

1 The Program of Priestly
2 Formation

3 in the United States of America

4 *Sixth Edition*

5
6 **PRE-PUBLISHED VERSION (April 20, 2022)**

7
8
9 UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

10 Washington, DC

11
12
13 Do not duplicate without permission.

14 © 2022 United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
15

Contents

16	
17	ABBREVIATIONS
18	PREFACE (NOS. 1-9)
19	INTRODUCTION
20	Priestly Formation: One, Integral, Grounded in Community, and Missionary in Spirit
21	(nos. 10-16)
22	Priestly Formation in the Context of the World and the Church Today (nos. 17-22)
23	THE MINISTERIAL PRIESTHOOD
24	Introduction (no. 23)
25	Trinitarian Foundation (no. 24)
26	Christological Nature (nos. 25-27)
27	Ecclesiological Expression (nos. 28-29)
28	Priesthood in Presbyteral Communion (nos. 30-31)
29	Priesthood: A Journey of Discipleship (nos. 32-36)
30	THE LIFE OF PRIESTS (NOS. 37-49)
31	PRIESTLY VOCATIONS IN THE CHURCH'S PASTORAL WORK
32	Accompaniment of Priestly Vocations (no. 50)
33	The Discernment of Vocations (nos. 51-52)
34	Growth in Hispanic Vocations (no. 53)

35	High School Seminaries and Accompaniment of Adolescents (no. 54)
36	ADMISSION INTO A FORMATION PROGRAM (NOS. 55-61)
37	<i>Norms for Admission into a Formation Program (nos. 62-90)</i>
38	SEMINARY FORMATION: THOSE WHO ACCOMPANY SEMINARIANS
39	Introduction (nos. 91-95)
40	Agents of Formation (no. 96)
41	The Diocesan Bishop (no. 97)
42	The Rector (no. 98)
43	Priestly Accompaniment (nos. 99-103)
44	The Spiritual Director (nos. 104-112)
45	Lay Accompaniment (no. 113)
46	SEMINARY FORMATION: STRUCTURAL ELEMENTS
47	An Integral Formation (nos. 114-117)
48	Seminary Stages of Formation (no. 118)
49	Propaedeutic Stage (nos. 119-131)
50	Discipleship Stage (nos. 132-134)
51	Configuration Stage (nos. 135-136)
52	Vocational Synthesis Stage (nos. 137-148)
53	Community (nos. 149-153)
54	NORMS FOR COMMUNITY (NOS. 154-162)
55	The Continuing Evaluation of Seminarians (no. 163)
56	NORMS FOR THE CONTINUING EVALUATION OF SEMINARIANS (NOS. 164-180)

- 57 HUMAN DIMENSION (NOS. 181-190)
- 58 Propaedeutic Stage Benchmarks (no. 191)
- 59 Discipleship Stage Benchmarks (nos. 192-197)
- 60 Configuration Stage Benchmarks (nos. 198-199)
- 61 Vocational Synthesis Stage Benchmarks (nos. 200-201)
- 62 NORMS FOR HUMAN FORMATION
- 63 *Aim of the Human Formation Program (nos. 202-203)*
- 64 *The Goals of Human Formation (nos. 204-205)*
- 65 *The Seminarian in Human Formation (nos. 206-208)*
- 66 *Preparation for Celibate Chastity (nos. 209-215)*
- 67 *Preparation for Simplicity of Life (nos. 216-218)*
- 68 *Preparation for Obedience (nos. 219-221)*
- 69 *Resources for Human Formation (nos. 222-224)*
- 70 SPIRITUAL DIMENSION (NOS. 225-234)
- 71 Propaedeutic Stage Benchmarks (no. 235)
- 72 Discipleship Stage Benchmarks (nos. 236-238)
- 73 Configuration Stage Benchmarks (nos. 239-242)
- 74 Vocational Synthesis Stage Benchmarks (nos. 243-245)
- 75 NORMS FOR SPIRITUAL FORMATION
- 76 *Prayer (nos. 246-258)*
- 77 *Spiritual Direction (nos. 259-260)*
- 78 INTELLECTUAL DIMENSION (NOS. 261-265)
- 79 The Various Contexts of Intellectual Formation (no. 266)

