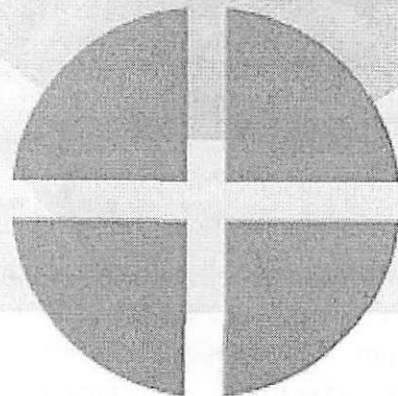


PRINCIPLES OF THE NEW PPF

The Program of Priestly Formation, Sixth Edition



THE HARVEST IS PLENTY

Scripture Reflection: Luke 10:1-9

The whole Church receives and accompanies the gift of vocations from God and is responsible for promoting and discerning vocations. It is integral to the mission of the Church “to care for the birth, discernment and fostering of vocations, particularly those to the priesthood” (*Pastores dabo vobis*, no. 34). Within that ecclesial context, the vocation director serves on behalf of the diocesan bishop or competent authority of an institute or society to promote vocations and direct those discerning a call to the priesthood. The vocation director supports, inspires, and equips pastors, parishes, and diocesan personnel to create a culture of vocations in which men can be better equipped to answer God’s prompting. Pastors and other members of the community are invaluable in assisting the vocation director in accompanying discerners along the path of discipleship and mission. Once a discerner has been identified, the vocation director works in conjunction with the parish or another community of the faithful to assist in nourishing the seeds of a vocation with divine grace, for example by helping the man to find a spiritual director, maintain an active prayer life, develop a network of relationships with others who bring forth fruits of authentic discernment in one another, and actively seek out a solid participation in the mission of the parish or other community of the faithful. It is important that the vocation director actively develop relationships by his presence, such as regular visits to parishes, youth groups, young adult gatherings, and university campus ministry events. In cooperating with the formation process, a diocesan vocation director may manage the diocesan admissions process,

KEY WORDS

The Vocation Director

Admissions Process

Seminary Collaboration

Ease Transitions to Ministry

serve as a liaison between the diocesan bishop and the seminary, and link the seminarian to the diocese and presbyterate, for example, through pastoral placements. He collaborates with the bishop, with the presbyterate, with a diocesan vocation commission if one is in place, and with the seminary.

In all cases, the relationship with the seminary merits special attention. Mutual respect and collaboration should mark the relations between vocation and seminary personnel. Each possesses different responsibilities; yet cooperation, mutual knowledge, and trust are vital for the good of the seminarians and the benefit of the Church. Such collaboration is especially important concerning applicants' ongoing evaluation and their recommendation for admission. The vocation director accompanies others along their journey but should not attempt to develop a process of formation that competes with or parallels that of the seminary. It is vital that all those responsible for the formation of priests collaborate fully in this work. Regardless of the length of the relationship, the vocation director has a lasting influence on the lives of those he encounters.

The vocation director's collaboration with the seminary should have a special focus during the Propaedeutic and Vocational Synthesis Stages. During the Propaedeutic Stage, the seminarian has already been accepted into the formation program but may reside in a specific community with a team of priest formators that is separate from the seminary. In a similar way, during the Vocational Synthesis Stage, a newly ordained deacon has completed the Configuration Stage and returns to his ecclesiastical entity to enter into the life of a cleric and to adjust to the life of ministry. Both stages will require assistance from the vocation director to ease transition for the seminarian and deacon, and to offer guidance and direction to those responsible for his formation.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. How is particular attention being given to the support of US-born Hispanic vocations within your ecclesiastical entity?
2. How is the presbyterate invited to witness and build a culture of vocations in their parishes and ministries?

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

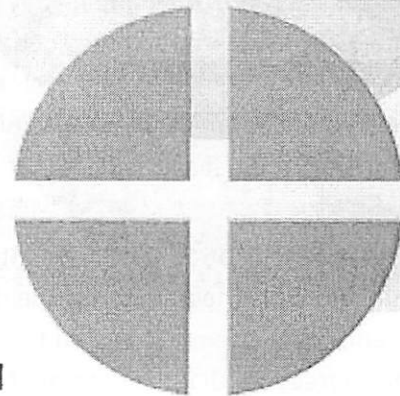
How are vocational directors supported in their ministry?

