

5. The Discernment Process

5.0 Introduction

As an important part of formation, one needs to have the accompaniment and approbation of the Church to continue in formation and to proceed to ordination or other formal ministry in the Church. The Seminary serves as an agent of the Church in this regard, taking time each year to evaluate the candidates for ordination and advising their bishops accordingly. Assessments focus on areas of growth and strengths, as well as weakness and areas for change. The seminarians themselves play an important part in this assessment, along with their peers and Formators.

This section of the *Handbook* explains the process of Discernment for seminarians, as well as providing the tools for self-assessment, peer-assessment and the summer evaluation for seminarians.

Included, as well, are the “Benchmarks” documents for an objective view of the development of the average candidate. The handbook for the Pastoral Year, another separate document, contains the information about evaluation for that part of formation.

Discernment Meetings normally take place in November and February, beginning with the most senior seminarians and ending with the newest seminarians.

I Preparations for Discernment Meetings

During the Propaedeutic Program, Seminarians are introduced to the document *Benchmarks for Seminary Formation* as a tool for personal reflection and for developing a plan for growth. This document is given after the new seminarians reflect on and discuss both the various *Roles and Responsibilities* of parish priests today, and the *Qualities needed* in priests to effectively carry out these roles. The new seminarians reflect on these Qualities that priests should possess in the areas of their Spiritual, Human, Intellectual and Pastoral life. After recognizing *all* the many qualities and skills that a priest needs in order to serve today’s Church and world, seminarians are reassured that “Rome was not built in a day,” and that they have a number of years in seminary formation to develop and foster these many qualities and skills. The *Benchmarks* document can serve as a tool that suggests incremental steps through which a seminarian can embrace the many qualities needed for effective priestly ministry today.

Therefore, in preparing to write your *Personal Plan of Formation* as part of your annual Discernment process, you are asked to review the *Benchmarks* document to help measure your progress in developing the various attitudes, skills and qualities that you will need for future priestly ministry.

II Rationale

Pastores Dabo Vobis (PDV) refers to the responsibility of the Church in laying down the norms and conditions of discernment and formation of candidates for the priesthood. It refers to the seminary as a place of discernment of a priestly vocation. In as much as it is an educational ecclesial community, the seminary and its entire life, in all its different expressions, is committed to the human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral formation of future priests. The duty of ensuring that there is

authoritative Discernment of the suitability of candidates with respect to the four areas of formation in the external forum is that of the bishop in consultation with the rector and the formation faculty. The following quotations from the document give great insight into this important process:

It is the task of the bishop or the competent superior not only to examine the suitability and the vocation of the candidate but also to recognize it. This ecclesial element is inherent in a vocation to the priestly ministry as such. The candidate to the priesthood should receive his vocation not by imposing his own personal conditions but accepting also the norms and conditions which the Church herself lays down, in the fulfillment of her responsibility (PDV 35).

The seminary is, therefore, an educational ecclesial community, indeed a particular educating community. And it is the specific goal which determines its physiognomy: the vocational accompanying of future priests, and therefore the discernment of a vocation, the help to respond to it and the preparation to receive the sacrament of orders with its own graces and responsibilities, by which the priest is configured to Jesus Christ head and shepherd and is enabled and committed to sharing the mission of salvation in the Church and in the world (PDV 61).

While safeguarding the distinctions between the internal and external forum, and maintaining a suitable freedom in the choice of confessors and the prudence and discretion which should be a feature of the ministry of the spiritual director, the priestly community of teachers should feel united in the responsibility of educating candidates for the priesthood. It is their duty, always with regard to the authoritative Discernment made by the bishop and the rector together, to foster and verify in the first place the suitability of the candidates in regard to their spirit of prayer, their deep assimilation of the doctrine of the faith, their capacity for true fraternity and the charism of celibacy (PDV 66).

Growth in priestly formation is a developmental and gradual process. Annual assessments provide students with clear, objective and accurate information and encouragement regarding their overall development, maturity, and readiness for public ministry. The assessment process is a co-operative and continuing effort involving the individual candidate, the candidate's Formator, the candidate's peers, the formation faculty, the rector and ultimately, the candidate's bishop.

