

Title: How can the Spiritual Development of the Student be best encouraged in a Theological School?

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The desire to grow in grace and in the knowledge of God, deepening one's relationship with God is the longing of every Christian. Theological educators concerned with spiritual formation in theological schools are concerned with helping students in their spiritual development, but perhaps focus should now begin to shift to how Theological Schools can create the condition for growth. The Christian who wants to train for ministry must pay attention to his spiritual 'fitness', this comes through spiritual development. Academic excellence and achievement are often seen as the hallmark of scholarship and status in society (and I dare say even in the Church), but while intellectual preparation for ministry is essential, spiritual preparation is even more so. "Before and above being learned, a minister must be godly."¹ The practice of setting intellectual preparation against spiritual development is an unhealthy dichotomy. The issue is not whether having an eye is better than having an arm, both are essential for the proper functioning of the body. That major Debates and Consultations in Theological Education in recent years have focussed on 'spiritual formation' is an indication of the importance that is now placed on spiritual development.

The **spiritual development** of the student will be largely influenced by the student's own understanding of his call to ministry. Ministry is not so much a profession as it is the "fruit of vocation."² So when the College says it is committed to spiritual development, what does it mean? If like the Jesuits believe, that there are two aspects to spiritual

¹ Warfield, B. B, *The Religious Life of Theological Students*, Grand Rapids, Presbyterian and Reformed, n. d, p.2

² O'Malley, J, "Spiritual Formation for Ministry, Some Roman Catholic Traditions – their Past and Present" in Neuhaus, R. J, (Ed), *Theological Education and Moral Formation*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1992, p. 85.

development – “conversion of heart and external conformity to norms of behaviour”³, then the College has a responsibility to help the student in his spiritual pursuit to guard against the danger of focussing primarily on external conformity to norms as a reliable sign for spiritual development.

Wakefield describes **spirituality** as attitudes, beliefs, and practices which are geared towards aiding spiritual development. “Spiritual formation is the intentional process by which the marks of an authentic Christian spirituality are formed and integrated.”⁴ Down the ages, true spiritual longing for an intimacy with God has been one of the greatest passions of many Christians, and this is rooted in the grace and mercy of God.

If as Thomas á Kempis declared, Jesus remains a present reality in the life of a Christian, then he still exercises a “formative influence on the growth of the spiritual life of the Christian in the present,”⁵ and not being a mere figure of past history, spiritual development involves imitating his life. The desire to do the will of the Father was the hallmark of Jesus’ life. Like Jesus, as his disciples, the path to self – denial, resignation to the will of God for our lives must be the focus for theological schools in the process of spiritual development.

Theological Schools exist to train Christians for leadership in the Church (and society). Although the College has the privilege to initiate and encourage spiritual development in the student through discipleship training and creating appropriate contexts, the student nonetheless has the primary responsibility with the help of the Holy Spirit to desire and own this goal. A student who responds “I want my seminary experience to form me as a person of prayer,”⁶ has placed his vision, and passion in the hands of the Holy Spirit to mould as clay in the potter’s hands. “Spiritual formation is the activity of the Holy Spirit which moulds our lives into the likeness of Jesus Christ.”⁷ The Holy Spirit at work in a believer and within the Church seeks to make us more like Christ and our cooperation

³ Ibid., p. 85

⁴ Amirtham, S, and Pryor, R, (Eds), Invitation to the Feast of Life: Resources for Spiritual Formation in Theological Education, Geneva, WCC, n. d., p.185

⁵ Tinsley, E. J, “Thomas a Kempis” in Wakefield, G. S, (Ed) A Dictionary of Christian Spirituality, London, SCM Press, 1983, pp. 379.

⁶ “Formed for Ministry: A Program in Spiritual Formation” in <http://www.religion-online.org> Sept. 2005

⁷ “What is Spiritual Formation? In <http://www.pcusa.org> Sept. 2005

through certain practices that make us open and responsive to Him moves us on in this sacred mystery. The college through its curriculum, the faculty, students, resources within, the church and society provide an appropriate environment to help the student in his spiritual development.

