

MIND MAPS

1. Rationale within Formation

Claretian formation seeks to form missionaries who can understand deeply, think clearly, discern wisely, and proclaim the Gospel effectively. Achieving this requires more than acquiring knowledge; it requires learning how to organise ideas, recognise relationships, and integrate study with prayer, community life, and mission. Mind Maps offer a simple yet powerful way of developing these capacities.

A Mind Map is more than a note-taking technique. It is a visual thinking tool that helps organise information around a central idea, making it easier to understand, remember, and communicate. By connecting ideas through key words, images, colours, and branches, Mind Maps encourage learners to move beyond memorising information to seeing the bigger picture and understanding how ideas relate to one another.

For Claretian missionaries, this ability is especially valuable. Whether preparing a homily, studying theology, planning a pastoral activity, discerning a vocational decision, or evaluating an apostolic experience, missionaries constantly need to integrate different perspectives into a coherent whole. Mind Maps make this process easier by helping them identify what is essential, organise their thoughts, and communicate their message with clarity and confidence.

This module does not aim to teach artistic drawing or complicated software. Its purpose is to help Formandi develop a practical habit of organising their thinking visually so that learning becomes more meaningful, prayer more focused, planning more effective, and preaching more coherent. Through regular practice, Mind Maps become a simple but valuable tool for lifelong learning and missionary service.

Formation Example

A formandus is preparing a Sunday homily on the Good Samaritan. Instead of writing several pages of notes, he places the Gospel passage at the centre of a Mind Map. Around it, he creates branches for the main characters, key message, theological themes, present-day application, and practical invitation. At a glance, he can see the entire structure of the homily. His preparation becomes clearer, more focused, and easier to remember.

Reflection Questions

- How do I usually organise my study or preparation for ministry?
- Do I tend to collect information without seeing the connections between ideas?
- In what areas of my formation could Mind Maps help me think and communicate more clearly?

Practice It Now

Choose one simple topic from your current study or ministry, for example, a Gospel passage, a chapter from a theology book, or an upcoming community meeting. Create a simple Mind Map by:

- writing the main topic at the centre of a page;
- drawing four or five main branches;
- adding only key words or short phrases;
- using different colours to distinguish the main ideas.

Spend no more than **15 minutes** on the exercise. Afterwards, ask yourself: Did this help me understand the topic more clearly than ordinary notes?

Formative Insight: *Mind Maps do more than organise information; they organise thinking. As Formandi learn to connect ideas, identify what is essential, and communicate with clarity, they become better prepared to study faithfully, discern wisely, and proclaim the Gospel with confidence and simplicity.*

2. What Is a Mind Map?

A Mind Map is a visual tool for organising ideas around one central theme. Instead of writing long paragraphs or lists of notes, a Mind Map begins with a single key idea at the centre of the page and develops outward through branches that represent related concepts. By using key words, colours, symbols, and simple images, it enables learners to understand relationships between ideas quickly and remember them more easily.

Unlike traditional note-taking, which often records information in a linear sequence, a Mind Map presents the “big picture” at a glance. It helps the learner move from collecting information to understanding how ideas fit together. For this reason, Mind Maps are particularly valuable in theological study, Scripture, pastoral planning, and missionary formation, where many different ideas need to be integrated into one coherent vision.

The purpose of a Mind Map is not to produce an attractive drawing but to make thinking visible. A good Mind Map immediately shows what is central, how ideas are connected, and where further clarification is needed. It therefore becomes not only a study aid but also a tool for reflection, discernment, and communication.

Why Are Mind Maps Effective?

Mind Maps are effective because they help the brain learn naturally. They:

- focus attention on one central idea;
- organise information logically;
- show connections between concepts;
- improve memory through visual learning;
- simplify complex topics;
- encourage creativity without losing structure.

Instead of memorising isolated facts, the learner develops an integrated understanding of the subject.

How a Mind Map Differs from Ordinary Notes

Ordinary Notes	Mind Maps
Information is written in long sentences.	Ideas are expressed through key words.
Information is read from top to bottom.	Ideas radiate from one central theme.
Relationships between ideas may be hidden.	Connections between ideas are immediately visible.
Reviewing requires reading many pages.	The whole topic can often be reviewed in a single page.
Encourages information collection.	Encourages understanding and integration.

Formation Example

A formandus studies the chapter on “**The Mission of the Church.**”

Using ordinary notes, he fills several pages with definitions, quotations, and explanations. Using a Mind Map, he places **Mission** at the centre and creates branches such as:

- Biblical Foundations

- Claretian Charism
- Evangelisation
- Community
- Witness
- Challenges Today

Within a few minutes, he can see how all the ideas relate to one another and explain the topic without relying on lengthy notes.

Practice It Now

Choose one chapter from a theology or philosophy textbook. Instead of taking ordinary notes:

1. Write the chapter title at the centre of a blank page.
2. Identify **four to six** main ideas.
3. Draw one branch for each idea.
4. Add only key words—not sentences.
5. Use colours or simple symbols to distinguish the branches.

After completing the Mind Map, explain the chapter to another formandus using only your map.

If you can explain it clearly without returning to the book, your Mind Map has achieved its purpose.

Mini Workshop

Create Your First Mind Map (15 Minutes)

Use one of these topics:

- The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37)
- Community Life
- Discernment
- Prayer
- The Claretian Mission

Your Mind Map should include:

- one central image or key word;
- four or five main branches;
- supporting sub-branches;
- different colours for each main branch.

Afterwards, compare your map with another person's.

Notice:

- What ideas did each of you consider essential?
- How are the maps similar?
- What can you learn from each other's way of organising ideas?

Reflection Questions

- Which part of creating the Mind Map was easiest?
- Which part was most challenging?
- Did using key words help me think more clearly?
- How could I use Mind Maps in my prayer, study, or ministry?