Peer organizations such as the National Conference of Diocesan Vocation Directors (NCDVD) and the National Religious Vocation Conference (NRVC) seek to promote vocations to priesthood in various ecclesiastical entities, as well the other

expressions of consecrated life. The exchange of ideas, sharing of resources, and development of best practices in promotion, discernment, and formation help those involved in vocational accompaniment, and provide a forum for best-practice resources, fraternity, and support.

PRINCIPLES OF THE NEW PPF

The Program of Priestly Formation, Sixth Edition



ACCOMPANIMENT IN SEMINARY FORMATION

Scripture Reflection: 1 Samuel 3:1-21

Accompaniment is the work of the formative community. "The principal agent of formation is the Most Holy Trinity, who shapes every seminarian according to the plan of the Father, both through the presence of Christ in His word, in the sacraments and in the brothers and sisters of the community, and through the many actions of the Holy Spirit" (*Ratio*, no. 125). In his docility to the Holy Spirit and the program of initial formation, "each seminarian is the protagonist of his own formation" (*Ratio*, no. 130). He is ultimately responsible for his ongoing growth in all dimensions of his formation.

Integral formation is successful when it is supported by a trusting atmosphere of personal and communal accompaniment. "The purpose of personal accompaniment is to carry out vocational discernment and to form the missionary disciple" (*Ratio*, no. 44). So too the role of the community is crucial in accompaniment. "Formation comes about every day through interpersonal relationships, moments of exchange and discussion which result in the development of that 'fertile soil,' in which a vocation matures concretely" (*Ratio*, no. 50)

Relationships characterized by trust are essential for accompaniment to be successful. "The program of formation should explore and outline the concrete ways in which this trust can be encouraged and safeguarded. Above all, those conditions should be sought and fostered, which can, in some way, create a peaceful climate of trust and mutual confidence: fraternity, empathy, understanding, the ability to listen and to share, and especially a coherent witness of life" (*Ratio*, no. 47)

KEY WORDS

Accompaniment

The Most Holy Trinity

Trust & Mutual Confidence

Internal & External Fora

The relationships in the external forum are those between a seminarian and his bishop or competent authority, including the rector, vice rector, vocation director, director of seminarians, and other formators (except for the spiritual director). The external forum includes discussions surrounding any observable behavior of the seminarian and the attitudes and motivations related to these behaviors. The Church has a right and responsibility to know the man she is ordaining, and therefore the seminarian has a corresponding responsibility to let himself be known. These discussions generally include, but are not limited to, vocational discernment, and behaviors related to interior freedom, and promises of prayer, obedience, and celibacy.

The primary relationship in the internal forum is that between a seminarian and his spiritual director. The purpose of the internal forum is to protect the manifestation of conscience of the seminarian and to provide him the space to share about his interior life with the moral freedom that is necessary for genuine growth and discernment. These discussions generally include, but are not limited to, movements in prayer, vocational discernment, and struggles and growth in interior freedom around the promises of prayer, obedience, and celibacy.

While the manifestation of conscience and sacramental confession are never part of the external forum, over time the seminarian will grow comfortable discussing appropriate interior matters related to his vocation with formators in the external forum. A solid relationship of trust with his formators in both fora will benefit the seminarian as he receives guidance from all formators. These relationships will allow major decisions to be reached following regular discussions throughout the formation process, so that the seminarian will not be surprised by decisions reached by those responsible for his formation, and vice versa.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. How are ongoing formation opportunities made available for the internal and external priest formators in your community?
2. What are some external signs that healthy personal accompaniment is occurring between seminarians and formators?

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is *required* and what is *recommended* in the PPF?

