanity only in the areas of the Evangelical Counsels as “affectivity” (chastity); “without possession” (poverty) and “authority” (obedience) (these three quotations from Directives on Formation: section 12); it is seen as a spiritual attainment towards perfection, rather than an examination of the human process and therefore there is a lack of detail regarding Human Formation as a process in human development, which is central to Religious Life. This writer calls this ‘Process Formation’. Process Formation is expressed in many different terms: anthropological, psychological and spiritual, but it requires a systematic approach because so far, the work done on formation has been piece-meal, with different aspects emphasised in

different social times and for different social needs (see Pope John Paul II, 1996:104). Formation is never-ending and touches every area of life and development, not just the spiritual. This dissertation will argue the importance of Human Formation within Religious Formation and requires more attention to be given to human development by all Formators.

'Directives on Formation in Religious Institutes' is the only document with 'Formation' in its title and is primarily addressed to Superiors and Formators and highlights the purposes of Formation with an emphasis on renewal. It explains vocation as part of the love of God. This document is both theoretical and practical and attempts to place Formation within the human context, but its task does not include analysing the principles of human growth and its processes.

Vita Consecrata (1996) is a post-synodal document which insists on the *Ratio Institutionis*, meaning that each Religious Institute is invited to formulate a syllabus pertaining to its own Charism and tradition.

On the one hand, it shows how to pass on the Institute's spirit, so that it will be lived in its integrity by future generations in different cultures and geographical regions. On the other hand, it explains to the consecrated how to live that spirit in the different stages of life, on the way to full maturity of faith in Christ.

This document states that the "consecrated life is not something isolated and marginal, but a reality which affects the whole Church. The bishops at the synod frequently reaffirmed this: "*de re nostra agitur*", 'this is something which concerns us all'" (Pope John Paul II, 1996:5). Hence Religious Life is at the heart of the Church and an important element in her mission; it "'manifests the inner nature of Christian calling' and the striving of the whole Church as the Bride towards her union with one Spouse [Christ]" (Pope John Paul II, 1996:5-6). *Vita Consecrata* expounds that the "consecrated life has not only proved a help and support for the Church in the past, but it is also a precious and necessary gift for the present and future of the People of God

since it is an intimate part of her life, her holiness and her mission” (Pope John Paul II, 1996:5-6).

Vita Consecrata states that although Institutes are facing problems throughout the world, they must not question the Evangelical Counsels as an essential part of the Church which enables, “greater fidelity to the Gospel” (Pope John Paul II, 1996:5-6). The substance of the Consecrated Life will not change despite changes in “historical forms,” because it is “a radical gift of self for love of the Lord Jesus and, in Him” (Pope John Paul II, 1996:5-6).

The results are expressed particularly clearly within Section 4:

This Synod...completes the treatment of the distinctive features of the states of life willed by the Lord Jesus for his Church. Whereas the Second Vatican Council emphasized the profound reality of ecclesial communion... in recent years there has been felt the need to clarify *the specific identity of the various states of life*, their vocation and their particular mission in the Church. Communion in the Church is not uniformity, but a gift of the Spirit who is present in the variety of Charisms and states of life... every gift of the Spirit is granted in order to bear fruit for the Lord in the growth of fraternity and mission (Pope John Paul II, 1996:7-8).

Vita Consecrata expresses Religious Life as a gift to the whole Church. Consequently, Institutes need to look at the Church and its documents when drawing-up outlines for the Formation of their members according to the mind and heart of the Church.

Vita Consecrata highlights the seriousness of Initial Formation for Religious, stating that “the Synod Assembly paid special attention to the Formation of those who wish to consecrate themselves to the Lord, and recognised its decisive importance” (Pope John Paul II, 1996:117). This document argues that “the primary objective of the Formation process is to prepare people for the total consecration of themselves to God through the following of Christ and at the service of the Church’s mission” (Pope John Paul II, 1996:117). It then proposes the importance of affirming the Lord’s Call in taking responsibility for the maturing of vocation which is the duty of those who are called.

This means that the whole of life is open to the work of the Spirit and is a pilgrimage of complete trust, “accepting in faith the means of grace offered by the Lord and the Church” (Pope John Paul II, 1996:118).

Formation is a process and this has “a profound effect on individuals in their every attitude and action” (Pope John Paul II, 1996:118). This occurs at important moments in life, as well as in the ordinary humdrum times and shows that they belong completely and joyfully to God since the very purpose of Consecrated Life is “conformity to the Lord Jesus in His total self-giving” (Pope John Paul II, 1996:118). This, then, is the principal objective of Formation; an invitation by Jesus, and again a process of becoming Christ-like in attitude and being. Thus, Formation helps the Religious “to a gradual identification with the attitude of Christ towards the Father” (Pope John Paul II, 1996:118).

Consequently, Formation involves the whole person, from what the person is to what he/she does. It means that Formation is continuous throughout life. Formees are to learn to grow from their vows and commitment to the Charism and mission of their own Institute. (Pope John Paul II, 1996:118-119). An adequate provision of time should be given for Initial Formation, as an introductory process for the development of the human/Christian personality. In the case of those studying for the priesthood, this Initial Formation is tailored to their specific course of studies, as part of a wider and broader Formation Programme. (Pope John Paul II, 1996:118-119).

Vita Consecrata expounds that “God the Father through the unceasing gift of Christ and the Spirit is the educator *par excellence* of those who consecrate themselves to Him” (Pope John Paul II, 1996:119). He makes use of human instruments, placing mature brothers and sisters as Formators of those whom He calls. Formation is a “sharing in the work of the Father who, through the Spirit, fashions the inner attitudes of the Son in the hearts of young men and women” (Pope John Paul II, 1996:119). The Formators’ primary quality is familiarity with the path of seeking God, in order to accompany others on this journey. They are to be sensitive to the work of grace and

...they will also be able to point out those obstacles which are less obvious. But above all they will disclose the beauty of following Christ and the value of the Charism by which this is accomplished. They will combine the illumination of spiritual wisdom with light shed by human means, which can be a help both in discerning the call and in forming the new man or woman, until they are genuinely free. The chief instrument of Formation is personal dialogue, a practice of irreplaceable and commendable effectiveness which should take place regularly (Pope John Paul II, 1996:120).

Due to the sensitivity of the Formators' tasks, the training of suitable Directors of Formation is important and can only be fulfilled in a spirit of communion with the whole Church. *Vita Consecrata* urges the establishment of appropriate and helpful structures for the training of those responsible for Formation, "preferably in places where they can be in contact with the culture in which their pastoral service will later be carried out" (Pope John Paul II, 1996:120). In Formation, the well-established Institutes are called to assist newer foundations by offering them some of their senior members to assist them (cf. Pope John Paul II, 1996:120).

Vita Consecrata analyses the communal element of Formation, and states that the community is the principal place of Formation "in Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life" (Pope John Paul II, 1996:121). So that Formation helps in facing "hardships and joys of community life takes place in the Community itself" (Pope John Paul II, 1996:121) and this happens through fraternal life. Consequently, each person learns to live with those whom God has put at his or her side, accepting their positive traits along with their differences and limitations. Each learns to share the gifts received for the building-up of all because "to each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good" (1 Cor. 12:7). At the same time, during the period of Initial Formation, community life discloses the essential missionary dimension of consecration. Thus, at the time of Initial Formation Institutes of Consecrated Life offer realistic knowledge which is cautiously followed by the one responsible for Formation. This enables Formees to test themselves within the framework of their culture, the

Apostolate,⁶⁹ as well as their ability to adapt and use spiritual ideals (see Pope John Paul II, 1996:121).

The document stresses the importance of the need to develop a critical judgement, based on the Gospel, by recognising both positive and negative values of their own culture and of the culture in which they will work. The document demands that “they must be trained in the difficult art of interior harmony, of the interaction between the love of God and love of one’s brothers and sisters” (Pope John Paul II, 1996:121-122). It requires a call to learn prayer which is the soul of the Apostolate, and to recognise that the Apostolate encourages and inspires prayer. The document also recommends an updated *Ratio Institutionis* for Religious Formation for all stages.

Vita Consecrata-, concerns the effect of the world on the Evangelical Counsels and confirms the fact that they cannot be questioned. The document stresses the importance of Initial Formation and understands Formation as involving the whole person. It does appreciate the fact that Formators are trained to fulfil adequate teaching. *Vita Consecrata* also emphasises the communal side of Religious Life and Formation.

Starting Afresh from Christ: A Renewed Commitment to Consecrated Life in the Third Millennium was signed by Pope John Paul II immediately after he closed the Holy door on the last day of the Great Jubilee in the year 2000. The Pope begins the document by recalling the words of Jesus to St. Peter: “The Holy Father John Paul II’s pressing invitation at the beginning of the third millennium to cast out into the deep: ‘*Duc in altum!*’ (Lk 5:4)” (Pope John Paul II, 2002: section 1). This is to create a re-awakening of “the desire for a more intense evangelical life” (Pope John Paul II, 2002: section1).⁷⁰ The casting out into the deep is a call for a different world through the power of the Spirit among us. John Paul II had an appreciation of young people as “sentinels of the

⁶⁹ ‘Apostolate’ means literally ‘the office of an Apostle’. In Church terms this relates to anyone involved in the mission of the Church from the Pope through to the laity.

⁷⁰ Religious discipleship is a more radical and intense form of Christian discipleship (see sections 1.1.3 and 1.1.4).

dawn” (Pope John Paul II, 2002: section1). ‘Starting Afresh from Christ’ is addressed to “Consecrated persons” (Religious).

Our globalised society of technology and economy has caused a both positive and negative force which has led to “insecurity and fear, crime and violence, injustices and war” (Pope John Paul II, 2002: section 1). This means that Consecrated people have a prophetic role to play of service in the cause of the Kingdom through their poverty and imitation of Christ. Their way of life is an important role of teaching in itself; it is a mission of service and care for those in need. This whole process is on-going and continual.

In an era as rushed as ours, perseverance and patient waiting to realize the scope of Formation are called for more than ever. In circumstances in which rapidity and superficiality prevail we need serenity and depth because, in reality, a person is fashioned very slowly (Pope John Paul II, 2002: section18).

The only way to interpret the signs of the time is to travel with Christ on the walk to Emmaus (Lk. 24:13-35). It is through this intimate relationship that “he can enlighten minds, and warm hearts” (Pope John Paul II, 2002: section2).

The Risen Lord’s promise “‘Know that I am with you always, until the end of the world’ (Mt 28:20)” (Pope John Paul II, 2002: section2). The importance of this quotation is to inspire people’s journey of faith and to be assured of God’s presence with them.

The Pope addressed this subject as “the gift of consecrated life which seeks you in faith and which through its universal mission invites all people to draw near to you” (Pope John Paul II, 2002: section5). He also understood the whole process as transformed existence that “participates in the life of the Trinity and confesses it as the love which saves” (Pope John Paul II, 2002: section5).

The on-going process is a progressive maturity and proclamation which is an alternative way of living in the world. This is one way in which the influence of Gospel values can be brought to society and culture. The call to follow Christ through a special

consecration is a Trinitarian gift. Consecrated men and women recognise that baptism is their common sacramental origin and through it, they share the common vocation with all members of the faithful. They are to be a sign of the universal vocation in order to manifest the specific mission of the consecrated life “which impels them to live a life in imitation of Christ, the Virgin and the Apostles with an impassioned love” (Pope John Paul II, 2002: section8). On-going Formation enables Consecrated people to be involved in the ‘Mission for the Kingdom’; by which they learn to use relevant spiritual experiences leading to courageous decisions.⁷¹ This is why it is important for those consecrated to be open to the Holy Spirit who works to fulfil the Father’s Will through the Son.

‘Starting Afresh from Christ’ explains that the guidance of the Holy Spirit inspires the Religious Institutes’ founders and foundresses to follow closely Christ in a particular intimate way and thus to share in his mission (see Pope John Paul II, 2002: section20). It is this Spirit in the consecrated that is deepened and developed. The Spirit will give freshness and authenticity to new initiatives which instil courage to stand-up for Christ and respond to the modern world.

This document is called ‘Starting Afresh from Christ’ for the very reason that it wants the Consecrated to follow the path of conversion and renewal. This is an imitation of the first disciples who obeyed Our Lord’s command to go back and start afresh from Galilee (cf. Mt. 28:10). Following this path is a way of love (cf. 1 Jn. 4:10, 19) and brings the person close to the vows of the Evangelical Counsels: Chastity enables the Consecrated to be open to Christ and to love as he loved; Poverty frees the Consecrated from materialism and to the only treasure that is of any importance, Christ Himself; Obedience places the Consecrated in Christ’s hands to do with what He wills and to make them a masterpiece for God.

⁷¹ These courageous decisions are made in the ‘desert’ rather than in the ‘ghetto’. Mission is not a comfortable exercise but a ‘desert’ reality (see section 1.5).

Christ is present, not simply and importantly in the Word and Sacraments, but also in everyday life with its ups and downs, joys and traumas. The document refers to this as “Contemplating the Faces of Christ” (Pope John Paul II, 2002: section23). The only true way to receive the Word of God and the Sacraments is through prayer and contemplation: “Every vocation to consecrated life is born in contemplation” (Pope John Paul II, 2002: section25). In the Eucharist all forms of prayer come together and there is unity in Christ. Essential conditions are present in order for the fruits of communion and renewal to be fulfilled: mutual forgiveness, a commitment to love one another, and reconciliation.

The Community Life in which the Consecrated live is a life in which spirituality can be nurtured, flourish and grow. The essence of the practice of a spiritual life will then spread out into the wider Church community: “Pope John Paul teaches: ‘A spirituality of communion indicates above all the heart’s contemplation of the mystery of the Trinity dwelling within us and whose light we must also be able to see shining on the faces of the brothers and sisters around us’” (Pope John Paul II, 2002: section29). To serve any purpose the spirituality of this ‘communion’ will involve sensing the needs of others and offering them the hand of friendship and then to find in them what is positive and thereby what is God’s gift in them.

These structures may seem to be merely external, but they resonate a far deeper truth about community. It is through these structures that Christ makes Himself real to us and is why the sacraments are of such importance and the loving of one another “brings about Trinitarian communion” (Pope John Paul II, 2002: section28). The ‘communion’ reaches out to other Religious families or Institutes and discovers its common Gospel roots; this will enrich each congregation and community (cf. 1 Cor. 12:12) in their Formation. It is a ‘desert’ experience, leaving the security of the close-knit ‘ghetto’ community [see 1.5] to learn what others are doing and saying and to grow “in the life of the spirit” (Pope John Paul II, 2002: section30). This leads to a “greater openness to all other members of the Church” (Pope John Paul II, 2002: section31) for both Diocesan clergy and the laity. It is all about communion and collaboration and the openness is a

response to, or has led to, an increase in the Secular Orders or Third Orders because they now feel included and able to be involved in this community. Community sharing “calls for an adequate formation of both consecrated persons and laity to ensure a collaboration which is mutually enriching” (Pope John Paul II, 2002: section31).

Section 34 sums-up the position of the document:

When one starts afresh from Christ the spirituality of communion becomes a strong and solid spirituality of disciples and apostles of his Kingdom. For consecrated persons this means committing themselves in service to their brothers and sisters in whom they recognize the face of Christ. In the exercise of the Apostolic mission *being* and *doing* are inseparable because the mystery of Christ constitutes the absolute base for all pastoral action (Pope John Paul II, 2002: section34).

Mary is an important model on which Christians can build and the document ends by recognising her as “Mother and Teacher of all. She, the first consecrated person, lived the fullness of charity” (Pope John Paul II, 2002: section 46). She reflects all that is good and right in the Consecrated Life and most of all “all the aspects of the Gospel; all the Charisms of Consecrated Life are mirrored and renewed in her” (Pope John Paul II, 2002: section 46). All of this is summarised in the document by quoting Ephesians, “‘live a life worthy of the calling you have received!’ Eph. 4:1” (Pope John Paul II, 2002: section 46).

This latest official Vatican Council II document, ‘Starting Afresh from Christ’, explains that Religious have an important role in the Church by teaching others through their own way of life. It is expressed that by following Christ through a Trinitarian understanding is essential to the Religious Life. Also Religious are to be open to the Holy Spirit in the same way as the founders of their various Institutes. The watchwords of conversion and renewal are on-going processes encouraged through the Evangelical Counsels. Thus, this document invites the Religious to engage in On-going Formation throughout their life. It also proposes that a renewed spirituality can be engendered through the sacraments.

2.3.5 Conclusion to the documents

All the Church documents (above) are important in ascertaining an understanding of Formation. However, because of their audience there is a tendency for them to be general in their outlook. The details of the 'how' and 'why' are often missing. This is because they are dealing with the known situation of their time which is a matter of dogma or dealing with particular heresies. Because of this, the documents are limited in what they have to say about Formation. There is, therefore, a need for a concrete, consistent, systematic definition of Formation which embraces all its aspects.

The documents that relate to the Religious Life are generally dealing with the practicalities of Formation ('Canon Law' and the 'Council of Trent') and/or the spiritual context (*Lumen Gentium*, *Perfectae Caritatis*, and particularly *Vita Consecrata* which deals mainly with spiritual maturity). 'Starting Afresh from Christ' is on more of a theological theme and, although it discusses Human Formation and spirituality, it does not mention the need for psychology as a central part of Human Formation. Later, in 2008, another document issued by Pope Benedict XVI entitled 'Guidelines for the Use of Psychology in the Admission and Formation of Candidates for the Priesthood' emphasises the need of psychological discernment in Formation⁷² (see Pope Benedict XVI, 2008a). However, this document has only priesthood as its subject; it is a continuation of a document issued by Pope John Paul II (Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, 1992). There is a lack of guidance in the documents on the subject of psychology for Religious Formation.

It should be noted, though, that there is a positive attitude towards renewal in some of these later documents which has been taken to heart by different Religious Institutes. In recent years the role of Religious within the Church has been strongly emphasised. Although Human Formation is not mentioned in Canon Law, *Vita Consecrata* concerns itself with Formation involving the whole person and communal life; however, no details

⁷² Psychology had not begun to be accepted by the Roman Catholic Church until the 1950s (see Kugelmann, 2011).

are given except in highlighting the humanity of Jesus. Formation is looked at through different windows, rather than being seen as a whole and a part of human life, Christian life and for this study the Franciscan Life. Leadership is assumed rather than examined. Human Formation is particularly lacking in the documents, although Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, which is strictly for Priestly Formation states: “The whole work of priestly Formation would be deprived of its necessary foundation if it lacked a suitable Human Formation” (Pope John Paul, 1992:43). Thus, all Formation stems from Human Formation and it can be argued that Formators need to go further in their explanations of Human Formation and be reminded that Formation not only begins in Human Formation, but ends there as well because all forms, for the Christian, start and end in the Incarnation (see Mulholland, 2004:27). In spiritual terms it is “a spirituality that is not foreign to the life of our Contemporaries and touches them; a spirituality that is incarnated” (Carballo).

Christian Formation is an engagement with the Call of God and a constant reminder that this Call is a process. It allows a Christian to be under the influence of the divine, working along the path of Religious consecration. Hence, Religious, as well as other Christians, will recognise the grace of God being formed from within in their individual Christian pilgrimage.⁷³ *Perfectae Caritatis* invites Religious to return to their original spirit,⁷⁴ which reminds us of St. Francis’s words, “Let us begin again” Thomas of Celano, 1999:273). This gives Franciscans and all Christians the opportunity to assess themselves and re-engage with the roots of their beliefs and Charisms. The section in this thesis entitled ‘Franciscan Formation’ is important in expounding the history that created the Franciscan Life today (see section 2.2).

The Church documents that discuss human and spiritual Formation do not adequately express Formation as an on-going process. However, these documents do accentuate

⁷³ The writer calls this ‘Graced Pilgrimage’.

⁷⁴ “The adaptation and renewal of the religious life (*sic.*) includes both the “constant return to the sources of all Christian life and to the primitive inspiration of the institutes, and their adaptation to the changed conditions of our time” (Flannery, 1975:546).

the necessity of including in Formation an understanding of anthropology, spirituality and psychology. These terms, though, are used without explanation of their background and processes. The developmental processes require a greater understanding within the Religious Life. There is, then, this writer believes, a need to understand the human and spiritual development processes in the sense of on-going and never-ending. In theological terms, “Consecrated Life is in itself ‘a progressive taking-on of the attitude of Christ’” (Pope John Paul II, 2002). ‘Process Formation’ is expressed in many different terms: anthropological, psychological and spiritual, but it needs a systematic approach because so far, the work done on Formation has been piece-meal, with different aspects emphasised in different social times and for different social needs (Pope John Paul II, 1996:104).

It is only in modern times that the documents from the various Councils mention ‘Formation’ in any form. It begs the question – ‘Why?’ It is difficult to answer this because no reasons are given, but it may simply be because Religious Life progressed in parallel to the Church councils and so no mention would be made unless there were problems. The Council of Trent emphasised the thinking of the Counter Reformation. Its aim towards the Religious was to restore discipline and ordered men and women Religious to follow the Evangelical Counsels within their own Order. Vatican Council II pronounces on Religious Formation more than any other Council’s documents and has been examined in two Vatican Council II documents, *Lumen Gentium* and *Perfectae Caritatis*.

There are three documents post-Vatican Council II which have been examined that relate to Religious Formation. The first is the only Vatican Council II document that has ‘Formation’ in its title: ‘Directives on Formation in Religious Institutes’, the other two are: *Vita Consecrata* and ‘Starting Afresh from Christ’.

These Church documents have been a good guide, as well as an encouraging support to Religious Formation in recent years.

CHAPTER 3:

FRANCISCAN FORMATION

3.1 INTRODUCTION: THE THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE OF FRANCISCAN FORMATION

The following chapter expounds Franciscan Formation. It illustrates growth in Francis's ideals, his spirit, values and the Charism from which this Formation is developed in order to create a mature spiritual concept for his brothers and sisters.

Francis saw formative activity through his relationships with his brothers. The key to this was a sensitivity towards creatures from which he learnt to 'read' revelation and creation groaning (cf. Rom. 8:19-22). He desired the brothers to, "respect nature as the furnishings of the sanctuary" (Temperini, 1999:169) as well as accepting closeness with creation to such an extent that he was able to converse with it, "like he spoke to people." (Temperini, 1999:151)⁷⁵ Lino Temperini (a Franciscan theologian) sees a connection between Francis's understanding of nature and that of Comenio, Rousseau and the experience of the 'New School' in the C18th (cf. Temperini, 1999:169). However, the lapse of so many centuries and the lack of research on the sources of St. Francis in the C18th would suggest that Temperini's idea has little to support or sustain it.

This interconnectedness with nature and creation in Francis's thought results in a very real appreciation of revelation. This revelation is constantly seen in his writings, "the Most High Himself revealed to me that I should live according to the pattern of the Holy Gospel" (Francis of Assisi, 1999a:125). It also results in a deep understanding of seeking peace with God, humankind, and with all creatures. These could be identified

⁷⁵ Temperini is citing Richerio. In 'The Little Flowers of Saint Francis' Richerio is known as 'Rinieri of the March of Ancona' (Anon., 2001b:614-616). He was an early follower of Francis.

with Francis's greeting ("the Lord give you peace"),⁷⁶ as well as his initiative to bring peace between the Mayor and the Bishop of Assisi (see Anon, 2000:187-188). Also, his sisterly and brotherly relationships with creation in his 'The Canticle of the Creatures' (cf. Francis of Assisi, 1999e:113-114) with its different creatures and natural occurrences expressed in terms of 'brother' or 'sister' (cf. Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, 2000a:586-595). Hence, when Franciscans speak of 'a vision of Franciscan Formation' they are expressing a drawing near to the profound mystery of God and his love for each one of his created children. This will "involve the assimilating subject who is molded [*sic.*] and so acquires like a second nature, a constellation and operative qualities, attitudes" (Temperini, 1999:152).

The formative content of Francis's pedagogy is adaptable and yet significant, charming yet strong, old yet always new, binding yet full of mysterious absorption. Francis is justifiably characterised as "a master of integral life," that is a full life with human and divine dimensions. "He practiced what he taught and wrote." (Both quotations are from Temperini, 1999:161). He remains a model and master. Francis assures that a lived pedagogy is capable of transmitting values which effectively affect the personality of the one being formed.

3.2 FRANCIS – A MODEL FOR FRANCISCAN FORMATION

Francis's Formation was an experiential inner-transformation. It is therefore difficult to use Francis directly as a method of Formation because his intuitive spirit was impregnated to form himself. Francis did not formulate a finished Franciscan Formation project, rather he continued to be formed as a process by which he was awakened to a constant awareness of "Let us...begin again." Thus, Francis encouraged his followers

⁷⁶ Francis says as much in his 'Testament', "The Lord revealed a greeting to me that we should say: 'May the Lord give you peace'" (Francis of Assisi, 1999a:126). Thomas of Celano, speaking of Francis's ministry of preaching states: "In all his preaching, before he presented the word of God to the assembly, he prayed for peace saying, 'May the Lord give you peace.' He always proclaimed this to men and women, to those he met and to those who met him. Accordingly, many who hated peace along with salvation, with the Lord's help wholeheartedly embraced peace. They became themselves children of peace, now rivals for eternal salvation" (Thomas of Celano, 1999:203).

to understand Formation as a process of divine grace. This is clarified by Francis himself shortly before his death, “Let us begin, brothers to serve the Lord God, for up to now we have done little or nothing.” Thomas of Celano also comments, “He did not consider that he had already attained his goal, but tireless in pursuit of holy newness, he constantly hoped to begin again” (all three quotations above are from Thomas of Celano, 1999:273) even though the first years were particularly decisive. These early years set the course and mark of everything that was to follow. For Francis, these decisive years were not structured within an academic framework, and yet they show an inner logic of perceptive guidance. Consequently, Francis was constantly aware of the need for a discerning spirit to strengthen his ‘pilgrimage’ (holy journey) towards God. It is in this endeavour that ‘the pilgrim Francis’ tried to discover the highest good, and to discover how to form habits conducive to achieving that good (see Thomas of Celano, 1999:273 from quotation above). This is a method of constant conversion and renewal; it is ‘pilgrim formation.’⁷⁷ Francis, therefore, discovered a method for the formation of the heart which deepens the restless to discover rest in the “highest good”, i.e., God, “You are three and one, the Lord of gods; You are the good, all good, the highest good, Lord God living and true” (Francis of Assisi, 1999d:109). Thomas of Celano explains that this search by Francis is unique to Francis’s spirituality and his writings (cf. Thomas of Celano, 1999:188).

Francis constantly cherished his desire to know and love his pilgrim path and to recognise his ‘call’ as a gift of God’s love despite various misunderstandings (cf. Anon., 2000a:72). In Francis’s life, this started with the aim of joining the army of Walter III in southern Italy (see below). After this, St. Francis played an important part in the peace process for the ending of the Fifth Crusade (1217-1221) which had been called by Pope Honorius III in 1216 in memory of Pope Innocent III, who died whilst preparing it. Francis saw his opportunity to meet Malik al-Kamil, the Sultan of Egypt when there was an interlude in the fighting in August 1219. Francis called directly on the Sultan in an

⁷⁷ This term is an adaptation from Scaperlanda, 2004:16.

attempt to restore peace (see Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, 2000:601-604). Earlier, in 1205, Francis travelled to enlist in the army of Walter III, Count of Brienne in Apulia.⁷⁸ Initially, Francis like all young men of the period wanted to be a knight and so his first step was to fight. However, on his way he had a vision in which God asked him: “Who can do more good for you? The Lord or the servant?” and Francis replied: “Lord, what do you want me to do?” (Both of these quotations are taken from Anon., 2000a:71).