Key Takeaways

- A Mind Map is a tool for understanding rather than merely recording information.
- It begins with one central idea and develops through connected branches.
- Key words are more effective than long sentences.
- Mind Maps reveal relationships between ideas and improve memory.
- The best Mind Maps are those that help the learner think clearly and communicate confidently.

Formative Insight: *Mind Maps transform information into understanding. As Formandi learn to identify what is essential, connect ideas, and explain them clearly, they gradually develop the habits of integrated thinking that are indispensable for study, discernment, preaching, and missionary service.*

3. Why Mind Maps Are Especially Formative

Mind Maps are much more than an efficient way of taking notes. They help Formandi develop a way of thinking that is organised, integrated, and focused on what is essential. Instead of collecting disconnected pieces of information, they encourage learners to understand how ideas relate to one another and how knowledge can be applied in prayer, study, community life, and mission.

For Claretian missionaries, this is particularly important. Mission requires the ability to connect Scripture with life, theology with pastoral practice, and personal experience with the needs of God's people. Mind Maps foster this integrative way of thinking.

3.1 They Help You See the Big Picture

One of the greatest strengths of a Mind Map is that it presents an entire topic on a single page. Rather than becoming overwhelmed by details, the learner can immediately identify the central idea and understand how the different parts fit together. This helps Formandi to:

- focus on what is most important;
- organise ideas logically;
- avoid fragmented learning;
- understand complex subjects more easily.

Formation Example: While studying the Gospel of Mark, a formandus creates a Mind Map showing the major themes, important miracles, key teachings, and the journey to Jerusalem. Instead of remembering isolated episodes, he understands the overall message of the Gospel.

3.2 They Improve Memory and Understanding

People generally remember images, colours, and key words more easily than long paragraphs. Because Mind Maps combine visual and verbal learning, they help information remain in long-term memory.

More importantly, they encourage understanding rather than memorisation. When learners organise ideas themselves, they process the material more deeply.

Practice It Now

After reading a chapter of a book:

- close the book;
- create a Mind Map from memory;
- reopen the book and compare your map with the original text.

Notice which ideas you remembered well and which need further study.

3.3 They Help You Prepare for Ministry

Mind Maps are practical tools for missionary life.

They can be used to:

- prepare homilies;
- organise catechetical lessons;
- plan retreats;
- prepare community meetings;
- design pastoral programmes;
- evaluate apostolic experiences.

Instead of searching through many pages of notes, missionaries can review an entire topic quickly and communicate it more confidently.

Formation Example: Before giving a youth catechesis, a formandus prepares a one-page Mind Map rather than several pages of notes. During the session, he speaks naturally because he understands the relationships between the ideas instead of trying to remember sentences.

3.4 They Encourage Reflection and Discernment

Mind Maps are also valuable for personal growth.

They help Formandi organise their thoughts during:

- prayer;
- discernment;
- spiritual accompaniment;
- evaluation of pastoral experiences;
- preparation of a Personal Project of Formation.

By placing one central question at the centre—for example, “**How is God calling me today?**”—and exploring related ideas through branches, the learner often discovers patterns and connections that might otherwise remain unnoticed.

Workshop Activity

Mind Mapping a Gospel Passage (20 Minutes)

Choose one Gospel text.

Examples:

- The Good Samaritan
- The Call of Matthew
- The Emmaus Journey
- The Prodigal Son

Create a Mind Map with these branches:

- Context
- Main Characters
- Key Message
- What It Reveals About Jesus
- Personal Application
- Missionary Application

Then explain your Mind Map to another formandus in **three minutes**.

The listener should be able to understand the Gospel without reading the passage again.

Practical Applications During Formation

Use Mind Maps regularly for:

Formation Area	Suggested Activity
Scripture	Map a Gospel passage or biblical book.
Theology	Summarise one theological theme on a single page.
Philosophy	Organise arguments and concepts visually.
Prayer	Map insights from Lectio Divina.
Community Life	Plan meetings or evaluate community projects.
Pastoral Ministry	Prepare homilies, retreats, catechesis, or pastoral visits.
Personal Formation	Create a Mind Map for your Personal Project of Formation.

Reflection Questions

- Which of these applications would benefit me most?
- Do I usually study to remember or to understand?
- How could Mind Maps improve my preaching or pastoral ministry?
- What topic will I Mind Map this week?

Practice This Week

Complete at least **three** of the following activities:

- ☐ Create a Mind Map of Sunday's Gospel.
- ☐ Summarise one theology chapter using a single page.
- ☐ Prepare your next homily from a Mind Map instead of ordinary notes.
- ☐ Create a Mind Map of one community meeting.
- ☐ Review your Personal Project of Formation through a Mind Map.
- ☐ Explain one Mind Map to another formandus without reading any notes.

Key Takeaways

- Mind Maps help learners understand the whole before the details.
- They strengthen memory by connecting ideas visually.
- They simplify the preparation of homilies, catechesis, and pastoral programmes.
- They encourage reflection, discernment, and integration.
- Their greatest value lies not in producing attractive diagrams but in helping missionaries think clearly and communicate effectively.

Formative Insight: *Mind Maps train the mind to see connections rather than isolated facts. As Formandi learn to organise ideas around what is essential, they become better prepared to integrate faith, study, prayer, and mission. In this way, Mind Mapping becomes not merely a learning technique but a habit of clear thinking that serves lifelong missionary discipleship.*

4. Creating a Mind Map: Six Practical Steps

Creating a Mind Map is not about artistic ability but about learning to think clearly and organise ideas meaningfully. The following six steps provide a simple method that can be applied to any subject, whether preparing a homily, studying Scripture, reading theology, planning a pastoral activity, or reflecting on personal formation.

The more regularly these steps are practised, the more naturally they become part of one's way of learning and communicating.

Step 1: Identify the Central Idea

Begin by writing the main topic at the centre of a blank page. This becomes the focus of the entire Mind Map. Use:

- one key word or a short phrase;
- a simple symbol or sketch if helpful;
- large, clear writing.