80	Integration of Intellectual Formation with the Other Dimensions (no. 267)
81	The Propaedeutic Stage (nos. 268-270)
82	Propaedeutic Stage Benchmarks (no. 271)
83	The Discipleship Stage (nos. 272-273)
84	Liberal Arts (nos. 274-277)
85	Philosophy (nos. 278-284)
86	Theology (nos. 285-286)
87	Cultural Preparation Programs (nos. 287-288)
88	Discipleship Stage Benchmarks (nos. 289-290)
89	The Configuration Stage
90	Graduate Theology (no. 291)
91	Configuration Stage Benchmarks (no. 292)
92	The Vocational Synthesis Stage (no. 293)
93	Vocational Synthesis Stage Benchmarks (nos. 294)
94	NORMS FOR INTELLECTUAL FORMATION
95	<i>Propaedeutic Stage (nos. 295-302)</i>
96	<i>Discipleship Stage (nos. 303-314)</i>
97	<i>Configuration Stage (nos. 315-364)</i>
98	<i>Vocational Synthesis Stage (no. 365)</i>
99	PASTORAL DIMENSION (NOS. 366-372)
100	Propaedeutic Stage Benchmarks (no. 373)
101	Discipleship Stage Benchmarks (nos. 374-375)
102	Configuration Stage Benchmarks (nos. 376-378)
103	Vocational Synthesis Stage Benchmarks (nos. 379-384)

104

NORMS FOR PASTORAL FORMATION (NOS. 385-398)

105

THE ONGOING FORMATION OF PRIESTS (NOS. 399-405)

106

SEMINARIES

107

Introduction (no. 406)

108

Governance (nos. 407-408)

109

The Role of the Diocesan Bishop or Major Superior (nos. 409-414)

110

Seminary Boards (nos. 415-419)

111

Formation of a Governance Policy (nos. 420-422)

112

Planning (nos. 423-428)

113

Structure (no. 429)

114

Leadership Principles of the Seminary Community (nos. 430-431)

115

Seminary Community Leadership Roles (nos. 432-433)

116

Roles Within the Community of Formators (no. 434)

117

Rector (nos. 435-441)

118

Vice Rector (no. 442)

119

Coordinator of Spiritual Formation (nos. 443-445)

120

Spiritual Directors (nos. 446-447)

121

Coordinator of Human Formation (nos. 448-450)

122

Priest Formators (no. 451)

123

Coordinator of Intellectual Formation (nos. 452-455)

124

Coordinator of Pastoral Formation (nos. 456-458)

125

Specialists (nos. 459-460)

126

Academic Dean (no. 461)

127

Librarian (no. 462)