The assessment process is an integral component of the overall formation program. The purpose of the annual assessment is to foster the candidate's growth and to assist the bishop in discerning the work of Christ who calls. The candidate fulfills his responsibilities to the bishop by entering this process with humility, honesty, obedience and an openness to further growth in the discernment and formation of his vocation. The rector and faculty fulfill their responsibilities to the bishop by providing a comprehensive and thorough assessment process designed to serve the purpose stated above. The assessment process is intended to help the candidate assess his progress in integrating the four areas of formation by developing the knowledge, abilities, and attitudes essential for ordained ministry.

5.1 Benchmarks of Formation

I Overview

This document identifies qualities and characteristics that are expected of a seminarian by the end of each of the four stages of the priestly formation program. These qualities and characteristics serve as criteria for evaluating a seminarian's human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral development as they complete each of these phases of formation during their accompanied journey towards ordination for the diocesan priesthood. These benchmarks are reflective of the developmental approach basic to the formation program of the Seminary. Quotations from the Dec. 8, 2016, *Ratio Fundamentalis Instrumentalis* on Seminary formation are cited throughout the document to provide meaningful foundations.

This Benchmarks document is an important instrument for the seminarian to reflect on regularly during his program of formation, and to use as an aid to his personal dialogue with his Formator. This will help the seminarian and his Formator to reflect together about areas of attained strength as well as areas in which the seminarian needs further development during his journey of priestly formation.

II Gradual Formation

Both Saint John Paul's Post-Synodal Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis* and the new *Ratio Fundamentalis* emphasize that the process of formation does not end with ordination to the priesthood. Discipleship, configuration, and growth toward ministering in the image of Jesus is a life-long process.

Highlighting the importance of what lies beyond ordination, the *Ratio Fundamentalis* states:

"The term 'ongoing Formation' is a reminder that the one experience of discipleship of those called to priesthood is never interrupted. The priest not only 'learns to know Christ' but, under the action of the Holy Spirit, he finds himself within a process of a gradual and continuous configuration to Him, in his being and his acting, which constantly challenges the person to inner growth. One must constantly feed the 'fire' that gives light and warmth to the exercise of the ministry, remembering that, 'the heart and form of the priest's ongoing formation is pastoral charity' (PDV no. 70)." (# 80).

Keeping this perspective ever in mind, seminarians are to develop, during their process of initial formation, hearts and minds eager for learning that will further develop their understanding and ability to communicate the faith. They will begin to plan while journeying towards ordination, ways to continue their learning in the areas of theology, spirituality and fresh methods of pastoral application for their ministry of service and outreach to God's people.

A more detailed descriptions of the Benchmarks can be found in section *3.3 Benchmarks in Formation*. These outline the benchmarks we hope a seminarian demonstrates during his time here. Simplified charts of the growth of these dimensions during the various stages of formation are listed below.