This vision of Francis’s Spoleto in which he was invited to ‘go back’ despite his desire to ‘go on’ for training as a knight (cf. Fortini, 1981:188). The voice which Francis heard at Spoleto-, was not yet the final call. It was not really the answer to his question either, but rather a big disappointment which put a halt to his own plans. Apulia was the wrong direction; he was told to go home, letting go of his plans and dreams; the ideal he had made for himself was destroyed. ‘Letting-go’ is always difficult especially when one lets go of what appears to be good and gives one self-esteem. In medieval society to become a knight was something to be proud of and ‘letting-go’ would have been particularly difficult, especially if there was nothing immediately to replace it. Francis did not know as yet what God required of him. He did not exchange his ambition to be a knight with anything else; Francis felt he had lost something and gained nothing.

Although this vision was difficult for Francis, it was not altogether negative: ‘The Three Companions’ write, “Go back to the land of your birth because I will fulfil your dream in a spiritual way” (Fortini, 2004:245, also see Anon. 2000a:71). Bonaventure uses the phrase, “Go back to your own land” (Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, 2000a:588), which is a quotation from Genesis 32:9). Francis’s call is similar to Jacob’s, when Jacob was told by God to return home (Gen. 32:9). The task for Francis was, then, not to run away, but to face his own people by going back to his roots. This is a good example for the beginning of Formation: by facing-up to one’s origins renewal can take place and growth starts again from the same root stock. Francis returned to Assisi with this humiliating turn-around which was the ultimate shame of medieval chivalry. Maybe it reminded

⁷⁸ The aim of the army was to claim Walter’s wife’s inheritance; she was a Sicilian princess.

Francis of the first Apostles who were commanded by the resurrected Christ to return to Galilee where Christ's mission had begun (Mt. 28:10).⁷⁹ Francis hears God's voice, and listens to it like the boy Samuel in the temple, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant hears" (1 Sam. 3:10b). At this point, Bonaventure remarks: "He awaited the Lord's Will" (Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, 2000a:533). The importance of this cannot be underestimated because there was an expectation in Francis for a change, a conversion.

Formation, then, begins with a search, a restlessness in which the response made is often reluctant or it can be simply a misunderstanding of the call. However, all of this is part of the search that Francis exemplifies. The search comes from a desire to do something positive with the givenness of life, a feeling of insufficiency in life which leads to a need for fulfilment. There is a longing to respond to God's call which becomes inner restlessness, and it is this that is the beginning of Formation. In Formation there should always be an expectation that God acts and will renew people. However, before that there is often a difficult period of waiting and this was certainly true for Francis, requiring patience because often the conversion is not instant, but rather a gradual process like a plant growing and flourishing. There is no blueprint because all are different and so too is each person's call from God; it is in the act of listening that each finds the Will of God for them. For Francis, Formation was the process of becoming more and more a disciple of Christ (see Gen. 32:9 and Acts 9:1-6). "Life is a process, knowledge that becomes understanding is a process. Being formed into a living example of the goodness contained in the Rule is a process. Being transformed into the image and likeness of Christ is a never-ending process" (Baker & Mulqueen, 2003:125).

This is a matter of 'taking-on' the "mind of Christ" (Thomas of Celano, 1999:189). Francis had a vision in which the crucifix icon in the San Damiano church spoke to him saying: "'go rebuild My house; as you see it is all being destroyed'" (Thomas of Celano, 2000:249). Thus, Francis shared more deeply his gift of himself and returned it to God.

⁷⁹ See section 3.2.

This was the beginning of Francis's transcendence; he wanted to go beyond what his life had been so far. Francis was determined to work for peace during the Fifth Crusade and eventually he managed to arrange a visit to see Sultan Malik al-Kamil in 1219. This visit came about only after failing twice before. First, he attempted to journey to the Muslims in the Holy Land during the summer of 1211, but his ship was blown off course and he ended up back in Italy. His second attempt was to visit Sultan Muhammad an-Nasir⁸⁰ in Morocco in 1213 or 1214; Francis travelled through Muslim Spain, travelling the supposed route that the apostle James took by visiting Santiago de Compostela on the way.⁸¹ However, Francis became ill and his trip was curtailed and so he never reached Morocco. Francis returned to Italy in 1214 or 1215, arriving in Rome for the Lateran Council which it is believed he attended. The council launched the Fifth Crusade.⁸² Francis's third attempt to visit the Muslim world was successful. He arrived in northern Egypt and met with Sultan Malik al-Kamil in the late summer of 1219 in Damietta. There are many different versions of what took place (there are some fourteen accounts, some of which are contemporary). It appears that Francis had the opportunity to speak directly with the Sultan over a period of three weeks.⁸³ Francis talked about his faith and his willingness to effect peace.

⁸⁰ Sultan Muhammad an-Nasir was known in the Christian world as Miramamolin or 'Commander of the Believers'. He ruled much of North Africa and Spain, but he was defeated on 16th July 1212 by a Christian force at the Battle of Las Navas de Tolosa in Spain, barely escaping with his life. This was devastating for the Sultan because it was said that an estimated one hundred thousand of the Sultan's men were killed.

⁸¹ There is a statue of St. Francis outside the cathedral at Santiago de Compostela to commemorate his visit.

⁸² The Fifth Crusade was launched in 1216 and laid siege to Damietta on the Egyptian coast. The crusaders had various defeats before eventually capturing Damietta in November 1219. Sultan Malik al-Kamil recaptured Damietta in 1221. The city was recaptured by the crusaders in 1249, but soon surrendered by them in 1250 and finally raised to the ground in 1251 by the then sultan (cf. Rout, 2011).
For a more detailed study see 'The Saint and the Sultan' (Moses, 2009).

⁸³ Probably during the three-week period of peace prior to the Muslims taking over the city on 29th August 1219.

3.3 FORMATION: A SEARCH TO RE-BUILD, RE-FASHION AND RE-FORM

Francis is the exemplar for all Franciscans; it is therefore important to look at how his ministry began. In Celano's story of St. Francis being called to rebuild God's Church, Francis thinks that he literally has to rebuild broken down churches. Celano writes that the church at San Damiano "was built in ancient times... and was threatening to collapse because of age" (Thomas of Celano, 1999:189). This story is important for Formation because it can be understood as Francis taking a dangerous step into a church that was threatened with collapse. This exterior reflects the interior and so Francis makes a courageous decision to stay and face up to his own brokenness and from thence he receives an answer.

Francis was asked two questions in his Spoleto vision: "'Who do you think can best reward you, the servant or the lord?' 'The lord!' said Francis. 'Then why do you seek the servant instead of the lord?' Francis then asked: 'What do you want me to do?' And the Lord said to him: 'Go back to the land of your birth because I will fulfil your dream in a spiritual way.'" (Thomas of Celano, 2000:245, see also Fortini, 1981:188). At San Damiano "the image of Christ crucified" instructed Francis to: "'Go rebuild my house'" (both quotations from Thomas of Celano, 2000:249). It is interesting to observe that the sources do not record that Francis started work immediately, but 'The Legend of the Three Companions' reports: "From that hour, therefore, his heart was wounded and it melted" (Anon., 2000a:76). So, the external action comes after the inner change which Celano calls this "*mutatio*" (Thomas of Celano, 1999:189); an existential becoming new. Francis has been so deeply touched by Christ that his soul is "melted" (Anon., 2000:76) and enters ever more deeply into his form. Francis is transformed, as St. Paul writes, "in Christ" (Rom. 15:17),⁸⁴ indeed everything he says and does is "in Christ." This is how transformation takes place in Formation, the mindset of all Christians is to be "in Christ."

⁸⁴ See also, "Christ be formed in you" (Gal. 4:19). The writer to the Ephesians goes further by stating "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10).

Francis, reflecting on his way of vocation in 'The Testament', remembers only this inner change:

When I was in sin, it seemed too bitter for me to see lepers. And the Lord Himself led me among them and I showed mercy to them. And when I left them, what had seemed bitter to me was turned into sweetness of soul and body (Francis of Assisi, 1999a:124).

Here, a transformation of former values takes place, and with it a real transformation of the whole being. It is true to say that values attract, bitter things repel and sweet things attract; here something bitter becomes sweet and values determined Francis's behaviour. After his basic transformation Francis leaves the world and its values to take up Christ's values. Francis took literally what Jesus said to his disciples: "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Mt. 16:24). This way of living has attracted other brothers and sisters to this day.

Francis is neither converted in his meeting with the leper (cf. Fortini, 1981:211-212) nor at San Damiano because the San Damiano event was not his doing, but God's (cf. Fortini, 1981:215). Various words can be used for the process of Francis's Formation: "*mutatio*"⁸⁵, "*conversion*"⁸⁶, "*conformatio*."⁸⁷ The formee is touched from the outside and thus made new. This is not really *formatio*, but *transformatio* through God. Formation is usually taught by others so that the formee can experience transformation. In Francis's case he had no Formator but Christ. He was transformed from within by his experience of which the main turning points occurred at Spoleto, the San Damiano Crucifix and by embracing the leper. Although only God converts, it is the response to God's call that initiates the conversion. Francis was thus transformed through the process of divine intervention within his humanity.

When Francis encountered the Crucified Christ, he met a "God of humble love." This meeting laid the basis for him encountering "God in the particularity of every other

⁸⁵ Translated means: change, alteration, transformation.

⁸⁶ Translated means: way, manner of life/monastic life.

⁸⁷ Translated means: to strongly strengthen.

where the humility of God was expressed in ordinary human flesh” (both quotations are from Delio, 2005:110). Subsequently, the Crucified Lord changes Francis at the very core of his being. Bonaventure claims that from that point onwards, “he [Francis] clothed himself with a spirit of poverty,⁸⁸ a sense of humility and an eagerness for intimate piety” (Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, 2000a:534). Francis embarked on a pilgrimage journey to imitate Christ and chose Christ as the model of his Formation.

One of the meeting places for Francis to meet the Crucified Christ was at the foot of the Crucifix at San Damiano, Francis saw and meditated on the Resurrected Christ looking down lovingly from his Cross.⁸⁹ In this context Francis encountered the living Christ in the real and tangible moments of his life, through a deep yearning and in a call which convinced him of the need for God’s mercy. Francis is touched by Christ and heard the words of Jesus and resolutely decided to rebuild the Church (see Higgins 2004:263-267)⁹⁰ However, as already seen, at first Francis thought the task God had set him in the vision he had before the Crucifix was to literally rebuild San Damiano and he went on to rebuild and repair other churches until he realised that his task was to rebuild the Church. Francis had probably learnt his building skills from being one of the many residents in Assisi who helped rebuild the castle after it had been destroyed during various raids by Perugia.⁹¹ Francis kneeling before the Crucifix at San Damiano has

⁸⁸ “Poverty meant much more to Francis than lack of material goods, although it meant that, too. It was a spiritual state of the soul, the perfect inner response of the creature to the Creator; the creature’s thorough realisation of the truth, learned in meditation on the Crucified, He emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant (Phil. 2:7). At any rate when Francis speaks of poverty, he has a definite intuition and understanding of an inner spiritual form, the form of the true Friar Minor, which was always intimately present to him and served as the norm by which guided himself and his brethren. And in this clear vision external poverty had its great importance as a manifestation and badge of interior poverty and humility, necessary for the integrity of the spirit of poverty and humility.” (Hug, 1949:48-49).

⁸⁹ Probably the most compelling aspect of the San Damiano Crucifix is, “*the redeeming love shining from His [Christ’s] loving compassionate eyes*” (Spikin, 2011:79).

⁹⁰ Francis misunderstood the message to rebuild the Church, as rebuilding the San Damiano church, he later realised that his mission was to rebuild the Church of God.

⁹¹ The castle fortress of Rocca Maggiore in Assisi was attacked in 1198 when Francis was 16. The attack was the result of the uprising by people of Assisi against the Emperor, who had ruled over them since 1173. Various attempts were made to rebuild the Rocca Maggiore and it was finally

been followed down the centuries as an important part of Franciscan Formation in contemplating the face of Christ, Pope John Paul II's document, 'Starting Afresh from Christ' demands a renewed contemplation of Christ's face and stresses that every vocation is born in contemplation and deepened in a friendship with Christ: "Contemplating Christ crucified and his glorious face and witnessing to his love in the world" (John Paul II, 2002). Thus, Francis began a new enthusiasm and spirit to transform his life through an active commitment to hear and do what the Lord personally told him to do.

This inner transformation turned into an external form from stripping-off his expensive clothes in front of his father and the bishop to embracing a leper. Embracing the leper was of extreme importance to Francis, who had despised and shrunk away from lepers in the past and he saw this act of his as part of his transformation and that meeting the leper was a way of meeting God. Indeed, Francis encouraged his brothers to work amongst lepers, "for Francis it was a sweet embrace of God, a mystical experience of human exchange. This movement out of himself toward the other became then the norm of Francis's action and mission" (Contemplation and Compassion).

It led Francis to decisions which expressed and safeguarded the essential transformation that took place: the encounter with the Crucified at San Damiano (see Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, 2000a:537) led him to follow the poor Christ by working and begging; he met the leper (see Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, 2000a:533) whom he had despised which enabled him to accept the unacceptable; he left the world and its wealth, shown by separating himself from his father (see Thomas of Celano, 1999:193), finally he was ultimately transformed at Mount La Verna through the stigmata he received (see Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, 2000a:630-632).

Francis's new way of life was a rejection of his previous dreams to become a knight and also a rejection of the world of his wealthy father. He completely broke with his past,

completed in 1356, following the original 12th-century designs. In 1972, parts of Franco Zeffirelli's film 'Brother Sun, Sister Moon' about St. Francis of Assisi were shot at the castle.

although his personality with its temptations was unchanged. His generosity, his winning charisma in dealing with people and his earthly longings remained, but are turned in a new direction, and assumed a new form. The new Francis is not an entirely new person because he is still himself, but in a different way, the 'old one' in a 'new form.' The decision Francis takes to follow the path of goodness is far more difficult than following the evil path. When Cardinal John of San Paolo advises Francis to make the decision to become a monk or a hermit, he, according to Celano, refuses because "he was intently seeking other things, moved by a loftier desire" (Thomas of Celano, 1999:212). In his 'Testament', Francis wants to pass on this dynamism of growth to his brothers as well, and so he writes explicitly: "that we might observe the Rule we have promised in a more Catholic way" (Francis of Assisi, 1999b:127). In this process, there is also continuity and growth.

Today, as in Francis's day, the process of Formation has a difficult side too: uncomfortable decisions, painful correction, 'letting-go' and 'dying to self'. This is a part of what Cencini expounds in the task of the Formator: "the Formator must educate, in the sense of *educere*, to pull out or evoke the truth of the person" (Cencini, 1998:54), however painful that may be. This is not a question of examining moral issues in a person, or of judging whether they are good and bad; it is a way of being decisive in the dynamism of growth and building on what is good; which is developed from a search for goodness. In a dream, in Spoleto, Francis hears a voice: "Who can do more good for you? The lord or the servant?" (Anon., 2000a:71). This is an on-going search which continues throughout life, as it did for Francis, he writes to Brother Leo, "In whatever way it seems better to you to please the Lord God and to follow His footprint and his poverty, do it with the blessing of the Lord God and my obedience" (Francis of Assisi, 1999b:122). Francis re-emphasises this at the end of his life, whilst dying, he says to his brothers: "I have done what is mine; may Christ teach you to do what is yours!" (Thomas of Celano, 2000:386). Francis's words enable each Franciscan to search within themselves and learn how best to serve his/her Christ.

Education⁹² is first followed by Formation, with transformation coming at the end. There exists the dialectics of Formation and transformation: first there is the external Formation with its human experiences and by following the inner aspiration this leads on to being touched by God who transforms. It is a two-way process and relationship (human/human and God/human), the person formed in this way, has to reach out in order to be touched by God anew. Franciscan Formation first touches humanity and then with divine grace it initiates a discernment to be formed in Christ. Transformation, too, is a process, not a one-off occurrence. As already shown, Francis was transformed through his experiences. So, the external experiential Human Formation is developed into the internal God-ward transformation.

Francis heard the call of Christ at San Damiano, he restored the dilapidated church there. It is important that Francis did something practical and constructive after hearing the call of God; he experienced Formation through being touched by God and responding to him, and then he formed his life by making decisions. This all takes place within Francis, as it does within people today; but the call always transcends the person. It can then be seen that vocation is unselfish, it is not a call for oneself, but for others which is the vocation of mission. In this, one is reminded of *Vita Consecrata*, where the Consecrated are exhorted to be “consecrated for mission” (Pope John Paul II, 1996:130). Francis did not build a warm nest for himself, but a place for God and his people and began by asking what he ought to do. He began to realise that this question had nothing to do with his needs; it is an unselfish inquiry. He discovered that by doing things for others he did something for God: “whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it for me” (Mt. 25:40). This is the call for all Franciscans today.

⁹² Education has a dynamic content, inviting initiatives for education according to precise objectives. It takes into account the many-faceted development of the individual or, on the personal level, provides the key for social integration. One of the tasks of education is to provide the opportunity for lively debate among qualified teachers and technicians in the Institute.

3.4 GOD-WARD FORMATION

3.4.1 The Franciscan encounter with God

Francis's inner desire to know and love God came from the divine inspiration which he experienced throughout his life. The decisive events in Francis's biography have to be examined in order to understand his vocation and its theological foundations for his life-changing Formation. The 'Theo-logics' which are by their very nature Theo-centric are the basis of the logics of Human Formation as creatures of the Creator God; Christian Formation is Human Formation looking God-ward. This theology makes the claim that:

man is right when his intelligence coincides with the supreme truth in knowing, [When] his will conforms to the supreme loving, and [when] his power is united to the supreme power in acting. Now this is when man is turned to God in his total self (Shannon, 2008:63).

In his search, in his readiness for transformation and, most of all, in his decisions, Francis takes full charge of his life and shapes it for active mission. He is motivated by his faith in a Creator God who does not simply give life as a finished product. Life is at the same time a gift as well as a task for Francis.

On every page of Francis's writings his encounter with the omnipresent God is implied.⁹³ It is amazing to observe how Francis realised that humans can never plumb the depths of the divine abyss designated by this generic term 'name', and in his writings, he declares, "no human is worthy to mention Your name" (Francis of Assisi, 1999c:113, see also Matura, 1997:53). Here Francis gives two reasons why we are not worthy, "We are not worthy to do so: because of our radical incapacity to know God as he is and to speak adequately about him" (Matura, 2004:51).

Although Francis advocated silent adoration as the right approach to God, he spoke about God at length, as well as using many terms to describe him (see Francis of Assisi, 1999d:81-86, also Francis of Assisi, 1999c:113-114 and Francis of Assisi,

⁹³ Francis uses the term 'God' 219 times or more frequently, the title 'Lord' 364 times (cf. Matura, 1997:53).

1999e:109). Francis described God in a way that reveals the possibility of catching a fleeting glimpse of God's divine presence. For Francis the knowableness and the unknowableness of God went hand-in-hand, thereby producing a paradox of his description of God. Consequently, Francis, "speaks about God and stresses the way we must adore⁹⁴ Him who is worthy of all praise, infinitely delightful yet always impenetrable to our eyes" (Matura, 2004:52, Matura has adapted this from Francis of Assisi, 1999d:85).

Francis saw God the Father as the "all-powerful, most holy, almighty and supreme God, Holy and just Father" (Francis of Assisi, 1999d:81). He comprehended God as someone beyond, and yet he received the revelation of knowing the all-powerful God as someone who is gentle, gracious and noble. Francis appreciated God as "delightful, and totally desirable above all else" (Francis of Assisi, 1999d:86). He even went further and described God as our pleasure, delight the source of all happiness. Francis attributed to God qualities that are connected with love: he is love and charity; he even further developed other divine qualities that are directed towards humanity, for example: "You are patience, You are beauty, You are meekness" (Francis of Assisi, 1999e:109). Francis tried to put God in the context of a human being, and even dared to say, "You are humility" (Francis of Assisi, 1999e:109). "Francis expresses in six Latin words that are difficult to translate – *pious*, 'merciful'; *mitis*, 'gentle'; *suavis*, 'delectable'; *dulcis*, 'sweet'; *benignus*, 'kind'; *mansuetus* 'meek'" (Matura, 2004:53, who has taken the words from Francis of Assisi, 1999d:85). Francis explains this by trying to integrate God into human history, as well as trying to integrate God as a part of human knowing and existence.

⁹⁴ Francis states fifteen times that we must adore God, that we must approach him with fear and trembling, prostrating ourselves at least in spirit before his mystery. This is so because God is, to use Francis's own words, "the Lord most holy, most high and supreme, holy and just, all-powerful, glorious, wonderful, sublime, he who is worthy of being honoured, revered and served." (Adapted by Matura (Matura, 1997:52 from Francis's 'the Earlier Rule': "honor [*sic*], adore, serve" (Francis of Assisi, 1999d:85).

Instead of separating God from matter, Francis developed a unique theme of seeing God as inseparable⁹⁵ from matter and gives God a human face.⁹⁶ He, therefore, changed the Aristotelian theme of separating God from matter. This is something that is unique which Franciscans can offer to people in modern times to help them discover God in all the eventualities of life. It is the vision and mission of Franciscans to help people to see and hear and recognise God in all people. Franciscan theology and Formation direct Franciscans towards the skills of spiritual knowledge by seeing God in all human events and in all people, indeed in all creation.

Furthermore, Francis deepens and develops a new dimension in his understanding that God is good⁹⁷ and supremely benevolent. He experienced God as goodness and “Francis was obsessed with the goodness of God” (Rotzetter, van Dyjk & Matura, 1994:123). The fact that God alone is good led Francis to spend a lifetime contemplating the divine goodness. He uses the word ‘good’ nine times in different contexts. He dares to propose that God is innocent; he designates God as beauty, calm, refreshment, strength and power (see Francis of Assisi, 1999e:109). Here his build-up of emotion in addressing God as overwhelmingly good can be appreciated. Francis’s faith in the basic goodness of all things was the result of his wish to think with the Church. In his day, the Church was troubled by heresy, especially the heresy of the Cathari, who taught that the visible world was evil because it had not been created by the Good God. This heresy is why Francis insisted so strongly, not only that all things

⁹⁵ This is different from the dualistic view of Thomas Aquinas who holds the two together rather than seeing them in unity as Francis did. “For St. Thomas Aquinas, reality is dualistic, never monistic. In plain English, life for St. Thomas Aquinas is always a two-way street, never a one-way street. We are surrounded by essence and existence, the natural and the supernatural, faith and reason, substance and accidents, matter and form, form and privation, potency and act, the Bible and oral tradition, Jesus and Mary, Adam and Eve, the physical and the metaphysical, order and chance, determinism and indeterminism, mysticism and speculative theology, ugliness and beauty, the material and the immaterial, and above all, God and creation” (Best Answer – Aquinas Realism).

⁹⁶ For a fuller appreciation of this concept, see Robinson (1993).

⁹⁷ “You are the good, all good, the highest good” (Francis of Assisi, 1999g:109). This prayer was inspired by the ‘Our Father’ (cf. Francis of Assisi, 1999h:158). God is described in very similar words in ‘The Earlier Rule’ (Francis of Assisi, 1999d:76) and Francis expresses God as, “Who is the fullness of good, all good, every good, the true and supreme good. Who alone is good...” (Francis of Assisi, 1999d:85).

are good, but that their source, the God who created them, is also good. Consequently, people should gratefully acknowledge that everything good belongs to God since all goodness comes from him (cf. Francis of Assisi, 1999d:76). It is this aspect of God that attracted Francis to always seek God everywhere (cf. Calisi, 2008:69). In Francis's eyes, "God is lavishly, unreservedly, and indiscriminately good to have created the universe, become flesh, suffered, died and rose from the dead to save abject sinners" (Calisi, 2008:69). Therefore, Francis was able to experience and know God's goodness and discovered the presence of God in all its reality.

In the Franciscan spiritual pilgrimage, it is important to know the depth of God's goodness; for Francis this realisation came through his intuitiveness. It is ideal that Franciscan Formation is to learn to live under the grace of God and to live a life worthy of God's grace, which can be taught and learned in the school of Franciscan theology and Formation. Francis invited the people to "produce worthy fruits of penance" (Francis of Assisi, 1999f:41). His vision of God as good moved him to do more; his image of God urged him to action because the most logical response to God's bounty is to imitate it to the limit of our abilities. The fundamental spiritual source of energy comes from the experience of God's goodness, which will eventually lead a person to know and love God. "His contemplation of God's goodness provided him with countless new ways of appreciating more keenly all the good things He has given us" (Micó, 1993:138). This logic, of knowing the 'good' leads to new ways of appreciating more keenly all the good things he has given us. "From God Himself to whatever good qualities we may possess, everything is good and is given to us out of His goodness" (Micó, 1993:138).

Francis was moved by understanding the goodness of God and this changed his entire life direction. "Francis uses the title Father ninety-two times in his writings, over and above the eight times he mentions the Our Father" (Matura, 1997:57). He was further able to form a life around God's goodness and providence. This eventually channelled his experience of God as Father, caring and providential, to meet even his material needs. In this way he lived his life of absolute trust in God, from the moment in which

he dramatically left his father, Bernardone, who had brought Francis before the Bishop of Assisi in order to persuade him to forfeit his ideas of poverty, instead Francis publicly stripped off his clothes and said, “From now on I will say freely: Our Father who art in heaven, and not My father Pietro di Bernardone.”⁹⁸ (Thomas of Celano, 2000:251). Francis saw the fatherhood of “God in creation which is the first emergence of God from self and which God also continues to sustain in its existence” (Rotzetter *et al*, 1994:121).

He further contemplated the fatherhood of God in the mystery of Redemption. Francis promoted the fatherhood of God made manifest as consolation and support through God’s Holy Spirit. Finally, Francis tried to connect the event of redemption and salvation by referring to redemption as a ‘Christ-event’ even in history and salvation as an eschatological event which propounds that God’s mercy alone saves. Thus, Francis confirmed that “the entire history of the human family is caught up in the fatherhood of God” (Rotzetter *et al*, 1994:121) as God’s self-giving love. “Francis contemplates the fatherhood of God at its very source, in the Son’s relationship with the Father” (Matura, 1997:57). Therefore, Francis stressed the relationship aspect of the Father and the Son as setting an example for the relationship with the Father through the Son: He has “created everything spiritual and corporal” (Francis of Assisi, 1999d:82). For Francis, God is Father particularly in regard to his Son. In his ‘The Office of the Passion’, Francis tells us who the Father was for Christ, rather than what the Father was for him. His own experience of the divine Sonship led him to teach us about the Son’s filial relationship with the Father (see Francis of Assisi, 1999i:139). Francis gave all credibility to the Father through his Son. He described God as “unchangeable, invisible, indescribable, ineffable, incomprehensible, unfathomable,” yet as, “sublime, most high, gentle, lovable, delightful” etc. (both quotations are from Francis of Assisi, 1999d:86). This contrast drew Francis to understand the transcendence and immanence of God

⁹⁸ “...we may suspect that his turbulent relationship with his own father, Pietro Bernardone, may have influenced his attitude to God the Father” (Micó, 1993:144). Francis would have understood God as a father very different, in fact the antithesis, of his own father.

and both of these realities delighted Francis and encouraged him to follow God in his mystery and his real existence. The fundamental experience of Francis was that there is a God who loves. This faith gave him a basis to weave his spiritual life. “Francis knew that God’s love for him defined him as a person and that only by the power of that love could he reach his full growth” (Micó, 1993:140). Here Francis explains the fundamentals for spiritual or human growth, which is to know that we are loved, and loved immensely. First, God loves a person; but this is not an excuse for forgetting one’s brothers and sisters. Francis dared to believe that the love of God is transforming, and therefore a person’s love ought to be put into practice effectively by loving one’s brothers and sisters which is a result, as well as a sign, of our love for God.