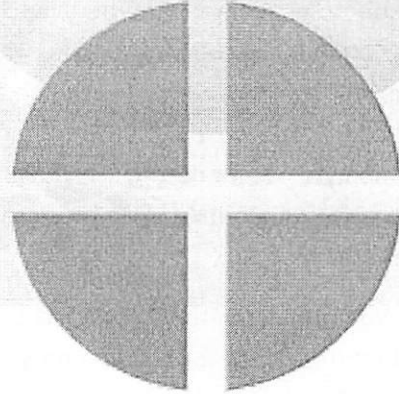
Care has been taken in the PPF to limit the use of prescriptive and exhortative language to two terms. The use of the word "*must*" is a designation that an action is required.

Authorization from the competent authority is required for an exception from following

the required course of action. The use of the word "*should*" designates that an action is highly recommended, such that a nonarbitrary reason is necessary for the decision not to pursue this course of action.

PRINCIPLES OF THE NEW PPF

The Program of Priestly Formation, Sixth Edition, *pre-Confirmation*



GROWTH IN HOLINESS IS THE GOAL

Scripture Reflection: Matthew 4:18-22

Formation for the priesthood begins with a focus on the seminarian's relationship with Jesus Christ. After becoming a disciple of Christ at his Baptism, formation allows a man to grow as a disciple who is discerning and preparing for ordained ministry. The gradual development of the future priest has holiness as its goal, to become configured to Christ, Head and Shepherd, Servant and Spouse.

While the 5th edition of the *Program of Priestly Formation* spoke of college seminary, pre-theology, and major seminary, the 6th edition, following the *Ratio*, speaks of stages. There are four stages of initial formation: Propaedeutic, Discipleship, Configuration, and Vocational Synthesis.

Since formation is a lifelong journey, it is important to lay a solid foundation for this journey in the Propaedeutic Stage, especially in the human and spiritual dimensions. Thus "the Propaedeutic Stage is an indispensable phase of formation with its own specific character" (*Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 59) This stage allows the seminarian to lay a foundation for a new way of life through prayer, study, fraternity, and appropriate docility to formation.

In the Discipleship Stage, which must not last less than two years, there is a systematic and rigorous formation that has at its core the goal of growing in an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ through the life of meditation, contemplation, philosophical study, and the training of one's character in Christian virtue

KEY WORDS

Propaedeutic Stage

Discipleship Stage

Configuration Stage

Vocational Synthesis Stage

In the **Configuration Stage**, the seminarian models his life on the self-donation of Jesus Christ, Shepherd and Servant, as he prepares more immediately for Holy Orders. "This configuration demands that the seminarian enter profoundly into the contemplation of the person of Jesus Christ, the beloved Son of the Father, sent as Shepherd of the People of God. It will make the relationship with Christ more intimate and personal and, at the same time, will lead to an awareness and an assumption of priestly identity" (*Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 88). Reception of Candidacy, and conferral of the ministries of lector and acolyte occurs during this stage, marking the progressive deepening of this self-configuration to Christ both liturgically and in catechesis, evangelization, and active service to the poor.

The **Vocational Synthesis Stage** is the period of formation between diaconal and priestly ordinations. Since formal seminary formation has been completed, it is intended primarily as a time not of evaluation, but of integration and transition into one's diocese or ecclesiastical entity in which the deacon is preparing to serve. This stage is a gradual realization of the cleric's responsibility for the care of souls while he resides full-time in a pastoral setting.

A more detailed description of each stage of formation will be provided in subsequent bulletins, beginning with the Propaedeutic Stage. It is hoped that these bulletins will serve as guides for bishops, major superiors, seminary rectors, vocation directors, and formators to reflect upon on how the dimensions of formation are lived within their specific ecclesiastical entity.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. What plans are currently in place for the propaedeutic stage within your (arch)diocese, seminary, or religious community?
2. How will the shift from academic language (i.e., college seminary, pre-theology, major seminary) to "stages" impact how you discuss the formation program with one another and with others?

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What happened to "Pre-Theology?"