Human Benchmarks

Propaedeutic	Discipleship	Configuration Stage to Christ	Vocational Synthesis
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relates with others in a manner which is appropriate for his age and stage of development • Is able to relate with others from different backgrounds and/or from different countries than himself • Is open to reflecting on his family of origin and addressing any areas that may need healing • Is receptive to reflecting on the presence of addictive behaviours in his lifestyle • Is open to new ideas and patterns of behaviour which formation personnel suggest to him 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates a healthy level of self-awareness and the ability to recognize his personal gifts and areas of needed growth • Is able to integrate new knowledge about himself into his personal means for development • 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 • Is able to share various aspects of his human development with his Formator and is open to receive helpful feedback • Sees human development as an ongoing task which unfolds throughout his lifetime 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manifests balance in the demands of study, prayer, service, and recreation by meeting his commitments in a timely fashion • Exhibits openness and honesty in one-to-one conversations and in group settings and is able to receive both affirmation and constructive criticism • Participates in group tasks in a collaborative spirit • Evidence of a realistic knowledge of sexuality and expresses sexuality appropriately • Establishes and sustains friendships in which he deals appropriately with issues of intimacy and respects boundaries • Engages positively in the formation program, managing well the various stressors of life • Has an appropriate level of self-knowledge and affective maturity, and clarity of male sexual identity with no abnormal affective tendencies • Demonstrates an appropriate use of leisure, including use of the media and the internet • Relates socially with others by manifesting self-confidence, interest in and concern for others, and ability to put others at ease • 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 • 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shows leadership ability in the seminary community and in ministry, being appropriately assertive when necessary • Is not given to extremes (e.g. moods, rigidity) • Has learned to manage finances responsibly, and has respect for the goods of the Church • 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 • Shows consistency in the prudence and good sense of his judgments and in his concern for the common good • Takes responsibility for his own life and formation while at the same time manifesting freedom from individualism • Has a commitment to social justice; manifests compassion and generously assists others in need, particularly the poor and disadvantaged • 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 • Has integrated the various aspects of his personality in such a way as to be effective in his role as a spiritual leader • Respects his own and others' humanity as Jesus did in becoming human, and encourages others to develop this gift in healthy ways

Spiritual Benchmarks

Propaedeutic Stage	Discipleship Stage	Configuration Stage to Christ	Vocational Synthesis
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates an awareness of the importance of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as the basis of his spiritual journey • Participates regularly and actively in the Eucharist and the Liturgy of the Hours by celebrating and singing with the assembly • Celebrates the Sacrament of Reconciliation regularly with his spiritual director • Demonstrates a daily commitment to prayer and an openness to quiet reflection • Is open to learning about various means for prayer and discerns how to integrate these into his personal prayer life • 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates serious and mature engagement in days of recollection and retreats • Gives indication of a growing integration of his learning and emotional life with a life of virtue and openness to the Holy Spirit • 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 • 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 • Shows willingness to be formed through spiritual direction and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates a daily commitment to prayer and solitude • Participates regularly and actively in the liturgy, demonstrating a love for the Eucharist and daily participation in its celebration • Demonstrates a deepening devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary through such practices as recitation of the Rosary • Shows a reverence for the word of God and the teaching of the Catholic Church through habits of prayer, study, and virtuous living • 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 • Gives indications of an integration of his learning, emotional life and his life in the Spirit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 • 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 • Gives evidence of an ability to build and support faith communities in the Church • Demonstrates a thoughtful understanding of and an emerging commitment to the spirituality of diocesan priesthood • 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 • Demonstrates an understanding of and a personal appreciation for the psychological, social and legal dimensions of sexual issues in ministerial relationships • Exhibits an underlying spirit of peace and joy, with an appropriate spirit of detachment in his behaviour towards material goods and his own goods • Demonstrates a commitment to praying faithfully the full Liturgy of the Hours • Has realized the continuing need for and value of spiritual direction in his own life and in that of others • 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 • Demonstrates an ability to offer instruction on faith and prayer, recognizing the value of different forms of prayer

	communal living		
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Intellectual Benchmarks