For Francis, all creatures were witnesses to the source from which they came: “Beauty recalled to him the Divine Beauty and goodness told him that his Creator was Goodness itself” (Micó, 1993:141). Secondly, our dignity does not depend on our human condition, but it is rooted in the fact that we are created in God’s image: “Humanity in the midst of creation was the finest fruits of His creative activity” (Micó, 1993:141). Francis knew this and was aware that, as he had come from God’s hands, so his destiny was to remain in those hands. Francis’s response to God’s apparent complete and disinterested love could only be to struggle tenaciously and rid himself of any obstacle that might hinder the growth of his own love for God (cf. Francis of Assisi, 1999d:80 and 84). At the same time, it is true-, that humanity is not condemned to remain forever the way it is now, but people can work on themselves and grow with God’s help. Any Christian Formation is a help to become what a person basically is, that is an image of God. Francis states in his writings: “Consider, O human being, in what great excellence the Lord God has placed you, for He created and formed you to the image of His beloved Son according to the body and to His likeness according to the Spirit” (Francis of Assisi, 1999j:131). Bonaventure informs that Francis, “After true love of Christ transformed the lover into His image-” (Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, 2000a:634).

Formation is a process of fulfilling that image. According to Francis, it is to recognise the importance of being what a person is before God, “What a man is before God, that he is and no more” (Francis of Assisi, 1999j:135). Francis came to this conclusion because, “A man is worth no more than God reckons him.” Francis explains how strange it is that we seek approval from others who do nothing for us, but we do little to please him “whose favor [*sic*] is the summit of holiness” All three quotations are from Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, 2000b:753).

Franciscan Formation is a discovery of “the ground of our being.” This term was first used by Paul Tillich (Tillich, 1953: throughout chapter 10), John Robinson extended this to “The Ground of our very being” in his then controversial book, ‘Honest to God’ (Robinson, 1963:22). The Ground of our being is God from whom people are to learn to be loved and served. Therefore, Franciscan Formation is a God-ward journey, and in this process, Franciscans become engaged in knowing God through spirit and truth, “God is Sprit and those that adore Him must adore Him in Spirit and in Truth” (Francis of Assisi, 1999d:80). Subsequently, Francis discovered the true path of knowledge through knowing the mystery of God and directed a contemplative method of adoring the Lord.

3.4.2 Christ is the pattern and model for Formation

Franciscan Formation is forming Christ in humankind or, put another way, “to form humankind according to the pattern of Christ” This is explained by Temperini when citing Bonaventure’s ‘Six Wings of the Seraph’ which delineates the objective of education, “The superiors must adapt themselves to the persons entrusted to them in order to present them with the form of Christ, that is, to imprint in them the life and doctrine of Christ, so that the students not only grasp His spirit, but also imitate His virtues” (both quotations are from Temperini, 1999:152). Chesterton affirms this process by stating that “Christ was the pattern on which St. Francis sought to fashion himself” (Chesterton, 2008:116). Consequently, the spirituality of St. Francis is Christo-centric. The ‘Christo-centrism’ of Francis is also ‘Theo-centrism’ and vice versa:

“Francis was convinced that God is known through Christ, whose function is to lead creation from this world to the Father” (Nguyen van Si, 1997:28). Therefore, the Christology of Franciscan Formation can be called “Christogenesis” (de Chardin, 1965:325). Teilhard de Chardin first used this word, but Francis implies it when he states, “We are mothers when we carry Him in our heart and body through a divine love and a pure and sincere conscience and give birth to Him through a holy activity which must shine as an example before others” (Francis of Assisi, 1999f:42). Francis understands this as a process that calls to engage, to form, and bring forth Christ: “to christify the world” (Delio, 2005:131).

It is important to analyse Francis’s relationship with Jesus, especially presented in his writings. He is seen using the words ‘God’ and ‘Lord’, but it is difficult to find the name of ‘Jesus’ used alone, mostly ‘Jesus’ is combined with other titles: “Jesus Christ” (Francis of Assisi, 1999d:82), “our Lord Jesus Christ” (Francis of Assisi, 1999k:87) and “the Lord Jesus” (Francis of Assisi, 1999j:128). These names reveal his personal relationship with Jesus but Francis was almost secretive; Thomas of Celano recounts that, following the precept of the Gospel, he loved to pray in solitude, and when he returned to the others, he carefully restrained himself so as not to reveal any details by his words or behaviour about his very personal relationship with Jesus (cf. Thomas of Celano, 2000:308-310). Francis recognised that the Incarnate Son is the Father’s gift to us. He became Man for us, a point emphasised by Francis, “His Father’s will was such that His blessed and glorious Son, whom he gave to us and who has born for us, should offer Himself though His own blood as a sacrifice and oblation on the altar of the cross.” (Francis of Assisi, 1999p:46). He saw Jesus as the love of the Father for humanity: “Christ incarnate is essentially the gift that the Father himself has sent to the poor” (Nguyen-Van Khan, 1994:95).

Francis, in the process of his conversion, retains and develops all his positive human gifts, so much so that until today even non-believers, sense in him true Christo-centric humanity. The prerequisites of his spiritual vocation are basic human attitudes such as openness, honesty, and attentiveness. It is exactly here, where God’s call comes in,

when people are open, honest, and attentive. At the same time that Francis became more and more Christ-like, he was on the way as a pilgrim, his life was without privileges, and he had to change his social status; all these things remind us of Christ, and thus make Francis an icon of Christ. This 'Life Pilgrimage' of Francis became more intense after he received the stigmata; he showed how 'Christ-likeness' and becoming fully human are one and the same thing.

Therefore, Franciscan Formation is to be centred on the Primacy of Christ. Christ is the beginning and end of any spiritual, as well as Franciscan, pedagogy. Hence, there has to be a radical 'Christo-centrism' in all aspects of Franciscan life and work.

3.4.3 The Spirit of God in Formation

Francis, as a student of the Gospel, understood the presence of the Spirit of the Lord and its holy manner of working. When Francis writes in general about God the Father and his works, he always shows the Spirit present with and beside the Son (cf. Francis of Assisi, 1999d:78). "He uses the word *Spiritus* seventy-three times, mostly to designate the Holy Spirit (forty times) or at least a divine power or force (twenty-four times)" (Matura, 1997:80). When Francis mentions the Holy Spirit, it is usually a part of an explicitly Trinitarian formula. He uses many lists of attributes of the Father and the Son, but he gives the Holy Spirit only three classical names: "The Holy Spirit" (Francis of Assisi, 1999d:82); "The Paraclete" (Francis of Assisi, 1999d:83) and "The Spirit of the Lord" (Francis of Assisi, 1999j:129). He reserved no particular attribute to the Holy Spirit and was simply content to call him "Holy," (Francis of Assisi, 1999h:158) "Consoler," (Francis of Assisi, 1999h:158) or "Spirit of the Lord" to indicate his place in the Trinity, his relationship with the Lord.⁹⁹

⁹⁹ It is unclear whether "the Lord" refers to the Father or the Son. The Holy Spirit is referred to as feminine in some schools of thought (Nettelhorst).

Francis refers to the Holy Spirit as “the Spirit of holy prayer and devotion” (Francis of Assisi, 1999L¹⁰⁰:102). He is also the One who is “spirit and life”, Francis quotes this biblical reference (Jn. 6:64) several times in his writings (e.g., Francis of Assisi, 1999d:81). This “spirit and life” are the essence of the Gospel which Francis desires to proclaim. He also acknowledges that “No one can say: Jesus is Lord, except in the Holy Spirit” (Francis of Assisi, 1999m:132), here Francis is quoting from I Cor. 12:3. In this way the Spirit is the true interpreter of Sacred Scripture. Francis understands that the Spirit is active with the Father and the Son in the consecration of the Eucharist:

our Lord Jesus Christ fills those present and absent who are worthy of Him...He [our Lord Jesus Christ] remains undivided and knows no loss; but One everywhere, He acts as He pleases, with the Lord God the Father and the Holy Spirit the Paraclete for ever and ever. Amen (cf. Francis of Assisi, 1999n:119).

In this way Francis understands the Trinity and its work. It is the Spirit who gives the spiritual eyes to contemplate Christ in the Eucharist (Francis of Assisi, 1999m:129). It is thus the Holy Spirit which is the only door through which people can access the inaccessible light in which the Father lives. The Holy Spirit cleanses, enlightens, and finally sets on fire the innermost recess of a person’s soul and his grace and light foster all holy virtues in our hearts, changing us from being faithless into being faithful to God, “holy virtues that are poured into the hearts of the faithful” (Francis of Assisi, 1999o:163). It is through the charity of the Spirit: “For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love be servants of one another” (Gal.5:13). Paul states in Romans, “God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 5:5). It is in this way that Francis shows God’s love for us, and this is the love that inspires Franciscans to serve and obey one another. Francis states this in his ‘The Earlier Rule’ (cf. Francis of Assisi, 1999d:67) even when correcting “Brothers at fault-”.

The first effect of the Spirit, according to Francis, is to make us aware of the ‘fleshy’ defects within us. He wishes the flesh to die in us and sets about creating appropriate

¹⁰⁰ An upper case ‘L’ is used here because the lower case looks like a one.

attitudes to allow the spirit to awaken in us the basic Christian values: humility (self-knowledge, self-acceptance); patience (perseverance, endurance, and long suffering); simplicity (a heart emptied of self and centred on God and his promises); and true peace of mind (an interior calm, solidly founded on hope). Only when someone has rejected evil and chosen to follow the path of truth about themselves can the Spirit begin to teach them how to perfect the work, he has begun in them through the reception of our Lord in the Eucharist: “It is the Spirit of the Lord, therefore, That [sic] lives in Its [sic] faithful, That [sic.] receives the Body and Blood of the Lord” (Francis of Assisi, 1999m:129). This indwelling of the Holy Spirit is expressed in Jn.14:23 “we shall come to him and make a home in him;” Francis makes the same sentiment in his ‘The Earlier Rule’ (Francis of Assisi, 1999d:80).

Francis described all these as a new relationship, as the bond of a son with the Father and the triple bond of spouse, brother, and mother with Christ. In this he makes the role of the Spirit quite clear when he states: “We are spouses when the faithful soul is united by the Holy Spirit to our Lord Jesus Christ” (Francis of Assisi, 1999p:49). It is interesting to note that although Francis understood that all Christian tradition has regarded Christ as the bridegroom and the soul the bride, he brought something new and unusual to it by speaking about the marriage between the soul and the Holy Spirit. This opened the way to another theological approach that has so far been under-used. We read in Scripture that the Spirit descended upon individuals and in the case of Mary, “the power of the Most High will overshadow you” (Lk. 1:35b). To this image Francis added that she was dedicated and “consecrated” by “the Holy Spirit the Paraclete” at the solemn celebration of “the most Holy Father in heaven...with His most holy beloved Son” (all three quotations are from Francis of Assisi, 1999o:163). Maybe it was this that inspired Francis to call Mary the “Spouse of the Holy Spirit” (Francis of Assisi, 1999q:141).

When reading through Francis’s writings it would appear the Holy Spirit plays only a modest role because he rarely mentions the Spirit and usually only under different titles. However, when the text of his writings is closely examined it can be seen that the Spirit,

although unobtrusive, is all-pervasive. Francis states in 'Admonition 12' that the Spirit's presence or absence is shown by behaviour (cf. Francis of Assisi, 1999m:133). The Spirit is always at work where the Father and Son are present (cf. Francis of Assisi, 1999n:119), so that with the Son he showers blessing on those who live in this world according to the Gospel (cf. Francis of Assisi, 1999a:127). Francis writes clearly regarding the role of the Spirit in relation to individual souls, he does not touch upon the Spirit's activity in the Church as a whole.

In Bonaventure's¹⁰¹ understanding of the person of the Holy Spirit, we can determine the Pseudo-Dionysian principle of the good, joined with the Victorine analysis of human love (cited by Calisi, 2008:47). This means that the greatest good, which is self-diffusive, is joined with the greatest love, which is self-expansive.

From the theological aspect the Spirit has a double function. On the one hand, he directs the individual into a direct and immediate relationship with God. He shows people who God is, in such a way that they can learn who and what God is through the Holy Spirit. From the writings of St. Francis, we can prove how for Francis, too, Christ is present in and through the Spirit: "The Most High Himself revealed to me" (Francis of Assisi, 1999a:125). The Spirit creates immediacy and freedom and has a corrective function regarding institutional forms.

On the other hand, and at the same time, the Spirit stands for what Christians experience: He unites people beyond all personal Charisms and beyond any separating limitation within a community. He constantly recreates the Church which he has done since Pentecost. So, the Spirit enables Christians to be free to develop as individuals as well as doing this within a community through Formation. The Spirit works on the

¹⁰¹ Bonaventure's importance cannot be over-emphasised in Franciscan theology due to his academic work, commentaries and 'the Sentences', spiritual and theological works (especially on St. John's Gospel). A summary of Bonaventure's importance to the Franciscan world is in Chapter 4. His contribution to the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition can be found in Ozilou, 2008:227-253 with an explanation of his preaching in Bériou(2008:255-267) and Ducolomb (2008:269-295).

individual level and for the greater good of the community. This two-fold approach we see illustrated in St. Francis:

And after the Lord gave me brothers, no one showed me what I had to do, but the Most High revealed to me that I should live according to the pattern of the Holy Gospel. And I had this written down simply and [*sic.*] in a few words, and the Lord Pope confirmed it for me (Francis of Assisi, 1999a:125).

Christian Formation is achieved only in this tension between the immediacy of the individual and the fullness of his/her being, unfolded and developed in and through relationships. Wherever one of the elements is missing the whole degenerates into individualism or collective oppression; both of which must be avoided at all costs. This can be seen in Francis's 'The Earlier Rule'. The text says that it should be-, observed "spiritually" (Francis of Assisi, 1999d:64), meaning "according to the Spirit" (Francis of Assisi, 1999d:67). The Rule is a model for the community, and yet, in the end, it is only the Spirit of the Lord who is able to achieve what it demands. According to 'The Earlier Rule', the whole life project of a Minor Brother has its origin in the work of the Spirit: "If anyone, wishing by divine inspiration to accept this life _" (Francis of Assisi, 1999d:64).

The task of the Franciscan does not consist of cloning Francis; neither is it to force ideology on people or to accept a specific community programme. Rather, Franciscans, by individually obeying the same Spirit today, are obedient to Francis, remembering his words, explained earlier: "I have done what is mine; may Christ teach you to do what is yours!" (Thomas of Celano, 2000:386).

3.4.4 The Trinitarian nature of Formation

Francis rarely uses the word 'God' alone, but usually puts it into the context of the Trinity, e.g., "magnify and give thanks to the Most High and Supreme Eternal God Trinity and Unity" (Francis of Assisi, 1999d:85) and "perfect Trinity and simple unity" (Francis of Assisi, 1999n:121). He sees God the Trinity as the ultimate unity and community to which we, His creatures, aspire. When Francis invokes or speaks to God, he addresses the Father: "You holy Father, King of heaven and earth" (Francis of

Assisi, 1999g:109) and “All-powerful, most holy, Almighty and supreme God, Holy and just Father, Lord King of heaven and earth we thank You for Yourself” (Francis of Assisi, 1999b:81) in which Francis combines the titles by which Christ is known in the Gospels of John (“Holy Father” – 17:11) and Matthew (“Father, Lord of heaven and earth” – 11:25).

Matura states that, “Francis saw the fatherhood of God as directly connected with the Trinity and only indirectly with humanity” (Matura, 1997:58). This cannot be so when we see how closely Francis sees God connected to his Creation and its creatures: “You have created everything spiritual and corporal and, after making us in Your own image and likeness, you placed us in paradise” (Francis of Assisi, 1999d:82). Bonaventure¹⁰² follows this up by striving, “to understand all of God’s activity in the world as the work of the Trinity; that is, creation, Incarnation, redemption, sanctification, and salvation are the work of the Father through the Son in the power of the Spirit” (Calisi, 2008:19). Bonaventure has a far more personal approach to the Trinity in that he does not begin by discussing the divine substance. Rather he begins with the person of the Father. This method was also used by Augustine and Thomas Aquinas and thus immediately creates the feeling of relationship on which so much of Formation is founded.

God, as the creator, as the incarnate Son and as the Holy Spirit has been examined. The Christian faith, however, does not imply that God can be viewed from three different angles, rather the One God lives in the living relationships of the three persons (cf. Young, 2007:100-102). He is within himself the ultimate One and thereby he is ultimate unity. This helps in understanding Christian Formation because Religious Vocation is an invitation to answer God’s call. It is therefore essential for all Religious to examine where and how they heard their individual call, certainly Francis did this. There are three basic ways in which God can speak to or call people: first, he speaks in the heart

¹⁰² Bonaventure was a part of the Paris scholastic school which believed that Trinitarian theology is arguably about God in ‘Godself’, i.e. the unity within the inner life of God, this is certainly how Thomas Aquinas saw the Trinity. However, Bonaventure understood the Trinity as linked with Creation.

of a person, as he did to Francis as he stood at the foot of the crucifix at San Damiano. Second, he speaks through the Word of Scripture transmitted by the Church, as he did to Francis at the church of St. Mary's of the Portiuncula when he asked the priest to explain the gospel readings.

When he heard that Christ's disciples should not 'possess gold or silver or money, or carry on their journey a wallet or a sack, nor bread, nor a staff, nor to have 'shoes' nor 'two tunics', but that they should preach 'the kingdom of God' and 'penance', the holy man, Francis, immediately 'exulted in the spirit of God', 'This is what I want,' he said, 'this is what I seek, this is what I desire with all my heart' (Thomas of Celano, 1999:201-202).¹⁰³

Thirdly, God can speak to a person through their relationship with another (especially the excluded and marginalised), Francis refers to this in 'The Testament': "The Lord gave me, Brother Francis, thus to begin doing penance in this way... And the Lord Himself led me among them [lepers]" (Francis of Assisi, 1999a:124). If God is relationship and Man is created in the image of God, then human relationships are the privileged place for encountering God, and thus every person is a revelation of God.

Relationships are being developed through support as well as through encounters, both of which help people to be formed through their transformation. Francis knew that confronting God is an awesome experience¹⁰⁴ and that he would need a companion to both ground him, and witness his journey, and so Francis always made sure he had a companion nearby to support him after his encounters with the divine (Francis of Assisi, 1999c:125).

This trinitarian theological foundation of Formation has immediate consequences with regards to its content. It has to do with the individual, but always in relation to others which is explained in the statement: 'I cannot find out who I am only by looking at

¹⁰³ These references are from Mt. 10:9-10, Lk. 9:2, Mk.6:12.

Bonaventure has a similar story, but he tells it in a more mystical setting in that Francis goes into the church of St. Nicholas and opens the Bible three times and finds similar texts to those in Thomas of Celano. The texts Bonaventure uses are: Mt. 19:21, Lk. 9:3 and Mt. 16:24 (cf. Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, 2000a:544).

¹⁰⁴ The word 'awesome' is quoted by Delio as an unattributed citation: "He [Francis] described the Trinity as 'awesome', 'most high', 'supreme' and 'most holy', a mystery beyond human expression and comprehension" (Delio, 2005:20).

myself, but only if I become aware of myself in my relationships with others.’ It is a growing together within the community. Community is not just a framework which is added to the existence of a Religious, it is an essential part of it. An ability to form community and to communicate are, therefore, always themes in Formation.

It has already been mentioned that Christian and Franciscan vocation always includes mission.¹⁰⁵ Here, too, the community is involved, not just as an object with whom one can fulfil personal mission, but as a ‘Thou’ (see Buber, 1958)¹⁰⁶ in mutual give and take. The ecclesiastical nature of the Christian Vocation has a strong Trinitarian foundation: Religious are gifts to one another in each other’s mission. Religious make their existence mutually possible by being open to one another and receive one another at the same time (to give and receive each other). The call goes to the individual, but it is also a call into the Body of the Church, in which the members need and complement each other.

One cannot emphasise enough the importance of relationships in Formation; from the formator to the formees and the formees among themselves. Understanding the Trinity in terms of equal relationships is the way to interweave into the good loving God, Formees can then learn that it is only by fostering good relationships that a community of love can be born and be sustained.

¹⁰⁵ See section 3.3.

¹⁰⁶ Further explanation is to be found in sections 3.4.2 and 4.1.

CHAPTER 4:

CONCEPTS AND CONSEQUENCES OF FRANCISCAN FORMATION

4.1 IDENTITY IN FRANCISCAN FORMATION

First and foremost, Franciscans are formed by the **gospel**; this is their identity. It consists of On-going Formation throughout the life of the Brother or Sister, with an awareness of self and searching for gospel perfection. It produces an acceptance of self which enables Formation to take place. This identity is, in essence, the outline of the vocation of Francis who ‘does theology’¹⁰⁷ in the vernacular, rather than using speculative theories about it. Francis’s theology was practical, but he does make theological statements, for example, “His [God’s] holy words” (Francis of Assisi, 1999n:119) to explain the Bible. Blastic understands that: “Celano provided three basic intuitions of the Franciscan worldview that reflect Francis’s theological vision: 1) the Christian relationship to the world, 2) the meaning of the human Christ and 3) the nature of the human person.” (Blastic, 1998:5).¹⁰⁸ The first reflects on the fact that Francis saw the world as good and a reflection of the creator in contrast to the Cathars; the second develops this theme through encountering Christ in creation which is shown in Francis’s celebration of Christmas at Greccio with a living crib (cf. Thomas of Celano. 1999:254-257, see also 247-248). The third theme refers to Francis’s vision of the crucified Seraph and by his receiving the stigmata. It shows forth the humanity of Jesus: his fragility, limitations and vulnerability. These three theological intuitions point to the identity of the early Franciscan movement in that it embraced the world as good, sought solidarity with the poor and oppressed by following Christ’s example. It showed a willingness to undergo suffering and even martyrdom for the sake of the Gospel. This way of ‘doing theology’ set the early Franciscans apart from other evangelical movements of the time.

¹⁰⁷ “Francis Doing Theology” is the title of Blastic’s article (Blastic, 1998:5-8).

¹⁰⁸ For further details on these three basic insights see Blastic (1998:5-8).

Francis was keen to keep his movement within the traditions of the Catholic Church promising, “obedience and reverence to the Lord Pope” (Francis of Assisi, 1999d:63). He was careful not to fall into the same position as the Cathars, Waldensians and Humiliati, all of whom had been named as heretics. However, by Francis’s time the Humiliati were approved by the papacy (1201). Francis was radical in the sense that he founded an Order that went out to the people, rather than being enclosed in a monastic community. He saw himself as immersed in the overflowing goodness of God manifested in the poor and humble Christ within the gospel. Francis captured a spirituality which is entirely on the “theological intuition of the kenosis of the Word, as supreme revelation of the disconcerting face of a humble God” (Rivi, 2011:28). Therefore, the centrality of Franciscan spiritual formation is to be seized by the kenosis of the Word of God. All of which displays a profound theological insight. The very word ‘kenosis’ implies a deep theological perception of incarnation.

Francis finally finds his identity at Portiuncula, so that without hesitation he can say: “‘This is what I want,’ he said, ‘this is what I seek, this is what I desire with all my heart’” (Thomas of Celano, 1999:201-202). The Gospel is there for all, but he discovered in it his very own vocation: “This is what I want”! Francis realised that whoever has found his identity is at rest within himself and is able to set out again and again anew. This is why for Francis and the brotherhood Portiuncula became a home, a place of recollection, a place to remain, a place of comfort, a place to nourish one’s identity, a place to be happy, a place from where to be sent out on a mission and finally a place to die and live for the Lord. Portiuncula is ‘the cradle’ of the brotherhood, a model convent and a place for Chapters to be held. The holding of Chapters is institutionally and historically monastic. Francis adapted this form rather than innovated it.

Francis's way of life can equally apply to Erich Loewy's list of the six aspects of community, which are: 1) common purpose, 2) solidarity, 3) mutual help, 4) mutual caring, 5) benevolence and 6) shared capacity for suffering (this is a summary of Loewy, 1993:1-255). These six aspects are found in Francis's 'The Earlier Rule' (cf. Francis of Assisi, 1999d:63-86) and summarised his gospel way of life by following the poor and humble Christ, which entailed radical inter-dependency and thereby care for one another see Francis of Assisi, 1999d:72) as well as a shared capacity for suffering (see Francis of Assisi, 1999d:79). Francis wrote: "Let each one love and care for his brother as a mother loves and cares for her son" (Francis of Assisi, 1999d:71). It is interesting to consider whether this idea of inter-dependency in community life was a reaction to the discovery of the individual during the Middle Ages (cf. Morris, 1972). Blastic states: "Community for Francis, underscored a new Christian identity in the face of growing competition and individualism" (Blastic, 1998:19). Medieval thought was very much a discovery of the individual (see Colin Morris's book 'The Discovery of the Individual 1050-1200').

Warren states that according to the Ministers at the time, "the structure or form of the early movement is what characterized or defined it" (Warren, 2003:16). This form included fraternal communion, the distinction of being 'lesser brothers' and the apostolic dimension of a life of service to others. The Ministers also indicate that in the early movement there was a feeling of community and equality between lay and clerical which was displayed in a radical following of Christ.

The Inter-Franciscan Commission¹⁰⁹ described the early Brotherhood as follows:

The identity of the Franciscan Order, and hence its classification in canon law, emerges first of all from the "form of gospel life" that Francis, in response to the inspiration of the Most High, put forward and lived together with his brothers as a particular experience of the mystery of Christ and of *discipleship* in the service of the Church and the world (The Inter-Franciscan Commission, 1999:237).

¹⁰⁹ Since 2009 it has been more explicitly named 'The Inter-Franciscan Commission for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation'.

When people identify with the gospel, they find themselves and their vocation because they are on the track to the image that God has of them. Such an 'identity' is connected to wholeness. It stands for integration and makes unity possible in the many areas of life and of Religious Life in particular within the Franciscan tradition. Francis's 'old self', was used as a mask that covered his essential nature and later became a vehicle to express his relationship with God. This is 'the self' that Jung calls, "the god within" (Jung, 1962:334). As has been shown, the cloth merchant's son used nakedness to dramatize his new relationship with God. Francis stripped off his clothes and returned them to his father in public and in front of the Bishop of Assisi. This was to make the point that he was changing from his life of luxury under his father to a life of poverty (see Thomas of Celano, 1999: 193-194, see also Spikin, 2011:64-65 explaining clothes to be a sign of wealth in the medieval period).

Identity refers to an individual or a social group. It is defined as the state of remaining the same under various aspects or conditions or a sense of self: providing sameness or continuity over time and history. The Oxford English Dictionary defines identity as-, "The sameness of a person or thing at all times or in all circumstances: the condition or fact that a person or thing is itself and not something else" (The Compact Edition of The Oxford English Dictionary, 1979:1368). Christian spiritual identity is always a corporate matter, although it starts at the individual level. The sacrament of baptism is the first step towards Christian identity (Gal. 3:27). A baptised person does not lose his/her original identity, but rather 'in Christ' they discover their true identity. The question of Christian identity begins at the level of baptism and the deepening of one's identity in Christ is at the heart of Religious Life. At the beginning in the 4th century the call to follow Christ took shape in the formation of eremitical and coenobitic ways of life. When a candidate entered into a communal way of life it entailed a new identity: a new name, a new set of clothes, a new job and a new set of relationships. The '*Vita prima*' of Pachomius for example, recounts how the famous monk led his disciples. They went step by step into their new way of life, first by clothing them in the habit and then instructing them to renounce the world and to follow Christ by 'Way of the Cross'. All

the attributes signified a certain death to the world and denial of self, in order to embrace their new life in Christ.