128 *Development and Public Relations Officer (no. 463)*

129 *Business Manager (nos. 464-465)*

130 *Seminary Professors*

131 *Conditions of Service (nos. 466-478)*

132 *Organization (nos. 479-484)*

133 *Doctrinal Responsibility (nos. 485-488)*

134 CONCLUSION (NOS. 489-490)

Abbreviations

136	<i>Amoris Laetitia</i>	Pope Francis, <i>The Joy of Love</i> (Washington, DC: United States
137		Conference of Catholic Bishops [USCCB], 2016)
138		
139	<i>Catechism of the</i>	<i>Catechism of the Catholic Church,</i>
140	<i>Catholic Church</i>	2nd ed. (Washington, DC: Libreria Editrice Vaticana–USCCB, 2000)
141		
142	<i>Charter for the</i>	United States Conference of Catholic
143	<i>Protection of</i>	Bishops, <i>Charter for the Protection</i>
144	<i>Children and Young</i>	<i>of Children and Young People</i>
145	<i>People</i>	(Washington, DC: USCCB, 2018)
146		
147	<i>Christus Dominus</i>	<i>Decree on the Pastoral Office of the Bishops in the Church,</i> in Austin
148		Flannery, ed., <i>Vatican Council II: Volume I: The Conciliar and Post</i>
149		<i>Conciliar Documents,</i> new rev. ed. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press,
150		1996)
151		
152	CIC	<i>Codex Iuris Canonici (Code of Canon Law),</i> Latin-English Edition, New
153		English Translation, Second Printing (Washington, DC: Canon Law
154		Society of America, 1998)
155		
156	CCEO	<i>Codex Canonum Ecclesiarum Orientalium (Code of Canons of the Eastern</i>
157		<i>Churches),</i> New English Translation (Washington, DC: Canon Law Society of
158		America, 2001)
159		
160	<i>Compendium</i>	Pontifical Council for Justice and
161	<i>of the Social</i>	Peace, <i>Compendium of the Social</i>
162	<i>Doctrine</i>	<i>Doctrine of the Church</i> (Washington,
163	<i>of the Church</i>	DC: Libreria Editrice Vaticana–USCCB, 2004)
164		
165	<i>Dei Verbum</i>	<i>Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation,</i> in Austin Flannery, ed.,
166		<i>Vatican Council II: Volume I: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar</i>
167		<i>Documents,</i> new rev. ed. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996)
168		
169	<i>Ecclesia de</i>	St. John Paul II, <i>On the Eucharist</i>
170	<i>Eucharistia</i>	(Washington, DC: USCCB, 2003)
171		
172	<i>Ecclesia in America</i>	St. John Paul II, <i>The Church in America</i> (Washington, DC: USCCB,
173		1999)
174		
175	<i>Evangelica</i>	<i>Apostolic Exhortation on the</i>

176	<i>Testificatio</i>	<i>Renewal of Religious Life</i> , in Austin Flannery, ed., <i>Vatican Council II: Volume 1: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents</i> , new rev. ed. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996)
177		
178		
179		
180	<i>Evangelii Gaudium</i>	Pope Francis, <i>The Joy of the Gospel</i> (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2013)
181		
182	<i>Fides et Ratio</i>	St. John Paul II, <i>On the Relationship Between Faith and Reason</i> (Washington, DC: USCCB, 1998)
183		
184		
185	<i>General Instruction of the Roman Missal</i>	Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, <i>General Instruction of the Roman Missal</i> (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2011)
186		
187		
188		
189	<i>Gaudete et Exsultate</i>	Pope Francis, <i>Rejoice and Be Glad</i> (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2018)
190		
191	<i>Gaudium et Spes</i>	<i>Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World</i> , in Austin Flannery, ed., <i>Vatican Council II: Volume 1: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents</i> , new rev. ed. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996)
192		
193		
194		
195		
196	<i>Guidelines for Receiving Pastoral Ministers in the United States</i>	Committees on Clergy, Consecrated Life, and Vocations; Cultural Diversity in the Church; the Protection of Children and Young People; Canonical Affairs and Church Governance, <i>Guidelines for Receiving Pastoral Ministers in the United States</i> , 3rd ed. (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2014)
197		
198		
199		
200		
201		
202		
203	<i>Guidelines for the Use of Psychology in Seminary Admissions</i>	Committee on Clergy, Consecrated Life, and Vocations, <i>Guidelines for the Use of Psychology in Seminary Admissions</i> (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2015)
204		
205		
206		
207		
208	<i>Guidelines for the Use of Psychology in the Admission and Formation of Candidates for the Priesthood</i>	Congregation for Catholic Education, <i>Guidelines for the Use of Psychology in the Admission and Formation of Candidates for the Priesthood</i> (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2008)
209		
210		
211		
212		
213		
214		
215	<i>Laudato Si'</i>	Pope Francis, <i>On Care for Our Common Home</i> (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2015)
216		
217		
218	<i>Lumen Gentium</i>	<i>Dogmatic Constitution on the Church</i> , in Austin Flannery, ed., <i>Vatican Council II: Volume 1: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents</i> , new rev. ed. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996)
219		
220		

