

3. The Progress of Formation

3.0 Benchmarks for the Stages of Formation

I Propaedeutic Stage

In presenting an overview of the significance of this first phase of the priestly formation program, the *Ratio Fundamentalis* states:

“The propaedeutic stage is an indispensable phase of formation with its own specific character. Its principle objective is to provide a solid basis for the spiritual life and to nurture a greater self-awareness for personal growth . . . This time is an ideal opportunity to acquire an initial and overall familiarity with Christian doctrine by studying the Catechism of the Catholic Church, and by developing the dynamic of self-giving through experiences in the parish setting and charitable works” (# 59).

During this first stage, the seminarian is to attend to the attainment of the following Benchmarks:

1. Human Formation:

1. Relates with others in a manner which is appropriate for his age and stage of development
2. Is able to relate with others from different backgrounds and/or from different countries than himself
3. Is open to reflecting on his family of origin and addressing any areas that may need healing
4. Is receptive to reflecting on the presence of addictive behaviours in his lifestyle
5. Is open to new ideas and patterns of behaviour which formation personnel suggest to him

2. Spiritual Formation:

1. Demonstrates an awareness of the importance of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as the basis of his spiritual journey
2. Participates regularly and actively in the Eucharist and the Liturgy of the Hours by celebrating and singing with the assembly
3. Celebrates the Sacrament of Reconciliation regularly with his spiritual director
4. Demonstrates a daily commitment to prayer and an openness to quiet reflection
5. Is open to learning about various means for prayer and discerns how to integrate these into his personal prayer life
6. Shows a reverence for the Word of God and an appreciation of the Scripture, especially the Gospels, as a foundation for his spiritual life and as an important source for discerning his call to priesthood

3. Intellectual Formation:

1. Is open to learning and appropriating Instruments for discerning the movement of the Holy Spirit
2. Demonstrates a love for reading and learning
3. Shows an interest in drawing wisdom from Classics of the Catholic spiritual tradition
4. Engages actively in discussions during Propaedeutic

teaching modules

5. Demonstrates an active interest in learning the foundations of the Catholic faith as articulated in the Catechism of the Catholic Church

6. Actively seeks inspiration from the witness and writings of the Saints

4. Pastoral Formation:

1. Demonstrates eagerness to serve the other members of the community of seminarians

2. Shows concern for the needs of the poor through his experiences of outreach during the Propaedeutic Stage

3. Openly and sincerely shares during theological reflection sessions about his experiences, struggles and the feelings evoked within him in his outreach

4. Shows commitment to contributing his energies to Group and Community duties

5. Engages genuinely in offering welcome, witness and accompaniment to participants in Come & See Weekends at the Seminary

6. Demonstrates signs of having zeal for evangelization

II Discipleship Stage

In explaining the role of this foundational phase in the process of priestly formation, the *Ratio Fundamentalis* states:

“The experience and dynamic of discipleship, that lasts, as we have noted, for the whole of life, and includes all priestly formation, pedagogically requires a specific stage in which all possible efforts are expended to root the seminarian in the sequela Christi, listening to His Word, keeping it in his heart and putting it into practice. This specific period is characterized by the formation of the disciple of Jesus who is destined to be a pastor. Special attention is given to the human dimension, in harmony with spiritual growth, so as to help the seminarian mature in his definitive decision to follow the Lord in ministerial priesthood, by embracing the evangelical counsels in a way proper to this stage” (# 62).

During this stage, the seminarian is to give attention to the following Benchmarks:

1. Human Formation:

1. Demonstrates a healthy level of self-awareness and the ability to recognize his personal gifts and areas of needed growth
2. Is able to integrate new knowledge about himself into his personal means for development
3. Has a balanced perspective on how the discipline of psychology can contribute to his total formation and is willing to use the psychological helps available to him in the seminary
4. Is able to share various aspects of his human development with his Formator and is open to receive helpful feedback
5. Sees human development as an ongoing task which unfolds throughout his lifetime

