

Creating a Personal Plan of Formation¹

The Program for Priestly Formation for English Speaking Canada and St. John Paul II's Post Synodal Exhortation *Pastores dabo vobis* speak of the role of the seminarian in his own formation. The primary formator is the Holy Spirit who works through the various agents of the Church – the bishop, your formator, the seminary faculty, and the entire Christian community. Nevertheless, formation cannot happen without the free and responsible cooperation of the candidate himself.² In the *Personal Plan of Formation*, you are invited to reflect upon the call you are discerning and the response you are making to this call. This document, and the reflection that accompanies it, will assist you, your bishop, and the seminary faculty in discerning whether you are called to the priesthood in your respective diocese or religious community. It will also help you to discern the next steps needed to respond to the call. During this reflection, you will be invited to consider your relationships with others, your understanding of who you are, and your understanding of the mission God is inviting you to participate in.

Relationships – A vocation never happens in isolation. No one calls himself to the priesthood but receives this vocation from Christ and his Church. The apostles are sent by Jesus himself and the early Church commissions Paul and Barnabas to preach and teach (Matthew 28:16-20; Acts 13:1-4). In this section, you are invited to reflect upon your relationship with Christ and with his people.

Where is God present in my life right now? What practices do I use to maintain my relationship with God?

What are the most important relationships in my life? What do I receive from these relationships? What relational skills and abilities do I bring to my relationships? Have these relationships changed significantly in the past year?

Is there any way I wish my relationships were different? How can I improve them? What are the relational skills and abilities I will need?

Identity – A vocation is a calling to become someone new. In the scriptures, Abram becomes Abraham and Simon becomes Peter (Genesis 17:5; Matthew 16:13-20). Peter, Andrew, James and John are called to abandon their fishing boats and nets to “Fish for people!” (Luke 5:1-13). In this section, you are invited to reflect upon who you are and who you are becoming in response to the call of God.

How would I describe myself to others? What have I learned about myself through my relationships, pastoral placements, experiences, and studies? How have my relationships, pastoral placements, experiences, and studies changed me?

¹ This document was approved by the Formation Team of St. Peter's Seminary on August 14th, 2024.

² Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops., *The Program for Priestly Formation for English Speaking Canada* (Ottawa: CCCB Publications, 2022), Paragraphs 167-198; John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1992). Paragraphs 65-69.

Why do I want to become a priest? What are the signs that I am called to be a priest? Am I ready to commit to the priesthood in my diocese/community? Who is the priest I hope to be?

Mission – A vocation is a call to action. In the scriptures, God invites Moses to lead his people out of slavery and Jeremiah to speak his word to the rulers of his day (Exodus 3; Jeremiah 1:4-10). Jesus invites his disciples to “Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to the whole creation” (Mark 16:15).

How am I being invited to share in the mission of the Church? What is God doing in me and through me? Whom is God calling me to serve?

What skills and qualities do I have that will contribute to the mission of the Church?
What skills and qualities must I develop to effectively serve others?

Goals – In conversation with your formator, choose two or three goals to focus on in the upcoming year. These goals should grow out of your reflections above. Make sure to consider the recommendations given in previous Rector’s reports.

Goal #1

Why do I want to achieve this?
What are the steps to achieve this goal?

Goal #2

Why do I want to achieve this?
What are the steps to achieve this goal?

Some Tips for drafting a “Personal Plan of Formation”

- While you are invited to be responsible for your own formation, this does not remove the need to cooperate with those to whom your bishop/superior has entrusted your formation. The *Personal Plan of Formation* should be drafted with the assistance of your Formator and take into consideration the observations and recommendations of your Bishop, vocations director, pastoral year supervisor, field placement supervisor, and other faculty.
- Review the personal history you wrote while applying to the seminary and previous plans of formation. How have you grown in the last year?
- Start reflecting on the questions well in advance of the date you are expected to submit your plan. Bring the themes to prayer and reflect on them in the light of the Word of God. Prepare a draft and discuss the themes with your formator over several meetings.
- Avoid abstract language and generalizations. Speak sincerely of your experiences, relationships, difficulties, accomplishments, fears, and hopes.
- Your reflection should be a maximum of 2500 words in length. Use pt. 12 Times New Roman font.