Propaedeutic	Discipleship Stage	Configuration Stage to Christ	Vocational Synthesis
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is open to learning and appropriating Instruments for discerning the movement of the Holy Spirit • Demonstrates a love for reading and learning • Shows an interest in drawing wisdom from Classics of the Catholic spiritual tradition • Engages actively in discussions during Propaedeutic teaching modules • Demonstrates an active interest in learning the foundations of the Catholic faith as articulated in the Catechism of the Catholic Church • Actively seeks inspiration from the witness and writings of the Saints 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflects a broad knowledge of the history of philosophy • Has an understanding and appreciation of elements of the philosophy of Plato, with its benefits and limitations in relation to Christian spirituality • 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 • Has begun to formulate a natural ethics based on the virtues • Has begun to reflect on the implications of philosophy in the social realm, especially as it relates to the common good • Has a thorough understanding of logic, including the ability to identify fallacious reasoning • Has a comprehensive understanding and ability to interpret fundamental philosophical writings of St. Thomas Aquinas • Has a basic familiarity with the principal currents of twentieth and twenty-first century philosophy, both Continental and Anglo-American • Demonstrates a grasp of the interconnection among the various branches of philosophical enquiry • 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 • Exhibits a sense of wonder and a desire to probe more deeply into the mysteries of the faith • Demonstrates a grasp of the continuity and development within the doctrinal tradition • 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 • Demonstrates an understanding of how the Magisterium relates to the theological disciplines and the opinions of scholars • Balances the quest for certainty with the sometimes-ambiguous character of the search for theological understanding • 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 • Reflects accurately in written assignments, class discussion, and course Discernments the interrelationships of the various theological disciplines • Uses historical-critical methods for the interpretation of primary sources in scripture, liturgy, and systematic theology courses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates the ability to use scriptural and liturgical texts in preaching and catechesis to address the pastoral needs of the community • Demonstrates a solid understanding of the major documents of the Second Vatican Council • Demonstrates a theological understanding of the roles of women and men in the life and ministry of the Church • 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 • Exhibits an integrated understanding of the theological, sacramental, moral, liturgical and spiritual traditions of the Church • Demonstrates the ability to enter theological discussions with persons of various backgrounds and levels of understanding of the faith • Demonstrates a commitment to the Church's ecumenical teaching and the willingness to enter

			mature and appropriate dialogue with non-Catholics
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Pastoral Benchmarks

Propaedeutic Stage	Discipleship Stage	Configuration Stage to Christ	Vocational Synthesis
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates eagerness to serve the other members of the community of seminarians • Shows concern for the needs of the poor through his experiences of outreach during the Propaedeutic Stage • Openly and sincerely shares during theological reflection sessions about his experiences, struggles and the feelings evoked within him in his outreach • Shows commitment to contributing his energies to Group and Community duties • Engages genuinely in offering welcome, witness and accompaniment to participants in Come & See Weekends at the Seminary • Demonstrates signs of having zeal for evangelization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates responsibility in dedicating four hours weekly in pre-practicum outreach and in completing reflection assignments thoughtfully and punctually • Manifests compassion and empathy towards the suffering and needy, thereby revealing his development of a caring pastoral presence • 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 • Manifests skills of working in collaboration with others, and an appreciation of the important role of the laity in works of service and justice • Manifests openness to receiving and integrating the input and Discernment of superiors in his outreach, and of peers who have engaged in similar forms of service • 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 • Demonstrates the ability to reflect on his outreach each month, recognizing personal skills developed, insights gained, and emotions evoked 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotes behaviours that foster Christian community and reflects a Gospel-based commitment to service, a spirit of hospitality, and a willingness to resolve conflict • Shows a capacity for collaborative thinking, analyzing and strategizing for effective service of others • Is both willing and able to reflect theologically on pastoral experience • Is neither obsequious nor adversarial in his relationships towards authority figures in the pastoral context • 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 • Demonstrates catechetical skills adapted to the development level and needs of learners • Demonstrates the capacity for attentive listening to others (especially in their time of need), and an openness to the needs of the poor • 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates an ability to preside at liturgies in a welcoming manner • 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 • 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 • 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 • Demonstrates an ability to integrate scriptural and theological studies into the preparation and delivery of homilies • Demonstrates the ability to maintain professional boundaries and confidentially in the exercise of ministry • Demonstrates pastoral zeal through engagement in seminary activities and parish outreach • 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 • Demonstrates an evangelical zeal for sharing the truth of the faith in an appropriate manner to those within and outside of the Catholic community.

5.2 Yearly Assessment Process

I Ongoing Faculty Submissions

All members of the faculty (full- and part-time) may submit written comments to the rector or appropriate Formator regarding any student's progress, for immediate consideration in creating or revising the seminarians' Personal Plan of Formation. Any concerns from the faculty should be voiced as soon as they become apparent to help the seminarian deal with the concern.

II Personal Plan of Formation

1. Possible use of the Self-Assessment Tool

Early each year, a seminarian is asked to update his personal plan of formation. The Self-Assessment Tool provides the seminarian with specific questions which are intended to assist him in reflecting on his integration of the various areas and dimensions of his formation. These include family background and recent events, personal and social development, human, spiritual development, intellectual, pastoral and ministerial development, and finally vocational discernment and continued growth.