In many Colleges, goals are aimed at developing academics, spiritual formation and skills, but often; priority is on the attainment of academic excellence to the detriment of the spiritual dimension. There is the unconscious divide that spirituality is nurtured in worship service, prayer meetings, retreats and organized conferences while the classroom is largely for the acquisition of mental knowledge.⁸ Nouwen suggests that theological schools should be seeking to form “spiritually sensitive persons who are aware of their woundedness and yet are called to be healers.”⁹ Because the Christian is aware of his own vulnerability, he shows compassion and understands the need for mutual dependency with others. College goals must therefore focus on the student, encouraging him to be open to new thoughts, ideas, rather than rigid in traditions (intellectual and spiritual). This is more so in Africa where students may experience spiritual crisis during their training through challenges from exposure to new ideas.

Spiritual development cannot be narrowed down to theological education alone; it is much wider. Through the arts, drama, liturgy, and socio – political activities, spirituality can also be developed.

But we must remember that any form of spirituality is only because of the grace of God. Spirituality is experiencing the reality of our salvation in Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit in us to live for Him through training in godliness, prayer and the Word.

The College **Curriculum** is an important element in the spiritual development process of the student. But Curriculum is not an end in itself; it is only an aid towards **the goal and**

⁸ Generally, faculty and students feel overburdened with everyone focusing on the final product (often this means academic achievement) that there is no room for a meaningful spiritual, reflective self to emerge along the way. Also many teachers feel they are not competent in the task of helping students spiritually, so they ignore the process. Taken from: Croatto, J. S, in Amirtham, S, and Pryor, R, (Eds), Invitation to the Feast of Life: Resources for Spiritual Formation in Theological Education, Geneva, WCC, n. d.

⁹ Amirtham, S, and Pryor, R, (Eds), Invitation to the Feast of Life: Resources for Spiritual Formation in Theological Education, Geneva, WCC, n. d. p2

vision of the College and student. The goal of the Curriculum is “the formation of a committed leader who is intellectually informed, professionally equipped and spiritually maturing”¹⁰, so he can faithfully proclaim the gospel. The acquisition of a cognitive knowledge of God’s Word, its interpretation and application to the student’s life and world would help to nurture his spiritual development only if organized effectively. In the process of providing this for the student, the College must not encourage a Curriculum that marginalizes spirituality. Knowing the content of what the Bible says is not enough, the student’s attitude and heart is also important. Having understood God’s Word, the student must have a heart that longs to love and obey. The student need to acknowledge the Authority of the Bible as God’s authentic Word that can speak to his life, so he should be encouraged to develop the art of memorizing Scripture for edification.¹¹

Introducing another program for spiritual development per se into the existing Curriculum merely adds pressure to both teacher and students. Rather, College should actively pursue the integration of spiritual development process within the overall program of the College; this will enable the student to relate his spirituality to the academic and training aspects of the Curriculum. Students and teachers must not fall into the error that “academic excellence, measured by ones grasp of written texts, is the primary preparation for ministry.”¹² If students get the wrong idea that the primary goal and emphasis of the College is academic pursuits, they will begin to devote more time to the academic rather than things like worship, music, relating with a matured Christian, which also feeds spiritual development.

If the College is committed to “the cultivation of spiritually sensitive souls,”¹³ which they should, then it must not heighten the tension between academics and spiritual development by its Curriculum and Methodology. Theological Education as a means to a spiritual end should be committed to helping the student discern the way of God in his

¹⁰ Amirtham, S and Pryor, R, (Eds), Invitation to the Feast of Life: Resources for Spiritual Formation in Theological Education, Geneva, WCC, n. d. p.88.

¹¹ Nicholls, B, “The Role of Spiritual Development in Theological Education “, in Bowers, P., (Ed)Evangelical Theological Education Today: Agenda for Renewal, Nairobi, Evangel Publishing House/WEF, 1982,p.130.