Only in union with 'the other' can true identity emerge. Teilhard de Chardin claimed that union differentiates (see de Chardin, 1967:266-267). The more a person is in union with another who is different from them the more they discover their true self. In a chapter sub-heading, Teilhard de Chardin warns against "A Blind Alley to be Avoided: Isolation" (de Chardin, 1967:261). Joining a Religious Community is a search for an individual's own identity within the community group. Thus, the identity of the community allows the Religious to become what they are created to be.

Subsequently, when becoming a Franciscan, the Franciscan identity has to be examined and it is in recognising this that the characteristics enable a person to identify with this tradition. At the outset of the Franciscan movement, Francis gave priority to the evangelical and theological content of the Franciscan life stressing the creative and dynamic fidelity to the Rule. "It was to be lived 'on the way', without necessarily being in a hurry or anxious to institutionalise the vital rhythms of the fraternity in the rigidity of fixed law" (The Inter-Franciscan Commission, 1999:236). Therefore, it should be appreciated, what makes Franciscanism unique from other traditions is how it is defined through the simple rules of poverty. However, it was, and is, the interpretation of poverty that has caused the rifts in the Franciscan Order.

In classifying the identity of the Franciscan movement, it is important to understand the person of Francis and the early Franciscan fraternity. The life of Francis provides a 'genetic code' for the growth of the movement.

4.2 FRANCISCAN FORMATION IS FREEDOM

Formation is a way to freedom. This freedom is the essence of every Formation. Reflections on a person's identity have shown that the freedom becomes real through and in binding oneself to conform to the Christ within; this can be seen in Francis. Francis was a man of the 13th century. He had no scholarly formation and had no

scholastic notion of freedom, yet Francis exercised his freedom of theological expression in his own formation. It is difficult to make a direct link between formation and freedom from his writings. The abstract word 'freedom' cannot be found in Francis's writings. However, there are inferences to a free person. Freedom is the basis of Franciscan Formation and has biblical backing [see below]. A quotation from 'The Later Rule' gives a rationale to this understanding of freedom which is present when a candidate wishes to live the gospel life of the brothers; "let the ministers speak to them the words of the holy Gospel that they go and sell all they have and take care to give it to the poor" (Francis of Assisi, 1999L:100). Francis, therefore, frees himself from physical ties.

Francis outlines a gospel demand for choosing a Franciscan way of life in the Franciscan movement which begins with freedom. This is described in the passages he opens-up from the gospels with Brother Bernard:

If you wish to be perfect, go sell all you own, and give to the poor [Mt, 19:21]. They repeated this a second time, and found: Take nothing for your journey [Lk. 9:3]. They tried a third time, and found: If anyone would follow me, let him deny himself [Mt.16:24]. Bernard immediately carried out all these things, without neglecting a single iota (Thomas of Celano, 2000:254).

According to Matura, "this has the tone of a categorical imperative, a pressure on freedom" and "Francis has for the freedom of the candidate, a respect which he requires from the ministers and other friars" (Matura, 2010:28) in their decision to follow the Lord. The choice of being a Franciscan entails an inner choice that requires freedom which arises from inside oneself rather than outside. The choice illustrates being "taught by God" (Jn.6:45) to enjoy the "glorious liberty of the children of God" (Rom. 8:21), and "the anointing you received from him abides in you" (1 Jn.2:27) and this propels the spiritual intervention. As a consequence, Francis places great freedom of choice based on gospel precepts. Once more it needs to be stated that the word freedom is not used by Francis in his writings in 'The Earlier Rule' or 'The Later Rule', but he proposes a freedom of choice. Some of the examples which strengthen this argument that Francis did not directly use the word 'free' or 'freedom' but rather invited his followers to seek a

freedom from within: “If anyone, wishing by divine inspiration”; “If he is determined to accept our life”; “if he wishes and is capable of doing so spiritually without any difficulty” (Francis of Assisi, 1999d:64). This liberal attitude of Francis is shown particularly in his words to his followers on his deathbed [already used in section 3.2], “I have done what is mine; may Christ teach you to do what is yours!” (Thomas of Celano, 2000:386, also see Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, 2000:642). Hence, Francis calls for a balanced vision of a gospel mandate for following the Lord with certain liberties for the individual. Accordingly, Matura points out that Francis teaches “how to hear it, yield to it and put it into practice” (Matura, 2010:29) at the embryonic stage of vocation. Therefore, in Francis’s view, anyone who aspires to follow the Lord, as his first desire, requires to seek-out the Word of the Lord in the first place. Francis demands a choice of following the Lord with a challenge and yet leaves room for freedom.

Francis’s form of life is authoritative *forma minorum* for himself, but he refuses to bind his brothers to his own person. He repeatedly refers them to their personal vocation: He does not want to replace the experiences of others with his own experience, but rather wants them to make their own experiences possible. Francis’s own radical design of life is summed up in ‘The Testament’: “no one showed me what I had to do, but the Most High Himself revealed to me that I should live according to the pattern of the Holy Gospel” (Francis of Assisi, 1999a:125). He wants to bring others to the same immediate contact with God, which he himself has experienced through his own personal call. This becomes clear, for example, when his first companions asked him what they should do. Francis does not give the answer himself, but takes them to the gospels, from where he had received his vocation, “they asked the priest of the church who was there: Sir, would you show us the Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ” (Anon., 2000c:38). He leaves Leo explicitly to his own freedom: “In whatever way it seems better to you to please the Lord God and to follow His footprint and poverty, do it with the blessing of the Lord God and my obedience” (Francis of Assisi, 1999b:122). Francis statement of “my obedience” adds emphasis to the fact that although he gives the brothers freedom, they have to obey their leaders, in this case Francis. As stated, even

on his deathbed he refuses to bind his brothers to himself: "I have done what is mine; may Christ teach you what is yours" (Thomas of Celano, 2000:386). It is simply by being bound to Christ that prevents a person from being manipulated by others and makes self-determination possible. Edith van den Goorbergh and Theodore Zweerman state:

The outline of Francis's approach to life is the form of life that he saw and admired in Jesus Christ and that he learned to trace back to the all-sustaining mystery of the Triune God. Those who allow themselves to be led by the spirituality that he lived may find themselves able to conform their lives in freedom to that mystery (Van den Goorbergh & Zweerman, 2001:355).

There are no direct explanations in either Francis's or Clare's writings on liberty and freedom, nor even on humility. These aspects of their spirituality are exposed in their prophetic actions which were performed through the circumstances of their everyday life and are echoed in their writings: "In these writings, their appeal to the irreplaceable dignity of a person's own will, of people making their own choices shines forth" (van den Goorbergh & Zweerman, 2001:374). It is, however, true that obedience and solidarity within the community are required (see Francis of Assisi, 1999L:103, see also Armstrong, 2006a:120). So, freedom within formation is within the bounds of the Rule and it is up to the individual to discover their own Religious life within it. As has been shown, this 'freedom' has caused rifts and splits within the Franciscan community. This was so with the Spirituals, and more recently between the OFM, the Conventuals and the Capuchins (see section 3.2).

Therefore, Franciscans do not just walk behind Francis, but stand beside him in the same immediacy and originality that they do before the gospel. Personal vocation goes before any ideological fulfilment of a programme. Meeting Francis at the time of Formation, therefore, cannot mean to imitate him as much as possible. Franciscans might want the experience of Francis to replace their own, but this is not Francis's way. It is rather a way of making their own experience possible by meeting Francis as a fellow brother. There are three levels of meeting Francis that can be formulated. First, simply getting to know Francis through his writings; second, asking the question of who

Francis is for me; and third, that the individual, inspired by Francis, will expose himself/herself before God just as directly as Francis did, in order to hear “from the Most High Himself” (Francis of Assisi, 1999a:125) what he or she should do. This is being open to the Spirit who will “guide you into all the truth” (Jn. 16:13).

4.3 ‘CHRIST-LIKENESS’

The goal of all Christian Formation is to be Christ-like. It is illustrated clearly by Francis’s spirituality and most particularly in his stigmata on Mount La Verna, where Christ took form in a physical way. Francis’s life “was to be nothing less than an ‘imitation of Christ’, conscious, literal, and uncompromising” (Moorman, 1963:20). Francis understood his relationship with Christ as one in whose service is perfect freedom.

Formation is a process of transformation in Christ; it is a growing in union with and in configuration to him. This is the call of every vocation. The goal of consecrated life is “putting on Jesus Christ” (The Code of Canon Law, 1983: canon 40). The measure of this transformation is implied in the total surrender to him and Formation has, most of all, to aim at this. It states in *‘Vita Consecrata’*: “It is a way of progressing assimilation to the attitude of Christ towards the Father” (Pope John Paul II, 1996:117).

Francis discovered that without Jesus Christ one cannot reach God. For Francis, Jesus is the language through which God speaks to us, for him Jesus is the “Word of the Father” (Francis of Assisi, 1999p:45). It is through Jesus the knowledge of God is experienced and expressed. The mystery of incarnation is the means by which God reveals himself to humanity. The foundation in the encounter between humanity and God is the birth of Jesus. Francis contemplated on the mystery of incarnation and celebrated the event with great joy and devotion. Thomas of Celano recounts the Christ event enacted and celebrated at Greccio, on the birthday of our Lord Jesus Christ (see Thomas of Celano.1999:.254). Francis’s passion for this event, is the result of his

closeness to grasp the meaning of the Word made flesh. God wears human flesh, a human face with human hands to communicate his love and closeness.

Hence, this awesome contingency is made visible in the incarnation of his Son. Francis identified himself with the child in the crib. Celano's account illustrates that Francis calls "Christ the 'babe from Bethlehem'...He seems to lick his lips whenever he uses the expression 'Jesus', or 'babe from Bethlehem', tasting the word on his happy palate and savouring the sweetness of the word" (Thomas of Celano.1999:256). Therefore, Francis exemplifies, the words of the Psalmist, "O taste and see that the Lord is good!" (Ps. 34:8). It is simply a mistake to think that Francis reduced the mystery of incarnation with tender feelings. However, this mystery of Christmas meditation is shown in 'The Office of the Passion' where Francis presents the "divine paradox: God is child-homeless, denied shelter" (Rotzetter *et al*, 1994:125). The Greccio Christmas sets a base for the virtues of humility, poverty and simplicity. Celano highlights that "his highest aim, foremost desire, and greatest intention was to pay heed to the holy gospel in all things and through all things to follow the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ and to retrace His footsteps completely..." (Thomas of Celano, 1999:254). Understanding the mystery of incarnation must become a pattern for the essential aspect of formation and for Franciscans this mystery should find expressions in developing a radical attachment to Jesus Christ. In the mystery of incarnation, the human face of God is revealed. The Franciscan's call is to make visible the humanity of Jesus and bring forth Jesus to the world.

God was made man as the centre of our human/Christian history. He is the central image to which Franciscans are called upon to grow into. 'The Admonitions' of Francis state: "Consider, O human being, in what great excellence the Lord God has placed you, for He created and formed you to the image of His beloved Son according to the body and to His likeness according to the Spirit" (Francis of Assisi, 1999j:131). This Admonition places every human person in relationship to God through the incarnate Son. It is not enough to understand the mystery of incarnation theologically and spiritually, but it has to become a contemplative action, to grasp the deeper truth of the

gospel which expresses that God became man. The pattern or design of the human person is divine: the whole person, body and spirit, is formed according to the image of the Son. Discovering the dignity of the human person is essential for the Franciscan vision and it must be cultivated in the Formation process. It is Man's value as the image of God and the value of each individual. As a result, Formation guides an individual to discover the dignity of the human person. God became a real man; the baby born of a Jewess called Mary; the baby who lay in the straw, the young boy who grew to know what it means to be loved by a mother; the young man who learnt and mastered an artisan's trade (traditionally thought of as a carpenter) and thereby developed calloused hands, etc. This became part of a contemplative praxis.

All Franciscans should comprehend the humanity of Jesus, God made man, who dirtied his hands and worked with his human father and lived with his mother. This is in order to develop a divine attitude to the human condition. Franciscans should contemplate the mystery of redemption on a daily basis, similar to the way that Francis contemplated it, in a profoundly Christological understanding of the human person, making each person sacred, unique, revelatory of God. Franciscan Formation comprehends this sacredness of the human person individually and collectively, which would require a complete growth in Christ. Hence, Franciscan Formation does not stop, but continues to discover the significance of being formed into Christ daily and, in doing so, to discover that the human person becomes fully human in embracing on-going Formation.

The mystery that moved Francis to become an agent of compassion is in his contemplation on the passion of Jesus, because Jesus Christ was in his mind, in his heart and in his lips. In the passion of Jesus, he understood the mercy of God. The humility of passion and crucifixion moved Francis to tears. In the mystery of the cross, Francis discovered the humility of God. St. Paul states in Philippians that God "emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross" (Phil. 2:7-8). Rotzetter *et al.*, explains this in the terms of Francis being granted the stigmata: "The biographers state that from his first encounter with the cross

at San Damiano, Francis was stigmatised, to become one [sic] wounded and sharing in the suffering of the Son of God” (Rotzetter *et al.*, 1994:127). Francis’s suffering with his divine Master enabled him to formulate a prayer: “we adore you, Lord Jesus Christ, in all Your churches throughout the world and we bless You, because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world” (Francis of Assisi, 1999a:125). He prayed this prayer every day and whenever he passed by a church. Therefore, in Francis’s life the cross occupied the central position. In Christ, Francis sees him who suffered so much for us (see Nguyen-Van-Khan, 1994:44). Hence, Francis invites his brothers to adore and thank Christ because he died on the cross. He reflects on the thoughts of St. Paul in Christ’s self-emptying and exaltation (see above Phil. 2:7-8). Francis took to heart “we preach Christ crucified...” (1 Cor. 1:23).

Francis was able to see the glorification of Christ intimately linked with his suffering. This Francis depicted in his conversation with Brother Leo in ‘True and Perfect Joy’ (Francis of Assisi, 1999r:166). Francis told Leo that in the face of rejection and mistreatment, true joy was patience can be found: “I tell you this: If I had the patience and did not become upset, true joy, as well as true virtue and the salvation of my soul, would consist in this” (see the full narration of ‘True and Perfect Joy’ in Francis of Assisi, 1999r:166-7). This portrayal brings the dimension of balancing suffering and joy to something which Franciscans can take pride in and learn to process in life as a strategy to face suffering with magnanimity. The joy of living is the joy that uncovers one’s worth in God and not in one’s success. Franciscan Formation must aim at a process wherein the ‘letting-go’ (material poverty) and letting God in (spiritual poverty) meet together to produce a perfection of contentment in one’s formation. The founder of the Order fathomed that the mystery of suffering embraces the mystery of joy. Suffering and resurrection, in that order indicates that resurrection is the *telos*, meaning the ultimate objective, the end. True joy is the result of a profound awareness of the closeness of the Risen Lord: “I am with you always, to the close of the age” (Mt. 28:20). Hence perfect joy is the result of acknowledging God’s closeness which enables the spiritual journey to be ‘joy-filled’.

The originality of Francis is revealed in his Rule which he described as “the life of the Gospel of Jesus Christ” (Francis of Assisi, 1999d:63). He revealed that those who embrace this form of Franciscan life are committing themselves to the Gospel. In ‘The Earlier Rule’, Francis invited Franciscans to remain faithful and stated: “let us, therefore, hold onto the words, the life and the reaching and the Holy Gospel...” (Francis of Assisi, 1999d:81). In the final chapter of Later Rule, Francis stated: “we may observe, poverty, humility, and the Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ as we have firmly promised” (Francis of Assisi, 1999L:106). Francis’s desire to follow in Christ’s footsteps is summarised by Thomas of Celano:

His highest aim, foremost desire and greatest intention was to pay heed to the holy gospel in all things and through all things, to follow the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ and to retrace His footsteps completely with all vigilance and all zeal, all the desire of his soul and all the fervour of his heart. Francis used to recall with regular meditation the words of Christ and recollect His deeds with most attentive perception. Indeed, so thoroughly did the humility of the incarnation and the charity of the Passion occupy his memory that he scarcely wanted to think of anything else (Thomas of Celano, 1999:254).

The hagiographer writes that after hearing the gospel at Portiuncula, Francis was “overflowing with joy, hastened to implement the words of salvation” (Thomas of Celano, 1999:202). Francis stated that: “No one showed me what I had to do, but the Most High Himself revealed to me that I should live according to the pattern of the Holy Gospel” (Francis of Assisi, 1999a:125). For Francis, the gospel was everything. In it he discovered his Saviour, who was born suffered and died for all. Thomas of Celano explains that “In his heart, in his mouth, in his ears, in his eyes, in his hands, he bore Jesus always in his whole body” (Thomas of Celano, 1999:283).

The culminative expressions of following the gospel of Jesus Christ are explained by Francis. He constantly meditated on Jesus’ birth and passion. In the vision of the incarnation, Francis sees in Christ his self-abnegation of the son of glory by being revealed in human flesh. Though “He was rich beyond all things” (Francis of Assisi, 1999p:46), he chose the poverty of the world (Francis of Assisi, 1999k:46 see also 2 Cor. 8-9). In his reading of the passion, Christ offered himself “through his own blood as a sacrifice and oblation on the altar of the cross” (Francis of Assisi, 1999p:46).

Christ “emptied himself” (Phil.2: 7). This “did not consist simply in mere material poverty but rather in assuming the human condition...” (Matura, 2004: 62). Christ’s coming “in human form” (Phil. 2:8) moved Francis to comprehend God in Jesus Christ (Phil. 2:8). In the mystery of incarnation, passion and resurrection, Francis contemplated the mystery of God’s humility. He lived these mysteries and celebrated redemption of the redeemed world in ‘The Canticle of the Creatures’ (Francis of Assisi, 1999c:113-114).

Formation into Franciscan life is learning to give oneself totally to Christ crucified, - Learning that the sufferings of Jesus are the lessons of humility, compassion, poverty, and obedience. A Franciscan journey is maturing into Christ. Therefore, a Franciscan absorbs, adapts and assimilates a pattern from the mystery of incarnation, passion and resurrection. These mysteries shape a person to believe that the call to Religious Life is to belong to God and fulfil God’s Will. In this process of formation, Franciscans learn to follow the Lord’s footprints. Hence, the formees are formed by Christ and taught to live according to the pattern of Christ. In Franciscan eyes this is to live the gospel in poverty and care for the marginalised. This is to direct the formees to study the life and teaching in the doctrine of Christ. Therefore, the formees grasp his spirit and his virtues. For this reason, formation directs the formee to a path of transformation into Christ in line with Teilhard de Chardin’s statement; “Christogenesis” (see section 3.4.2).

4.4 LEARNING AND HOLINESS – A FRANCISCAN PERSPECTIVE OF FORMATION

“John of Parma [1209-1289] was accustomed to say that the Order rests on the two pillars of holiness and learning” (Ossanna, 2003:133) He added that the brothers must make certain that learning does not destroy holiness. He saw that there was a danger of turning the gospel story of Cana around by changing the good wine into water instead of changing the water into good wine for the wedding of fraternity. He urged the Brothers to stop any “sterile hunger for knowledge” that they may have and “not to foster the search for curiosities” (Ossanna, 2003:133).

Learning and holiness are the two hinges of the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition. At the beginning of his mission, Francis thought that books and learning¹¹⁰ only hindered the spiritual path to a relationship with our Lord, but he came to realise that the more intellectual Brothers needed the stimulation of 'book-learning'. Similar to other Orders, Francis particularly emphasised the dangers of pride in connection with knowledge and learning; he demanded primacy of faith rather than knowledge. However, in a letter to St. Anthony of Padua, Francis wrote: "I am pleased that you teach sacred theology to the brothers providing that, as is contained in the Rule, you 'do not extinguish the Spirit of prayer and devotion' during study of this kind" (Francis of Assisi, 1999s:107). Francis wanted what the Brothers had learned to be experiential to them. The Christian message is not limited to its material content, rather it needs to be the result of encountering Jesus. Franciscan theology is not merely a theology of ideas, but it is a vital force, a response, a quest and an experience derived from knowing Jesus. For this, Francis demands in each teacher or preacher a spirit of prayer and dedication. The Franciscan Intellectual contribution to the theology of Franciscan Formation is therefore of extreme importance. Those who led this Intellectual Tradition were called 'Masters'. The following Masters were the most important with regard to Formation material: Anthony of Padua, Julian of Speyer, Henri d'Avranches, Alexander of Hales, and Bonaventure.

Anthony of Padua (1195-1231) is a good illustration of Francis's attitude to learning because he readily accepted him to teach the brothers [see above]. Anthony's conversion was so deep that he was humbled to the extent that he mentioned nothing about his qualifications; in fact we are told that "he asked to be given, 'the first rudiments of spiritual formation'" (Temperini, 2002:292). Anthony's preaching had a

¹¹⁰ "in the *Fioretti*, 8, Francis says to Brother Leo that perfect joy for a Minor does not consist in knowing all The languages and all the sciences and Scripture...Even if a Friar Minor could speak with the voice of an Angel, and knew the course of the stars and the powers of herbs, and knew all about the treasures in the earth, and if he knew the qualities of birds and fishes, animals and humans, roots, trees, rocks and waters... Certainly, this text is less an attack on knowledge than a call to joy, 'in the cross of tribulation and affection'" (Le Goff, 2004:116, citing Habig, 1987:1318-1319). This reveals Francis's profound understanding of seeking true and perfect knowledge through the experiences of sorrows and sufferings.

profound effect on his hearers and many followed this Master's call to penitence in following Francis, who was sometimes called 'The Penitent of Assisi'. 'Life of St. Anthony'¹¹¹ explains that: "His preaching, seasoned with the salt of grace, conferred abundant divine grace on his listeners" (Gamboso, 1984:13). Anthony had the great gift of teaching in stories and parables which meant, "Men from every condition, class and age rejoiced to receive from him teachings appropriate for their lives" (Gamboso, 1984:14). Anthony showed that penitence was an on-going and dynamic state enabling people to follow their baptismal vows and come to salvation.

Anthony's preaching and teaching led in future years to the 'Intellectual Tradition' which has pervaded Franciscan history. The early leaders of this movement were **Julian of Speyer** who composed the '*Officium Rhythmicum S. Francisci*' (1231/32), most probably the first pedagogy on Franciscan liturgical music. Another early writer, despite not being a Franciscan, was **Henri d'Avranches** (d. 1260) who wrote Franciscan inspired poetry in 14 books entitled '*Legenda Versificata S. Francisci*' in 1232/34.

Alexander of Hales (d. 1245) was a great intellect of his time, his most valued work being '*Summa Universæ Theologiæ*'.¹¹² Alexander was a renowned teacher whose importance for the history of theology and philosophy is that he was the first to attempt a systematic exposition of Catholic doctrine. He was the first to use 'The Four Books of Sentences' by Peter Lombard as the basic text for his lectures rather than texts directly from the Bible.¹¹³ He joined the Franciscans in 1236 and was permitted to keep his chair in Paris. The Franciscans continued to fill this chair throughout the medieval period and this could be the reason he is considered to be the founder of Franciscan theology.

¹¹¹ For more details of St. Anthony of Padua's life and works see Gamboso, 1984.

¹¹² His *Summa* was only begun by him and completed by William of Melitona and there are various other added pieces.

¹¹³ Written c.1250 they are named after *sententiæ*, being the authoritative passages from the Bible that it gathered together.

Alexander's '*Summa*' is divided into four parts: the first attempts to express in theological terms God the Trinity etc; the second is about creatures, sin etc.; the third is regarding Christ, redemption, and supernatural law; and the fourth has to do with the Sacraments. Each part is divided into Questions, each Question into Members and each Member into Articles. The method is similar to that employed by Abelard in his 'Yea' and 'Nay', and St. Thomas Aquinas's readers would have been familiar with this style. Alexander's '*Summa Universæ Theologiæ*' opens with a recital of the objections, then, follows the thesis, with proofs, scriptural, patristic, and rationale references to end under the title '*Resolutio*' when the answers are given to the objections.

Alexander was a man of intellect. His Franciscan ideals enabled him to follow St. Francis in his love of God and his creation as a means towards understanding humanity and achieving holiness and spiritual perfection.

These Franciscan theologians are the foundation stone for the 'Franciscan Intellectual Tradition' and their theology is a great influence on Franciscan Formation today. Bonaventure warrants a separate sub-section due to his theological and spiritual contribution to the Franciscan movement and in particular the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition.

4.5 BONAVENTURE (1221-1274)

Formation is a continual and constant updating of the process of growing into a holistic individual which enriches all of a person's life. Franciscans have an Intellectual Tradition enabling this process of Formation to be developed through the formative contributions of the past and in each individual's life. This can be more fully understood by examining the Intellectual Tradition through Bonaventure's approach to the formation of each person's intellectual journey. At the start of the '*Itinerarium*',¹¹⁴ Bonaventure

¹¹⁴ "In this work, Bonaventure shows the soul's spiritual progress in steps. Intellectual contemplation, whose immediate objects may be the sensible world or the interior world of the soul, and always refers to God as a source from which all rays of light diverge and converge. By allowing itself to be guided by these smaller lights, multiple and multi-coloured, the soul rises to the shining noon-day

shows the reader a vision of peace and contemplation. Bonaventure sees this as the goal of the fully integrated life. This life has both educational goals and personal integrity. He understands that the life of learning and theoretical speculation, as well as of scientific research and reflection on human experience and of contemplation and illumination creates this intellectual journey. It is through this life that one can achieve enlightenment and personal development. At the very heart of Bonaventure's vision is his conviction that the life of the mind is to be fully integrated with the nature of the person, "the mirror of the external world put before them is of little or no avail unless the mirror of our soul has been cleansed and polished" (Nguyen Van Si, 1995:330). Bonaventure sees the intellectual life as refreshing the spirit and thus ennobling all activities. The journey begins with a joyous and positive spirit, "anointed with the oil of gladness" (Bonaventure, of Bagnoregio, 1978:56 quoting from Psalm 45:7, parts of this paragraph are adapted from: The Intellectual Journey).

Bonaventure wrote many influential and inspiring theological and contemplative works. His spiritual theology fully exposes Francis's inner life and provides a Franciscan vision of a spiritual formative journey. Bonaventure's work entitled 'The Soul's Journey into God' illustrates the true spirit of Francis and, "Bonaventure claims that one can enter on this journey only through Christ Crucified" (Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, 1978:21). This is the symbolic meaning of the crucified Seraph in Francis's vision. Bonaventure sees that "Christ Crucified is the gateway, the door" (Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, 1978:22), consequently Bonaventure illustrates the Franciscan vision of a formative journey in seven visions which are similar to the seven stages in 'The Soul's Journey into God'. The seventh being the climax and is the vision of the six-winged Seraph and the stigmata (Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, 1978:22). This Bonaventure uses to illustrate to

sun, the cross, the way and the door, the ladder and the vehicle, in order to attain all mysteries hidden since the foundation of the world. When the soul reaches the summit, stripped of all sensible things, it is ineffably united with the Truth; it enters with Christ crucified into the silence of the senses that marks the passage of Jesus to his Father. The contemplative soul transcends the sensible world, and in transcending this world it transcends itself; this is what Bonaventure calls luminous darkness, wise unknowing, rapture, ecstatic knowledge, etc. The soul in search of truth must enter into darkness with Christ crucified, in order to pass with him into endless light" (see Nguyen Van Si, 1997:119).

the reader that Francis has reached the highest stage in his spiritual process of formation.