2. Review the Benchmarks of Formation

The Benchmarks can help identify any areas of needed growth and also highlight possible strengths to grow on. Begin to have three prayerful reflections reviewing the graduated benchmarks of formation. The reflections relate to the various dimensions in the following manner.

3. Receive Peer Assessments

The comments and observations of peers are sought. The Church appeals to the responsibility of the community when calling forth a candidate to the diaconate and the priesthood. The peers' participation in the assessment process reflects the Ordination Rite. Those within the seminary community have a moral responsibility to participate and communicate information which directly relates to the growth and formation of candidates as they advance to such orders. The willingness of peers to speak the truth in love provides the candidate with further help with his progress to God's call to serve as a priest.

4. Receive Formator's Input

Seminarians are expected to meet with their Formators regularly. They are to review their Self-Assessment, Peer Assessments and input from Faculty Submissions. Reviewing the Benchmarks of Formation seminarians form a Personal Plan of Formation (PPF) in dialogue with their Formator.

5. Write (revise) Personal Plan of Formation

Seminarians take their own written self-assessment along with input from the peer assessment(s) and other pertinent reports such as the summer report and prepare a Personal Plan of Formation.

The report is organized under the following headings

a) Background and Recent Events

b) Reflections

i) *Growth in Foundational Relationships*

- ii) *Integrating A Priestly Identity*
- iii) *Understanding My Vocational Mission*
- c) **Goals and Objectives**

As a guideline of objectives for growth the Formator follows the pertinent sections of the “Benchmarks” document.

The Formator shares this report with the candidate before it is given to the faculty. A copy is given to the candidate; and the candidate is required to share it, along with his self-assessment, with his spiritual director

III Review of Discernment Committee

All members of the faculty have responsibility for the formation and continuous assessment of candidates for the priesthood. A committee of the faculty, known as the Discernment Committee, is responsible for the annual assessment process as outlined here.

Members of the faculty are appointed to the Discernment Committee by the Bishop of London, on the recommendation of the rector. The committee may comprise any/all of the following individuals:

- the Rector,
- the Vice-Rector,
- all Formators,
- the Human Formation Counselor,
- the Director of Field Education,
- the Director of Lay Formation
- the Director of the Pastoral Year
- the Dean of Arts
- the Dean of Studies

This committee acts in the name of the whole faculty. Members of the DEC receive copies of each student's self-assessment and his Personal Plan of Formation. At the DEC meetings, the members discuss the reports for each candidate. The house spiritual director, the candidate's spiritual director(s), and the Human Formation Counselor may be present at the discussion, as observers only. They have no voice or vote in the discussions.

The faculty discussion considers the following:

points in the Seminarian's Personal Plan of Formation (PPF) which need clarification, points where the experience of the faculty differ from the report, and particularly significant points which must be acknowledged more strongly;

experiences of the candidate's behaviour and growth in formation not addressed in the PPF;

where he still needs to grow, and specific recommendations concerning his formation;

the qualities and attributes observed in the candidate which will contribute to his future priestly ministry;

The rector summarizes the discussion and calls for a vote as to whether the candidate should proceed further in formation. Neither the house spiritual director nor the candidate's own spiritual director (or, if applicable, any previous spiritual director) has a voice or a vote.

IV Meeting with Rector

In the days that follow, normally within one to two weeks, the student then meets the rector to review the discussion of the faculty. During this meeting, the student receives the recommendations, observations, and encouragement of the faculty. It affords the candidate an opportunity to gain greater self-knowledge, encouragement and fraternal challenge to make further progress in his formation.

V Rector's Report

The rector writes an annual report to each candidate's bishop. This report is based on the seminarian's PPF, the discussion and assessment of the DEC at their meeting, and the candidate's meeting with the rector. Each candidate receives a copy of the rector's report, which he is obliged to share with his spiritual director. For the good of the Church, the seminary reserves the right to communicate privately, freely and unencumbered with a bishop should there be certain concerns that they might have with a candidate.