¹² Amirtham, S and Pryor, R (Eds), p134

¹³ Cheesman, G, “Spiritual Formation as a Goal of Theological Education” in <http://www.theologicaleducation.org/docs/resource2>, p.5, Sept. 2005

life. There must be a deliberate change in the spiritual programs offered and the approach of delivery. There must be a deliberate move from the scientific study of the Bible and Theology which produces gaps in the student's academic development which the teacher then tries to fill with the odd spiritual formation modules he can lay his hands on. Spirituality must be made central not peripheral in the life of the student. In some Colleges in Latin America, spiritual formation programs are taught using new approaches based on the students own pastoral and socio – historical needs. The results have been the enhancement of spiritual development in students who are now able to relate these to their own context. The extent to which faculty and students own and support this holistic approach to Theological Education will affect the attainment of meaningful spiritual development. Students able to relate knowledge gained to daily living will be open to teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, this is the proper equipping.

The College should not restrict its Curriculum to Theology and Bible subjects alone. Courses that help shed light on the process of contextualization should be introduced. It will help students relate spirituality more meaningfully to knowledge acquired and the public nature of ministry in the Church. Applied Theology must be made relevant to personal life, e.g. teaching Church History, Ethics etc in an African College is often very stressful. It is difficult creating and sustaining interest in students because many of the concepts used come in cultural clothing that students are unable to unwrap or relate to. Many have no idea where the Europe of today is, and they are required to imagine the Roman Empire of the 16th c. If the student is able to link thoughts with existing spirituality in his context, it might be easier for him to understand. In finding an effective model, the teacher must pay attention to student's individual needs whilst not encouraging individualism.

Prayer is an important element in spiritual development. Teachers and students must see themselves as partners together in the spiritual pilgrimage of Prayer. The school has the responsibility to help students deepen their prayer life through formal and informal, personal and corporate prayers. It is not just talking about prayers; emphasis must be on the doing and living the life of prayer through providing an “environment and

opportunities for students to develop and practice a life – style of prayer.”¹⁴ While “we cannot tightly package Christian spirituality, we can humbly prepare ourselves and others to listen to the Spirit’s wind and move with it, utilizing all the modes of knowing and trusting with which we are gifted.”¹⁵ Students must be able to relate beliefs with practices which the School must see is not wedged against each other. One must not exist without the other so students can learn to adequately nurture the interrelation of prayer, study and service (or any other discipline). The concept of role model will be very helpful in this particular area but care must be taken not to create a situation where students concentrate on the object of the role model rather than internalizing virtues learnt.

Attention must not only be paid to the curriculum, **the role of the Faculty** is also very important in the spiritual development process of students.

College need to pay attention to the composition of staff as they would serve as role models to the students. The personality, spiritual maturity of the teachers can influence their input into the student. Sometimes, many teachers feel they are not competent in the task of helping students develop spiritually. In such a situation, the teacher is unlikely to be able to deal with spirituality in the regular academic subjects in which he is an authority. Integrating the academic and experiential dimensions of the regular courses offered may also be very difficult for him, and yet he is an essential link in the chain for enhancing spiritual development.

The **Principal** of the College not only has the responsibility of owning the goals of the College, he has the added responsibility of motivating the faculty and students in the task of spiritual development. Each faculty member must see the spiritual development of students as part of his responsibility. The teacher should regularly ask himself the question, how am I helping to form a person from my particular hermeneutical position and how does my work contribute to the intellectual, practical and spiritual life of students? The teacher must see that the aspect of the Curriculum that he is responsible for reflects the overall goal of the College (to enhance the spiritual development of the

¹⁴ Amirtham, S and Pryor, R, (Ed), Invitation to the Feast of Life: Resources for Spiritual Formation in Theological Education, Geneva, WCC, n. d. p85.