Examples:

- Eucharist
- Discernment
- Community Life
- Luke 15
- Forgiveness

The central idea reminds you of the main purpose of your study and prevents unnecessary digressions.

Formation Example: If preparing a homily on the Good Shepherd (John 10), write “**The Good Shepherd**” at the centre rather than the entire Gospel title. Everything else will develop from this central theme.

Step 2: Draw the Main Branches

From the centre, draw **four to six thick branches** representing the major aspects of the topic. For example, for “**Prayer**,” the branches might be:

- Biblical Foundations
- Types of Prayer
- Challenges
- Fruits
- Personal Practice

Keep each branch to **one key word** whenever possible. Using different colours for each main branch makes the map easier to read and remember.

Practice Tip: Ask yourself: “If I had only five ideas to explain this topic, what would they be?” Those become your main branches.

Step 3: Add Supporting Branches

Develop each main branch by adding smaller branches containing supporting ideas. Use:

- key words;
- short phrases;
- symbols;
- dates;
- biblical references.

Avoid writing complete sentences.

For example:

Prayer

→ Biblical Foundations

- Jesus at Prayer
- Psalms
- Early Church

This creates a natural hierarchy of ideas without overcrowding the page.

Step 4: Use Colours, Symbols, and Images

Visual elements make Mind Maps easier to understand and remember. Use:

- different colours for major branches;
- arrows to show relationships;
- simple icons;
- boxes to highlight important ideas;
- small sketches where appropriate.

Remember: The purpose is **clarity**, not decoration. Even very simple drawings are sufficient.

Formation Tip: If one branch represents **Mission**, a small cross, globe, or pair of sandals may communicate the idea more effectively than another sentence.

Step 5: Review and Simplify

When the first draft is complete, pause and review the entire Mind Map.

Ask yourself:

- Is the central idea immediately obvious?
- Are the main branches clear?
- Have I included unnecessary details?
- Could I replace sentences with key words?
- Are related ideas grouped together?

Do not hesitate to redraw or simplify the map.

Revision is part of learning.

Step 6: Use the Mind Map Actively

A Mind Map becomes valuable only when it is used. Use it to:

- explain the topic aloud;
- revise for examinations;
- prepare a homily;
- lead a catechetical session;
- plan a meeting;
- reflect during prayer;
- evaluate a pastoral experience.

If you can explain the entire topic by looking only at your Mind Map, you have probably understood it well.

Practice It Now

Activity 1 – Scripture

Create a Mind Map of **Luke 15 (The Prodigal Son)**.

Suggested branches:

- Characters
- Main Events
- Image of God
- Personal Reflection
- Missionary Message

Time: **15 minutes**

Activity 2 – Theology

Read one section of your theology textbook.

Summarise it using:

- one central idea;
- five main branches;
- key words only.

Time: **20 minutes**

Activity 3 – Community Life

Prepare a Mind Map for your next community meeting.

Possible branches:

- Agenda
- Information
- Decisions
- Responsibilities
- Follow-up

Workshop

Create and Share (30 Minutes)

Working in pairs: Each participant prepares a Mind Map on one assigned topic.

Examples:

- Eucharist
- Claretian Mission
- Vocational Discernment
- Community Life
- Evangelisation

Exchange your Mind Maps.

Each person explains the other's map in three minutes.

Afterwards discuss:

- Was the central idea clear?
- Were the branches logical?
- Was anything missing?
- How could the map be simplified?

This exercise develops understanding, communication, and collaborative learning.

Common Tips for Success

✓ Begin with one clear central idea.

- ✓ Use key words instead of sentences.
- ✓ Limit yourself to four to six main branches.
- ✓ Leave enough space between branches.
- ✓ Use colours to distinguish major ideas.
- ✓ Review and improve the map after completing it.
- ✓ Remember that understanding is more important than appearance.

Reflection Questions

- Which step did I find most difficult?
- Did I tend to write sentences instead of key words?
- Did my Mind Map help me understand the topic better?
- Could I confidently explain my map to another person?

Key Takeaways

- Every Mind Map begins with one central idea.
- Main branches represent the most important themes.
- Key words communicate ideas more effectively than long sentences.
- Colours and symbols should improve clarity rather than decoration.
- Reviewing and explaining the Mind Map deepens understanding.
- Regular practice makes Mind Mapping a natural way of studying, planning, and communicating.

Formative Insight: *Creating a Mind Map is an exercise in disciplined thinking. Each branch represents a decision about what is most important, and every connection reveals a deeper understanding of the subject. As Formandi practise this simple method, they gradually develop the ability to organise knowledge, integrate experience, and communicate the Gospel with greater clarity, confidence, and missionary effectiveness.*

5. Common Mistakes in Mind Mapping and How to Avoid Them

Mind Maps are easy to learn, but beginners often make a few common mistakes. Fortunately, these mistakes are part of the learning process. Recognising them early helps Formandi develop Mind Maps that are clear, useful, and genuinely formative.

The goal is not to produce a perfect diagram but to organise ideas in a way that promotes understanding, reflection, and communication.

5.1 Writing Long Sentences Instead of Key Words

The most common mistake is treating a Mind Map like ordinary notes by writing complete sentences on each branch.

Why this is a problem

- The map becomes crowded.
- The main ideas are hidden.
- Reviewing takes longer.
- The brain focuses on reading rather than understanding.

Better Practice: Use one key word or a short phrase for each branch. Instead of writing: *“The disciples failed to understand Jesus because they were afraid.”* Write: **Disciples → Fear → Misunderstanding**

This keeps the map simple and memorable.

5.2 Including Too Many Ideas

Some learners try to include every detail from a lecture or book.

Why this is a problem

- The central idea becomes unclear.
- Important ideas are lost among minor details.
- The map becomes difficult to review.

Better Practice: Ask: “*What are the five or six most important ideas?*” Place only those on the main branches. Additional details can be added as smaller sub-branches or in separate Mind Maps.