VI Meeting with the Bishop

In March of each year, bishops or their delegates are invited to the Seminary to receive the faculty's assessment for each of their students and to meet with the DEC. The rector presents his report, as outlined above, along with the student's self-assessment and the Formator's report. The bishop has an opportunity to seek clarification and to offer his own perspective on a candidate's progress. Petitions for ministries, candidacy and orders are considered in the same meeting, with the vote of the DEC being taken at that time, in the presence of the bishop or his delegate.

5.3 Creating a Personal Plan of Formation

A Personal Plan of Formation (PPF) is continually revised based on self-reflection as well as peer and faculty submissions. Both the Institute for Priestly Foundation and the Seminary Formation Council suggest reflecting on relationship, identity, and mission (RIM) to spiritually integrate the human, intellectual and pastoral dimensions of formation. These three key reflections help orient and set Goals that define the personal objectives in formation. At St. Peter's Seminary we apply the principles of RIM by asking you to reflect on: 1) Growth in Foundational Relationships, 2) Integrating a Priestly Identity and 3) Understanding My Vocational Mission.

I Growth in Foundational Relationships

The first conversation revolves around the foundational relationships that continually form us. Our relationship with God and the people we serve and minister with fortify each other. Starting with your current pastoral endeavours review how you are being challenged to grow in your foundational relationships. Your pastoral endeavours could include living and studying with others as well as your apostolic and pastoral works. Pay attention to potential conflicts and areas of needed growth. Reflect on the human dimension of your formation.

1. How have my relationships changed in the past year? (Consider your relationship with God, your Bishop/Superior, other priests and seminarians, seminary faculty, lay students, people you encounter in your outreach or parish ministry, family members and friends.)
2. What are my relational skills and abilities which will serve me in my future role as a priest?
3. Where have I seen growth in my relationships? What relationships do I wish to develop? How can you develop these relationships?

II Integrating A Priestly Identity

The second conversation arises out of the conversation around foundational relationships. Integrating a priestly identity reflects on the intellectual dimension of your formation but not in a merely academic way. Discover how God is challenging you to grow in your self-understanding of what it means to be a minister of the Church and hopefully a priest of God. How do you feel about this new understanding of priesthood? How is your heart and mind being stretched by this new understanding?

Reflect on the intellectual dimension of formation not merely as an academic endeavour but to help to integrate a priestly identity.

- What have I discovered about myself?
- How have my relationships influenced my understanding of myself and what it means to be a priest? How has my intellectual formation changed my understanding of myself and what it means to be a priest?
- Where do I need to grow in my priestly and self-identity?

III Understanding My Vocational Mission

The final conversation considers the vocational mission to which God is calling you. God unpacks his mission within our hearts. His mission is

not merely a program or plan of action but an entry into a life of grace that encourages and calls others forth to share in his saving work. One's vocational mission is found through prayer and pastoral reflection, so that the priest's high ideals may impact his humanity and call him forward. The priest's mission, while firmly based on the eternal Word, cannot remain static because his pastoral situations are continuously changing. Also, the priest's mission must express the lofty Word of God in concrete ways in his parish. His is a prophetic voice amidst the community that is demonstrated in the simplicity of laying down his life and leading his flock.

Reflecting on intellectual growth discuss the needed application of our vocation mission in the pastoral dimension of formation.

- How do I understand the mission to which God is calling me? How have I grown in my appreciation of this call?
- Where can I grow in my understanding and appreciation of what I am called to?

IV Set Formation Goals with Strategies and Objectives

With the help of your Formator, set some personal Goals and Objectives for the coming year of formation. Be sure to address the areas of growth you have identified in the three categories of relationship, identity and mission. You are asked to review your self- assessments, peer submissions and faculty submissions and any previous Personal Plans of Formation. The Benchmarks of Formation will clarify the Formation Faculty's expectation as you formulate what areas of growth your PPF will address.