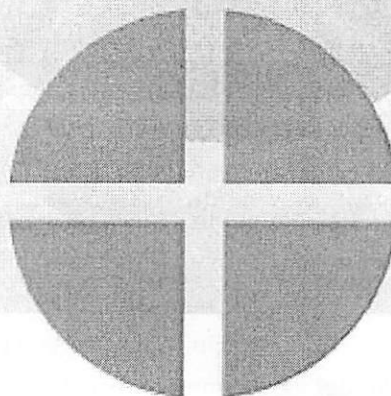
Men enter the discipleship stage at varying levels of life, work, and educational experience. In the past, intensive philosophy programs for more mature men have been referred to as "pre-theology programs."

The term pre-theology, with its inference of academic status, is discouraged because it

can obscure the integral nature of formation in the discipleship stage. Nevertheless, these men are a distinctive set of seminarians who come to initial formation with more extensive experiences on many levels and formation programs should take these unique circumstances into account.

PRINCIPLES OF THE NEW PPF

The Program of Priestly Formation, Sixth Edition, *pre-Confirmation*



PRAYER, TRUST, AND FRATERNITY

Scripture Reflection: Proverbs 3:5-6

One of the first questions that bishops and seminary communities ask about the 6th edition of the *Program of Priestly Formation*, often regards the implementation of the Propaedeutic Stage. Using a gradual approach, it is fitting to begin institutional changes with a focus on this mandatory stage, as it is always the first stage of formation and the first time a man is considered a seminarian.

The Propaedeutic Stage must always be lived in community with a team of priest formators. This stage can be housed in the same building as other stages of seminary formation, provided it is a distinct community with its own living area, formators, *horarium*, scope and sequence.

As the name implies, the Propaedeutic Stage is introductory in nature, but also intensive through its focus on significant times of growth in prayer, trust, and fraternity. This stage should last at least twelve consecutive months but could be extended for a longer period if circumstances require it. These months should maintain their own specific character and allow the seminarian to lay a foundation for a new way of life centered in Christ and in communion with his Bishop, presbyterate, and his local Church or ecclesiastical entity through involvement in parish settings and in charitable works.

While all four dimensions are present in every stage, the focus should be on the foundation of the human and spiritual dimensions. During this stage, general education credits are

KEY WORDS

Propaedeutic Stage

Twelve Consecutive Months

Human & Spiritual Focus

All Dimensions are Present

permitted but should not be full time. Classes proper to this stage, such as an introduction to scripture, catechesis, and spirituality, can be taken for credit, in addition to a maximum of nine (9) general education credits per semester. This allows the seminarian to remain a full-time student for purposes of student loans and immigration status. It is not necessary to take courses for credit, but the PPF offers this option. The study of philosophy must be avoided at this stage, and care must be taken that the academic work does not interfere with the overall tenor of this stage's objectives, which is intensive vocational discernment, growth in relationship with Jesus Christ and the Church, and growth in self-knowledge.

Three flexible models have been presented for this stage:

- Model #1, for men entering seminary *with* an undergraduate degree:
Propaedeutic Stage: one year
Discipleship Stage: two years
- Model #2, for men entering seminary *without* an undergraduate degree:
Propaedeutic Stage: one to two years
Discipleship Stage: two to four years
- Model #3, for men entering seminary *without* an undergraduate degree, two years of full-time academic studies of a general nature, followed by one year focused on the human, spiritual, and pastoral dimensions of formation (these three years, taken together, constitute a complete Propaedeutic Stage which would then lead into a two-year Discipleship Stage).

Regardless of the model, the foundations established during this stage will allow for a more integrated seminarian and greater depth of formation.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. What is necessary to maintain a distinct community for the Propaedeutic Stage within your formation program?
2. How can you more frequently utilize retreats, pilgrimages, days of reflection, and fraternal outings during the Propaedeutic Stage?

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

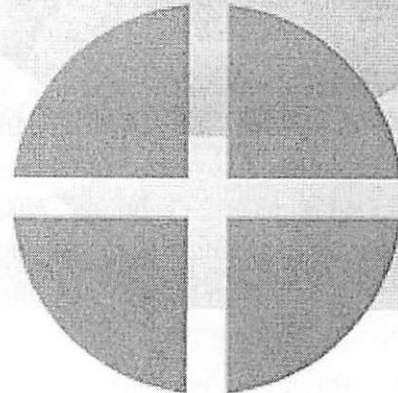
What about seminarians with an F-1 Visa?