Bonaventure's seven-fold properties in his 'The Soul's Journey into God' explains his belief that creatures, "offer a seven-fold witness to the power, wisdom and goodness of God" (Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, 2003:57). He sees the seven as: origin, greatness, multitude, beauty, fullness, activity and the order of all things (Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, 2003:57). All of these are required for Franciscan Formation.

In his 'The Major Life of Saint Francis', Bonaventure ordered three stages of spiritual life: purgation, illumination and perfection or the unitive way. The first two chapters correspond to the purgative way, (Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, 2000a:530-549) chapters three to twelve to the illuminative way (Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, 2000a: 550-629) and chapters thirteen to fifteen the unitive way (Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, 2000a:630-649). It is this order that is developed in the pattern below:

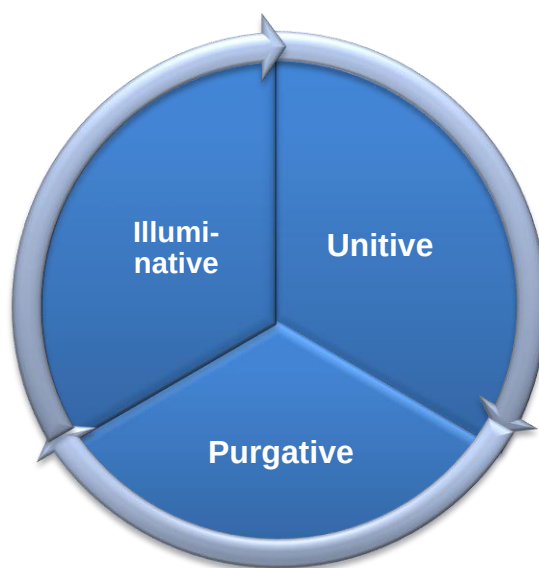


Diagram 4.1: Bonaventure's three stages for spiritual formation

It is a three-fold method for Franciscan Formation which can also be derived from an exposition of 'The Soul's Journey into God'. Bonaventure discusses in this treatise a person's journey in the three ways stated above. This could be a process by which a person is able to go through the formative stages to attain perfection or integration of a person's life through God (unitive).

It has already been explained that Formation is a process by which Franciscans are called to attain the Franciscan vocation and its maturity. In this maturing of the call, the formation process entails these three dynamic spiritual processes proposed by St. Bonaventure; and so, go through a stage of conversion (purification). It is a stage in which the person discovers the call of God and makes a heartfelt choice to follow the Lord with heart, mind and soul, as well as a way of letting go and letting God into all aspects of life. In this process of recognising the call of God, the journey is one embarked upon to understand the call as a gift from the Lord, as well as making a decision to follow the Lord's demands through mission, and finally staying with that decision to serve the Lord. This "active service-in-return" (van den Goorbergh & Zweerman, 2001:121) is, then, created when the two elements of 'letting-go' and the acknowledgement of God as the giver meet and are intertwined. The three key words in Francis's spirituality are 'vulnerability', 'frailty' and 'dependency'; with these Francis turned this precarious condition towards 'the other' into freedom. This is entirely biblical in which serving humility is the companion to cheerful freedom: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Mt. 5:3) and "Rejoice and be glad, for great is your reward in heaven" (Mt. 5:12a).

The three-fold way can, therefore, be applied to the call and be a response to Franciscan vocation and the formation method for an integrated spiritual life. Purgative, illuminative and unitive are considered to be the spiritual exercises for the process of meditation, prayer and contemplation. The perfection to which humankind is able to attain implies these three elements which Bonaventure advocates as the three steps to spiritual perfection through purification (purgative). It leads to peace and the expulsion of sin. Illumination leads to truth and the imitation of Christ. Perfection leads to love,

union with the Spouse. According to Bonaventure, sin is disorder and the source of disorder. It is by constantly expelling it that peace can be established. Truth is the second element of perfection. People can never possess it unless they can do so by having Christ as their model by the grace of God. The only way to acquire truth is through the imitation of Christ. The illuminative way is acquired through both the search for truth and the effort to be good (see Bonnefoy, 2002:10).¹¹⁵ These three steps can be considered as the Franciscan spiritual theology for formative guidance to meditation, prayer and contemplation. Bonaventure understands meditation as “merely thoughtful reading: affective dispositions enter only as a means. All the powers of the soul take part in meditation, but four of them particularly: reason, synderesis, conscience, and will” (Bougerol, 1964:159-160).

Bonaventure borrowed Pseudo-Dionysian terminology but modified it. Whereas Pseudo-Dionysius had the understanding of a stairway moving from one step up to the next. This leads to three goals: “Bonaventure saw in St. Francis what this experience is: it is the experience of a very humble, very realistic journey, day by day, it is walking with Christ, accepting his cross” (Pope Benedict XVI, 2008b)).¹¹⁶ However, Bonaventure forms this triple way into a single formation for a Franciscan methodology of spiritual synthesis- (these, in more detail, are):

The **Purgative Way** (see Bougerol, 1964:22 and see above) consists of the expulsion of sin by a process of conversion. It calls forth self-examination and thereby the purification of love. In the Religious Life this is essential and for Franciscans it is one of the most important components for the process of growing into and understanding Franciscan vocation and Franciscan Formation of the spiritual life.

¹¹⁵ This article illustrates the triple way of the theology of Bonaventure and offers an insight to a Franciscan theological formation for spiritual life. Bonaventure considers the triple way as a part of the same spiritual process to be used to advance spiritual perfection. Bonaventure’s steps to spiritual perfection are a necessity for Franciscans today, in order for them to nourish the spiritual yearning of the Franciscan fire.

¹¹⁶ These three steps remind one of the Terrestrial, Telestial and Celestial degrees with which the Church of the Latter-Day Saints divides its followers. However, see I Cor. 7:20 – “Everyone should remain in the state in which he was called.”

The Purgative Stage is a form of conversion which entails hearing a call and responding to that call by means of serving the Lord. Purgation is a process of identifying that which is opposed to giving oneself totally to God and eliminating all else from self. As the word suggests, it is a purgatory of reflection and prayer by which one is rid of all that speaks of self as opposed to the 'Other'. This is the beginning of spiritual growth and can be applied as Initial Formation to Franciscan life and mission. At Spoleto St. Francis heard the question in a vision: "Who can do more for you, the servant or the lord?" (Thomas of Celano, 2000:245). He then returned to Assisi. In his search for the Master, Francis encounters him before the San Damiano Crucifix which deepens his resolve to repair the life of the Church. Finally, Francis leaves the world by separating himself from his earthly father; in this he confirms his desire to serve his true Father and Master. In Initial Formation this same process takes place in the life of each Franciscan Brother or Sister. This is a quest to fulfil the deepest search for God. Franciscan Formation calls for a constant renewal and re-formation of self under the divine initial invitation to change and respond to serve the Lord.

The **Illuminative Way** (see Bougerol, 1964:23) consists of imitating Christ which includes a deepening of prayerful theological study and reflection as a means to learning through holiness. This is the means of following the Lord in his teaching and obeying his commands by doing the will of him who has called people. Subsequently, Scripture becomes a pathway to illuminate the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition and thereby, in Bonaventure's words, "we can conclude that all creatures in this world of sensible realities lead the spirit of the contemplative and wise person to the eternal God" (Bougerol, 1964:77). This illuminative process of Franciscan Formation is directed towards a transforming grace.

The **Unitive Way** (see Bougerol, 1964:23-24) consists of being in union with Christ (the Spouse) and is adapting a process of perfecting and integrating the call to Franciscan life. It is a continual deepening of a relationship with the Spouse and entering into a deep and lasting relationship with the mystery of Christ. This means embracing the reality of Christ by entering these mysteries as a personal and profound commitment.

Thus, the Unitive nature of Franciscan Formation is a 'Christification' or identification with Christ, where Christ becomes the source and model of being formed. Francis's stigmata were an identification with Christ from deep within, a sign of his full conversion from a man of war to a man of peace. Accordingly, Francis sets an example that Franciscan Formation is life-long process to be in the likeness of Christ. In order to engage in the process of Formation, Christ's mysteries are to become part of a formee, therefore, to being ennobled and empowered to make visible 'Christ-likeness'.

Each of these ways begins at the lowest level which is an essential element in Bonaventure's spiritual theology. Thus, Bonaventure's three stages could be seen as on-going: beginning, progressing and perfecting. This is the meaning of engaging with Franciscan Formation and the end is predicted only in the 'process of becoming'. In 'The Soul's Journey into God' Bonaventure invites Franciscans to begin their spiritual journey from where and from whom they are. His argument is a movement from created to 'uncreated'; from earthly to heavenly and from human to divine. Religious Formation is the way in which this is all brought about; to attain the sense of fullness. This fullness is reached from the recognition of the visible or sensible to the invisible or that which is not sensed in a physical way ('unsensed'). Therefore, Franciscan Formation begins with Human Formation which is existential. St. Francis's place in this Formation is as an exemplar saint who can be seen as feeling and tasting and creating a partnership with God in order to reach the highest plain.

Another important Formative document of St. Bonaventure is his sermon '*Christus Unus Omnium Magister*'. Asello Guzman writes about this sermon:

'Learn from me,' Christ said. St. Bonaventure's most famous sermon, *Christus Unus Omnium Magister*, is about how our Lord is the One Teacher of All — the exemplar of all Teachers, the one from whom we all can learn in order to be united with the Trinity forever (Guzman, 2010).

In this work, Bonaventure gives a theological and biblical guide to Spiritual Franciscan Formation. Therefore, it can be seen as a formative guide for Franciscan Formation. He illustrates in this sermon that Christ is the Master. He proposes the three-fold path

to accept the Primacy of Christ in Intellectual Formation. Bonaventure accentuates the importance of Christ in the cognitive process of the illumination of the mind and as the Master of contemplation. Bonaventure defines Jesus in his 'Morning Sermon IV: section 20' thus:

He as the principal Master is principally to be honored (*sic.*)...as there is attributed to him the dignity of the Magisterium, Matthew, chapter 23:11 [*sic.* should be 23:10], do not be called Rabbi; for one is your Master, but all you are brothers. Moreover, He wanted to reserve the dignity of the Magisterium to Himself, according to that (verse) in John, chapter 13:12 you call me, Master and Lord; and well you say it, for indeed I am. (See also Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, 2000b:747-758).

Hence, Bonaventure proposes three fundamental steps of learning in the 'School of Wisdom', especially to illuminate the spiritual life. Jesus illuminates the disciples and slowly the true disciples of Christ conform to the Master. Hence, Franciscan Formation is growing into Christ's life and action. Christ is the true basis of Franciscan evangelical life. He is the reason and source through which the person progresses in Christian life and Formation. The diagram this writer has designed below shows these steps as means of philosophical and theological integration in the wisdom and knowledge of Jesus.

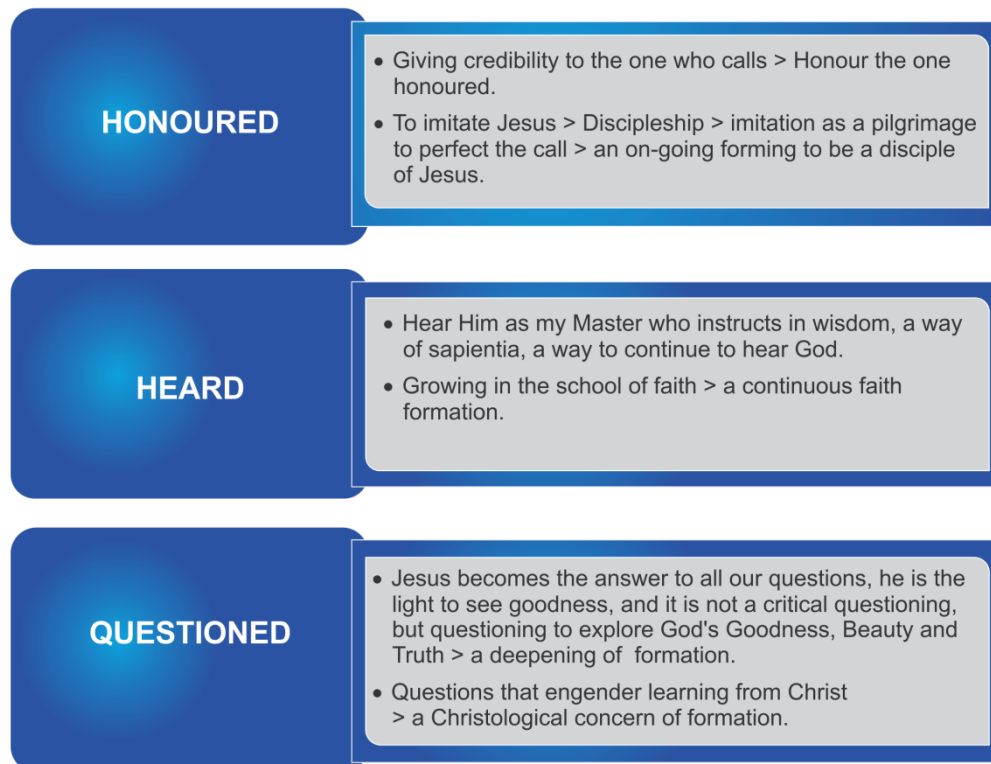


Diagram 4.2: Christological paths for perfecting discipleship

Bonaventure argues that Jesus is to be honoured. He explains this more fully in his Sermon IV entitled 'Christ, The One Master Of (*sic.*) All': "Therefore, He as the principal Master is principally to be honored (*sic.*), as there is to be attributed to him the Magisterium...If I, therefore, wash your feet etc.; because, as is said in Luke, chapter 14:13: He who comes not after Me cannot be My disciple." Bonaventure continues: "He is honoured, moreover, not only with words [*vocaliter sic.*] in speech, but also really in imitation" (Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, Sermon IV: section 20). This argument of Bonaventure's to honour Jesus by imitation, is fundamental to the Religious Call and Formation. It is illustrated in Bonaventure's 'Morning Sermon on Saint Francis' (Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, 2000b:508-516) in which he uses St. Francis as the exemplar through which a person is able to follow Christ's example. The examples he uses are freeing a formee from useless cares and to be Christ-like by despising all

possessions and giving away all or selling them and giving the proceeds to the poor; to be separated from worldly company and to embrace the path of conversion by stepping out of sin and evil; to leave family and other natural attachments;¹¹⁷ to purify the heart by means of virtuous practices. Finally, St. Francis instructs his Brothers to be perfect disciples of Christ. This is the essence of Francis's practical Christology which Bonaventure explains as Francis the 'Master Formator'.¹¹⁸

Francis educates his Brothers to a new form of teaching insofar that if one is a true disciple then one is an authentic teacher. This can be put into four categories: first, Francis taught what he learned without error because of the truth of God's revelation. Bonaventure gives account of this by stating that St. Francis learned his teaching in the same way as Jesus. Indeed, one may well wonder at his teaching. How was he able to teach others what no human had taught him? Bonaventure concludes "by becoming a true disciple, he became an authentic teacher" (Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, 2000b:511). Second, he taught what he had learned without guile due to his fervent love, and also, he loved what he learned (Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, 2000b:512). Third, he taught what he had learned without forgetting it. This is because he put it into practice and so Bonaventure states that Francis was an excellent teacher; and lastly, he taught what he had learned without doubting because of the trustworthy signs he was given. Bonaventure continues by stating that "Francis would never have dared to teach or write down other than what he received from the Lord" (Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, 2000b:513). The above sums up Franciscan Formation and the training required for Formators.

It is also clear that Franciscans should learn from the Lord and be authentic and truthful in communicating the revelation of God through first hearing Jesus who is principally heard through the humility of faith. The writer of Isaiah states: "The Sovereign Lord has

¹¹⁷ This relates to the three biblical references that Francis looked at with Brother Bernard: Mt. 16:24; 19:21; Lk. 9:3 (see section 4.2).

¹¹⁸ This term is used here to express the underlying meaning behind Bonaventure's theological understanding of St. Francis (cf. Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, 2000b:516).

given me an instructed tongue, to know the word that sustains the weary” (Is. 50:4). This text is used by Thomas of Celano (1999:269). Nguyen van Si explains in his writings on the ‘Theology of the Imitation of Christ’ that according to St. Bonaventure:

The Disciple of Christ, in humility and faith, must always be attentive to the Master’s teaching. But we are true listeners of Jesus only when we do not separate understanding of the Word from the obedient witness of our actions, for Christ teaches not only by word, but also by example. We cannot attain wisdom solely by listening; but we must obey divine law (Nguyen van Si, 1997:91).

Nguyen van Si, however, does not take into account that in the Hebrew Bible the creative commandment is *Shema, Israel* (Hear O Israel), from Deut. 6:4, “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one Lord.” In the New Testament, the command is “Listen to him!” (Lk.9:35b).

Second, he is also principally to be questioned through the desire of learning, not as the curious and the incredulous did, who interrogated him by tempting him by asking for a sign (for example Mt. 12:38). Bonaventure states that:

the disciple should question the Teacher, not out of curiosity or unbelief like the Pharisees and Doctors of the Law who wanted signs (see Mt.12:38-39) but rather like Nicodemus, who despite his age and his learning came to see Jesus at night to receive from him words of light and life (see Jn.3:2). It is through love that the true disciple of Christ is conformed to the Master. Love is the crown of all imitation of Christ (Nguyen van Si, 1997:91).

Bonaventure expounds his ideas regarding the qualities of exemplary disciples for a formative discipline of Franciscan Formation in his ‘The Evening Sermon on Saint Francis’ (Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, 2000c: 517-524) with the text of “Learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls” (Mt. 11:29). Bonaventure draws two possible lessons for the followers of Francis: first take Francis as the model of discipleship and secondly embrace his teaching. Bonaventure often preached on vocation to the Franciscan movement, as well as to adhere to the teachings of ‘Seraphic Father Francis’.

4.6 ASCETICISM IN FRANCISCAN FORMATION

The Oxford English Dictionary defines 'ascetism' as "extremely rigorous self-discipline... pertaining to the spiritual; exercises by which perfection and virtue may be attained, as in Ascetical theology" (The Compact Edition of The Oxford English Dictionary, 1979:120). Classically, 'ascetical theology' has been defined as the branch of theology dealing with the ordinary means of Christian perfection, e.g., the self-disciplined renunciation of personal desires, the imitation of Christ, and the pursuit of charity. On this level it has been distinguished since the 17th century from 'moral theology' (dealing with those duties essential for salvation) and 'mystical theology' (dealing with the extraordinary grace of God, leading to infused contemplation and is thus a passive reception rather than an active pursuit). The borderline between moral and ascetical theology is hazy at best, while the distinction between them is sometimes denied altogether (see Anon., 1997c:113-114 and Anon., 1997d:1532-1533, also Wimbush, 2000:45-46). Wimbush concludes in his article in 'The Oxford Companion to Christian Thought':

Over the course of Christian history...it was assumed that Christian existence required some sort of expression of the ascetic...For most of Christian history, the battle about ascetism has been not whether Christian piety should be associated with it, but about the type, intensity of expression, and meaning of the ascetic that is appropriate or required (Wimbush, 2000:46).

This fact becomes particularly clear when ascetical theology is divided into the Purgative, Illuminative, and Unitive ways. The Purgative way stresses the cleansing of the soul from all serious sin. The Illuminative way is the practice of positive Christian virtue and remains the central focus for continued on-going formation. The Unitive way focuses on union with God which could contain mystical theology. This three-fold division of ascetical theology has been firmly established since Thomas Aquinas, although its roots can be traced to Augustine and earlier. Bonaventure highlights these stages in his illustration in 'The Major Legend of Saint Francis' (see Ascetical Theology and Mutz, 1912). Hence, ascetical theology is the basis for the process of Christian discipline and the spiritual life. For the Franciscan, it guides a full understanding to the

process of discipleship as growing and developing into the pattern of Christ. It is a way of comprehending the path for Christian perfection through the natural process of dying and rising to new life. There are “two sides to Christian ascetism, the negative one of self-denial, and the positive one of the following of Christ” (Anon., 1997c:113). The practice of self-abnegation can be found frequently in the gospels (e.g., Mt. 10:38ff and Jn.12:25). This will involve watchfulness (e.g., Mt. 24:42 and 25:13 etc.) and fasting (e.g., Mt. 6:16-18 and Mk. 2:18-22). It often all leads to a renunciation of all earthly possessions (e.g., Mt. 19:21; Mk. 10:28; Lk. 9:57-62 and perpetual chastity (Mt. 19:12).¹¹⁹

Ascetical Formation is essential and central to Franciscans because Francis’s life, growth and holiness are based on his humanity which embraces the struggles within humankind. Ascetical theology allows the whole Formation process to be integrated and balanced, and thus, human, and Christian perfection can be intertwined and lived out more fully.

David of Augsburg¹²⁰ was also for many years Master of Novices at Regensburg where he wrote his ‘*De Exteroris et Interioris Hominis Compaositione*’. The book was dedicated to Berthold of Regensburg (later to become a famous preacher) and his fellow novices. He portrays the novice in his outward behaviour, in his relationship with his Superiors and Brothers in the choir, at table, in the dormitory, at work, in receiving the sacraments, in going outside the house, etc. He, then, deals with the process of strengthening the inner man through ascetic struggle, the imitation of Christ, the cultivation of virtue and the journey up the road of prayer to the height of mystical contemplation.

¹¹⁹ For further information see Anon., 1997c and d.

¹²⁰ David of Augsburg was a Medieval German mystic, born probably at Augsburg, Bavaria, early in the 13th century and died at Augsburg, 19th November 1272. He entered the Franciscan Order probably at Ratisbon, where a monastery of this Order was in existence as early as 1226; the Franciscan Monastery at Augsburg was not erected until 1243. At Ratisbon, David filled the position of Master of Novices and wrote for the spiritual benefit of the latter his celebrated *Formula Novitiorum* (see David of Augsburg).

David of Augsburg wrote in his '*Formula Novitorum*':

Bonaventure similarly wrote a treatise called *Regula Novitorum* in 1259/60, for an essentially practical purpose. Its aim was also to make the Novitiate a progressive task of outward and inward reform, instructing the young down to the last practical detail of how to pray, confess, and take communion, how to behave in the refectory, in the dormitory and in community service. Also included was the behaviour in their dealings with others, in the struggle against temptation and in the practice of poverty. Bonaventure states that "bodily austerities 'prepare, foster, and preserve perfection'" (Ascetical theology).

However, the manual *par excellence* for the training of Novices, officially accepted as the discipline for several centuries, was the *Speculum*. It is generally attributed to Bonaventure, but in fact it is the work of his disciple and collaborator Bernard of Bessa (d.1300). As the title indicates, the content is concerned exclusively with reflecting discipline; the aim of the whole book is to mould the Religious according to an ideal model of claustral discipline, not only in physical and spiritual behaviour, but in the most elementary rules of courtesy and cleanliness. The purpose above all is to prepare the novice for living in a community by instilling in him the ascetic and natural virtues which make his life conventional.

In the modern world, this is especially relevant as an integral programme of formation. It is important as a daily and personal asceticism that leads candidates, novices, and professed to the exercise of the virtues of faith, hope, charity, prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude. It is always contemporary and always necessary. In addition, Christians have the need for guidance, which can assist them in the 'Way of the Cross', requiring role models who understand the love of God and his values. The Kingdom of God is shown by Religious Life, "to surpass all things that are here below" (Directives on Formation in Religious Institute, 1999). During the course of Franciscan Formation, time is given to teach reflection upon the Christian meaning of asceticism and its penitential aspects; that will also include sound convictions about God and his

relationship with the world. It is therefore necessary to avoid a blissful and naturalistic optimism on the one hand, and a pessimism oblivious to the mystery of Christ, Creator and Redeemer of the world, on the other. Francis's understanding of creation was all-inclusive in accepting the good which he saw as God-given (see Francis of Assisi, 1999d:85) and the bad that humankind does to and in God's world (see Francis of Assisi, 1999d:97).

Humans are always in a position of learning and advancing in their lives. The pedagogy used in the Formation of Religious is to help them to be enthusiastic for a life that demands effort and pain. Asceticism is inherent in the Religious Life and among other elements calls for an initiation into silence and solitude; this is true also for Institutes dedicated to the Apostolate. They are to faithfully comply "with the basic law of all spiritual life, which consists in arranging a proper balance of periods set aside for solitude with God and others, devoted to various activities and to the human contacts which these involve" (Directives on Formation in Religious Institute, 1999). Solitude, if it is freely assumed, leads to interior silence, inviting material silence. The regulation of every Religious Community, not only of Formation Houses, is to provide times and places of solitude and silence; this fosters hearing and assimilating the Word of God, and at the same time, developing a spiritual maturity in Christ.

4.7 PRACTICALITIES OF FRANCIS'S THEOLOGY

Francis's theology was experiential and to him it was always simple as well as being essential to his life. Later Franciscan 'Masters of Theology' examined more closely what Francis had said and written, realising the depth of his intuitive theological understanding. This led to the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition which we are re-discovering today. The consequences of this have produced much research and many books. However, Francis had a very direct understanding of God and the gospel message of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit.

Francis was a practical man whose primary aspect of life and mission was that of a penitent. It is therefore important to look at the practical application of his message as well as the Franciscan Masters when examining Formation for today.

4.8 PENITENTIAL AND CONVERSION DYNAMIC OF FRANCISCAN FORMATION

The first Franciscan Master who expounded and taught penitents after Francis was St. Anthony of Padua. He understood penance as safeguarding health; as a medicine immunising the body against the dangers of corruption and invigorating defences. He also saw penance as nourishment and *viaticum*;¹²¹ the bread of penitence nourishes and strengthens and the Holy Spirit transforms penitence into the *viaticum* of our mortal condition (see Temperini, 2002:301).

St. Francis states at the very beginning of 'The Testament', that it is necessary "to begin doing penance" (Francis of Assisi, 1999a:124). His radical response to God's initiative is in terms of service to one's neighbour. '*Facere poenitentiam*' (doing penance) turns out to be *facere misericordiam* (showing mercy). This is exemplified most clearly in the last words by the lawyer in the Parable of the Good Samaritan: "'The one who showed mercy on him.' And Jesus said to him, 'Go and do likewise.'" (Lk. 10:37). In the interpretation of St. Augustine and others, the Good Samaritan stands for Christ who makes himself the neighbour to the half-dead man by the roadside. It is this that Francis wants to imitate in following Christ Jesus. For Francis, doing penance, is then, a way of un-learning and learning anew, of ridding oneself of old habits and taking-up new ones. St. Francis calls this, 'leaving the world'. He stated early in 'The Testament', "I left the world" (Francis of Assisi, 1999a:124). This is medieval parlance for dedicating one's life to God. Francis understood penance as paired with faith. This he clearly showed in 'The Earlier Rule', "to preserve the true faith and in penance" (Francis of Assisi, 1999d:84). Francis, due to his poor health, understood that penance goes hand-

¹²¹ *Viaticum* is a term used particularly in the Catholic Church for administering Holy Communion usually to the sick and dying.

in-hand with patience. He explains in 'The Earlier Rule': "I beg the sick brother to thank God for everything and to desire to be whatever the Lord will, whether sick or well, because God teaches all those He has destined for eternal life by the torments of punishments, sicknesses, and the spirit of sorrow, as the Lord says: those whom I love, I correct and chastise" (Francis of Assisi, 1999b:71-72).