5.3 Focusing More on Decoration Than Understanding

Colours and drawings make Mind Maps attractive, but they should always support learning.

Why this is a problem

When too much attention is given to artistic design:

- valuable study time is lost;
- the learner concentrates on appearance rather than meaning;
- the educational purpose is weakened.

Better Practice: Keep the design simple. Use colours, symbols, and images only when they help you understand or remember the material.

Remember: A simple Mind Map that shows understanding is more valuable than a beautiful one that creates confusion.

5.4 Copying Instead of Thinking

Some learners simply transfer information from a textbook onto a Mind Map without processing it.

Why this is a problem

Copying information does not guarantee understanding.

True learning happens when the learner:

- identifies the main ideas;
- organises them personally;
- explains them in his own words.

Better Practice: Read first. Close the book. Then create the Mind Map from memory before checking the original text. This develops deeper understanding.

5.5 Never Reviewing the Mind Map

Some learners complete a Mind Map once and never use it again.

Why this is a problem

Learning is strengthened through review.

A Mind Map becomes much more valuable when it is revised, expanded, and used repeatedly.

Better Practice: Return to your Mind Maps regularly. Add new insights. Simplify unnecessary branches. Use them when preparing talks, homilies, classes, or examinations.

Quick Self-Check

Before considering your Mind Map complete, ask yourself:

- ✓ Can I understand the topic in one minute?
- ✓ Is the central idea immediately clear?
- ✓ Have I used mostly key words?
- ✓ Are the branches organised logically?
- ✓ Could I explain this map without reading additional notes?

If the answer is **Yes** to most of these questions, your Mind Map is probably serving its purpose well.

Practice It Now

Choose one of your previous Mind Maps.

Review it using the checklist above.

Then improve it by:

- replacing long sentences with key words;
- removing unnecessary information;
- grouping related ideas together;
- adding one or two helpful symbols or colours.

Finally, compare the original and the revised versions.

Notice how much clearer the revised map becomes.

Group Activity

Improve an Existing Mind Map

Working in small groups: Each participant brings one previously prepared Mind Map.

Together, evaluate it using these questions:

- Is the central idea obvious?
- Are the branches balanced?
- Which ideas could be simplified?
- Which ideas should become separate branches?
- Could someone unfamiliar with the topic understand this map?

After discussion, redraw the Mind Map incorporating the group's suggestions.

This exercise develops both analytical thinking and collaborative learning.

Reflection Questions

- Which mistake do I make most often?
- Am I trying to remember information or understand it?
- Does my Mind Map help me explain ideas clearly?
- What one improvement will I make in my next Mind Map?

Key Takeaways

- Use key words instead of long sentences.
- Focus on the main ideas rather than every detail.

- Keep the design simple and purposeful.
- Think before you write; do not merely copy information.
- Review and improve your Mind Maps regularly.
- The value of a Mind Map lies in the clarity of thinking it produces.

Formative Insight: *Mind Maps reveal how we think. Every revision is an opportunity to refine our understanding, simplify what is unnecessary, and focus on what is essential. As Formandi learn to create clearer Mind Maps, they also learn to think more clearly, discern more wisely, and communicate the Gospel with greater confidence and simplicity.*

6. Practical Applications of Mind Maps in Formation

Mind Maps become truly valuable when they are used regularly in the ordinary activities of formation. They are not simply a study technique but a practical tool for learning, reflection, planning, discernment, and missionary preparation. By applying Mind Maps in different contexts, Formandi gradually develop habits of organised thinking, clearer communication, and deeper integration.

6.1 Mind Maps for Study and Learning

Mind Maps help Formandi study actively rather than passively. Instead of copying large amounts of information, they identify the main ideas and organise them into a meaningful structure. Use Mind Maps to:

- summarise lectures;
- review chapters of books;
- prepare for examinations;
- compare different theological or philosophical concepts;
- revise class notes.

Formation Exercise: After each lecture, spend **10 minutes** creating a one-page Mind Map from memory. At the end of the week, review all your Mind Maps instead of rereading lengthy notes.

6.2 Mind Maps for Scripture and Theology

Scripture and theology contain many interconnected themes. Mind Maps help organise these relationships clearly and make preparation for preaching or teaching much easier. They can be used to:

- analyse a Gospel passage;
- summarise a biblical book;
- organise theological themes;
- prepare Bible-sharing sessions;
- prepare catechetical lessons.

Workshop

Read one Gospel passage.

Prepare a Mind Map with these branches:

- Main Message
- Characters
- Important Events
- What It Reveals About God
- Personal Application
- Missionary Application

Present your map to your formation group.

6.3 Mind Maps for Prayer and Discernment

Mind Maps can also support personal prayer and discernment by helping Formandi organise their thoughts before God. For example, a Mind Map may be centred on:

- a Gospel passage;
- a vocational question;
- a personal struggle;
- a community challenge;
- an apostolic experience.

Branches can include:

- emotions;
- insights;
- questions;
- invitations from God;
- practical resolutions.

The objective is not to analyse prayer but to deepen reflection and recognise recurring patterns.

Formation Example: After a retreat, a formandus creates a Mind Map entitled “**What God Is Inviting Me to Grow In.**” The branches include:

- Prayer
- Community
- Mission
- Personal Growth
- Challenges
- Concrete Resolutions

The map becomes a useful resource during spiritual accompaniment.

6.4 Mind Maps for Community Life

Many community activities become more effective when organised visually.

Mind Maps can be used to:

- prepare community meetings;
- organise annual community projects;
- plan celebrations;
- distribute responsibilities;
- evaluate community life.

Practical Exercise: Prepare the agenda for your next community meeting using a Mind Map instead of a written list. Suggested branches:

- Prayer
- Information
- Decisions
- Planning
- Responsibilities
- Follow-up

Notice how easily everyone can see the flow of the meeting.