¹⁵ Ibid.

student). It is an awesome responsibility when one considers that the spiritual development of students “begin with, and is dependent upon, the spiritual formation and development of the faculty”,¹⁶ because all of the experiences of the student have an impact on him spiritually, his “spiritual formation cannot be left to chance, any more than the pastoral or strictly academic components of ministerial formation.”¹⁷ All who are responsible for the execution of Theological Schools must acknowledge the importance of spiritual development at all levels of planning, budgeting, and admission and then move on to support the College in this noble task.

The **relationship between teacher and student** should be cordial. Attention should be paid to factors that affect trust, openness, and individual traits in the classroom setting. In some Colleges, special attention is given to developing “mutual spiritual formation” of both faculty and students. Together, they are on the spiritual pilgrimage.¹⁸ If approaches like these are pursued more regularly by the College, the integration of academics with the spiritual dimension which students often find difficult might improve. Organizing regular spiritual development seminars for teachers to interact, share ideas, and evaluate existing programs will help to improve the spiritual development process.

Programs that are culturally determined may inhibit response to spiritual development in students. Also, participating in intercollegiate seminars and workshops can be of great value for faculty members. Staff/student ratio in many Colleges are so high that it is usually very difficult for teachers to effectively combine teaching with paying attention to student’s individual spiritual needs. In such situations, the issue of trust, confidence is difficult to establish and yet the teacher is to be the role model of spirituality to the student. The **role of language** is also important in spiritual development. Language should not be seen only in terms of the written word. The choice of words, symbols, images and visuals makes a difference to communicating especially where students have to study in a language that is not their first language.

¹⁶ Ibid, p.8

¹⁷ Buechlein, D, in Edwards, T. H, “Spiritual Formation in Theological Schools: Ferment and Challenge” in Theological Education, 1980, p 37.

¹⁸ Edwards, T. H, “Spiritual Formation in Theological Schools: Ferment and Challenge” in Theological Education, 1980, p.15

Programs designed to help with the spiritual development of students should allow for flexibility and freedom. Provision should be made for voluntary participation of students because genuine spiritual learning will not take place under pressure. The student should be directly involved in determining the form, content, and goals of his spiritual development, since there has to be a willingness on his part to make it happen. It is important that those responsible for the process of spiritual development need to be familiar with where the student is spiritually. Often College thinks the student is at a particular level of spiritual development through contact with the Church, society, and family. But this is not necessarily the case. Many who come to College are recent converts with little or no experience in spiritual disciplines.

The responsibility for the spiritual development of the student lies largely with the **individual student**. Many students have a narrow understanding of spirituality and ministry. Spirituality is directed towards the whole person (body, soul, and mind), the community and expresses itself in the proper integration of the whole person. Students should be encouraged to cultivate the art of writing “spiritual biographies,” such an exercise will help them reflect on their spiritual experience.¹⁹

The student must desire in his heart to be a ‘good workman’, faithful whatever the task at hand as “no religious character can be built upon the foundation of neglected duty.”²⁰ Every aspect of theological studies must be seen as a religious exercise designed to nurture spiritual growth, so in addition to his mind, his heart must be in his study too so that he can experience a rich and wholesome spiritual life in the various encounters with God.

The students must not become too familiar and so complacent with spiritual things; rather this should make him more aware of his privileges and opportunities in Christ and so strive for holiness. The student should be part of the faith community in the College

¹⁹ Amirtham, S and Pryor, R, (Eds), Invitation to the Feast of Life: Resources for Spiritual Formation in Theological Education, Geneva, WCC, n. d. p.162.

²⁰ Warfield, B. B, The Religious Life of Theological Students, Grand Rapids, Presbyterian and Reformed, n. d, p.5

through prayers, worship and fellowship. He should integrate and be involved in the corporate life of the College, offering to be a support to someone and be willing to receive support too. As a Christian, we need each other, for “the holiest personal life can scarcely afford to dispense with stated forms of devotion, and that the regular public worship of the Church, for all its local imperfections and dullness, is a divine provision for sustaining the individual soul.”²¹ The student must not lose sight of his call, the immensity of the task, and the limitations of his resources. Living within this consciousness will encourage him to keep his spiritual quest aglow and nurtured continually in the Word of God. Activity in Christian work must not be allowed to be a substitute for abiding in Christ always.