There are direct references in 'The Canticle of the Creatures', "Praised be You, my Lord through those who give pardon for Your love, and bear infirmity and tribulation. Blessed are those who endure in peace for by You, Most High, shall they be crowned" (Francis of Assisi, 1999c:114). Just as in Hebrews 6:12, the twin concepts of faith and penance are changed into faith and patience; Francis makes the same change in 'The Canticle of the Creatures'. In 'The Testament' of Francis, after he "showed mercy" (Francis of Assisi, 1999a:124) on lepers, he recognised God's initiative in the bestowal of mercy in "penance" (Francis of Assisi, 1999a:124). Francis gave God his trust and, in this way, he was able to sustain his faith. Throughout Francis's writings, he links conversion with praising¹²² and penance, and bearing suffering with patience. Bearing suffering with patience is well depicted by Francis in 'True and Perfect Joy'. Francis returned from Perugia to Portiuncula on a cold night. The brothers did not welcome him, but rather reject him and demand him to go away. Francis replied, "I tell you this: If I had patience and did not become upset, true joy, as well as true virtue and the salvation of my soul, would consist in this" (Francis of Assisi, 1999r:167).

Francis understood penance, not in a negative way, but rather as patiently bearing-up with troubles and difficulties throughout life, by which a friar develops an "openness to grow, to be shaped and formed" (Magee, 2007:149) as an imitation of Christ (for this whole concept in Francis's writings see Francis of Assisi, 1999r:166-167). Francis is always practical and so there can be no mysticism without caring responsibility, no trusting intimacy with God without 'penance-in-service.' Francis stresses that the

¹²² Francis often praised God in French (his mother's tongue) and praised God during his conversion experience whilst repairing the church at San Damiano (see le Goff, 2004:23 and Francis of Assisi, 1999d:85).

vocation of the brothers is to “follow in the footprints of Our Lord Jesus Christ” (Francis of Assisi, 199b:64). It is not realised in the ministerial successes or accomplishments of the brothers, or in the recognition given to the importance of the contributions of the Lesser Brothers to the Church, but in living and accepting the logic of the cross.

It is through his experiences that Francis discovers his mission. His plans fail and he faces his own brokenness in a dilapidated church. He is led among the lepers. There is conflict with his father. So, Franciscan Formation will, therefore, always be experience-orientated, that is starting with concrete experiences, or making such experiences possible, accompanying and most of all interpreting them; conversion is essentially a matter of a personal encounter.

The fact that Francis in ‘The Testament’ mentions only the encounter with the leper shows that, next to the experiences in Church and society, the relationship with the poor, the excluded and the marginalized are to be given special concern and priority. His encounter with the leper is regarded by many commentators as seminal. That one incident was a profound clarification of what ‘the imitation of Christ’ essentially means to Franciscans.

The ‘Way of Conversion’ for Francis is marked by tensions; he seeks solitude, and yet experiences transformation in the encounter. Through separation from his father, he makes a clear break and yet his way is marked by a clear continuity in which what is already there grows and matures. He discovers his way in what is foreign to him, in the Word of the Gospel that comes from outside. It is precisely in this, that he comes into contact with his deepest self; he leaves the world, and yet returns to it transformed. Franciscan Formation will then make sense of the call of God to the individual.

The ‘Way of Francis’ is a Way from ‘No’ to ‘Yes’. First comes the ‘No’: not becoming a knight, not going to war, not taking over his father’s business, not joining an existing Religious Community. From all of this comes the ‘Yes’; an acknowledgement of what is

required. The 'No' is important, but nobody can live by the 'No'. A successful life needs a generous 'Yes'. Franciscan Formation is bound to be a way from the 'No' to the 'Yes'.

Francis's search for his own identity starts at the very beginning, but out of this developed a life for others and for God. It is exemplified very beautifully in a comparison between his first prayer with one of his last prayers. Before the Cross of San Damiano, he prays for enlightenment and faith, hope and charity (love) for himself, so that he may recognise his way (see Francis of Assisi, 1999t:40). However, when he writes 'The Praises of God' at La Verna, he writes 'You' (Francis of Assisi, 1999e:109), as he also does on the reverse side of the same parchment when he writes 'A Blessing for Brother Leo' (Francis of Assisi, 1999u:112). Franciscan Formation is a way from 'I' to 'You'.

'The Way of Conversion' for Francis is a way from the dream (see Thomas of Celano, 2000:245) and from acting; "the acting as a beggar" in Rome (Anon., 2000a:73) to reality. When, at the end, wounded by Christ, he dies naked on the bare ground, he has finally reached the ground of reality, the very 'ground of his being', that is God (see Robinson, 1963 and Tillich, 1953: chapter 10). Formation is discovering the heart of one's existence, God.

Franciscan Formation is, on the human level, a way to recognise and discover the answer to the question, 'Who am I?' and it is a journey into the radical reality of 'me', and my existence before God. Nonetheless, Franciscan Formation will lead ever more deeply into the reality of God, humankind and the world. In their spiritual Formation, Franciscans should be able to engage in a lengthy maturation (a way of being formed daily) associated with concrete external commitments to discover the constant process of conversion that transforms and enlightens the process of Formation. It is a way in which a Franciscan becomes whom they are called to be. Franciscan Formation therefore is a continual search "in submitting one's ego to the Gospel and being always receptive to God's will" (Aizpurua, 2003:91). Hence, leading a life of penance means to live a life in the light of the gospel.

CHAPTER 5:

FRANCISCAN FORMATION IS SCHOOLING IN THE GOSPEL

5.1 THE GOSPEL LIFE IN FORMATION

The gospel and living the gospel life meant everything to Francis. His life began in the gospel, he lived the gospel and ended his life in the gospel. In other words, the gospel transformed his whole life. He grew with the gospel; he consulted the gospel for everything and discerned the will of God according to the pattern of the gospel. According to Rotzetter, “Francis is an evangelical man” (Rotzetter *et al.*, 1994:52). This evangelical man used the gospel to live radically the message of Jesus Christ. Although Francis was not a theologian, he learnt to form his character through the deeds he did and his way of life. The goal and the vision of Franciscan gospel life are not external conformity, but internal conformity. Franciscan life therefore is not simply listening to the word, but it is actively putting the gospel into practice. Franciscan life is to be anchored in the gospel, which governs the life of every Franciscan. Hence, the call to be a Franciscan is a call of forming oneself into the essence of the holy gospel. Franciscan Formation is basically intended to find perfection through the inspiration of the gospel. Franciscan Formation’s aim is to form a deep intimacy with the Word of God and then to transmit the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Francis’s holy way of life began with “the fragrant words of my Lord” (Francis of Assisi, 1999p:45). The Rules for the brothers make the same claim, at the very beginning of ‘The Later Rule’ (1223): “The Rule and Life of the Lesser Brothers is this: to observe the holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Francis of Assisi, 1999L:99-106, see also Francis of Assisi, 1999d:81). In ‘A Letter Addressed to the Entire Order’, Francis’s “my words” are identified in the next sentence with the “voice of the Son of God” (Francis of Assisi, 1999n:116-117). On a more personal level, Francis explains in ‘The Testament’ that “the Most High himself revealed to me that I should live according to the pattern of the Holy Gospel” (Francis of Assisi, 1999a:125). Francis humbly expressed his conviction that these writings are simply transmitting the gospel, “pay attention to my words”

(Francis of Assisi, 1999n:116). Thus, Francis begins his life with the words of the gospel; his first brothers were admitted to the Order by consulting the words of Jesus. Francis instructs and forms his first brothers in the 'School of the Gospel' and uses this as a pattern for his way of life. This can be seen in his writings which are replete of quotations from Scripture¹²³ and justifies the claim that his message simply "transmits the Word of God" (Matura, 2004:118-119). Francis uses the Word of God as revealed to him and the Word for him is the "the Word of God" and he addresses them as "the most holy divine words" (Francis of Assisi, 1999a:125, see also Francis of Assisi, 1999n:119), "the words of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Francis of Assisi, 1999:46), "the words of the Holy "Spirit" (Francis of Assisi, 1999p:45), "the words of the holy Gospel" (Francis of Assisi, 1999L:100).

The famous dictum often attributed to Francis is aptly fitting: "Preach always, sometimes use words" (Saggau,2006: viii). Francis understood that gospel can be revealed in God's revelation to individuals leading to a change in their way of life. This, in turn, leads to mission and so, for Francis, the Word of God is the primary text for all preaching and teaching. The adjectives that describe the Word are: "most holy" (Francis of Assisi, 1999a:125), "most holy names" (Francis of Assisi, 1999v:52), "divine" (Francis of Assisi, 1999n:119) and the unusual "fragrant" (Francis of Assisi, 1999p:45). The word 'fragrant' means that it infiltrates and enhances the whole of a person's being and indicates the reason for Francis's reverence for the Word of God. Francis further deepens and expands that these words, proclaimed, written, transmitted and related are from his intuition. He, therefore, tries to give great impact to his inspiration and sets before his Brothers that his thoughts were rooted in the theology of the sacred Scriptures and he formulates a revelation-based formation that he received from the gospel.¹²⁴ "Francis used Scripture and integrated it into the development of his thought

¹²³ It is thought that Francis's Oral Rule of 1221 (of which there is no record) entirely consisted of biblical quotes (cf. Moorman, 1963:50).

¹²⁴ Francis varies in his use of Scripture, for example the 'Earlier Exhortation', 'A Letter to the Entire Order' and 'The Admonitions' (14 of the 28 Admonitions). These are full of biblical quotations; whereas 'The Canticle of the Creatures' (Francis of Assisi, 1999c:113-114) some of 'The

in original and varied ways, proving once more how familiar he was with Holy Writ” (Matura, 2004:16). Matura continues to explain that Francis “quotes Scripture explicitly and solemnly, using introductory phrases such as: ‘The Lord says..., The Lord commands..., According to the Gospel...’” (Matura, 2004:16). This illustrates Francis’s sudden revelations at particular times in his life (see Francis of Assisi, 1999a:125, also see section 3.1).

Francis’s understanding of the gospel was personal and not theological. He read the Bible in a straightforward uncomplicated way. The Religious Formation which Francis had received as a medieval layman was through the simplest, plainest reading of the gospel. Francis considered that the ‘letter’ of Scripture (Francis of Assisi, 1999m:132) was not complete unless it is understood in depth and practised by living out the radical following of the Lord’s counsels. *Propositum Vitae Evangelise*, after continual and constant assessment, was finally formalised and expressed in the Rule through a collection of values, experiences and norms. The Franciscan Rule was therefore a Rule of Life precisely because it codified an experience that had been lived and re-thought, together with a small core plan of life according to the Gospel of Jesus Christ (cf. Inter-Franciscan Commission, 1999:252). Franciscan Formation is always Scriptural because of the dynamic illustrations we have in the stories told about how God revealed to Francis that he should “live according to the pattern of the Holy Gospel” (Francis of Assisi, 1999a:125). The mandate of the Franciscan Life and Rule has one simple command, “to observe the Holy Gospel” (Francis of Assisi, 1999L:100). This is the primary call and it is the necessary framework to draw together the parameters for holy life. Francis was continuously formed as a disciple of Christ in the ‘School of the Gospel’. St. Bonaventure writes that Francis “had learned great things from the supreme Master” (Temperini, 1999:158). It was usual for him to zealously search for

Admonitions’ (Francis of Assisi, 1999m:128-137) and both ‘Exhortations to the Clergy (Later Edition)’ (Francis of Assisi, 1999w: 54-55) and ‘The First Letter to the Custodians’ (Francis of Assisi, 1999x: 56-57) contain none at all. There are only a few in ‘The Later Rule’ (Francis of Assisi, 1999L: 99-106); ‘The Testament’, (Francis of Assisi, 1999a: 124-127); ‘A Rule for Hermitages’, (Francis of Assisi, 1999y:61-62); ‘Exhortations to the Clergy’ (Francis of Assisi, 1999v: 52-53); and ‘A Letter to a Minister’ (Francis of Assisi, 1999z: 97-98).

ways to serve God more perfectly in order to please him more. This was the height of his philosophy, this was his greatest desire as long as he lived: to ask the wise and the simple, the perfect and the imperfect, the young, and the old what was the virtuous way to reach the height of perfection. Francis, the servant and truly faithful minister of Christ, wanted to complete all things with fidelity and perfection, and to this end he strained to practise above all those virtues that he knew his God truly appreciated; these he had learned from the Holy Spirit's inspiration through the Scriptures.

It was always a new beginning. Francis was increasingly prepared for every spiritual exercise. He never paused in the race towards perfection. He was a man of great courage. Francis always wanted to be the poorest of the poor when he came to Christ (see Thomas of Celano, 2000:302). Francis lived intensely. He was tireless in his purpose of renewal, so that he always hoped to begin, that is, he constantly thought to undertake a way towards higher perfection and he exhorted his brothers in the same way, saying "Brothers, let us begin" (Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, 2000a:640).

The gospel was his guiding principle in the 'School of Perfection'. This was Francis's aim: 'Gospel Perfection'. It was something original to Francis who conceived and lived his form of life dynamically, following Christ on the model of the first community at Jerusalem. Francis's aim was a monastic expression that implied 'imitation' as a static form of the 'Gospel Life'. However, from Francis's point of view he never used the word 'imitate', for Francis it was always "to follow the teaching and footprints of our Lord Jesus Christ" (see Micó, 1993:299, Micó's quotation is taken from Francis of Assisi, 1999d:63-64). Francis used Scripture to form and transform his spirit; this is well defined in his writings. The man of the Word of God made his perfection day by day. Returning to Jesus, he obeyed the Word without changing it, but he practised it with ever greater affection for the Lord. This is true of Franciscan Formation which begins and ends with the words of the divine master Jesus. The gospel invites its hearers to "You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt. 5:48), which means to make a continuous journey towards Godliness. In Religious Franciscan Formation 'to be perfect' should be considered an ideal of the on-going nature to

Christian perfection. The way to holiness, then, is the heart of the Religious Call. There is a double indication for all Franciscans to use the gospel as the mirror of perfection and of holiness.¹²⁵ This is 'picked-up' by St. Clare in her 'Third Letter to Agnes of Prague', "Place your mind before the mirror of eternity! Place your soul in the brilliance of glory. Place your heart in the figure of the divine substance and, through contemplation, transform your entire being into the image of the Godhead Itself..." (Clare, 2006:51, see also Armstrong, 2006b:21).

The key question in Intellectual Formation is: 'Do the Scriptures make a difference in our lives?' It is possible for Franciscans to be 'evangelical' in their attitude to the Scriptures, not in the sense of having fundamental views, but rather seeking the virtues that direct them to God with great simplicity. Today there is a need to go beyond historical-critical methodology into the deeper realms of personal, life-long, and life-enhancing commitment to the gospel; this is the starting point of modern Franciscan Formation. Scripture can be introduced as a tonic to the spiritual crisis of modern life and society. It is the backbone of the Formation manual and used for Scriptural formative methodology. As a matter of fact, the 'Gospel Life' as lived by Francis continues to be a challenge to Franciscans to re-shape the Franciscan vision and vocation. In his Spiritual and Religious Formation, Francis walked the road of the gospel, to form his character and to seek the values of the Kingdom. Francis is the pristine example to engage in a life-long process of formation in a life according to the holy gospel.

This approach lives right at the heart of Francis's genius in that he viewed the Word of God as an experience of real presence. His deep, life-changing devotion to the Word now becomes our deep, life-transforming experience (Saggau, 2005: ix).

Francis is a model for all Christians to keep to the path of holiness and perfection. His undying love for the Word made flesh and his devotion to the holy words of Jesus raised

¹²⁵ This concept of Francis's *Speculum Perfectionis* (the Mirror of Perfection) is explained more fully in Hammond, 2004:150-157).

him to live a more joyful and authentic Christian vocation. Charged with the spirit of the gospel, Francis became the words of Jesus and walked the Word of God and aimed at attaining perfection. Franciscan Formation is an experiential walk with the Word of God and not merely a theoretical talking of the Word. This can be initiated during the initial stages of Formation and is be encouraged as a life principle for On-going Formation. Francis's life remains a living memory for all Franciscans, recalling a life filled with the Spirit and imitating a life in the pattern of the holy gospel. The pattern Francis followed was the gospel; the words of the Lord shaped, moved, energised and rejuvenated him anew for the service of the gospel.

5.2 FRANCISCAN FORMATION IS ECCLESIAL

It is sometimes boldly stated that Francis was no theologian and, on the surface, there may be an element of truth in this.¹²⁶ When examined in any depth, though, it becomes clear that Francis has a great theological contribution to make, not least in ecclesiology, despite the fact that he does not have a systematic ecclesiology (see Saggau, 2004:66). Francis's theological contribution is confirmed through the works of later scholars like Bonaventure (1221-1274), Duns Scotus (1266-1308) and William of Ockham (1285-1347).

Francis lived at a time when there were many heretical currents mounted against the Church (see section 2.3.2). Nevertheless, he remained solidly in relationship with the "Holy Church" (Francis of Assisi, 1999d:65), he instructed his followers to do the same since they should be "always submissive and subject at the feet of the same Holy Church" (Francis of Assisi, 1999L:106). Saggau cites Matura's conclusion that Francis's writings regarding the Church fall into three categories: first, those that give a vision of Christian life; secondly, prayers that speak of the mystery of God and of Christ; thirdly, writings for specific occasions or people (see Saggau, 2004:67). These three categories show that Francis not only obeyed the authority of the Church but derived

¹²⁶ See section 5:1.

great spiritual nourishment from his life in the Church. Matura cites Francis's 'Salutation of the Blessed Virgin Mary' in which Francis refers to Mary as "Virgin made Church" (Francis of Assisi, 1999o:163)¹²⁷ In this, Francis epitomises Mary as an icon of the Church because of her response to God. This can be seen over 750 years later in the Vatican Council II statement that Mary was the first exemplary Christian and states clearly "the mother of the members of Christ...since she has by her charity joined in bringing about the birth of believers in the Church, who are members of its head" (Flannery, 1975:375).¹²⁸ Whilst not depicting Mary as quasi-divine or co-redemptrix, Francis does depict the Church in terms of the mystical union with God (see Saggau, 2004:67), which marks the Church out with holiness and grace beyond canonical categories and ecclesiastical structures. Another aspect of Francis's writings on the Church is his clear view of its functions; for Francis it is a place where conversion is experienced, the place where God can be experienced in the Word and the Sacraments, and the place where one can be nourished for discipleship and ministry.

Francis understood the importance of the Church and had a positive attitude towards it despite its failings and suffocating structures. He balances Church authority with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, for example he states that he was inspired to write the Rule (Francis of Assisi, 1999a:127). Francis's experience from "go rebuild my Church" (Francis of Assisi, 1999d:76) to his realisation of the task in a wider sense than he at first envisaged. This led him to a reform that was cast in personal and evangelical terms, which was typical of the mindset of the Church in general and Francis in particular in the medieval period. It is sometimes labelled by historians as 'The Discovery of the Individual'. The historian, Colin Morris, refers to the need for reform: "The system of discipline which had prevailed in the Church before 1050 appeared, to an age with a new self-awareness, to be in urgent need of reform." (Morris, 1972:70). In

¹²⁷ Here Francis also addressed Mary as: "Palace", "Tabernacle", "Dwelling", "Robe", "Servant" and "Mother" (Francis of Assisi, 1999o:163).

¹²⁸ Vatican Council II also states: "Wherefore she is hailed as a pre-eminent and as a wholly unique member of the Church, and as its type and outstanding model in faith and charity" (Flannery, 1975:375).

fact, the whole of Morris's book refers to this subject, as too does Walter Ullmann's (Ullmann, 1967). Saggau's thesis is that "the Franciscan movement was evangelical, catholic and reformed." Saggau also portrays this through the experience of the Church in conflict and the way that the early Franciscans responded to it.

Today the Church is somewhat defensive and polemic rather than a 'Confessional Church'. This could be a result of a failure in Vatican Council II; Saggau explains that, "Vatican II is perhaps best understood as a 'transitional council,' marking the end of the medieval Church and offering initial theological directions for a new understanding of the Church. It did not, however, provide the elements needed to build that Church" (Saggau, 2004:72). The 'rebuilding' of the Church is to be done without an over-concern for structures and without an emphasis on ordained clergy. It is to be renewed through evangelical fervour. Jesus rejected the Religious leaders of his day and called for reform within Judaism (see Mt. 12 and 23). If the spirit of God was released in the Church today with the message of "rebuild My house" (Thomas of Celano, 2000:249), it could change the mindset of the Church. Franciscans should take with them all that is good in their tradition and follow Francis in obedience to the Spirit of the Church; praying not for revolution, but for reform to the origins of the Gospel Life for which Francis was so passionate.

5.3 THE SOCIAL NATURE OF FRANCISCAN FORMATION

The teaching of the Ecclesiastical Magisterium reveals the truth of Christian moral principles in the social order and is called the social doctrine of the Church. It applies the gospel message to social reality. The purpose of the Church's social teaching is to present to people God's plan for secular reality. It enlightens people's minds with truth and guides them in building-up the earthly city according to the divine plan. The Church's social doctrine is an integral part of the Christian conception of life; it is founded upon revelation and natural law. The Church's social doctrine can be known and taught by all the faithful, who can also strive to address social problems in conformity with it. This doctrine can be part of the education of young people, who must

also form themselves in accord with its principles. Therefore, the faithful have an obligation to study and become duly formed according to each one's ability and social position. Moreover, the social teachings of the Church should be the focus of every formation plan for Franciscans. The centrality of the document (*Mater et Magistra*) should encourage every formee to understand Francis of Assisi and his involvement in society. The document states:

It is therefore our urgent desire that this doctrine be studied more and more. First of all, it should be taught as part of the daily curriculum in Catholic schools of every kind, particularly seminaries, although we are not unaware that in some of these latter institutions, this has been done for a long time now and in an outstanding way. We would also like to see it added to the Religious instruction programs of parishes and of Association of the Lay Apostolate (*Mater et Magistra: section 223*).

Section 1.3 and 1.4 in this thesis explains the problem that the writer is dealing with and the aim of the thesis. It is important to have an 'open process' in formation in order for a healthy exchange of views with a readiness to adapt to the age Christians are living in. At the same time, it is also important for Franciscans to hold onto the values of Francis, the Order's founder. Social formation is the ability to know about society and involves understanding its changing pattern and the way in which it adapts itself throughout time and in different cultures. It is important, therefore, to learn about the people in and amongst whom one lives and works by considering the areas of history, culture, ethnicity, language, customs and social systems. Francis showed an ability to lead others to question their lifestyle through his ability to demonstrate his belief. Besides educating his disciples in the fidelity of the Church, he also formed them to be sensitive to their social milieu. He instilled in them a sense of service and responsibility for involvement in society through the spirit of fraternal solidarity. Francis first provoked a social consciousness for the care of the neglected, which do not have voices. These included lepers, the poor and sinners: "he was simple with the simple, humble with the humble, and poor with the poor...and strove to behave as one of them as much as was possible" (Thomas of Celano, 1999:269).

He wrote to all mayors and consuls, magistrates and rulers because he understood they were culturally Religious, giving to the Lord honour among people. He also addressed

the clergy in 'Exhortations to the Clergy' (Francis of Assisi, 1999v:52-53) and the 'Later Edition' (Francis of Assisi, 1999w:54-55) and lay Christians in 'Earlier Exhortation' (Francis of Assisi, 1999f and 'Later Admonitions and Exhortation' (Francis of Assisi, 1999p:45-51),¹²⁹ proposing words that "are spirit and life" (Francis of Assisi, 1999p:45) because they come from the Lord. Francis never threatened but rather presented himself as "simple and subject to all" (Francis of Assisi, 1999a:125). He respectfully appealed to them and blessed those who listened. His manner of proceeding was delicate and soft, hopeful and loving. Francis touched the lives of people with simple love; he had nothing to give them but to extend his goodness to all, the poor and the rich appreciated his relationship. The beggars were his companions, and his friends were from all sections of society; he touched the lives of the people and educated all who came to him.

Francis's message was one of love and peace: to avoid violence and to strive for peace, to practise justice and mercy, to overcome rivalry and enmity with love. The Franciscan witness is relevant and essential today, at a time when people are divided through violence, hatred, war and injustice (see Martinez & Crosby, 2002:242-249). The need for reaching out to all and establishing a human and spiritual bond is to be seen as something socially edifying and Religious Formation can promote formation with and for the people.

Specified tasks and limits of authority were made: Francis put everyone on guard against cupidity and avarice, admonished them against pride, and exhorted them to confidence and joy. He developed a programme of social formation consisting of values and action, which would bring out the best in all people. Francis's social formation began among lepers; this was his Novitiate (see Hugo, 2011:135-144). Thus, he asked his Brothers to live with lepers as part of early 'Friar Formation'. Francis not only called people to the reign of God, but he also wanted them to be in a harmonious relationship

¹²⁹ 'The Admonitions' are not merely a warning, but in a religious sense a biblical passage or image in the light of a practical application (see Francis of Assisi, 1999a:128).

with all creation. He considered the value of relationship that touched all aspects of life and was willing to extend this relationship to created goodness. Thus, in a sense Francis wanted his relationship with God to bring about a universal relationship which promoted social changes.

The understanding Francis had of God was personal as well as original, one of the best places where this is expressed is in 'the Praises of God' (Francis of Assisi, 1999e:109). His ability to relate did not remain on the periphery of human relations, but it was extended to all creation. Some of Thomas of Celano's examples are given here: "He picks up little worms from the road, so they will not be trampled underfoot" (Thomas of Celano, 2000:354) and "he walked reverently over the rocks, out of respect for Him who is called the Rock" (Thomas of Celano, 2000:354) and Francis did not want the bees to perish of hunger or thirst in the winter and therefore, commanded to provide for them with drinks (see Thomas of Celano, 2000:356). Also, Thomas of Celano gives an example of the way people are asked to farm and garden today, "Leave the edges of the garden undisturbed, so that in their season the green of herbs and the beauty of flowers may proclaim the beautiful Father of all" (Thomas of Celano, 2000:354). Today farmers are reinstating this policy. Francis even suggests that within the garden a smaller garden should be "set aside" (Thomas of Celano, 2000:354), similar to the 'set-aside' policy of the UK government. Hence, the saint's, passionate love and compassion for creatures is well illustrated. According to Thomas of Celano, Francis derives these attitudes from his comprehension of who God is. Francis discerned visually that "In art he praises the Artist...In beautiful things he discerns Beauty itself...Following the footprints imprinted on creatures, he follows his Beloved everywhere" (Thomas of Celano, 2000:353).

All of this speaks to the ecological debate raging within society, governments and the Church today. Francis's ability to understand, nature in its multi-formed beauty was an educating process. This approach of Francis's is most apparent in his 'The Canticle of the Creatures' (Francis of Assisi, 1999c:113-114). Thomas of Celano, as stated above, placed Francis's conception of art that he was able to direct his attention to the artist;

“whatever he discovers in creatures he guides to the Creator. He rejoices in all the works of the Lord’s hands, and through their delightful display he gazes on their life-giving reason and cause” (Thomas of Celano, 2000:353). Francis was indeed a mystic who discovered the meaning of relationship which covered all animate and inanimate creations of God. Francis included all things as a means of experiencing and extending God’s goodness. Hilarin Felder explains that Francis’s theology is recognised in his devout reflections on the works of God (see Felder, 1998:423). He was a past master of the genuine mysticism of nature. In a spiritual way, Francis discovered a complete understanding of cosmic mysticism and he succeeded in humanising nature and adds a sisterly and brotherly face to it. Thus, Francis embodies a reconciliation concept on spirit and matter. Moreover, he highlights a mystical spirituality in practical terms, by calling creatures and nature ‘brother’ and ‘sister’, striking a balance to create a healthy fraternal relationship. Therefore, Franciscan Formation should create a noticeable balance between matter and spirit, human and God, and creation and Creator. Francis understood the universe in terms that everything in it that lives and moves and breathes (Acts 17:28) that glitters and glows and gleams stirred him to deep devotion. In fact, he learned from nature the natural symphony of God’s moving presence.