6.5 Mind Maps for Pastoral Ministry

Missionaries often need to organise complex pastoral activities involving many interconnected elements. Mind Maps help in preparing:

- homilies;
- retreats;
- recollections;
- youth programmes;
- parish missions;
- formation sessions;
- pastoral visits.

They provide a clear overview and reduce dependence on lengthy written notes.

Formation Example: A formandus preparing a retreat for young adults begins with the central theme “**Walking with Christ.**” The branches include:

- Scripture
- Testimony
- Group Activities
- Prayer
- Discussion
- Practical Commitment

The Mind Map enables him to present the retreat naturally while maintaining a clear structure.

6.6 Mind Maps for Personal Formation

Mind Maps are excellent tools for reviewing personal growth. They can be used to organise:

- the Personal Project of Formation;
- annual evaluations;
- apostolic experiences;
- strengths and areas for growth;
- vocational goals.

Seeing these dimensions on one page often reveals connections that may otherwise remain unnoticed.

Reflection Exercise: Create a Mind Map entitled: “**My Growth This Year.**” Possible branches:

- Spiritual Life
- Community Life
- Intellectual Formation
- Pastoral Experience
- Personal Challenges
- Goals for the Coming Year

Review the Mind Map with your formator during accompaniment.

Weekly Mind Mapping Challenge

Choose one activity each day.

Day	Activity
Monday	Mind Map one lecture.

Tuesday	Mind Map a chapter from a book.
Wednesday	Mind Map a Gospel passage.
Thursday	Mind Map your personal prayer.
Friday	Mind Map an apostolic experience.
Saturday	Mind Map next week's community responsibilities.
Sunday	Review and improve one of your Mind Maps.

Within a few weeks, Mind Mapping will become a natural part of your study and ministry.

Formation Workshop

One Topic – Many Mind Maps

Divide the formation group into small teams.

Give everyone the same topic.

Examples:

- Eucharist
- Mission
- Prayer
- Forgiveness
- Community Life

Each group prepares a Mind Map from a different perspective.

For example:

Group 1 – Biblical

Group 2 – Theological

Group 3 – Pastoral

Group 4 – Psychological

Group 5 – Claretian

Finally, compare the Mind Maps.

Discuss:

- What themes are common?
- What new insights emerged?
- How did different perspectives enrich understanding?

This activity teaches both synthesis and interdisciplinary thinking.

Reflection Questions

- In which area of formation could Mind Maps help me most?
- Which practical application would I like to begin immediately?
- How can Mind Maps improve my preaching or pastoral ministry?
- What topic will I Mind Map this week?

Key Takeaways

- Mind Maps are practical tools for every dimension of formation.
- They simplify study, prayer, discernment, planning, and ministry.
- Regular use strengthens memory, understanding, and communication.
- They help integrate intellectual, spiritual, pastoral, and community life.

- The greatest benefit of Mind Mapping is not producing attractive diagrams but developing a clear, organised, and missionary way of thinking.

Formative Insight: *Mind Maps are most effective when they become part of everyday formation. Each map created for study, prayer, discernment, or ministry strengthens the ability to see relationships, communicate clearly, and integrate learning with life. In this way, Mind Mapping gradually becomes not merely a technique but a habit of missionary thinking—helping Claretian missionaries proclaim the Gospel with greater clarity, creativity, and apostolic effectiveness.*

7. Guidelines for Formandi

Mind Maps become truly effective when they are used consistently as part of everyday formation. Like prayer, study, or reflection, they develop through regular practice. The following guidelines will help Formandi use Mind Maps not merely as a study technique but as a practical tool for learning, discernment, and missionary preparation.

7.1 Practise Mind Mapping Regularly

The greatest benefits of Mind Maps come through frequent use. Rather than creating them only before examinations or presentations, use them throughout your formation. Try to create Mind Maps for:

- lectures and seminars;
- personal reading;
- Scripture study;
- community meetings;
- pastoral experiences;
- retreats and recollections.

Regular practice gradually improves both understanding and confidence.

7.2 Focus on Understanding, Not Perfection

A Mind Map is meant to clarify your thinking, not to display artistic talent. Do not worry if your first maps are simple or untidy.

Instead, ask yourself:

- Do I understand the topic better?
- Can I explain it clearly?
- Have I identified the main ideas?

A simple Mind Map that reflects genuine understanding is more valuable than an elaborate one that only looks attractive.

7.3 Use Key Words and Images

Whenever possible:

- use one key word for each branch;
- replace long sentences with short phrases;
- include simple symbols or sketches;
- use colours to distinguish major ideas.

These practices improve both memory and understanding.

7.4 Review and Improve Your Mind Maps

A Mind Map is not a finished product.

As your understanding grows:

- simplify complicated branches;
- add new insights;
- remove unnecessary details;
- reorganise ideas where needed.

Each revision deepens learning.

7.5 Explain Your Mind Maps to Others

One of the best ways to test your understanding is to explain your Mind Map without reading additional notes. This develops:

- confidence;
- communication skills;
- logical thinking;
- preaching ability.

If another person understands your explanation easily, your Mind Map is serving its purpose.

7.6 Apply Mind Maps Beyond Study

Use Mind Maps not only for academic work but also for:

- preparing homilies;
- planning apostolic activities;
- organising meetings;
- reflecting on prayer;
- evaluating ministry;
- preparing your Personal Project of Formation.

The more varied the applications, the more naturally Mind Mapping becomes part of your missionary life.

Weekly Formation Habit

Develop the habit of creating **at least three Mind Maps every week**.

For example:

- one from your academic study;
- one from Scripture or prayer;
- one from pastoral or community experience.

Within a few months you will build a valuable personal library of organised knowledge that can be used throughout your ministry.

Practice It Now

Choose one recent pastoral experience.

Create a Mind Map using these branches:

- Situation
- People Involved

- Challenges
- My Response
- What I Learned
- What I Would Do Differently

Discuss your Mind Map with your formator or a fellow formandus.