It has also been observed that **the spiritual quality of the student** coming to College can also influence spiritual development. If a student does not have a firm spiritual anchorage before coming to College, he may have difficulty making any significant progress in this area since there isn't much to build on. In Africa, there are many who come to College not because they have a call, but because they want to prepare for a career that may not necessarily have anything to do with ministry and yet spiritual development being a life-long process does not end with graduation.

Paying attention to **Curriculum, Faculty and Students** are not enough, **methodology** is also very important in spiritual development. Some learning methods are more conducive to spiritual development, encourage these,²² but avoid those that inhibit spiritual development like “the banking system of learning,”²³ where students acquire knowledge for examination purposes only. Students learn more when through reflection and small group discussions they are able to process materials. Whatever the method used, it must be geared towards achieving the larger overall goal – the spiritual development of the

²¹ Ibid, p.11

²² The use of participatory and team – oriented methods of teaching, seminars, case study, and interdisciplinary courses lead to great student involvement in the learning process and will help both teacher and students identify their strengths and weakness. Amirtham, S, p78

²³ Amirtham, S and Pryor, R, (Eds), Invitation to the Feast of Life: Resources for Spiritual Formation in Theological Education, Geneva, WCC, n. d. p.78.

student, bearing in mind that “a finely constructed, careful approach to spiritual formation assumptions, practices, and evaluation procedures does not guarantee spiritual maturation among students.”²⁴ Deliberate effort must be made to integrate the intellectual, social, cultural, and spiritual dimensions of the student’s life in the educational process. The orientation of the material taught in ministerial training should be such that academic pursuits are done within the context of an existing spiritual foundation and not in isolation. **Individual attention** is also very important. During teaching sessions, the teacher should be sensitive and learn to listen to the student initiating discussions around lessons and how what has been learnt can be shared with others in their community.²⁵ To reduce the risk of placing scholarship above the spiritual dimension, teaching sessions should be made to reflect and strengthen spirituality.

College must avoid presenting theology in fragmented autonomous disciplines as this encourages shallowness in spiritual understanding of academic theological thoughts. College listening to the needs of the Church should try and accommodate these in the Curriculum (although this will be difficult in an interdenominational setting). For example if the liturgical life of the church remains central to the theological and spiritual formation of its members, then the academic theology in the College ought to pay greater attention to this, so it has more to offer.

The concept of **Community** is very important for spiritual development. Many believe that “spirituality is rooted in community,”²⁶ living together in a community gives an experience that is not otherwise learnt. Residential Theological School as a community of faith provides an excellent environment for spiritual development. Although spiritual development is personal, it cannot be reduced to an individualistic exercise, it is to be

²⁴ Edwards, T. H, “Spiritual Formation in Theological Schools: Ferment and Challenge” in Theological Education, 1980,p.24.

²⁵ Tamez, E., in Amirtham, S and Pryor, R, (Eds), Invitation to the Feast of Life: Resources for Spiritual Formation in Theological Education, Geneva, WCC, n. d. p.22.

²⁶ Amirtham, S and Pryor, R, (Eds), Invitation to the Feast of Life: Resources for Spiritual Formation in Theological Education, Geneva, WCC, n. d. p.158.

lived and sought in community where all participants are willing to subscribe to some basic common goals. Living in community nurtures discipleship as a way of life, it encourages growth in discipline, mutual edification, personal trust, and foster healthy competition. The whole experience is even richer if teachers are actively involved in the community life, (and not just there to teach but perhaps to learn too) and effectively seeking to model principles of spirituality. These experiences provide valuable strands in the process of spiritual development of the individual student and community.