Felder explains that Francis “heard the thousand-fold *Sursum Corda* echoing for the works of creation filling him with the knowledge, the praise and the love of God” (Felder, 1998:423). Francis’s relationship with the creator and creation was not merely discovering the usefulness of matter; rather it was learning the underlining principle of God being at the heart of creation. Francis believed that the created world was created by the Word (*Logos*) made flesh in Jesus Christ (John 1:1-4 and 14). Therefore, creation itself was a reminder, a message, and a messenger from God (see Short, 1999:113). The whole idea of his tenderness towards the world around was a celebration of the world as a place for brother-sister relationships. Francis intuitively discovered that “as a human being, Christ has something in common with all creatures. With the stone he shares existence; with animals he shares sensation; and with the angels he shares intelligence” (Hayes, 1996:13).

Thus, by reaching out to people, Francis found creation was a means through which he could know and be with God. The need for social formation today is to have a growing awareness of existential relationships as well as to be stewards to one another. Consequently, Francis put forward a pedagogy for a truly Christian society which promotes human, social and ecological stewardship. During Religious Formation, Franciscans can learn to discover the evangelical stewardship of caring and being God's 'Ministers of and in Creation'.

Before Vatican Council II, Formation of the Religious had little or no connection with their external society. A good example of this is that in the not too distant past many Religious will recall when newspapers, radio and television were not permitted during Formation. The reason for this was that the formees had left society and were now being formed as Religious; there was a clear-cut separation between the Religious Life and the world. In pre-Vatican Council II, Religious Life and Formation were not thought of in the context of social systems and social relationships (see Kulbicki, 2002:190-196). It brought with it a great failure to nourish and cherish the importance of being with the people which is now believed to be essentially a part of being a Religious. As a result, the critical evaluation of social events, social justice and human rights did not make any impact on Religious Formation. This is one of the reasons for the Religious Life's failure to adjust to society.

As a result of Vatican Council II, it was realised that the social side of Formation was an important element to such an extent that The International Union of Superiors General state in their 'Consecrated Life Today' that "it is not possible to make a sound evangelical response to a society of such complexity and pluralism, and consequently understand it, unless one knows oneself fully." There is an awareness of an inability to enter into "dialogue with the contemporary world when the persons involved in the dialogue do not know one another" (both quotations are taken from The International Union of Superiors General, 1993:66). It is evident that the initiative of this mutual knowledge comes from Religious Formation. Progress has been made in this direction, but there is still much more to be done. The social nature of Formation is, then,

beginning to be understood by the Religious who are called to witness in the society in which they live and to exercise their Christian faith. Franciscans are 'out in the world' and therefore the aspects (above) of social mission were as applicable to Francis as they are today.

5.4 PRAYER-CENTRED NATURE OF FRANCISCAN FORMATION

The Franciscan movement is a Religious movement within the Church and is intended to be a leaven in the world and for the world. It is therefore essential that Franciscanism is seen in terms of a way of living spirituality which is intended for every circumstance in life. The spirit of Franciscan living is formed and nurtured in prayer. Prayer confirms, or puts into concrete, the relationship between God and self and between God and the community.

St. Francis sought to cultivate in himself the spirit of prayer modelled from what he had discovered from the Lord: "No one showed me what I had to do, but the Most High Himself revealed to me that I should live according to the pattern of the Holy Gospel" (Francis of Assisi, 1999a:125). Francis sought to imitate Jesus in everything, and prayer was no exception. His prayer was not simple imitation; his prayer was a true act of love arising from his inner spirit. "Prayer celebrated and sealed the relationship Francis had with the Triune God, with Jesus the Christ, with Mary, his Mother and with all the rest of creation" (Saggau, 2006:52). The nature of Francis's prayer was contemplative as he listened to God speak to him. Prayer created in Francis wonder and awe and it transported him to experience the goodness and beauty of creation. Pope John Paul II proclaimed St. Francis of Assisi the patron saint of ecology in 1979. The Pope cited him for being "an example of genuine and deep respect for the integrity of creation..." (Pope John Paul II, 2011). Prayer guided Francis to experience the lasting and joyful existence of God in creation. He was able to meet God because he was able to feel the revelation of God's sweetness, and subsequently his prayer was filled with praise and thanksgiving.

There are certain aspects of Francis's prayer life that one can list: his prayer life was contemplative, listening to God (see Francis of Assisi, 1999r:116-117); filled with awe as he marvelled at the beauty and goodness of creation (see Francis of Assisi, 1999c:113); filled with praise and thanksgiving; responding to God's revelation; adoration; responding with reverence to the manifestation of God's love; and humble (experiencing the Triune God as humble) (see Saggau, 2004:52). Francis was very aware of his sins and of being a creature of the creator and thereby his complete dependence upon God. On the practical level, Francis prayed the 'Liturgy of the Hours';¹³⁰ he also encouraged all his brothers to recite the same. It is interesting to note that it is not whether Francis prayed the 'Liturgy of the Hours', rather how he prayed them. He is described as praying the Office with awe, devotion, joy, peace and quiet (see Anon., 2000b:226-227 and Thomas of Celano, 2000:311).

Francis not only prayed in this manner until he seemed "not so much praying as becoming totally prayer" (Thomas of Celano, 2000:310). Francis was solicitous in forming his disciples in living prayer that was persevering, personal and ecclesial, fervent and always new. He was not a master of formulae but of experiential prayer. It is essential to grasp that Francis's way of praying was creative, innovative, traditional and new.¹³¹ Hence, prayer for Franciscans is not something to be done, but rather a call to become prayer, which means they should be woven with thoughts, words, gestures and the heart. Franciscans today have something to offer the world and can set an example to be a living prayer and make prayer meaningful and fruitful. Therefore, Franciscan Formation is to train Franciscans to live, move and be in prayer.

¹³⁰ See Francis of Assisi, 1999L:101; 1999m:119-120, 1999s:165. Also see Anon., 2000b: 227-229; Thomas of Celano, 2000:311; Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, 2000:592 and 609; Ugolini Boniscambi of Montegorio, 2001:447.

¹³¹ "Francis's prayer was 'new' in the sense that it was done not in the quiet seclusion of a monastery, as was usual then, but amid the uncertainties of an itinerant lifestyle: not in the well-ordered routine of a monk, but in a kind of life in which one never knew what would happen from moment to moment. This ensured that Francis's prayer was more rooted in real life, more 'normal' less formal and stilted, more Gospel Life, in fact more like Christ's own prayer" (Aizpurua, 2003:94-95).

The Franciscan characteristics of prayer follow closely in the footsteps of St. Francis, where all are inter-connected and inter-mingled. Franciscan prayer begins in the heart, not the head. It is contemplative in a very receptive way; it is an attitude of openness and listening to God. It is imperative in formation for the formee to be prepared to be patient and eagerly wait in prayer, by this accompanying is faith-filled; inviting 'the other' to be present, only then can the Franciscan be ready and receive God.

Franciscan prayer is adoration, and this begins with humility. It is filled with praise and thanksgiving because it acknowledges that humans are in relationship to God and creation. It is Christo-centric in its language which is addressed to the Triune God and praised by the Spirit. It thereby becomes spiritual communion marked by God's goodness, love, holiness, peace, and joy. To enable Franciscan prayer to be real, it requires silence, beauty, sound, smell, taste; thereby it involves the whole of the body and its senses. It is therefore sacramental. In other words, the visible, tangible dimensions of life are bearing the holy.

The call to holiness is the invitation of Vatican Council II which has to be discovered as a new way of being in the world. Francis in his time set an example to be leaven in the world and the mission of the Franciscan movement today is to become that leaven in order to keep alive the flame of God's love. It is clear that Francis was a man of prayer. "For Francis prayer was an act of self-abandonment, putting himself into God's hands with absolute trust" (Aizpurua, 2003:95). Therefore, Spiritual Formation is the way to assist a person through prayer to grow in "confident and childlike abandonment into the hands of the Father" (Presidency of the International Council of the Secular Franciscan Order, 1992:40).

5.5 FRANCISCAN FORMATION FOR THE PRACTICE OF VIRTUES

Francis educated himself in the love and the practices of the virtues,¹³² wanting his friars to possess the quality of being morally good and righteous. It is well defined by the author of 'A Mirror of Perfection' (Anon., 2001a:333), which affirms that "Francis, in a certain way identified with his brothers through a burning love and fervent zeal which he had for their perfection, often he thought about those qualities and virtues which make an authentic Franciscan" (Temperini, 1999:166; cf. Thomas of Celano, 1999:271-272). According to Temperini, within Francis's brotherhood "Such perfective virtues are not considered separately as in spirituality or in moral treatises, but they are personified and incarnated in some characteristic figures" (Sabatier, 2001:333). Francis honours especially:

The faith and love of poverty of Brother Bernard: the simplicity and purity of Brother Leo...the courtly bearing of Brother Angelo...the friendly manner and common sense of Brother Masseo...the mind raised in contemplation of Brother Giles...the virtuous and constant prayer of Brother Rufino...the patience of Brother Juniper...the bodily and spiritual strength of Brother John of Lauds...the charity of Brother Roger...the solidarity of Brother Lucidus... (Anon., 2001a:333).

Francis signalled a constellation of formative virtues, like faith and love, the practice of poverty and simplicity, purity and courtesy, goodness and patience with common sense, physical and spiritual robustness, true charity and the like. Central to Francis's thinking on ethics is 'of being' in addition to the 'ethics of doing'. "Action and disposition are interrelated; a good person will seek to do the right action" (Getek, 2008:67).

Thomas of Celano states that Francis "with all vigilance and concern he, he was forming his new sons with new instruction, teaching them to walk with steady steps the way of holy poverty and blessed simplicity" (Thomas of Celano, 1999:205). Francis wanted his friars to be possessed with natural gifts and grace to penetrate and realise the perfection of the individual, both as a human and as a Christian. The phenomenology of holiness unites this complex of formative values and their dynamics.

¹³² Now we call 'virtues' ethics, cultivating habits for moral development.

Franciscan Formation embraces the example of Francis and allows this process to perfect the human and Christian virtues naturally.¹³³ Probably the greatest Christian treatment of virtue was by Aquinas in his '*Summa Theologiæ*' in which he gives the simplest definition as, "virtue is a good habit of action" (cited by Pinches, 2000:742). Aquinas was born a year before Francis died in 1226 and as a Dominican he had the feel for practicality in his theology; so for him virtue was not simply an ideal, but rather something that is to be attained in life.

Bonaventure's 'The Major Legend of St. Francis' states that Francis taught the brothers "to follow discernment as the charioteer of the virtues" (Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, 2000a:565). Francis used the word 'discernment' when discussing the virtues; in fact, people consider discernment as something cognitive when used to study the whole situation and choose the one that is good in relation to the other. Francis asks the brothers to be discreet and delicately practice the virtues that direct the brothers to be holy. These virtues consisted of the fact that the brothers made a prime virtue of poverty, which was not burdensome, "While it is true that we are poor, our poverty is not as burdensome for us as it is for the other poor, for we have become poor by the grace of God and in fulfilment of His counsel" (Anon., 2000c:44, see also Francis of Assisi, 1999d: 63-64). They also had to be generous to the poor. They aimed to be a good example to each other as brothers as well as to the populace. Devout prayer was an essential part of their life which they tried to live through loving and caring for one another and being humble and loving even when people were throwing stones at them (see Anon., 2000c:46). This humility is clearly illustrated in Bonaventure's 'The Minor Legend of St. Francis':

Humility, that guard and embellishment of all virtues, had by right so filled the man of God that, although a manifold privilege of virtues was reflected in him, nevertheless, it sought its special domain as though in the very least of the lesser ones. In his own opinion, by which he accounted himself the greatest of sinners, he was nothing more than some earthen

¹³³ "He [Francis] shed light on his neighbors (*sic*), less advanced on their way of perfection, by his manifest virtue; refreshed them with ardent love by his devout prayers, and filled them with wonder by the miracles wrought through his holiness and goodness. The cross of Christ is the sign of God's perfect works and of all his wonderful deeds" (Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, 2000c:759-765).

vessel, whilst in truth he was an elect vessel of sanctification, set apart by sanctity and glittering with the adornment of many kinds of virtue and grace (Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, 2000d:695).

Thomas of Celano's 'The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul' explains the virtuous life of Francis in the following way: "What a chosen vessel of all virtues; able to contain every grace! Already he pours out charisms in all directions!" (Thomas of Celano, 2000:243). Bonaventure also writes, "Just as that blessed man [Francis] had shone in his life with marvellous signs of virtue" (Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, 2000a:649). For Francis, virtue was not a matter of reason, but an act of faith. It was not logically patterned behaviour by reason; rather it is the result of the transforming desire to what is truly good. It is in this way that Franciscan virtues come to know and love good. Francis intimates in the introduction to 'A Salutation of the Virgin Mary' (Francis of Assisi, 1999o:163) that these virtues are to be found in her; indeed, some consider that early manuscripts prove that the original title could have been one of two titles: "The virtues possessed by the holy Virgin and which should be present in a holy soul"; 'the Salutation of the Virtues with which the Blessed Virgin was clothed and which should be present in a holy Soul'" (Francis of Assisi, 1999za:164-165).¹³⁴ There is a similarity that could be identified with the Salutation of the Virtues (Francis of Assisi, 1999:164 and the Salutation of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Francis of Assisi, 1999o:163), both begin with 'Ave' ('Hail'). Mary is the symbol for every Christian vocation. Francis's devotion to Mother Mary is ecstatically summarised by Thomas of Celano. "He embraced the Mother of Jesus with inexpressible love, since she made the Lord of Majesty a mother to us" (Thomas of Celano, 2000: 374). Hence it is important for Franciscans to develop and grow into the holiness of the Blessed Virgin. Mary expresses a total openness to God in her fiat and she remained virtuous and holy to fulfil her fiat until the end.

Temperini lists these virtues in 'A Salutation of the Virtues': "Queen wisdom, holy poverty, holy charity, pure simplicity, holy humility, holy obedience and all the holy

¹³⁴ Other manuscripts contain simpler titles: "the Salutation of the Virtues and their efficacy in confounding vices; the Linking of the Virtues" (Francis of Assisi, 1999za:164).

virtues” (Temperini, 1999:167). It is also interesting to understand that in ‘The Admonitions’ Francis exhorts his brothers to the practice of humility, obedience, charity, patience, poverty, mortification, mercy, repentance, faith, prayer, and fidelity to the Church. He also instructs his followers to be submissive to all, industrious, and to be the bearers of joy. Francis inspired his friars and followers in the importance of good actions following knowledge.

In emphasising the fundamental truth of a virtuous life, “faith teaches that Christ is the centre of the virtues” (Nguyen van Si, 1997: 146). The centre of virtue is Christ; this is expressed well by Bonaventure in his ‘Early Questions on the Gospel’, where he explains Christian perfection, “with respect to His human nature, Christ was the example of virtue and of all Christian perfection” (Hayes, 2000:130). Bonaventure states that “Christ is always drawing us upward, toward the higher virtues, in order to lead us back at last to the Father” (Nguyen van Si, 1997:147). In order to engage in the Franciscan Theology of virtue, it should be underlined that faith teaches that Christ is “the ethical center (*sic.*), the exemplar of the virtues, and source of all grace” (Nguyen van Si, 1997:147).

Those in Franciscan Formation can be guided to grow in the holiness of virtues, and these virtues come from the source of Christ himself and his teachings. The Franciscan movement is an active spirituality which integrates “word and example” (Francis of Assisi, 1999a:132). The Religious Life is a call to holiness and Francis is an example to all Franciscans to live holiness rather than merely to preach it. Therefore, Franciscan Religious Life edifies modern society through a ‘witness-life’ similar to Mother Theresa of Calcutta. It can be summarised that Franciscan virtue is necessary for anthropological formation.

5.6 FRANCISCAN FORMATION FOR PERFECT JOY

St. Francis proposes to his brothers to aim for “Perfect Joy” (Francis of Assisi, 1999o:166). We can find this important element in Francis’s theology through his

writings and biographies. In fact, “Francis calls God ‘Joy’: ‘you are joy; you are hope and joy’ and Christ gives his joy to his disciples” (Matura, 2004:135). Francis finds the true source of his joy in Jesus. “This joy in the Lord is experienced in meditating on the most holy words and deeds of the Lord, in which we find the joy and gladness by means of which we can lead others to the love of God” (Matura, 2004:135). Hence, perfect joy is the experience of the presence of the divine. The source of Franciscan joy is the result of knowing Jesus, who is the primary source of Franciscan spirituality and formation. Therefore, perfect joy is Christological, or Christ-centred and it derives from the teachings of Jesus in his Beatitudes (Mt. 5:1-12).

Francis’s understanding of joy is clearly expounded in ‘The Little Flowers of St. Francis’ (Anon., 2001b:566-658) through the words “Perfect Joy” (Anon., 2000a:579-581). The words, ‘Perfect Joy’ were possibly derived from 1 Cor. 13:1-13, also Jude 1:2 and the phrase arose from Francis’s evangelical experience. The author of ‘The Mirror of Perfection’ (Sabatier, 2001:341-342) explains that Francis’s exhortations possess the internal and external joy in himself and in others. Francis instructs his brothers that spiritual joy springs from the integrity of the heart and the purity of constant prayer. He explains that it must be their primary concern to acquire and preserve these two virtues and to possess internal, as well as external joy. Francis’s perspective on joy is expounded by Jansen:

Francis proffers true joy, namely, when man does not lose himself in the outside world and measure his worth by his success, but instead measures his worth in God. Francis knew personally the implication of this. His own life served as a testimony to it. He discovered, at his own expense, what deep poverty he had to endure before one can experience true joy – that virtue by which the soul is healed (Jansen, 1991:387).

It is easy to be surprised by joy when it is read about in the stories that surrounded Francis in his youth as a leader of frivolity (cf. Anon., 2000a:68), but the social milieu of the time held troubadours and jongleurs in great esteem. The significance of the troubadours in the medieval period is explained by Colin Morris (Morris, 1972:107-120 and Anon., 1968:229-234). The notion of St. Francis as a troubadour has been used by various writers e.g. “His genial nature overflowed with the joy of life and a youthful yet

healthy exuberance. Heart and fancy were filled with the song of the troubadours...” (Felder, 1998:1). Also, “As genuine Knight of Christ, Francis was inexpressibly happy to serve his Liege, to follow Him in poverty and to be like unto Him in suffering; and this blissful happiness in the service, the imitation, and the suffering of Christ he announced as knightly Minstrel and Troubadour of God” (Felder, 1998:242).

This joy is also found in Francis’s early life as a knight (Thomas of Celano, 2000:243); knights of the time followed strict courtly behaviour as well as having the quality of joy with an ability to use a sword and a lyre.¹³⁵ Francis took the joviality that he enjoyed in his youth with him into his ‘calling’ through his market teaching and preaching, which was very much a part of the troubadour society.¹³⁶ His increasing joy whilst showing love to lepers and deprived people is depicted in ‘The Legend of the Three Companions’ (see Anon., 2000a:74). Even from his deathbed Francis sang with a joyful heart because he understood that he was on a journey with ‘Lady Poverty’ which would end in joy (see Anon., 2000a: 107-108). Franciscan joy is found paradoxically, from the world’s point of view, in poverty. Francis’s motto was *paupertas cum lacti* (poverty with joy) (see Francis of Assisi, 1999a:137). Indeed, the source of this joy is also of a divine order. It is a transcendent experience, a sign of grace, the effect of the Holy Spirit is born out of the discovery of the gospel and of poverty. “The Devil can do nothing against I” (Le Goff, 2004:123) and it was the joy of these early disciples of poverty that encouraged others to join them. Felder explains that Francis’s companions cultivated: “bridal converse with Holy Poverty...they vowed to remain faithful to her in all places and for all times” (Felder, 1998:237). Francis developed the idea of joy which accompanies poverty (see Matura, 2004:135, citing Francis of Assisi, 1999a:137). Francis curtailed the joy of riotous and sensual pleasures and the hypocrisy found in society with firm instructions to his followers (see Thomas of Celano, 2000:332).

¹³⁵ For the Code of Chivalry see Dorothy Sayers, 1957:33 and Anon., 1968b:254-269. Also see “I am the herald of the great King” (Thomas of Celano, 1999:194 and Habig, 1972:242).

¹³⁶ For a detailed explanation of ‘troubadour’ and its influence on St Francis’s spirituality see Mulholland, 2009:52-81.

Mueller explains that: “Lady Poverty so strips Francis that he learns to rely on the love of God alone” (Mueller, 1998:129). Francis finds joy even in suffering; this is expounded in ‘The Little Flowers of St. Francis’ in the story about Leo and Francis walking together in the extreme cold from Perugia to St. Mary of the Angels discussing what perfect joy is in suffering (see Anon., 2001b:579-581). It was through his sufferings that Francis felt close to his Lord and he felt this especially at his death (see Felder, 1998:230-231). Thomas of Celano explains that Francis realised that “when the spirit is teary-eyed...swallowed up in sorrow” it will “be carried away toward empty enjoyment.” Celano continues by explaining that St. Francis “always strove to keep a joyful heart, to preserve the anointing of the spirit and the oil of gladness” (Thomas of Celano, 2000:329). This, despite his sufferings, helped to lead him joyfully to follow his Lord.

It cannot be over-emphasised that Franciscan joy is a choice. It is a choice of maturity which is offered as a calling by God to those who have risked embracing hardship for the sake of the gospel of Christ. This means that it is a gift to discern grace in the darkest places.

We thus understand the essence of Franciscan joy and the source from which it springs. Francis and his brothers rejoiced in the greatness and the goodness of God, which is revealed in all His creatures and which becomes his soul-satisfying and living experience especially through the personal contact with God, by living His eyes, and in constant converse with Him. Franciscan joy is the joy in God, of God, and from God (Felder, 1998:236).

In terms of Franciscan Formation, joy is a process and the task of a lifetime. In today's world, Franciscans have a duty to go back to Francis, the essence of their thinking, and look again at his message of joy and all that it implies. Franciscan joy is not an easy road because it is human nature to look for a simpler and more comfortable way. Franciscans' eyes are to ponder on God in Christ through the practice of St. Francis. Therefore, during the Initial and On-going Formation processes, this joyfulness in life and spirit is at the heart of the whole Franciscan pedagogical method. On 6th July 2013, Pope Francis addressed seminarians and novices with the words, “keep freshness and

joy in your lives.” He told them “There is no sadness in holiness” and added that such clergy lack “the joy of the Lord. If you find a seminarian, priest, nun, with a long, sad face, if it seems as if in their life someone threw a wet blanket over them you should conclude that they can go, ‘buenos dias’” (Pope Francis, 2013). Pope Francis opted for a word in his native Spanish to indicate that clergy etc. with that attitude are not suited for their vocations.

5.7 FRANCISCAN FORMATION FOR PEACE

St. Francis’s traumatic journey to conversion came to its initial completion in the chapel of the Portiuncula probably in early 1208 when he heard the words of Jesus addressed to the Apostles and the seventy disciples regarding what a disciple should possess and wear when on a mission (see Thomas of Celano, 1999:201 citing Mt. 10:9-10; Lk. 9:3). Francis’s immediate response was, “‘This is what I want,’ he said, ‘this is what I seek, this is what I desire with all my heart’” (Thomas of Celano, 1999:201-202). Francis also heard the words in this gospel reading, “‘Whatever house you enter, first say ‘Peace be to this house!’” (Lk. 10:5). Francis believed these words not only as the concept for peace, but also for the desire to be the instrument of peace. It is too simplistic to take Francis’s conversion as a ‘once for all’ event because from the time of his ‘conversion’ at San Damiano until his death at Portiuncula Francis became more and more immersed in the ways of God and in coming to understand his and creation’s role within the Trinitarian Godhead. In other words, ‘conversion’ is an on-going event and not a simple one-off event, however dramatic the first experience may be.

St. Francis emphasised his belief in being an instrument of God’s peace by greeting individuals, birds, and congregations with the words, “May the Lord give you peace” (Thomas of Celano, 1999:203, originating from the ‘Aaronic Blessing’ in Num. 6:24-26) and, as already shown, used by Jesus in his instructions to the seventy-two disciples he sent out. For Francis, peace was closely linked with messianic salvation. “The salutary gift of peace flows from the redemption accomplished by Jesus on the altar of the cross” (Schmucki, 1995:151). When Francis was ill, he said to his brothers, “in Whom that

which is in heaven and on earth has been brought to peace and reconciled” (Francis of Assisi, 1999m:117). If peace is to flourish in the hearts of the Christian faithful, conversion is necessary, which opens them to this gift. Thomas of Celano writes that from the very beginning Francis “separated them [the brothers] into four groups of two each: ‘Go my dear brothers’, he said to them, ‘two by two through different parts of the world, announcing peace to the people and penitence for the remission of sins’” (Thomas of Celano, 1999:207). Francis was following Jesus’ example by sending his followers out “two by two” (Lk. 10:1).

St. Francis’s understanding of peace derived from biblical texts: from St. Paul he understood peace as the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). Also, from the writer of ‘The Letter to the Ephesians’: “For he [Christ] is our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility” (Eph.2:14) and “and having shod your feet with the equipment of the gospel of peace” (Eph.6:15). Isaiah uses the term “Prince of Peace” (Is. 9:6). In Francis’s thought there is a clear distinction between peace as the world knows it, i.e., no fighting or wars etc and “true peace” (Ugolino Boniscambi of Montegiorio, 2001:526) whom Francis proclaims in his greeting “May the Lord give you peace.” This is related to Augustine’s understanding of the difference between the temporal state’s search for peace and his vision in his ‘City of God’, “Augustine focuses on how the two cities will end in book XIX, and in the process, he outlines the nature of the supreme good. He emphasises the idea that the peace and happiness found in the heavenly city can also be experienced here on earth” (Augustine, City of God). Francis’s peace is a peace which comes from heaven, “true peace from heaven” (Thomas of Celano, 1999:203) and is intrinsically bound up in Jesus Christ, the real ‘Prince of Peace’, “And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near” (Eph. 2:17). This peace then enables a comprehension that, “For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father” (Eph. 2:18). Francis, with his emphasis on the Eucharist, acknowledged that through the Eucharist all are united in the created order with the heavenly places: “in whom that which is in heaven and on earth has been brought to peace and reconciled to almighty

God” (Francis of Assisi, 1999m:117). This, then, is the purpose and completion of created life on earth and points to the necessity for formation.

Francis reflected on peace and saw that it was closely linked with justice; there can be no peace unless people can see that their basic requirements are satisfied. Francis did not simply talk about peace, he acted on his beliefs. He used practical models as examples to his disciples, of which there are many examples: Francis safeguarded peace in Brother John the Simple’s family after he had joined Francis (Thomas of Celano, 2000:368-369); in restoring harmony between husband and wife (Thomas of Celano, 2000: 271-272); the mediation for peace in the reconciliation between the Bishop and Mayor of Assisi (Anon., 2000b:187-188). All of these are examples of Francis’s aim to realise the gospel and the Kingdom of God in practical ways. The order of peace in the world is put in doubt and substituted by a true peace of the Spirit: the peaceful way in which three thieves of Montecasale were converted (Anon., 2001b:609); the contribution of peace to Arezzo (Thomas of Celano, 2000:318-319); and also the peace resolved between the factions in Siena. Emblematic of Francis’s modes for peace are shown in the story of the Wolf of Gubbio (Anon., 2001b:601-604) and also in his down-to-earth and honest and fearless approach to the Sultan of the Saracens (Thomas of Celano, 1999:231). During the Fifth crusade in 1219, in the midst of wartime, Francis went to the enemy unarmed and loved the enemy as a brother. Francis attempted to embody Jesus’ words to love one’s enemy (see 3.1 for further information on St. Francis and the Sultan).

