

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.

1) Relationship

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. Where have I seen growth in my relationships? What relationships do I wish to develop? How can you develop these relationships?

2) 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.

1. What have I discovered about myself?
2. 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?
3. Where do I need to grow in my priestly and self-identity?

3) Mission and Current Goals

The final conversation considers the mission to which God is calling you currently. 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 current mission in the pastoral dimension of formation.

1. What are the skills and abilities I can develop which will serve in my future role as a priest?
2. Where do I need to give extra attention to in my current formation?

4) 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 Relationships, Priestly Identity, and Mission.
- 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.*