The two days at Castlewellan castle was an enriching experience for me at the beginning of a new milestone in my life. The weekly Fellowship Group here at Belfast Bible College is also enriching. Members take turn to lead each week; this builds trust, confidence and a sense of worth. Regular counselling programmes involving staff and students will enhance not only the spiritual development of the student but also of the College community. The inner dimension of personal faith should not be nurtured in isolation for it is not learning about spirituality but living out our faith.²⁷

Today though, the idea of a residential College is on the decline. Ideal as they are, it is becoming too expensive to sustain and many who are coming to College want to be able to keep a part-time job, and remain with the family. As a result, many can not benefit fully from the richness of community life in College. If the ideal spiritual community is available to aid and nurture the discipleship model, it will go a long way to reduce the tension between personal and community spirituality. Community life creates contacts that help students integrate meaningfully academic learning with personal faith and ministry in the world.

There are **other players** in the life of the College that influences spiritual development. One cannot over emphasize the importance of the Church in the spiritual development of the student. The Church as a valuable partner, comes alongside the College to provide “a living and personal context in which the student’s spirituality can grow and develop.”²⁸ If

²⁷ Edwards, T. H, “Spiritual Formation in Theological Schools: Ferment and Challenge” in Theological Education, 1980, p.159

²⁸ Amirtham, S and Pryor, R, (Eds), Invitation to the Feast of Life: Resources for Spiritual Formation in Theological Education, Geneva, WCC, n. d. p.164.

the College must maintain the balance between academics, training and spiritual development, she needs the Church. This mutual relationship must be strengthened because the involvement of students in the life of the church gives the church the opportunity and privilege to mould and influence the student positively for ministry. The idea of internship for students after graduation should be encouraged by College and Church (this would mean more responsibility for the College). The pastoral care, love and acceptance which a new graduate receives in his first posting leave an unforgettable memory which nurtures spiritual training and development.

In Africa, the Church needs to do more in the area of the spirituality of candidates going to College. Many come with little or no faith formation, and working through meaningful integral faith life can be very difficult for them as they struggle through the various academic demands.

The **world** of the student is another factor that influences his spiritual development. A student that lives in the familiar comfort zone of the college must go into the real world after his studies. Out where the weak, the underprivileged are, is where the student's spirituality is waiting to be tested. "A spiritual journey which has never encountered suffering may lead to a false image of spirituality."²⁹ Extension Programs like the TEE³⁰ has as one of its strengths the opportunity for students to remain and learn within their context, this help to enrich the spiritual development of the student in a way that a Theological College may not be able to provide. The extent to which the College is able to help students integrate his internal and external spirituality and so reduce the tension between these two aspects of his life is an indication of the effectiveness of its efforts in the area of spiritual development. The College should strive to train contextually being aware of the world out there.

The student must be able to relate his internal spirituality with his neighbour. Real spiritual development cannot ignore a meaningful integration of these two spheres of the individual's life. Generally, in many Colleges, spiritual formation programs lean more to

²⁹ Ibid., p.158.

³⁰ TEE – Theological Education by Extension

the traditional internal spirituality, the external strand is often ignored. Students are left on their own to source for this or at best they are given the theoretical tips to the 'how' of that area of spirituality. To reduce or eliminate this tension, the College must help students pursue spirituality as a discipleship process and in context. Gutierrez considers spirituality from this angle when he describes it as "a process of double conversion: to God and to our neighbour,"³¹ for the student cannot really go through the spiritual process in isolation, he needs his context to nurture his experience, but he must always let the Word of God be the standard in assessing the truth.