2. Spiritual Formation:

1. Demonstrates serious and mature engagement in days of recollection and retreats
2. Gives indication of a growing integration of his learning and emotional life with a life of virtue and openness to the Holy Spirit
3. Demonstrates that he values community life, is open to formation of friendships, and sees the development of appropriate personal relationships with men and women as being important for his spiritual growth
4. Has an awareness of the importance and value of the gift of celibate chastity in the priesthood and indicates a willingness to explore openly the presence of this gift in his life
5. Shows willingness to be formed through spiritual direction and communal living

3. Intellectual Formation:

1. Reflects a broad knowledge of the history of philosophy
2. Has an understanding and appreciation of elements of the philosophy of Plato, with its benefits and limitations in relation to Christian spirituality
3. Has a grasp of the four causes as articulated by Aristotle, as well as of the strengths and limitations in classical arguments

for the existence of God

4. Has begun to formulate a natural ethics based on the virtues
5. Has begun to reflect on the implications of philosophy in the social realm, especially as it relates to the common good
6. Has a thorough understanding of logic, including the ability to identify fallacious reasoning
7. Has a comprehensive understanding and ability to interpret fundamental philosophical writings of St. Thomas Aquinas
8. Has a basic familiarity with the principal currents of twentieth and twenty-first century philosophy, both Continental and Anglo-American
9. Demonstrates a grasp of the interconnection among the various branches of philosophical enquiry
10. Is able to think philosophically: to analyze arguments on the basis of their logical soundness and their cohesiveness with what one already knows to be true; to distinguish what is essential from what is secondary or ephemeral; to integrate newly-discovered truth in a synthesis with a sound, philosophical world-view

4. Pastoral Formation:

1. Demonstrates responsibility in dedicating four hours weekly in pre-practicum outreach and in completing reflection assignments thoughtfully and punctually
2. Manifests compassion and empathy towards the suffering and needy, thereby revealing his development of a caring pastoral presence
3. Demonstrates the capacity to consider the needs of those requiring pastoral care and the willingness to serve these needs in preference to personal needs or convenience
4. Manifests skills of working in collaboration with others, and an appreciation of the important role of the laity in works of service and justice
5. Manifests openness to receiving and integrating the input and evaluation of superiors in his outreach, and of peers who have engaged in similar forms of service
6. Demonstrates an appreciation of the many helping agencies which, although are not specifically Church-sponsored, make significant contributions to the well-being of the community
7. Demonstrates the ability to reflect on his outreach each month, recognizing personal skills developed, insights gained and emotions evoked

III Configuration Stage

In explaining the role of the Configuration Phase in the process of priestly formation, the *Ratio Fundamentalis* states:

“The whole life of a priest, from the first moment of his calling, is one of continuous formation. It is the life of a disciple of Jesus, docile to the action of the Holy Spirit, for the service of the Church. The pedagogy of initial formation, in the first years of Seminary, was aimed above all at leading the candidate to enter into the *seculae Christi*. At the conclusion of that stage, the so-called discipleship stage, formation then concentrates on the configuration of the seminarian to Christ, Shepherd, and Servant, so that, united to Him, he can make his life a gift of self to others. This configuration demands that the seminarian enters 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" (# 68).

During this stage, the seminarian is to give attention to the following Benchmarks:

1. Human Formation:

1. Manifests balance in the demands of study, prayer, service, and recreation by meeting his commitments in a timely fashion
2. Exhibits openness and honesty in one-to-one conversations and in group settings and is able to receive both affirmation and constructive criticism
3. Participates in group tasks in a collaborative spirit
4. Evidence of a realistic knowledge of sexuality and expresses sexuality appropriately
5. Establishes and sustains friendships in which he deals appropriately with issues of intimacy and respects boundaries
6. Engages positively in the formation program, managing well the various stressors of life
7. Has an appropriate level of self-knowledge and affective maturity, and clarity of male sexual identity with no abnormal affective tendencies
8. Demonstrates an appropriate use of leisure, including use of the media and the internet
9. Relates socially with others by manifesting self-confidence, interest in and concern for others, and ability to put others at ease
10. Demonstrates an ability to deal with any personal defects of character present, including aggressiveness, ambition, arrogance, avarice, comfort-seeking, difficult character, dishonesty, duplicity, hypocrisy, laziness, personal untidiness, pride or stubbornness
11. Works effectively with people who are different from him in race, sex, economic class, ethnicity, personality, ideology, role in the Church, demonstrating balanced behaviour in prudence, emotional self-control, language and conversation