221		
222	<i>Misericordiae</i>	Pope Francis, <i>Bull of Indiction of the</i>
223	<i>Vultus</i>	<i>Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy</i> (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana,
224		2015)
225		
226	<i>Optatam Totius</i>	<i>Decree on the Training of Priests</i> , in Austin Flannery, ed., <i>Vatican</i>
227		<i>Council II: Volume 1: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents</i> , new
228		rev. ed. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996)
229		
230	<i>Pastores Dabo</i>	St. John Paul II, <i>I Will Give You</i>
231	<i>Vobis</i>	<i>Shepherds</i> (Washington, DC: USCCB, 1992)
232		
233	<i>Perfectae Caritatis</i>	<i>Decree on the Up-to-Date Renewal of Religious Life</i> , in Austin Flannery,
234		ed., <i>Vatican Council II: Volume 1: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar</i>
235		<i>Documents</i> , new rev. ed. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996)
236		
237	<i>Presbyterorum</i>	<i>Decree on the Ministry and Life of</i>
238	<i>Ordinis</i>	<i>Priests</i> , in Austin Flannery, ed., <i>Vatican Council II: Volume 1: The</i>
239		<i>Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents</i> , new rev. ed. (Collegeville, MN:
240		Liturgical Press, 1996)
241		
242	<i>Ratio</i>	Congregation for the Clergy, <i>Ratio</i>
243	<i>Fundamentalis</i>	<i>Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis (The Gift of the Priestly</i>
244		<i>Vocation)</i> (Vatican City: L'Osservatore Romano, 2016)
245		
246	<i>Rites of Ordination</i>	International Committee on English
247	<i>of a Bishop, of</i>	in the Liturgy, Inc., <i>Rites of</i>
248	<i>Priests, and of</i>	<i>Ordination of a Bishop, of Priests,</i>
249	<i>Deacons</i>	<i>and of Deacons</i> , 2nd ed. (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2002)
250		
251	<i>Rosarium Virginis</i>	St. John Paul II, <i>On the Most Holy</i>
252	<i>Mariae</i>	<i>Rosary</i> (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2002)
253		
254	<i>Sacramentum</i>	Pope Benedict XVI, <i>The Sacrament</i>
255	<i>Caritatis</i>	<i>of Charity</i> (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2007)
256		
257	<i>Sacrosanctum</i>	<i>Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy,</i>
258	<i>Concilium</i>	in Austin Flannery, ed., <i>Vatican Council II: Volume 1: The Conciliar and</i>
259		<i>Post Conciliar Documents</i> , new rev. ed. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical
260		Press, 1996)
261		
262	<i>Scrutinies</i>	<i>Circular Letter to the Most Reverend Diocesan Bishops and Other</i>
263		<i>Ordinaries with Canonical Faculties to Admit to Sacred Orders</i>
264		<i>Concerning Scrutinies Regarding the Suitability of Candidates for Orders</i>

265
266
267

(Vatican City: Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, November 10, 1997)

268	<i>Verbum Domini</i>	Pope Benedict XVI, <i>The Word of the Lord</i> (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2011)
269		
270		
271	<i>Veritatis Gaudium</i>	Pope Francis, <i>On Ecclesiastical Universities and Faculties</i> (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2017)
272		
273		
274	<i>Veritatis Splendor</i>	St. John Paul II, <i>The Splendor of Truth</i> (Washington, DC: USCCB, 1993)
275		
276	<i>Vita Consecrata</i>	St. John Paul II, <i>The Consecrated Life and its Mission in the Church and the World</i> (Washington, DC: USCCB, 1996)
277		

Preface

279 1. The documents of the Second Vatican Council¹ form an essential resource for the program
 280 of priestly formation along with the Council's specific treatment of priestly formation found in
 281 *Optatam Totius (Decree on the Training of Priests)*. The teaching of the Second Vatican Council
 282 establishes the normative understanding of the presbyteral office. As authentic articulations of the
 283 Church's faith, these documents along with *Ratio Fundamentalis Sacerdotalis Institutionis (The*
 284 *Gift of the Priestly Vocation*, 2016), the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*
 285 *(I Will Give You Shepherds*, 1992), the *Code of Canon Law* (1983), the *Code of Canons of the*
 286 *Eastern Churches* (1990), and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1997) shape this current
 287 *Program of Priestly Formation*.