It has been observed generally that, many theological schools achieve academic and skill formation more readily than spiritual formation, perhaps not only because it is more difficult to implement, it is also more difficult to measure. Although **evaluating** spiritual development is difficult and inherently subjective, it is nonetheless important. Getting students involved in their own evaluation (through self – evaluating questionnaires and report) and the use of examination questions that would challenge the student to relate knowledge and understanding of the subject to his own life can reveal much about the student's spiritual development. Whilst evaluating the spiritual development of a student may be so difficult, many theological educators are of the view that a student's "spiritual development must be a fundamental factor in determining his preparedness for receiving the theological degree or diploma at the end of his course."³² Students who have not shown adequate level of spiritual development should not be allowed to graduate; rather provision should be made for individual pastoral help in difficult areas of his spiritual life and understanding. If a student knows that his spirituality would be a central element in commending him for ministry, he is likely to pay serious attention to that area as well as seeking good academic grades.

There are many other smaller unseen factors that indirectly affect the spiritual development of the student that has not been mentioned. The issue of Church Tradition

³¹ Cheesman, G, "Spiritual Formation as a Goal of Theological Education" in <http://www.theologicaleducation.org/docs/resource2>, Set.2005,p.5

³² Nicholls, B, "The Role of Spiritual Development in Theological Education ", in Bowers, P., (Ed) *Evangelical Theological Education Today: Agenda for Renewal*, Nairobi, Evangel Publishing House/WEF, 1982, p.134.

and Authority plays a role in the student's spirituality. For example that celibacy remains a requirement for priesthood in the Roman Catholic tradition means sexuality is a factor in the spiritual and moral development of the student. Also, exercising authority in the Church affects spiritual development. The Church expects some measure of loyalty to its Authority, what happens when a student does not share that view? There is the constant silent pressure on the student to perform to impress others, the tension between "conformity to expectations and personal appropriation of religious values,"³³ makes genuine spiritual formation very difficult.

Conclusion

Programs are important (and necessary) and helpful in developing spirituality, but we must remember that it is not all about programs, methodology, and resources. Spiritual development is a "mystery of the human personality" that cannot be unravelled by following a good recipe. The factors that appear effective in the process of spiritual development are "evocative, not prescriptive ... aesthetic, not cognitive, that are inspirational, not clinical. These factors find best expression in poetry, music, dance, painting, and liturgy – all of which, except the last are notably lacking in most seminary situations, ..." ³⁴ The College need to pay attention to the overall nature of its Curriculum. The history of the Church shows that "the disciple has best been formed by sitting at the feet of someone who embodies the wisdom that is being striven for, of someone who by his or her life communicates what it means to live the human mystery in tranquillity and in surrender to God's will,..." ³⁵ This is what spiritual development is all about – following Christ and seeking to be like Him day by day.

There are a number of new initiatives in the effort to improve the process of spiritual development of students in the Theological School. One plausible suggestion is that students should go through a pre – theology program within the College that will help

³³ O'Malley, J, "Spiritual Formation for Ministry, some Roman Catholic Traditions – their Past, and Present" in Neuhaus, R. J, (Ed), Theological Education and Moral Formation, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1992,p.104

³⁴ Ibid., p.110

³⁵ Ibid.

both the college and the student assess meaningfully the spiritual level of students.

During this period, the college is able to influence the student positively.

The College should create a Resource Pool for spiritual development. This should include gifted clergy and laity from the community who can help as spiritual mentors and guide, this will help to boost the status of spiritual development in the life of the College.

Identify and support teachers who are gifted and feel called in the area of spiritual development. Help them to deepen their gifts through further training, attendance at conferences, retreats and dialogue with colleagues.

Encourage learning more by apprehension as comprehension alone is too limiting when it comes to the area of spirituality. The College must always remember that an important dimension to any spiritual development program is the understanding that “the program is not primarily focussed on objective, manipulative skills and concepts of spiritual guidance, but rather upon the continued unfolding of and surrender to grace in the lives of participants. This approach assumes that the main asset of the spiritual guide is his or her own integral presence with another, informed by personal faith, compassion, and the church’s experience and tradition.”³⁶ Every Christian should see himself as a “spiritual friend” and be willing to reach out to help someone else along the way on this journey together.

³⁶ Edwards, T. H, “Spiritual Formation in Theological Schools: Ferment and Challenge” in Theological Education, 1980, p.41.