A student visa is required to enter seminary studies in the United States. After the student is accepted, they must be enrolled full-time in the seminary, and be proficient in English or be taking courses leading to English proficiency.

The maximum credit allowance for the Propaedeutic Stage permits a seminarian to be considered a full-time student (i.e., nine general education credits plus three or more credits for courses such as an introduction to scripture, spirituality, and the Catechism).

PRINCIPLES OF THE NEW PPF

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INTIMACY WITH JESUS CHRIST

Scripture Reflection: John 15:1-8

A significant number of seminarians enter the Discipleship Stage as older adults with a wealth of education and practical experience, yet many younger men enter the Discipleship Stage with minimal or no higher education. Seminary formation must meet the various needs of these men at this stage. All men in the Discipleship Stage must receive philosophical formation to train their minds in right reason and prepare them to study theology. In addition, as future pastors and leaders, seminarians need to be broadly formed in the human, spiritual, and pastoral dimensions to develop as virtuous prayerful men who can engage with society. Thus, in the Discipleship Stage there is a systematic and rigorous formation that has at its core the goal of growing in an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ through the life of contemplation, philosophical study, and the training of one's character in the virtues which lay a solid foundation for future stages. By the end of the Discipleship Stage the seminarian will demonstrate:

Human Formation Benchmarks

- *Affective Maturity*: the ability to appropriately communicate emotions surrounding conflict and stress and a deepening of the moral virtues (i.e., prudence, fortitude, temperance, justice).
- *Self-control*: education in the truth of one's being leading to freedom; a desire to overcome individualism; a fostering of the sincere gift of self.

Spiritual Formation Benchmarks

- *Consistent Prayer*: a habit of regular spiritual reading, the ability to speak about God's work in one's life; a habit of personal and communal prayer and spiritual direction

KEY WORDS

Discipleship Stage

Affective Maturity

Commitment to Celibacy

Faith & Reason

Spiritual Formation Benchmarks (Cont.)

- *Commitment to Celibacy:* the ability to articulate an understanding and awareness of God's call to a lifelong commitment to celibate chastity. The ability to articulate and demonstrate appropriate boundaries with others, relating to all persons as beloved children of the Father, and a solid understanding and desire of a habit of healthy solitude.

Intellectual Formation Benchmarks

- *The Study of the Human Person:* the ability to articulate the Christian understanding of the Creator and his creation and understand how this differs from the ideologies that have shaped popular conceptions of the human person, the world, and its Creator.
- *Issues of Faith and Reason:* an understanding of the issues surrounding the intersection of faith and modern science, as well as the ability to articulate how faith and science can support one another.

Pastoral Formation Benchmarks

- *Apostolic Work:* the ability to relate well with men and women from diverse cultural backgrounds through freedom from prejudices against any class or group of individuals; demonstrated generosity and accompaniment with the poor; the ability to tithe; a willingness to work collaboratively with others and to take initiative in leadership situations with a missionary spirit and zeal.
- *Stewardship:* commitment to Christian charity and an awareness of global poverty issues.

By the end of the Discipleship Stage, the seminarian should determine with resolve that God is calling him to present himself for the priesthood. His transition to the Configuration Stage is marked by a level of self-knowledge that permits ongoing growth, especially in his relationships with others. God's grace will then build upon a more mature human nature.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. How will the Discipleship Stage in your ecclesiastical entity need to be modified to provide opportunities for seminarians to demonstrate competency in the benchmarks noted above?
2. What resources are available to assist seminarians who struggle to communicate clearly in both the written and spoken word?