2. Spiritual Formation

1. Demonstrates a daily commitment to prayer and solitude
2. Participates regularly and actively in the liturgy, demonstrating a love for the Eucharist and daily participation in its celebration
3. Demonstrates a deepening devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary through such practices as recitation of the Rosary
4. Shows a reverence for the word of God and the teaching of the Catholic Church through habits of prayer, study, and virtuous living
5. Is beginning to relate his daily sufferings and joys to the Paschal Mystery as the basis of his spirituality and living the Christian life, developing a spirit of self-denial along with a spirit of celebration
6. Gives indications of an integration of his learning, emotional life and his life in the Spirit

3. Intellectual Formation

1. Exhibits a spirit of openness and docility to growing in knowledge of the ecclesial and theological tradition with a spirit of confidence in the hierarchy of the Church
2. Exhibits a sense of wonder and a desire to probe more deeply into the mysteries of the faith
3. Demonstrates a grasp of the continuity and development within the doctrinal tradition
4. Reflects a clear grasp of the dogmatic content of Church teaching, the data found in the history of doctrine, and the key historical and speculative formulations of those teachings
5. Demonstrates an understanding of how the Magisterium relates to the theological disciplines and the opinions of scholars
6. Balances the quest for certainty with the sometimes ambiguous character of the search for theological understanding
7. Participates in discussions in a way that makes clear his positions, enables him to listen openly to others and maintains respect for them when disagreeing with their ideas
8. Reflects accurately in written assignments, class discussion, and course evaluations the interrelationships of the various theological disciplines
9. Uses historical-critical methods for the interpretation of primary sources in scripture, liturgy, and systematic theology courses

4. Pastoral Formation

1. Promotes behaviours that foster Christian community and reflects a Gospel-based commitment to service, a spirit of hospitality, and a willingness to resolve conflict
2. Shows a capacity for collaborative thinking, analyzing and strategizing for effective service of others
3. Is both willing and able to reflect theologically on pastoral experience
4. Is neither obsequious nor adversarial in his relationships towards authority figures in the pastoral context
5. Recognizes the important role of dedicated lay people in

the Church and in compassionate service within the community exercising different styles of leadership in a variety of contexts

6. Demonstrates catechetical skills adapted to the development level and needs of learners
7. Demonstrates the capacity for attentive listening to others (especially in their time of need), and an openness to the needs of the poor
8. Has reflected upon his own struggles, and with the light of the Gospel, has grown from them in developing a greater compassion towards others' sufferings

IV Pastoral Stage: Vocational Synthesis

In explaining the role of this phase in the process of priestly formation, the *Ratio Fundamentalis* states:

"The Pastoral Stage or vocational synthesis has a twofold purpose: on the one hand it is about being inducted into the pastoral life, with a gradual assumption of responsibilities in a spirit of service; on the other hand it is about making a suitable preparation, with the help of a specific accompaniment, in view of priesthood. During this stage, the candidate is asked to declare freely, consciously and definitively his intention to be a priest, having received diaconal ordination" (# 74).

During this stage, the seminarian is to give attention to the following Benchmarks:

1. Human Formation:

1. Shows leadership ability in the seminary community and in ministry, being appropriately assertive when necessary
2. Is not given to extremes (e.g. moods, rigidity)
3. Has learned to manage finances responsibly, and has respect for the goods of the Church
4. Demonstrates ability to manage time effectively, appropriately balancing his personal life with the duties of ministry, as well as demonstrating the natural virtues of honesty, a spirit of hard work, and constancy
5. Shows consistency in the prudence and good sense of his judgments and in his concern for the common good
6. Takes responsibility for his own life and formation while at the same time manifesting freedom from individualism
7. Has a commitment to social justice; manifests compassion and generously assists others in need, particularly the poor and disadvantaged
8. Manifests a collaborative approach to ministry by trusting others, being sensitive to their needs and aspirations, using conflict constructively, and developing effective conflict resolution skills
9. Has integrated the various aspects of his personality in such a way as to be effective in his role as a spiritual leader
10. Respects his own and others' humanity as Jesus did in becoming human, and encourages others to develop this gift in healthy ways