Francis firmly believed that the source of peace can be found only in God. Its desired fruits need to mature within the human heart before they can be shared with others. Interior peace grows to the extent that people open their hearts to the influence of the Holy Spirit, as Francis explicitly insists in ‘The Earlier Rule’, “the spirit of the flesh very much desires and strives to have the words but cares little for the activity; it does not seek a religion and holiness in an interior spirit” (Francis of Assisi, 1999b:75). In one of his Admonitions, Francis repeats the Beatitude: “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God” (Francis of Assisi, 1999a:134 from Mt. 5:9). St. Francis

went further than simply being a worker for peace, he wanted to live the life of peace, to proclaim the Gospel of peace and thus to effectively work to establish peace. So, for him peace is three-pronged: seeking peace with God, humankind and all creatures.

The 20th century was, and 21st century world so far has been, full of war, violence and hatred.¹³⁷ Franciscans have a great mission in the world and are active in the United Nations as NGOs. Franciscan Formation can prepare Franciscans to work towards peace and justice. Indeed, the JPIC (Justice and Peace and Integrity of Creation) is a Franciscan movement. Throughout Formation, Formators are given the task to enable Formees to attain peace and justice within themselves and develop attitudes for a mission of peace and justice in the world.

5.8 FRANCISCAN FORMATIVE THEOLOGY OF DYING AND DEATH

Francis brought a new theology to death. Francis discovered in it a theme of natural ending but fosters fraternal and sororial relationships (see Francis of Assisi, 1999d:114). He saw death as something to be expected and embraced, loved and waited for with a joyful spirit. “Francis understood death as integral to human life, and death is the ultimate journey into poverty, a letting go of all possessions including life itself” (Nothwehr, 2005:16). Francis is an inspiration which allows all Franciscans to take up the path in the process of death as Francis had given his life completely to Christ, and he exhibits such courage as not to fear death. He believed that death was for him a human passage into the fullness of life with and in Christ. This is evidently seen on Francis’s deathbed when he says, “If I am to die soon, call Brother Angelo and Brother Leo that they may sing to me about Sister Death” (Anon., 2000b: 121).

¹³⁷ The two World Wars of the 20th century had a profound effect on society. In the 21st century there have been more and more terrorist attacks from religious extremists.

Francis wanted to form everyone for this encounter with Sister Death¹³⁸ “from which no one can escape” (Francis of Assisi, 1999d:114). He pleaded with rulers, who might have been overwhelmed with many worries not to forget to prepare themselves “for the day of death is approaching” (Matura, 1997:58). Francis admonished “all Christian Religious people: clergy and laity, men and women” (Matura, 1997:45) so that they would not forget the vanity of this world which compromises them. They are to put aside “this world’s cares and preoccupations” (Matura, 1997:58). Francis wanted his brothers in turn to educate the Christian people for death’s arrival, for them to “Do penance, performing worthy fruits of penance because we shall soon die” (Matura, 1997:78) and advised them to “Beware of and abstain from every evil and persevere in good till the end” (Matura, 1997:78). Francis reflected “I have been even more zealous reflecting on the day of my death” (Anon., 2001a:369) he desired to die lovingly. He received death with a song as Celano reports from eyewitness testimony (see Thomas of Celano, 2000:388). The *Poverello*¹³⁹ knew “...she [death] will be the gate of Life!” (Thomas of Celano, 2000:388). Hence Francis taught an entire generation to deal with death through his own intense personal endeavour, the formation of his brothers, and his final witness in welcoming her. He still remains a luminary example. In the School of Francis, in the wake of the gospel, death’s arrival is neither dramatic nor frightening. The believer is, like Francis, “equally as happy either to die as I am to live” (Anon., 2001a:369).

Francis proposes a formative argument of death to self, of inner self-renunciation, of openness and service to one’s neighbour. Today this could change the world’s attitude

¹³⁸ “After marveling [*sic.*] at the beauty of creation, Francis turns to us humans, not to praise our beauty and strength but to show that we have been wounded by sin, afflicted with ‘infirmity and tribulation’, and destined to feel the pangs of death. In contrast and opposition to the harmony of nature, Francis depicts our humanity in the somber [*sic.*] tones of suffering and inevitable death. Nevertheless, he praises the Lord even for all this because, knowing that He loves us, we can bear illness and trials with peaceful minds. Francis calls death by the tender, loving name of ‘Sister’ and portrays it as having been subdued and even as gentle. Because none of us can escape death, we must accept its mysterious obscurity and abandon ourselves to God’s will in its regard. That is why, immediately after praising God for His creation, we can go on to extol Him by accepting our mortality and can look to Him in hope because, then, ‘the second death shall do [us] no harm’” (Matura, 1998:140).

¹³⁹ *Poverello*, means ‘the little poor man’ in Italian and was the term used for St. Francis in Assisi.

to the fear of death and could paradoxically create joy from the Beatitudes; incorporating the virtues of poverty, purity of heart, peace, wisdom and knowledge of God.

5.9 CONCLUSION

Francis's life and *raison d'être* are to be found in the 'Gospel Life'. He understood this as purveying and influencing the whole of his life with the realisation of God's revelation through the Scriptures inspired by the Holy Spirit. In this way, he searched for self-perfection. Francis's theology, although intuitive, has a wide implication for the Church and the world. This is especially true in his message of love and peace.

Respect for the world and creation is in Francis's mind respect for God and his creation. Indeed, his ideas of ecology are extremely relevant in today's world which is looking for guidance in this direction. This act of love arises from his spirituality which is undergirded by prayer and his closeness to God, creating in him reverence and humility. Francis's life was a life of prayer by communing with the creator. Creating in him a virtuous, ethical lifestyle, but always through poverty embracing 'Perfect Joy' and peace. The source of that peace, Francis believed, was only to be found in the adoration of God. Francis's idea of peace again, like many other aspects of his life, can only be found in living a life of peace and fully understanding what it means.

Francis embraced death as 'Sister Death'. He understood death as part of life which needed to be prepared for and not feared or side-lined. This is well-illustrated by his own joyful death.

Francis understood that the gospel was lived out in full in all aspects of his life.

CHAPTER 6:

CONCLUSION

6.1 RADICAL FORMATION

This thesis has examined the various papal documents regarding formation and discussed further reforms and emphases that the author believes are essential for future development of the subject. Until Vatican Council II it was accepted that formation was something that could be completed in a certain number of years, rather like a course of study that a person could procure.¹⁴⁰ However, today the Church has become more aware that formation is an on-going process for all Christians, including Religious and priests as they come to understand their faith and their spirituality. For Religious, it is an important part of their calling which continues throughout life.

This study has underlined that it is essential during formation to examine, not just the Religious element of a person's life, but also the human element. In other words, to get down to the essence of a person's humanity and what this means in a Religious context to the individual. The formation takes place within the human person and is therefore in a constant state of flux and adaptation. Understanding and caring for the human element are important during the life-long process of growth and development.

Indeed, the creativity of God is, by its very nature, sacred and blessed. It is developed in all human beings and is an essential part of Religious Formation, thus of Religious Life itself. There is, though, the danger of its continuity not being kept alive within the Religious Life because it requires constant and conscious formative programmes.

¹⁴⁰ In the Abstract to his article in 'Theology' Tim Gibson writes: "This article outlines a theological basis for the process of compiling a portfolio as part of a programme of ministerial formation. Such a task can often seem to the candidate rather like jumping through hoops, or gathering evidence merely for the sake of it. But I argue that it is properly understood as a theological practice, inviting reflection on who they are becoming in Christ" (Gibson, 2021:260). This writer would emphasise 'becoming'.

It is easy to be 'waylaid' by the common assumption that Francis was simply kind to animals. Pope Francis in his 2015 encyclical states: "The poverty and austerity of Saint Francis were no mere veneer of asceticism, but something much more radical: a refusal to turn reality into an object simply to be used and controlled" (Pope Francis, 2015:15). Thus, Francis's theology was much more than the thought process of the modern romantic figure by which he is often depicted. Francis cannot be written-off as a naïve idealist because his theology was challenging to the medieval Church and it still is today. He did not romanticise nature and creation, rather he recognised the power of God in created beings. Francis's theology was based on the Jesus/God he made in the crib at Greccio. It was not a theology of 'gentle Jesus meek and mild', but rather one of active concern and respect for creation. This theology is extremely relevant with regards to the problems of climate change that the world faces today. The teachings of the Church greatly influenced St. Francis of Assisi. He lived for the Church and her teachings and he upheld them tenaciously. Pope Francis states: "what is more, Saint Francis, faithful to Scripture, invites us to see nature as a magnificent book in which God speaks to us and grants us a glimpse of his infinite beauty and goodness" (Pope Francis, 2015:15). Hence, St. Francis of Assisi is as relevant today as he has always been, maybe even more so.¹⁴¹ All the writings issued by Pope Francis embody the enduring influence of Francis of Assisi. Francis's teaching can be read in every line of *Laudate si*.¹⁴²

Francis's true theological basis is inherent in the image of the living crib he created at Greccio in 1223 (see section.4.3). It illustrated in literal terms what God has done for humanity by sending his Son to redeem the world back to his desired creation.

¹⁴¹ St. Francis of Assisi was declared the patron saint of ecology and those who promote ecology by the bull issued by Pope John Paul II on 29th November 1979.

¹⁴² *Laudate si* (Praise be to You) is the second encyclical of Pope Francis issued on 24th May 2015. The first was a completion of the last encyclical of Pop Benedict XVI. So, it is the first one which is entirely Pope Francis's own work. *Laudate si* is an urgent call for the world to tackle the current ecological crises, requesting humanity to live sustainable lives. The encyclical is often referred to as 'The encyclical letter of the Holy Father to care for and protect our common home'. This encyclical was greatly influenced by the committee of Patriarch Bartholomew's organisation 'Religion, Science and Environment' (Bartholomew I is the Archbishop of Constantinople).

Francis's own words in 'The Office of the Passion' "the Most Holy Father of heaven, our King before all ages, sent His Beloved Son from on high..." (Francis of Assisi, 1999i: 156). Thus, Franciscan Formation begins in Christ, it is a Christocentric vision of life and being. It invites the Franciscan to pose Christ radically, internally and through a day-to-day basis which makes visible the incarnate spirituality of the Son of God.

Creation develops an interconnectedness of forming and growing in a constant and continual process. The emphasis is that Franciscan Formation is a radical process built on the 'Gospel Life' (see sections 4:3 and 4:6) which follows Francis's own teaching. The necessity of a deep-seated Franciscan Formation being developed and deployed is the intention of this thesis and that Franciscans should remain faithful to their heritage, to their founder, and the charism of the Franciscan movement. However, that there is a watering down of the fundamental teaching of Francis of Assisi and his spirituality today cannot be denied. There is a lot more that Franciscans could do to make visible steps which would create a Franciscan exemplarism for the modern time, in the same way that Pope Francis is presenting it today. The stress on the importance of revival of the imitation of Francis's life based on the gospel itself promote a radical life (see sections 4.1; 4.2; 4.3; and 4.8 which discusses the radical nature of Franciscan life). The starting point is individual conversion on a personal level. It begins on the individual level. Franciscans should be directed to learn how to live it in a personal way in the spirit of Francis of Assisi. This learning is not once and for all, but it is a process to enable a lifestyle without succumbing to the wiles of the consumer society.

The centrality of the person has recently become the core concept in the method of formation. This radical new system which turned traditional formative systems upside down originated as long ago as St. Francis, who challenged the binomial superior-subject relationship to that of master-disciple. The Superior is the minister who serves his/her subjects.¹⁴³ In Franciscan Formation there is a deep spiritual freedom to enable

¹⁴³ This turns the social triangle upside down where the leader is serving his subjects. The model of the pyramid or triangle is often used in secular terminology: where the CEO is at the top of the pyramid

the Formators to respect the dignity of each person. Francis explains this as, “I have done what is mine; may Christ teach you what is yours” (Thomas of Celano, 2000:386). The dichotomy is that although this is true, at the same time the Franciscan puts his/her life into the context with that of St. Francis and their life must always be an advocacy of the mantle of Francis. The quotation above clearly expounds Francis’s belief. This is a process by which ‘postulants’ can live their lives in their time and place in the way Francis lived his life in his time and place.

Francis is the model and ‘Master of Formation’ for Franciscans (see section 4.5), but in turn he “saw Jesus as the model human being, who set the standard and marked the way for all other humans to travel on the journey of daily life towards the fullness of life with God” (see Nothwehr, 2005:8). This does not mean following a blueprint, but by becoming what each individual can be as a disciple of Christ because all are different from one another. This individuality is shown in the various ways in which people respond to God’s call. For Francis, vocation was based on the gospel and he followed this principle throughout his life (see Inter-Franciscan Commission. 1999:239). Through identity with the gospel, a Franciscan is on the path to become more Christ-like. This identity is based both on the individual and the community and has become a guiding principle for all Franciscans.

In dealing with the development and conversion of the Brothers, Francis insisted that the formative process is to be done with utmost care and the approach is through gentleness and compassion. It is clear from his ideals that the motivating factor for the Formator is the development of the one being formed. The Formator can maximise the hidden potential of the one being formed, and it is to be done with consideration, care and loving respect in the process of growth. Humility is also a gift that the Formator will

and all other employees know their place beneath him/her. However, the Christian model is contrary to this with the pyramid is inverted so that the leader serves the people. (cf. Herbst, 2009:116). See also ‘The Earlier Rule’ (Francis of Assisi, 1999d: 71-97) and Christ’s words: “I am among you as one who serves” (Lk. 22:27).

need because through the Formator's humility the candidate will be able to allow his human potentials and gifts to grow and blossom.

Francis proposed a balanced Christian pedagogy for formation. Early Franciscans understood that education is part of formation. The aim of Franciscan Formation is transformation and this is shown through total surrender to Christ. It can be helpful to examine the lives of people who paved the way, for example: Anthony of Padua, Julian of Speyer, Henri d'Avranches, Alexander of Hales and Bonaventure who were the foundation of the 'Franciscan Intellectual Tradition' (see sections 4.4 and 4.5). Here Bonaventure's 'Purgative Way', 'Illuminative Way' and 'Unitive Way' are paramount (see section 4.5).

It is easy to mould a person into what the formator thinks they should be, but far harder to discern their gifts and encourage and nurture what is already there in embryo. Franciscan ideals are ageless and seem to have a great attraction to the contemporary world. The richness and validity of these ideals have great impact in any system of thought and faith. The *Poverello's* ideals and his style make him the teacher to all generations. There are four important areas in Francis's pedagogy. First, he educated himself in the 'School of the Divine Master', then he formed the friars that the Lord gave him in the 'School of the Evangelical Life' and the Apostolic Mission. Thirdly, he inspired Consecrated Sisters to be joyfully dedicated to the Beloved. Finally, he educated the people to better discover the Christ of the gospels. This was a Lay Spirituality which Francis pioneered and has been held in great esteem, especially since Vatican Council II, with the 'Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity' (see Pope Paul VI, 1965). 'Lay Formation' is becoming an increasingly necessary training ground in the Catholic Church and could lead to the transformation of individuals as well as the Church.

In Francis, the human and the divine are increasingly united; nature and grace meet. Any feeling of opposition between spirit and matter, creation and creator, science and revelation are dissolved into one. On top of this it is important to realise that in Francis's

mind nobody is privileged and nobody is excluded, so that all are integrated: finite and infinite, mortality and immortality, life and death, light and darkness are embraced.¹⁴⁴ In Francis there is no division; it is all-embracing. He guides and teaches Franciscans to have the ability to put the Spirit and the world together. This is seen in Franciscan prayer where human frailty is acknowledged and yet the one at prayer is open and ready to receive God in adoration and joy. Francis's call was a call to holiness and virtue.

"Francis's anthropological horizon hinges upon fundamental earthly graceful virtues using the resources of the individual. In this way the person is assisted to mature according to the stature of Christ" (Temperini. 1997:175). In Franciscan theological formation it is important to recognise growth towards "the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13), which requires a maturation in the humanity as Christ. The expected growth is in full stature of Christ. Nguyen Van Si writes: "Wherever Christ lives, he transforms his dwelling according to his plan. Christ forms the inner self in his own image, in such a way that we are transformed into his and identified with him" (Nguyen Van Si. 1997:137). Franciscan Formation is a development of the "inner self", the "inner person" through God's grace in Christ and a "growth toward the fullness of Christ" (Nguyen Van Si, 1997:137). This is done in the awareness that human beings are called the image of God, the soul being conformed to God as to its expressed likeness. A Franciscan formator's task should be to create 'Franciscan self-knowledge', which is rooted in the process of forming the Religious to the contemporary world. The spiritual growth depends on this awareness of having an affinity, to attain a spiritual image in relation to the imprinted image of God.

Francis understood his Religious movement as a way of guiding humanity to "spiritual perfection" (Temperini. 1997:175). But in his writings, Francis provides a method of

¹⁴⁴ This is a change of direction from the Zoroastrian ideas of conflict between Ahura Mazda (Creator) and Angra Mainyu (Evil One) often represented in terms of light and darkness. It even goes further than the balance attempted in the Yin Yang Taoist philosophy of trying to keep opposites in balance (light/dark, male/female, high/low, hot/cold etc.). This is often thought of as good/bad, but it is far more complex than that.

Formation which is often forgotten by Franciscan formators. Francis proposed a full and balanced human development by being sensitive to the values of earthly existence, a careful understanding of the signs of the time, openness to fraternity, and the readiness to share joys and sorrows in a constructive way. Francis's formation method is anthropological as well as spiritual. (cf. Temperini. 1997:175). Thus, the contributory statements of Seamus Mulholland, highlight that Franciscan anthropology is central to Franciscan Formation (see Mulholland. 2005:23)¹⁴⁵. The construction of human character is not merely vested in the hands of the Master, but by the collaborative efforts of God and the one being formed. This is done by encouraging a gradual maturity to be developed in formees on the wings of a loving formator, through God's grace. The development involves both the individual and the community. The community is based on the Trinitarian relationship of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, from whence vocation comes and mission follows. In Franciscan Formation relationship can never be over-emphasised.

The 'Gospel Life' which Francis emphasises shows Francis's growth in holiness and was designed to inspire men and women everywhere. Most of it is devoted to conversion, "promotion of the gospel, and his [Francis's] example and teaching of Christian holiness" (Thomas of Celano, 1999: 175).

Francis sought and responded obediently to the will of God as he believed it to have been given to him throughout the radical changes to his life.

Francis's discernment over his future was to result in setting in place a process of continual change and it demanded Francis abandoning the call to be a knight even though he had thought it to be right in his early life. Francis went through: long periods of prayer in solitude and in churches; tremendous devotion to the poor crucified; a tireless searching, in which he abandoned many aspects of his previous life. This all led

¹⁴⁵ "...the Franciscan formative process becomes broader than 'formation'. It becomes a Franciscan anthropology since formation is about the human project and its endeavour in the world" (Mulholland, 2005:23).

to mendicancy and seeking out the poorest in society by confronting the leper within and without himself. Francis was resolute in pursuing whatever course he discerned to be right regardless of what he encountered from other people. Always seeking Church support as he did so, even in abandoning his father's lifestyle.

Francis's radical conversion was accompanied by changes, such as the stripping and abandoning of clothing to create an austere life, taking up masonry, becoming more aware of his true Lord and his unimaginable love for him. Francis acted alone on his spiritual journey, but found company in prayer and in the priest at San Damiano. He lost any sense of fear of earthly obstacles. Hence, Franciscans are called to continue to have an experience of radical spiritual formation in the priorities of life.

The radical nature of the Franciscan life is not limited to pondering on the life of the saint, rather it invites Franciscans into a constant engagement with a process that demands continual on-going formation. When this radical nature of Franciscan life is lost, then there is no authenticity of Francis's spirit left

In today's busy world asceticism enables a Franciscan Religious to contemplate through solitude and silence their own place in God's world and their task of mission in his Church. This is part of Spiritual Formation and in the Franciscan, context should lead to a 'letting-go' and submitting to the Gospel life in poverty and penance. This means that Franciscan Formation is always an on-going process which follows Francis's catchphrase "Let us begin, brothers, to serve the Lord our God, for up to now we have done little" (Bonaventure of Bagnoregio. 2000:640), which is formative and continues to engage to renew life on a daily basis. In the book of Revelation, a similar theme echoes, "'Behold, I make all things new'" Rev. 21:5). Hence, to engage a relentless formation is the clarion call of all Franciscans. The social life of Franciscan Religious Life has been emphasised (see The Union of Superior Generals, 1993:26) and is shown through the work Franciscan do as NGOs in the United Nations and in their JPIC movement for justice, peace and integrity in creation.

If Saggau is correct in her belief that Vatican Council II should be seen as a “Transitional Council” (Saggau, 2004:72) between the Church in medieval times and today, then the Spirit of God needs to be released with less emphasis by the Church on structures and position and more on the gospel. The Church of God will then be re-built as Francis envisaged. In this, Franciscans have a vital role.

The Franciscan *sine proprio* (without property/poverty) recalls that life is the gift of God and does not belong to anyone else. My contention is that Franciscans should return again and again to this basic truth from their founder.

6.2 FURTHER RESEARCH

There is a need for further research on Franciscan understanding of formation based on the latest systematic sources of Francis of Assisi. This study provides a foundation for further research on how Francis of Assisi’s life and writings could aid Franciscans today in this way of life. A further development on prayer, suffering, peace and justice could indeed highlight a Franciscan Formation for integration.

Systematic research is required for Franciscan theological hermeneutics within the Franciscan tradition for Franciscan Formation. The intention of the author is to initiate and produce more scholarly thoughts and theology in the field of Franciscan Formation. The important factor in this is to further Franciscan Formation as an on-going process. If Franciscans are to be relevant, there is a greater need to produce fresh thinking enlivened with modern presentations. The research covers an in-depth survey of Franciscan teachings and theology. However, there are still quintessential elements that need to be more thoroughly researched for Franciscans in the contemporary world. The research discovered that Bonaventure’s philosophy and theology have not been used in formation in the wider sense. Bonaventure’s paradigm in ‘Soul’s Journey into God’ directs a formative integration of life as a journey of ‘Purgative’, ‘Illuminative’ and ‘Unitive’ (see section 4.5). These three are an excellent method for examining Franciscan Formation in the present time and in the future.

6.3 APPLICATION OF THE LIFE OF FRANCIS OF ASSISI FOR THE GUIDANCE OF FRANCISCAN FORMATION

The research has already applied many of the perspectives of Francis of Assisi's life as an endearing example of being Francis as the true Master of Formation (see details in section 3.2). Inevitably, the researcher's desire is to illustrate certain practical applications from the thesis to present the importance of Francis and his life and writings as an imparting of formative recommendations. The question arises as to why those engaged in Franciscan Formation today are not able to shape and practice these values in a radical way. Hence, it is essential to create concrete awareness of this and to return to the origin of the Franciscan movement, Francis himself.

Although Francis had no set pattern to form himself, rather in his writing of 'The Testament' he clearly states: "and after the Lord gave me some brothers, no one showed me what I had to do, but the Most High Himself revealed to me that I should live according to the pattern of the Holy Gospel" (Francis of Assisi, 1999:125). The cause of his radical living sprung from the pattern of the holy gospel. Francis was the son of a merchant and he developed a way of living a radical pattern of the gospel, forming himself and his first followers. This study, by looking at Francis as a Master of Formation, and presents Franciscan elements as the basis of Franciscan Formation.

Francis's practice of the gospel precepts is inseparable from his deep grasp of the teachings of Jesus. The three gospel quotations that inspired Francis's gospel vocation are embedded in the imitation of Christ after opening the Gospel Book with Brother Bernard three times (see section 4.2 for the quotation from Thomas of Celano, 2000:254).

Francis's exemplary practical living of the gospel demonstrates a profound theological understanding of the words of Jesus and the mysteries of the gospel. Moreover, Jesus constantly drew people to himself to shape and form the disciples through his teaching to make visible the face of God.

Francis radical lifestyle has a comprehensive scope from his conversion to conformation. A true disciple of the gospel demands a continual reassessment of the person's progress and development. Francis's understanding that up to now we have done nothing brothers, let us begin again, really sets a fire under a radical and holistic view of gospel life.¹⁴⁶ It is never over or complete, people should start over and over again, in order to set forth towards the goal to attain full perfection.

Formation into Christ is therefore, practised and lived in the present moment for Franciscans. This is highlighted by Pope Francis in his choice of a papal name and the several encyclicals of the present time.

Francis's following of Jesus commands respect as well an approach to the Franciscan life and formation. His life and teaching have the capacity to bring new depth, focus, dynamism to the Franciscan Formation in the contemporary era when our times requires more examples rather than intellectual pronouncements.

6.4 SUGGESTED APPLICATION FROM THE FINDINGS IN THIS RESEARCH

- 1) Those involved in Franciscan Formation, including the formees, should be radically inspired, be steeped in the gospel and live the gospel in the way that Francis did. These are as the main tenets in the process of Franciscan Formation.
- 2) Franciscans should develop a deep perception of the person of Francis who focused all his attention on following Christ. Hence, the Franciscan Should draw certain principles from the saint's values, spirituality and charism in the process of emerging with a gospel character that will lead to a spiritual formation.
- 3) This thesis can be used as a basis for a more scholarly theological study to research into Franciscan theologians of the 13th century, such as St.

¹⁴⁶ See section 3.2.

Bonaventure Bagnoregio and Duns Scotus, as well as many others, who have sought to draw a spiritual portrait closer to what Francis has left in his writings. These theologians have proposed to bring out the theology and spiritual personality of Francis of Assisi in all its richness, complexity and profound steadfastness.

- 4) A formator should have the comparable attitude of Francis, who was totally imbued with the Spirit of Jesus. Hence, this would involve an understanding that the role of impartation is one of great responsibility and would require great effort to be an example before being a mentor.
- 5) Francis was a son of the Church, which is displayed in his fidelity and submission to the Church. However, he remained a free and charismatic man who was able to conform within the framework of the institutional Church. Hence, Franciscan Formation needs to enable people to follow their charism within the Church. The Church must, therefore, be central in the formator's and formee's life.
- 6) Francis is full of spontaneity, freshness, and imagination. The biographers portray him as a man within the singing rhythm of nature; a man with tears; a man with dramatic expressions of kissing the leper; letting-go of his own desire to be a knight; and standing before the Bishop of Assisi, his parents and the people of Assisi which would have required radical thinking. Francis cannot be taken as a romantic personality, rather he presents the world with dramatic and emotional aspects of devotion. Francis, extemporaneity could set fire to the passion in Franciscan Formation, which would enable a formation programme to be effective and affective at the same time.
- 7) The spiritual presence of Francis of Assisi should be cultivated within the formation of the Franciscan movement. Biographies and spiritual books that

illustrate the most remarkable aspects of Francis's personality could be used in the various stages of formation and as tools for on-going formation.

- 8) This dimension of the spiritual presence of Francis is illustrated by the stigmata he received. It is a further experience of his devotion to the Passion of Christ as well as to Francis's crib at Greccio, which shows his innovation and his endearing love for his Eucharistic Lord. Francis's understanding of radical poverty, his connection to nature and his cheerfulness are truly an authentic characteristic and the most evangelical experience of the saint.
- 9) Francis of Assisi has offered insight for Franciscan life and formation, though not by written methods or formulae, but by a comprehensive and radical suggestion to form a person to gospel discipleship with a complete openness to the life-process of growing into Christ. In his final statement, Francis stated: "Let us begin again Brothers" hence, there is no end in forming oneself in the gospel precepts.

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