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

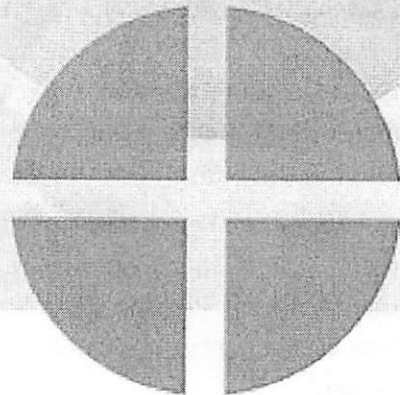
Should older and younger candidates share the Discipleship Stage?

The Discipleship Stage benefits from having a diversity of ages and backgrounds represented in the formational community. Some programs are designed to meet the needs of young men who have recently completed high school. Older men approach the seminary with considerable life

experience; variants of this stage may be developed to take these circumstances into account. Reducing the Discipleship Stage expectations for older seminarians should be resisted. Seminaries can benefit from the blessings that a variety of men in formation together can bring.

PRINCIPLES OF THE NEW PPF

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BECOMING SHEPHERD AND SERVANT

Scripture Reflection: John 10:1-18

The Configuration Stage demands from the seminarian a great commitment as he models his life on the self-donation of Jesus Christ, Shepherd, and Servant, and prepares more immediately for Holy Orders. This stage challenges seminarians to acquire a proper priestly spirituality as self-offering for the pastoral care of the sheep. Conferral of the ministries of lector and acolyte is appropriate during this stage, marking the progressive deepening of this self-configuration to Christ both liturgically and in catechesis, evangelization, and active service to the poor.

Formation for priestly spirituality involves a heartfelt dedication to his ecclesiastical entity and evidence of observable benchmarks.

Human Formation Benchmarks

- **Interiority:** demonstrate interior freedom, self-possession, self-motivation, direction, and the capacity for self-donation; selfless leadership and the relational qualities of solidarity, compassion, empathy, and attentive listening.
- **Self-mastery:** cares for and has vigilance over his body with balanced habits of exercise and rest; developed strategies for handling psychological issues in his life; well-established habits regarding the proper use of technology; and a capacity to manage appropriate boundaries.

Spiritual Formation Benchmarks

- **Internalized Spiritual Life:** fidelity to the Liturgy of the Hours, daily Mass, and personal prayer, even when he is away from the seminary or house of formation

KEY WORDS

Configuration Stage

Self-Mastery

Vocational Permanence

Pastoral Leadership

- **Vocational Permanence:** ability to communicate and share his joyful desire for lifelong priestly life and ministry, as well as a desire to live the sacramental life of a priest.

Intellectual Formation Benchmarks

- **Academic Integration:** demonstrate the ability to integrate academic development with the spiritual and pastoral dimensions (e.g., his understanding of Christian anthropology influences his approaches to personal prayer and pastoral ministry).
- **Fidelity to the Magisterium:** demonstrated in his proclamation and explanation of the Catholic faith and in his ministerial actions.

Pastoral Formation Benchmarks

- **Pastoral Leadership:** demonstrate that he is articulate, good at listening, and capable of public speaking. He can take on the role of a public person in the Church. His intensive study of theology is integrated with his pastoral skills making him an effective homilist and teacher.
- **Docility to Authority:** offering his life in service to the Church involves understanding and following the will of Christ in the person of his diocesan bishop or the competent authority of his institute of consecrated life or society of apostolic life.

The end of the Configuration Stage should demonstrate that the seminarian entered profoundly into the contemplation of the person of Jesus Christ, making his relationship with Christ more intimate and personal and, at the same time, leading to an awareness and an assumption of priestly identity. Both the seminarian and community of formators are then free to make a recommendation to the diocesan bishop or ecclesiastic superior on his readiness for ordination to the diaconate.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. What learning outcome evidence best demonstrates a seminarian's integration of the intellectual, spiritual, and pastoral dimensions?
2. How does the focus on liturgy and the celebration of the Mystery of Christ integrate into the intellectual formation of seminary life?