2. Spiritual Formation

1. Demonstrates a growing clarity of ideas on the nature of

celibate chastity and its positive significance along with a growing acceptance of celibacy as a true good in itself, not simply as an unavoidable condition for receiving Orders

2. Demonstrates a life of virtue: the natural virtues of honesty, prudence, constancy, firmness of convictions, and a spirit of sacrifice and service; the supernatural virtues of a spirit of faith, love for Jesus and the Church, and hope rooted in God

3. Gives evidence of an ability to build and support faith communities in the Church

4. Demonstrates a thoughtful understanding of and an emerging commitment to the spirituality of diocesan priesthood

5. Demonstrates a missionary and apostolic zeal for the Gospel and willingness to commit his life to the service of the Gospel, the Church and the salvation of the world

6. Demonstrates an understanding of and a personal appreciation for the psychological, social and legal dimensions of sexual issues in ministerial relationships

7. Exhibits an underlying spirit of peace and joy, with an appropriate spirit of detachment in his behaviour towards material goods and his own goods

8. Demonstrates a commitment to praying faithfully the full Liturgy of the Hours

9. Has realized the continuing need for and value of spiritual direction in his own life and in that of others

10. Gives evidence of being able to provide basic spiritual direction and possesses sufficient humility to refer a directee to another who could provide more competent accompaniment when necessary

11. Demonstrates an ability to offer instruction on faith and prayer, recognizing the value of different forms of prayer

3. Intellectual Formation

1. Demonstrates the ability to use scriptural and liturgical texts in preaching and catechesis to address the pastoral needs of the community

2. Demonstrates a solid understanding of the major documents of the Second Vatican Council

3. Demonstrates a theological understanding of the roles of women and men in the life and ministry of the Church

4. Demonstrates an understanding of the development and theology of the sacraments of Penance and the Anointing of the Sick, and their place within the life of the Church

5. Exhibits an integrated understanding of the theological, sacramental, moral, liturgical and spiritual traditions of the Church

6. Demonstrates the ability to enter theological discussions with persons of various backgrounds and levels of understanding of the faith

7. Demonstrates a commitment to the Church's ecumenical teaching and the willingness to enter mature and appropriate dialogue with non-Catholics

4. Pastoral Formation

1. Demonstrates an ability to preside at liturgies in a welcoming manner
2. Has reflected upon his own struggles, and with the light of the Gospel, has grown from them in developing a greater compassion for others' sufferings
3. Shows an understanding of Church law as a pastoral instrument in the life of the Church and demonstrates an ability to apply the law appropriately to pastoral situations
4. Gives evidence of understanding the role of the priest as a public person, demonstrates leadership skills, exercises pastoral roles with insight and confidence, and manifests a grasp of the collaborative nature of ministry
5. Demonstrates an ability to integrate scriptural and theological studies into the preparation and delivery of homilies
6. Demonstrates the ability to maintain professional boundaries and confidentiality in the exercise of ministry
7. Demonstrates pastoral zeal through engagement in seminary activities and parish outreach
8. Demonstrates the ability to reflect and dialogue on the issues and concerns he will encounter in future parish ministry, drawing upon theological studies and previous pastoral involvement to address them
9. Demonstrates an evangelical zeal for sharing the truth of the faith in an appropriate manner to those within and outside of the Catholic community.

3.1 Specific Benchmarks for Spiritual Growth

I Principles

Three Principles guide the creation of these benchmarks: graduality, tolerance, mystery.

1. Graduality

Graduality acknowledges that everyone is at a different "place" of spiritual development, no one is a finished product, and all are in need for ongoing formation.