Self-Assessment Checklist

At the end of each month, reflect on the following.

Statement	Yes	Sometimes	No
I use Mind Maps regularly in my study.	☐	☐	☐
I focus on key ideas rather than long notes.	☐	☐	☐
My Mind Maps help me remember important concepts.	☐	☐	☐
I can explain my Mind Maps clearly to others.	☐	☐	☐
I use Mind Maps in prayer, ministry, or planning.	☐	☐	☐
I review and improve my Mind Maps regularly.	☐	☐	☐

Identify one area you would like to improve during the coming month.

Reflection Questions

- Which type of Mind Map has helped me the most?
- What difficulties do I still experience?
- How has Mind Mapping changed the way I study or prepare for ministry?
- What practical commitment will I make this week?

Key Takeaways

- Mind Mapping becomes effective through regular practice.
- The purpose is understanding, not artistic perfection.
- Key words, images, and colours help organise ideas clearly.
- Reviewing and explaining Mind Maps deepen learning.
- Mind Maps can enrich study, prayer, discernment, pastoral planning, and missionary service.

Formative Insight: *Mind Maps gradually shape a way of thinking that is clear, organised, and integrative. As Formandi practise them regularly, they learn not only to remember information but also to understand, communicate, and apply it wisely. This habit of organised thinking prepares missionaries to preach with clarity, discern with wisdom, and serve God's people with greater confidence and effectiveness.*

8. Guidelines for Formators

Mind Maps are valuable not only as learning tools but also as instruments for accompaniment. They help formators understand how Formandi organise ideas, make connections, and integrate learning with life and mission. A Mind Map often reveals much more than a written summary because it makes the person's thinking visible.

The role of the formator is not to evaluate artistic ability but to accompany the development of clear thinking, sound understanding, and effective communication.

8.1 Introduce Mind Maps Gradually

Many Formandi may never have used Mind Maps before. Begin with simple topics before moving to more complex theological or pastoral themes. For the first few weeks, invite Formandi to create Mind Maps on familiar subjects such as:

- a Gospel passage;
- community life;
- prayer;
- a recent lecture;
- a pastoral experience.

As confidence grows, gradually introduce more complex applications.

8.2 Demonstrate Before Asking

Learning becomes easier when formators model the process. Occasionally use a Mind Map when:

- presenting a lecture;
- leading a formation session;
- explaining a theological concept;
- planning a community activity.

Seeing a practical example often removes uncertainty and encourages Formandi to try the method themselves.

8.3 Evaluate Understanding, Not Artistic Ability

The purpose of a Mind Map is to reveal understanding. When reviewing a Mind Map, ask questions such as:

- Is the central idea clear?
- Are the main ideas organised logically?
- Are relationships between ideas visible?
- Can the formandus explain the map clearly?
- Does the map show understanding rather than copied information?

Avoid judging handwriting, drawing ability, or artistic style.

8.4 Use Mind Maps During Accompaniment

Mind Maps can enrich personal accompaniment by helping Formandi organise their thoughts before discussing them. Invite Formandi to prepare a Mind Map on topics such as:

- my vocational journey;
- my strengths and challenges;
- my experience of prayer;
- my apostolic ministry;
- my Personal Project of Formation.

These visual summaries often make conversations more focused and fruitful.

Formation Example: Before an accompaniment meeting, a formandus prepares a Mind Map entitled “**My Growth in Community Life.**”

The branches include:

- relationships;
- communication;
- responsibilities;

- joys;
- challenges;
- goals.

The conversation becomes more concrete because both the formator and the formandus can easily identify areas of growth and areas needing attention.

8.5 Integrate Mind Maps into Formation Activities

Mind Maps can easily be incorporated into regular formation without adding extra courses. Examples include:

- summarising lectures;
- reviewing books;
- preparing homilies;
- planning retreats;
- evaluating apostolic experiences;
- preparing community meetings;
- organising pastoral projects.

Using Mind Maps regularly reinforces learning across all dimensions of formation.

8.6 Encourage Collaborative Learning

Mind Mapping should not remain an individual activity. Occasionally organise pair or group exercises where Formandi:

- compare Mind Maps;
- explain their reasoning;
- improve one another's work;
- discuss different ways of organising ideas.

Such collaboration develops communication skills, openness to feedback, and respect for different ways of thinking.

Practical Activities for Formators

Weekly Five-Minute Mind Map

At the end of one class each week, ask Formandi to summarise the lesson in a simple Mind Map. Review a few examples together.

Monthly Formation Workshop

Present one topic, such as:

- Eucharist
- Community Life
- Discernment
- Evangelisation

Ask small groups to prepare a Mind Map within 20 minutes and present it to the community. Discuss both the content and the organisation of ideas.

Homily Preparation Exercise

Invite each formandus to prepare a homily using only a Mind Map. After the presentation, evaluate:

- Was the message clear?
- Did the ideas flow logically?
- Was the practical application evident?

This exercise strengthens both understanding and communication.

Apostolic Reflection Exercise

After a pastoral activity, invite Formandi to create a Mind Map using these branches:

- Experience
- Successes
- Challenges
- Lessons Learned
- Future Improvements

This simple activity promotes reflective practice and continuous growth.

Questions for Accompaniment

During accompaniment sessions, formators may ask:

- Which branch of your Mind Map was easiest to develop?
- Which part required the most reflection?
- What surprised you while creating this Mind Map?
- Has Mind Mapping changed the way you study or prepare for ministry?
- How can you use this method more effectively in your missionary life?

These questions encourage deeper reflection and help integrate intellectual formation with personal growth.

Checklist for Formators

Review the following periodically.