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

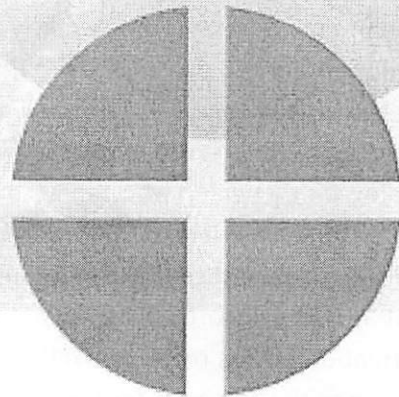
How often should the seminary community be together?

It is important for formators to help seminarians find a balance between seminary community and the essential learning which occurs in apostolic and pastoral assignments. Time in intentional seminary community can reveal affective maturity, and the ability to exercise

leadership among peers. Seminary community also offers older seminarians the opportunity to be positive examples for younger seminarians through their willingness to volunteer for additional responsibilities, and their avoidance of gossip and cynicism.

PRINCIPLES OF THE NEW PPF

The Program of Priestly Formation, Sixth Edition *pre-Confirmatio*



TRANSITION AND INTEGRATION

Scripture Reflection: Hebrews 10:10-12

The Vocational Synthesis Stage is not entirely new. Rather, it is the name the Ratio gives to the stage of initial formation that has had the force of law since 1983: *"After completing the curriculum of studies, and before being promoted to the priesthood, deacons are to spend an appropriate time, to be determined by the bishop or by the competent major Superior, taking part in the pastoral ministry and exercising the diaconal order" (CIC can. 1032 §2).*

As the Code suggests, the Vocational Synthesis Stage is distinct from what has been commonly referred to as the "pastoral year." The purpose of this stage is to allow transition and integration into the life of a cleric, incorporating the entirety of the formation he has received from the moment of Baptism until his reception of Holy Orders. Rather than "on the job training," this stage is living as an ordained minister in a new ontological and existential reality. Having already demonstrated the required pastoral competencies during his seminary formation, the newly ordained deacon should be adjusting to the life of ministry before advancing to priestly ordination and the full weight of priestly responsibilities.

Prior to the minimum six-month Vocational Synthesis Stage, the seminary should resolve all questions regarding suitability for orders. The deacon will now live away from the seminary, within his own diocese, institute, or society, accompanied by his bishop or major superior, presbyterate or religious community, and parish. This vocational synthesis provides a formative environment which

KEY WORDS

Vocational Synthesis Stage

Transition & Integration

Six-Months Minimum

Away from the Seminary

most seminaries cannot offer. While seminaries are an invaluable intentional community, the Vocational Synthesis Stage transitions men as clerics into the parish or other ministerial setting where they will live their priesthood.

The primary formator of the newly ordained deacon during the Vocational Synthesis Stage is now either the pastor of the parish where the deacon is assigned, or someone delegated by the bishop or major superior who serves in their diocese, institute, or society. In this way, the deacon experiences the life of clerical ministry in an environment of openness and dialog with a person who can accompany him personally and directly regarding his ministerial experiences. Different from seminary formation, this accompaniment should help him to appreciate his new status in the Church as an official representative and a public figure, incorporating, again, all the human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral formation he has received. While in some dioceses it may be appropriate for the deacon to return to the seminary for times of prayer, spiritual direction, group reflection, sacramental *practica*, and fraternity, he should not be enrolled in credited courses during this stage. The Vocational Synthesis Stage always takes place after the completion of the Configuration Stage, and the two can never be concurrent.

Upon completion of the Vocational Synthesis Stage, the suitability of the man for the conferral of the Order of Priesthood is now judged by those responsible in his diocese of incardination, religious institute, or society of apostolic life (*CIC can. 1028 and 1030*).

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Because the diaconate is oriented toward ministry, what are ways that seminaries can assist a man in completing the equivalent of four years of theological studies *before* his diaconal ordination?
2. What is needed to best prepare priest/pastor formators for the Vocational Synthesis Stage?

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

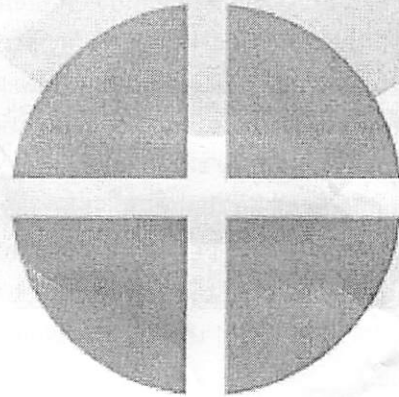
Does the PPF change the length of formation?