- Build on your strengths to develop strategies which help you in addressing an area of growth
- Describe where you would like to be in your discernment by year's end regarding growing in your Foundational Relationships, Priestly Identity, and Vocational Understanding.
- Describe some strategies you will engage in to reach your objectives

EXAMPLES:

Goal: I want to grow in my ability to resolve conflicts with others.

Strategies and Objectives:

- *When the behavior of another seminarian is bothering me, rather than avoid the issue, I will try to start a conversation in order to better understand the person and his behaviour.*
- *Discuss with the Human Formation Counsellor my difficulties handling conflicts and brainstorm new strategies.*
- *If I notice I am "losing my temper" I will take a break and address the issue at a later time.*

Goal: By the end of this academic year, I want to make a decision to pursue ordination to the priesthood or to leave seminary formation.

Strategies and Objectives:

- *Discuss with my spiritual director and formator the doubts I have about my vocation.*

- *Ask my spiritual director or Formator to recommend a good book on priestly life to better understand my calling. Spend some time in prayer each week reflecting on scripture passages where someone is called by God.*

5.4 Personal Plan of Formation

Name

Diocese

Year

Formator

Spiritual Director

I Background and Recent Events

II Reflections

1. Understanding My Vocational Mission

- How have I grown in my appreciation of my vocational call and mission?
- Where can I grow in my appreciation of what I am called to?

2. Growth in Functional Skill

- What are my natural skills and abilities which will serve me in my future role as a priest?
- Where have I seen growth in my skills and abilities?
- Is there a skill or ability I wish to develop?

3. Integrating A Priestly Identity

- How does the Priesthood of Christ challenge or integrate my own self-identity?
- What have I discovered about myself?
- Where do I need to grow in my priestly and self-identity?

III Summary of Goals and Objectives

1. Goal 1

- a) An objective to attain that goal
- b) Possibly another objective to attain that goal

2. Goal 2

- a) An objective to attain that goal
- b) Possibly another objective to attain that goal

Signature

Formators Signature

5.5 Peer Review

Your Name:

Name of seminarian you are evaluating:

<input type="checkbox"/> Very well	<input type="checkbox"/> Recommend without reservation
<input type="checkbox"/> Well	<input type="checkbox"/> Recommend with reservation
<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat	<input type="checkbox"/> Do not recommend
<input type="checkbox"/> Not well	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to judge
<input type="checkbox"/> No response	

Please provide some written remarks below, with objective examples if possible. Feel free to use another sheet, but no more than one sheet. You may, if you wish, use some the characteristics on the back of this sheet to include in your remarks below.

Positive characteristics:

Principal areas for growth:

Signature:

Date:

Positive Characteristics

Adaptable
Approachable
Articulate
Caring
Charitable
Collaborative
Compassionate
Competent
Courteous
Creative
Dependable
Determined
Devoted
Diligent
Disciplined
Down to Earth
Easy to talk to
Empathetic
Friendly
Generous
Gentle
Hard working
Helpful
Holy
Honest
Humble
Initiative
Intelligent
Joyful
Kind
Leader
Listener
Loyal
Masculine
Mature
Well groomed
Organized
Outgoing
Pastoral
Patient
Personable
Prayerful
Punctual
Reliable
Respectful
Responsible
Selfless
Sense of humor
Sincere
Sociable

Studious
Thoughtful
Trustworthy
Understanding
Zealous

Areas for Growth
Absent from required functions
Aloof
Anger
Antagonistic
Apathetic
Argumentative
Arrogant
Careless
Conceited
Cultural issues
Discourteous
Disheveled
Dishonest
Disorganized
Disrespectful
Easily stressed
Effeminate
Immature
Impatient
Inappropriate language
Indifferent
Inflexible
Insensitive
Intolerant
Irresponsible
Judgmental
Likes to gossip
Likes to be the center of attention
Naïve
Negative
Off-color jokes
Pessimistic
Pompous
Poor hygiene
Rigid
Sad
Selfish
Short temper
Sloppy
Standoffish
Spiritualizes Everything
Tardy
Too quiet

Troubled
Withdrawn
Worldly