- ✓ Do I use Mind Maps occasionally in my teaching?
- ✓ Do I encourage understanding rather than artistic presentation?
- ✓ Do I provide opportunities for practical application?
- ✓ Do I use Mind Maps during accompaniment when appropriate?
- ✓ Do I encourage collaborative learning?
- ✓ Do I connect Mind Mapping with preaching, pastoral planning, and discernment?
- ✓ Do I affirm progress rather than perfection?

Reflection for Formators: Mind Maps are valuable because they help formators see how Formandi think. A well-prepared Mind Map reveals not only what a person knows but also how ideas are connected, what is considered important, and where further clarification is needed. Used with sensitivity, they become an effective tool for accompaniment, enabling formators to foster deeper understanding rather than mere accumulation of information.

Key Takeaways

- Mind Maps should be introduced gradually and practised regularly.
- Formators should evaluate understanding rather than artistic ability.
- Demonstrating Mind Maps encourages confidence and participation.

- Mind Maps can enrich teaching, accompaniment, pastoral planning, and homily preparation.
- Collaborative activities strengthen learning and communication.
- Practical use is more important than perfect presentation.

Final Formative Insight: *Formators accompany not only the intellectual growth of Formandi but also the development of their way of thinking. By encouraging the regular use of Mind Maps in study, prayer, discernment, and ministry, formators help shape missionaries who can integrate knowledge, communicate clearly, and respond creatively to the needs of the Church. In this way, Mind Maps become more than an educational technique—they become a practical instrument for forming thoughtful, discerning, and mission-oriented Claretian missionaries.*

9. Concluding Formative Insight

Mind Maps are far more than a study technique. They are a practical way of thinking that helps missionaries organise ideas, understand relationships, and communicate the Gospel with clarity. By transforming large amounts of information into a simple visual structure, they enable Formandi to move from memorising facts to integrating knowledge, experience, prayer, and mission.

Throughout this module, we have seen that Mind Maps can enrich every dimension of Claretian formation. They simplify study, strengthen memory, support discernment, improve preaching, facilitate pastoral planning, and encourage reflective learning. Most importantly, they help Formandi identify what is essential and communicate it with confidence and coherence.

Like every formative practice, Mind Mapping becomes effective only through regular use. A single Mind Map may be helpful, but the habit of creating Mind Maps gradually shapes a disciplined and integrative way of thinking. Over time, Formandi become more capable of analysing complex situations, organising ideas clearly, making sound decisions, and preparing pastoral activities with greater creativity and confidence.

For Saint Anthony Mary Claret, preaching was characterised by clarity, simplicity, and practical wisdom. Mind Maps support this missionary spirit by helping today's missionaries prepare thoughtfully, communicate effectively, and remain focused on the heart of the Gospel. They encourage a style of evangelisation that is well organised without being rigid, creative without becoming confusing, and faithful without losing relevance.

Ultimately, the value of a Mind Map is not measured by its appearance but by its usefulness. A simple Mind Map that helps a missionary understand a Gospel passage, prepare a homily, organise a retreat, or discern an important decision has already fulfilled its formative purpose. As these habits become part of everyday life, they contribute to forming missionaries who think clearly, discern wisely, and proclaim the Gospel with conviction and hope.

Personal Action Plan

At the end of this module, each formandus is invited to make a few practical commitments.

During the coming month, I will:

- ☐ Create at least **three Mind Maps each week**.
- ☐ Prepare one homily or catechetical session using a Mind Map.
- ☐ Summarise one chapter of a theology or philosophy book with a Mind Map.
- ☐ Use a Mind Map during personal prayer or Lectio Divina.
- ☐ Prepare one community meeting or pastoral activity with a Mind Map.
- ☐ Review and improve one previously created Mind Map.

My personal commitment is:

Final Reflection

Lord Jesus,

You taught with clarity, wisdom, and simplicity, helping people understand the mysteries of God's Kingdom through images, stories, and everyday experiences. Teach us to organise our thoughts with the same clarity, to seek understanding before speaking, and to communicate your Gospel with humility and love. May the skills we develop through study become instruments of service, helping us to proclaim your Word faithfully and accompany others with wisdom. Like Saint Anthony Mary Claret, may we prepare well, think clearly, and serve generously, so that our lives may always reflect your truth and your love. **Amen.**

Summary of Key Learning Points

By the end of this module, Formandi should be able to:

- understand the purpose and value of Mind Maps in missionary formation;
- create clear and well-organised Mind Maps using key words and visual connections;
- use Mind Maps for study, prayer, discernment, preaching, and pastoral planning;
- avoid common mistakes that reduce the effectiveness of Mind Maps;
- communicate ideas more clearly through visual organisation;
- integrate knowledge from different disciplines into a coherent whole;
- use Mind Maps as a lifelong learning tool for mission and ministry.

Final Formative Insight: *Missionary formation is not simply about acquiring more knowledge but about integrating knowledge so that it becomes wisdom for mission. Mind Maps help cultivate this integration by enabling Formandi to organise ideas, recognise relationships, and communicate clearly. When used consistently, they become a practical habit of disciplined thinking that strengthens study, deepens prayer, supports discernment, and enriches apostolic service. In this way, Mind Mapping becomes an expression of responsible missionary discipleship, preparing Claretian missionaries to proclaim the Gospel with clarity, creativity, and conviction.*

SAMPLE 1: THEOLOGY MIND MAP

How to Study This Mind Map

Observe:

1. What is the central idea?
2. Why are these the main branches?
3. How are the branches connected?
4. Could you reproduce it from memory?
5. Create your own version.

This transforms the samples from illustrations into formation exercises.