A man entering formation following high school could be ordained after eight years, and a man entering formation with an undergraduate degree could be ordained after seven years. In this situation, he could spend twelve-months in the Propaedeutic Stage, two years in the Discipleship Stage,

and three-and-a-half years in a compressed Configuration Stage. After diaconate ordination he would enter a parish to serve for six-months and be ordained to the priesthood at the satisfactory conclusion of the Vocational Synthesis Stage.

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KNOWLEDGE OF THE DIVINE MYSTERIES

Scripture Reflection: Mark 12:28-34

Intellectual formation in the seminary centers on theology as a search for “an ever-deeper knowledge of the divine mysteries” (*Pastores dabo vobis*, no. 51). This kind of theological study, which far exceeds a purely technical approach to religious phenomena, cannot be detached from human knowledge. In fact, it is to be integrated with other elements of human understanding, especially philosophy and the human sciences.

However, the study of theology in seminary intellectual formation is truly to be *fides quaerens intellectum*, faith seeking understanding. This direction is not the same as the approach of religious studies or the history of religions. The seminary study of theology begins in faith and ends in faith, as should all true theological inquiry and study, and must flow from prayer and lead to prayer. In a particular way, the theology studied in preparation for priestly ministry must find integration and focus in the liturgy, the celebration of the Mystery of Christ, and in personal meditation and contemplation.

In a seminary or priestly formation context, the study of theology is oriented to one’s own faith and to the faith of others. In other words, the study of theology is apostolically motivated. At the same time, this study of theology enriches and expands the personal faith of the seminarian studying it.

Because theology studied in light of priestly mission and ministry must be directed to a practical wisdom, it must offer a complete and unified vision of the truths of faith. This wisdom and unified vision, then, can be conveyed in the priest’s preaching and teaching, and allow him to bring the Word of God and Tradition into dialogue with the contemporary human situation, in matters related to Christian

KEY WORDS

Study of Theology

Flow from Prayer

Apostolically Motivated

Lifelong Study

anthrology, morality, social teaching, in other words, all aspects of the human experience.

Because theology is rooted in the Church's faith and serves the faith of the Church, it must be studied in complete and faithful communion with the Magisterium and must necessarily be concerned about restoring Christian unity. The ecumenical imperative that flows from the prayer of Christ for his flock and the renewed vision of the Second Vatican Council demand this focus.

Finally, theology's theoretical and practical dimensions in priestly mission and ministry mean that it must be rigorous in its orientation, both academically and pastorally, and be an initiation into a lifelong study of the truths of faith. If the priest is to be a teacher, he must first be a student who continuously pursues an understanding of the faith to which he commits himself and invites his people.

It is expected that by the end of the Configuration Stage the seminarian demonstrates a well-established habit and desire to explore the Word of God and theological Tradition. He should also demonstrate the ability to uphold the truths of faith by the light of reason; the ability to integrate academic development with the spiritual and pastoral dimensions (e.g., the growth in knowledge about Jesus Christ deepens his friendship with Christ, his understanding of Christian anthropology influences his approaches to pastoral ministry); fidelity to the Magisterium in his speech and actions; and, the ability to exercise the Ministry of the Word by proclaiming, explaining, and defending the Catholic faith.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. How does formation in liturgical preaching serve to integrate the study of theology with pastoral practice?
2. How can the seminary prepare future priests for ongoing formation (beyond saying that it is important)?

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What should the study of Theology look like during the Discipleship Stage?

Theology courses in the Discipleship Stage should study the themes contained in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, including courses on Catholic doctrine, liturgy and the sacraments, Catholic morality, Christian

prayer, and Sacred Scripture. All seminarians should be thoroughly acquainted with the *Catechism* and all its contents as a source for a full, complete exposition of Catholic doctrine.