- It also acknowledges that while all persons have a spiritual life, owing to their nature as body and spirit, development in the spiritual life can only occur in communion with God and with others (particularly family and the Church).
- The development of the spiritual life, which occurs within communion, requires conversation and conversion.
- Conversation and conversion are dialogical – meaning they require two or more people to be in communication.
- Moreover, the development of the spiritual life presumes the free cooperation of the individual with the grace of God.
- No development can occur without the grace of God.

2. Tolerance

Tolerance identifies the upper (avoiding exaggerated manifestations of piety) and lower (minimum spiritual requirements for a healthy pastoral life) limits of spiritual life. This document may not define the upper limits of the spiritual

life as these may be too numerous and varied. It will, however, as this is its purpose, seek to define the lower or minimum limits of the spiritual life with respect to one's stage in the formation program

3. Mystery

We are, throughout this exercise of identifying benchmarks of spiritual development, dealing with the mystery of the participation in divine grace – which cannot be quantified.

II The Document

1. A Living Document:

This is a living document. It will undergo ongoing development to communicate new insights of the Church, to respond to the needs of seminarians, or to articulate ideas more clearly. Nonetheless it is meant to be used even in its unfinished state. As soon as the parties involved in formation have given assent to its content, it may be employed.

2. Objective:

The object of this document is to offer seminarians, spiritual directors, counsellors, and formators (including bishops, vocation directors, and pastoral year supervisors) some guideposts and goals for formation in the dimension of the spiritual life.

3. A Holistic Perspective:

While this document treats the spiritual life on its own it is understood that the spiritual life is not lived out in isolation but in communion with the other three dimensions of formation – human, pastoral, and intellectual.

Furthermore, what affects the spiritual life will affect the other three dimensions – and vice versa.

i.e. good sleep, exercise, good relationships, etc. will support one's life of prayer.

III Introduction

Dabo vobis pastores juxta cor meum (Jer 3.15). Bishop Michael Francis Fallon, OMI, the founding bishop of St. Peter's Seminary in London, chose this as the motto of the seminary: "I will give you shepherds according to my own heart"

This motto is at the heart of our Chapel Prayer, which we pray as a community for the seminary family and all her alumni.

Here is that prayer:

V. Our help is in the name of the Lord.

R. Who made heaven and earth.

V. Let us pray for N. our pope, N. our bishop, for all our bishops, and all servants of the Lord.

V. No longer will I call you servants but friends,

R. for I have told you all that I have heard from my Father.

V. I will give you shepherds according to my own heart,

R. and they will lead you with wisdom and understanding.

V. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit,

R. for the common good and building-up the Body of Christ.

V. Let them give themselves first to the Lord;

R. for the love of Christ impels us.

V. Father, you give to us the ordained, religious, and lay apostles to restore all things in Christ by the Holy Spirit. May they abide in your heart and, from there, be sent out to refresh the hearts of the saints to proclaim your name to the ends of the world. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

V. Holy Mary, Mother of God,

R. Pray for us.

It is according to the Heart of Jesus, Sacred and adored by the Church, that the seminary seeks to offer a program of formation for men preparing for ordination and women and men preparing to serve in positions of leadership in the Church.

IV Foundational Year

In the first year of a seminarian's formation, regardless of his academic standing, he is assigned to the Foundational Year program.

a) Personal Prayer

The men who enter the seminary for their first year come from various walks of life where there are a variety of values assigned to such things as prayer. Since personal prayer has a prime importance in the spiritual life, and since community life and silence are to be cultivated, the Foundational Year seminarian will be given an intentional, structured, and communal form of personal prayer – which will introduce him to this highly valued aspect of the spiritual life.

As such, each Foundational Year seminarian will have a scheduled 30-minute communal personal prayer period each day – to which their attendance is expected.

The means of prayer during this 30-minute period are described below.

V First Theology

a) Personal Prayer

Personal Prayer is distinct from Liturgical Prayer (Liturgy of the Hours) and from Devotional Prayer (Rosary, Chaplets, Stations, Novenas, etc.)

Personal Prayer is that prayer which is neither prescriptive nor formulaic – it is intimate and has the characteristic of presenting one's whole person and personality into conversation with the Persons of the Holy Trinity.

