Exploring socio-cultural issues regarding vocation to the priesthood and religious life in the context of Catholic Church today.

The priesthood and religious life are central expressions of Christian life and ministry in the Catholic Church. They cannot be approached in isolation from the theological perspective since the notion of constitutive elements of vocation, formation and spirituality emerges within the Catholic faith context. However, since much literature already explores the theological dimensions, the task of identifying and understanding the cultural and sociological issues that either support or lead to the abandonment of priestly and religious vocations are pertinent to this research.

The six bodies of literature relevant to the proposed research are:

- Historical background of the vocation to priesthood and religious life
- Contemporary Church teaching about the vocation to priesthood and religious life
- Contemporary social and cultural challenges to the vocation to priesthood and religious life
- Dominating ideologies of today that influence vocations to the priesthood and religious life.
- Programs of formation for priests and religious as they currently exist in the Catholic Church.
- Literature that examines the needs of formation in the future.

Alongside the theoretical-analytical method which is the focus of the context chapter and literature review, a group of priests, religious, ex-priests and ex-religious will be interviewed, followed by analysis of the collected data, which will enable a qualitative practical dimension to the research. These interviews will reveal their background, place and year of ordination or final profession to the religious life and the circumstances that led them to adopt or abandon their priestly and religious vocation, thus identifying sociological and cultural factors that impinge on these vocations. Furthermore, a substantial number of recommendations that could be integrated in the formation programs of priestly and religious life will be identified.