288 2. Other documents of the Holy See pertaining to priestly formation and treating specific
 289 aspects of seminary programs also contribute to this edition of the *Program of Priestly Formation*,²

¹ Among these, of special importance are *Lumen Gentium*, *Christus Dominus*, and *Presbyterorum Ordinis*.

² The Holy See has given direction on the teaching of philosophy (1972), theology (1976), canon law (1975), mutual relations between bishops and religious (1978), liturgical formation (1979), social communications (1986), pastoral care of people on the move (1986), Oriental Churches (1987), social doctrine (1988), Mariology (1988), patristics (1989), formation in religious institutes (1990), marriage (1995), ecumenism (1998), *Fraternal Life in Community* (1994), and the interrelation of theology and philosophy (1998). The Congregation for Catholic Education has also commented on other aspects of formation, notably celibacy (1974), *Sapientia Christiana* (1979), and spiritual formation (1980). Additional documents of the Holy See that were issued following the promulgation of the *Program of Priestly Formation*, fifth edition, include Congregation for Catholic Education, *Instruction Concerning the Criteria for the Discernment of Vocations with Regard to Persons with Homosexual Tendencies in View of Their Admission to the Seminary and to Holy Orders* (2005); Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Minimum Profile of Formation for Former Protestant Ministers Who Desire to Be Ordained Catholic Priests* (2007); Congregation for Catholic Education, *Guidelines for the Use of Psychology in the Admission and Formation of Candidates for the Priesthood* (2008); Congregation for Catholic Education, *Decree on the Reform of Ecclesiastical Studies of Philosophy* (2011); and Pope Francis, *Veritatis Gaudium* (2017).

290 along with documents published by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB)
291 and the Bishops' Committee on Clergy, Consecrated Life, and Vocations (CCLV) identifying
292 particular concerns and giving specific directions in light of needs and experiences in the United
293 States.³ The Bishops' Committee on Priestly Life and Ministry, one of the predecessor committees
294 to the Bishops' Committee on CCLV, also contributed a series of important documents on priestly
295 ministry and life that also has influenced this edition of the *Program of Priestly Formation*.⁴

296 3. The central focus of this latest version of the *Program of Priestly Formation* comes from
297 reflecting on the lived experience of seminaries and the Church in the United States in these
298 opening decades of the twenty-first century and takes its inspiration from the *Ratio Fundamentalis*
299 published in 2016: "The fundamental idea is that Seminaries should form missionary disciples who
300 are 'in love' with the Master, shepherds 'with the smell of the sheep,' who live in their midst to
301 bring the mercy of God to them."⁵

302 4. This *Program of Priestly Formation* begins with an introduction to its central operating
303 theme that priestly formation is an integrated journey, grounded in community and missionary in
304 spirit. Building on this theme, the *Program of Priestly Formation* then explores the theological
305 foundations of the ministerial priesthood, a description of the life of priests, and the Church's role

³ These include documents, for example, on spiritual formation (1983), liturgy (1984), and pastoral formation (1985). Additional documents are *Preaching the Mystery of Faith: The Sunday Homily* (2013), *Guidelines for the Use of Psychology in Seminary Admissions* (2015), and *Guidelines for Receiving Pastoral Ministers in the United States* (2014).

⁴ These include documents, for example, on preaching (1982), stress (1982), sexuality (1983), general health of priests (1983), ongoing formation (1984), the role of pastor (1987), morale (1989), and a basic plan for the ongoing formation of priests (2001).

⁵ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, Introduction, no. 3.

306 in promoting priestly vocations. After this foundation, the text then outlines the process for
307 admission into a formation program.