Theme: Grace



SAMPLE 2: SCRIPTURE MIND MAP

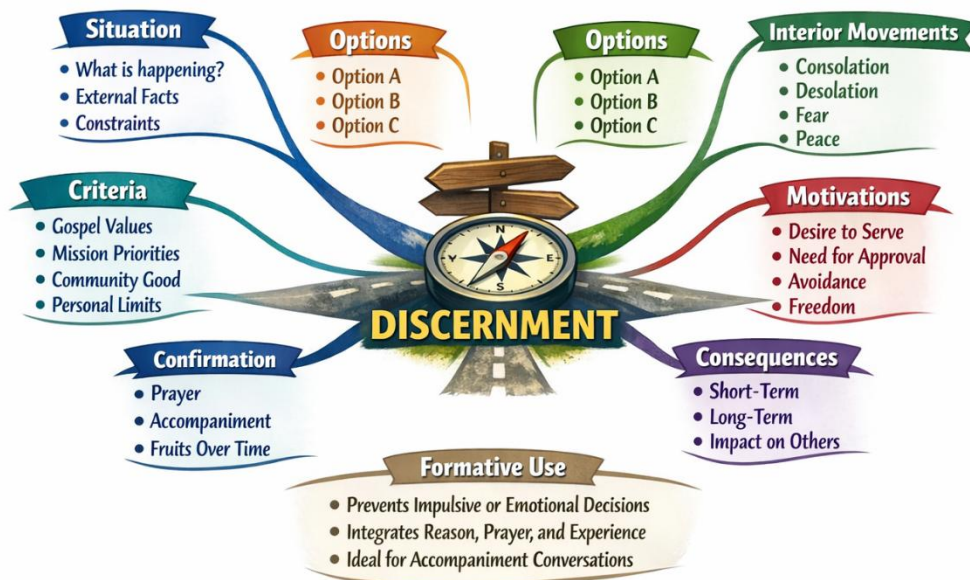


SAMPLE 3: HOMILY MIND MAP



SAMPLE 4: DISCERNMENT MIND MAP

Theme: Apostolic Decision / Life Choice



HOW TO USE THESE IN FORMATION

These Mind Maps can become much more than visual summaries. In formation, they work best when they help the person think, pray, connect, and internalize. A formandus should not treat a

mind map as a neat academic product to be copied and submitted. It should become a tool for personal assimilation. Recreating a mind map by hand is especially useful because it forces the person to slow down, identify the central idea, and recognize how the parts relate to one another. That process itself is formative. It moves the learner from passive reception to active appropriation.

Formandi can also be encouraged to adapt each mind map into their own language rather than repeating ready-made terms. This matters. If a person cannot restate an idea in his own words, he usually has not yet understood it deeply. A mind map becomes fruitful when it reflects the person's own grasp of Scripture, theology, spirituality, or pastoral experience. In this way, it can serve as a bridge between content and interiorization. It helps the formandus not only remember ideas but organize them in a way that becomes usable for life and mission.

These maps are also highly effective for prayer, study, and apostolic preparation. In prayer, a mind map can serve as a starting point for meditation by helping the person remain focused on one central mystery or theme while moving through related insights. In study, it can help synthesize large amounts of material without getting lost in disconnected details. In planning, it becomes useful for preparing homilies, recollections, catechesis, classes, community reflections, or pastoral interventions. Instead of beginning with scattered notes, the person begins with an integrated vision. That alone prevents confusion and superficiality.

For formators, Mind Maps can become a subtle but powerful tool of accompaniment. One of the most useful practices is simply to ask a formandus to explain his mind map aloud. This reveals much more than a written summary often does. It shows whether the person has really understood the theme, whether he can distinguish what is central from what is secondary, and whether he can think in an organized and coherent way. It also reveals how he links faith, experience, and mission. Often, what is missing in the explanation is as important as what is present.

A formator can also use Mind Maps to observe certain patterns in learning and integration. Some mind maps reveal clarity and maturity: the central idea is strong, the branches are meaningful, and the relationships are coherent. Others reveal overload: too many ideas, too little hierarchy, and no real centre. Still others reveal gaps: important dimensions are absent, misunderstood, or disconnected. These are not merely academic issues. They often reflect how a person thinks, prays, discerns, and processes reality. That is why mind maps can be useful not only in teaching but also in accompaniment.

Used well, they can become a practical instrument during accompaniment sessions. A formator may ask a formandus to create a mind map on a Gospel passage, a vocational theme, a personal struggle, a theological topic, or a pastoral experience. This can help the conversation become more concrete and less vague. It gives visible shape to the person's inner understanding. It can also help uncover confusion, resistance, simplifications, or areas that need deeper integration. In this sense, a mind map is not only a study method. It can also become a mirror of formation.

FINAL FORMATIVE NOTE

A good Mind Map is not one that looks impressive. It is one that shows real understanding. Its purpose is not to reproduce information attractively but to demonstrate that the person has grasped the core meaning of a theme and can organize it intelligently. If it only repeats phrases without showing comprehension, it has failed its formative purpose.

A good mind map also reveals relationships, not just lists. This is decisive. Formation is not about collecting disconnected points. It is about learning to see how Scripture, theology, experience, prayer, community, and mission belong together. A mind map should therefore show movement, connection, and internal logic. If everything is simply placed side by side without relation, the person may be memorizing but not integrating.

Above all, a good Mind Map must serve mission, not decoration. Its value lies not in colour, beauty, or design, but in whether it helps the person live, communicate, discern, and serve more effectively. A beautiful but empty Mind Map is useless. A simple but clear one is often far more

formative. The real question is not, “Does it look good?” but “Does it help this person think clearly, pray deeply, and respond more faithfully?” That is the standard that matters.

Further Reading

- Tony Buzan, *The Mind Map Book: Unlock Your Creativity, Boost Your Memory, Change Your Life*. Revised ed. London: BBC Active/Pearson, 2018.
- Tony Buzan, *Mind Map Mastery: The Complete Guide to Learning and Using the Most Powerful Thinking Tool in the Universe*. London: Watkins Publishing, 2018.
- Peter C. Brown, Henry L. Roediger III, and Mark A. McDaniel, *Make It Stick: The Science of Successful Learning*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014.
- Sönke Ahrens, *How to Take Smart Notes: One Simple Technique to Boost Writing, Learning and Thinking*. North Charleston, SC: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2017.