First, a love for and a sense of value of personal prayer, is to be cultivated. The seminarian would value personal prayer, as a source of spiritual life, as he values the air he breathes to sustain his biological health. Personal prayer is not everything he needs for his spiritual life, as breathing is not everything necessary for biological life, but it is necessary.

b) How long should one be praying?

By the end of 1st Theology, a seminarian will want to be praying:

- 45-60 contiguous minutes in personal prayer each day – OR –
- Two 30-minute periods in personal prayer each day

The seminarian is to have an ongoing conversation with his spiritual director about the length of time spent in personal prayer and what shape that time is to take from the above two options.

- Note that when it comes to prayer, duration of prayer can be, but is not necessarily, directly proportional to depth in prayer.
- The seminarian who prays one hour of personal prayer daily ought not to lengthen the duration of his prayer or seek to pray a second hour or more of personal prayer in his day.
- The exception to this is on retreat – when the seminarian may be asked to pray more than one hour of personal prayer in the day.

c) Means of Prayer

There are three means of personal prayer which we find in the tradition. They are known as meditation, contemplation, and being present to God. These will be described briefly.

i) Meditation

Also known as lectio divina involves the use of Sacred Scripture.¹⁴ Meditation has the following moments: Relax, Read, Repeat, Reflect, Review.

Relax: find a place of silence; take the posture of prayer; acknowledge God is looking upon you with mercy; slow your breath and calm your spirit.

Read the chosen Scripture passage with care

Repeat: re-read the text being attentive to what word or phrase moves you

Reflect: hold onto and ponder the word or phrase that affected you. When distracted repeat the word or phrase or re-read the text.

Review: ask God, “what are you saying to me in and through this experience of prayer?” Then give thanks to God. You may want to enter something in your spiritual journal.

ii) Contemplation

¹⁴ Momney, A. “Gospel Contemplation.” Presented via Microsoft Teams for the Year End Retreat, London, ON, April 23, 2021.

Contemplation uses Sacred Scripture, but it also deploys our imagination.

Contemplation has the following moments: Relax, Read, Replace, Remain, Review.¹⁵

Relax: find a place of silence; take the posture of prayer; acknowledge God is looking upon you with mercy; slow your breath and calm your spirit.

Read the chosen Scripture passage with care and, with the gift of your imagination, enter the scene with all its characters, action, sights, sounds, smells, tastes, drama, etc.

Replace: put yourself into the scene and allow it to unfold with you present.

Remain: remain in the scene and take part in what is happening. When distracted return to the scene.

Review: be aware of what moved you. Give thanks to God. You may want to make a notation in your spiritual journal.

iii) Being Present to God

Presence has the following moments: Relax, Receive, Respond, Remain, Review.

Relax: find a place of silence; take the posture of prayer; acknowledge God is looking upon you with mercy; slow your breath and calm your spirit

Receive: the language of God is silence, says St. Mother Teresa of Kolkata. Receive (listen to) the silence as a means of God speaking.

Respond: when you become aware of any thoughts, feelings, or desires, present these to God.

Remain: abide in the Lord; return to Him when distracted.

Review: be aware of what moved you. Give thanks to God. You may want to make a notation in your spiritual journal.

This form of prayer is best described by St. Jean-Marie Vianney. Vianney was curious about a person who spent about

¹⁵ Momney, A. "Gospel Contemplation." Presented via Microsoft Teams for the Year End Retreat, London, ON, April 23, 2021

an hour each day in the parish church. The man seemed to be doing nothing, so Vianney asked him what he was doing during the time he spent in prayer. The man answered, "I do nothing. He [Jesus in the Eucharist] looks at me and I look at Him."

One last note: we do well to recall throughout our day that God is always present to us, looking upon us with great affection, delighting in us, and, in a certain sense, contemplating us.

We also do well to recall that prayer is as much, if not more, the work of God as it is ours. In fact, St. Paul reminds us that it is the Holy Spirit who helps us to pray "for we do not know how to pray as we ought" (Rom 8.26).