308 5. In the two chapters that follow those discussions, the text describes seminary formation.
309 First is a discussion of the necessity of proper accompaniment. Here, the various people
310 responsible for accompanying a seminarian through his formation are described. The next chapter
311 sketches the structural elements of seminary formation, beginning with the importance of
312 integrating the dimensions (human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral) into the stages of seminary
313 formation (propaedeutic, discipleship, configuration, and vocational synthesis). The goal of this
314 integration is to aid the seminarian in cooperating with God's grace in conforming his heart as a
315 disciple of Jesus Christ to the service of the Church in pastoral charity. The stages of seminary
316 formation are then described in more detail. That chapter concludes with a description of the
317 seminary community and the norms for evaluation.

318 6. Four chapters follow the chapter on seminary formation and present a detailed description
319 of how each of the four dimensions (human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral), respectively, is
320 to be integrated at each of the four stages of seminary formation (propaedeutic, discipleship,
321 configuration, and vocational synthesis). Each chapter includes the benchmarks for that dimension,
322 which the seminarian is expected to achieve before moving to the next stage.

323 7. This *Program of Priestly Formation* continues with a chapter about the ongoing formation
324 of priests. This chapter is intended to help all those involved in the preparation of seminarians for
325 the priesthood, including the seminarians themselves, to recognize that the seminary lays a
326 foundation for a lifetime of formation. The USCCB, however, does have a separate document that

327 presents ongoing formation in more detail.⁶ The *Program of Priestly Formation* concludes with a
328 section on seminaries that describes their governance, leadership, and personnel. The *Program of*
329 *Priestly Formation*, then, is normative for United States seminary programs and serves as a basis
330 for future visitations.⁷

331 8. A BRIEF NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY: When the term “ecclesiastical entity” is used in this
332 document, it refers to the diocese or eparchy, personal ordinariate, institute of consecrated life, or
333 society of apostolic life for which a seminarian is preparing for ordained ministry in the Church in
334 the United States. At the same time, each seminary, with the approval of the diocesan bishop or
335 the bishops concerned, or of the competent authority of an institute of consecrated life or society
336 of apostolic life as the case may be, is to develop, articulate, and implement its own particular
337 program in conformity with the *Program of Priestly Formation*. The term “discerner” refers to a
338 man who has not yet entered the propaedeutic stage and is in the process of discerning entry into
339 the first stage of initial priestly formation. The term “seminarian” refers to a man who has been
340 accepted into a seminary formation program. The term “candidate” refers to a seminarian who has
341 received the Rite of Candidacy. The term “professor” refers to anyone who teaches courses, clergy
342 and laity. The term “specialist” refers to a member of the formative community who is engaged in
343 a specialized field (e.g., psychologist, counselor, librarian, business manager, and so on). The term

⁶ USCCB, *The Basic Plan for the Ongoing Formation of Priests* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2001). As of the publication of this *Program of Priestly Formation*, the *Basic Plan* is being revised; the second edition will be published soon.

⁷ See CIC, cc. 242, 455. This *Program of Priestly Formation* is intended to serve the entire Catholic Church in the United States. Some of its principles, norms, and pastoral applications are specific to the Latin Church. Nonetheless, the *Program of Priestly Formation* is also normative for all Eastern Catholic Churches *sui iuris* in the United States except where it conflicts with their particular traditions and pastoral life and with the requirements of the CCEO.

344 “formative community” refers broadly to the larger community within the Church that is involved
345 in varied ways in the discernment and initial formation of men preparing for the priesthood. It
346 refers to the bishop and his priests and collaborators in the diocese and to all members of the
347 seminary community, including priest formators, professors, specialists, other seminary staff, and
348 above all, the seminarians themselves. It also refers to those engaged with the seminarian in his
349 pastoral placements. Finally, it includes his family, parish, and others who are involved in his
350 vocational journey. For members of an institute of consecrated life or a society of apostolic life,
351 the term “formative community” includes members of his institute or society. The term “seminary
352 community” is narrower in meaning and refers specifically to the community of seminarians, priest
353 formators, professors, specialists, and other seminary staff. The term “community of formators” is
354 limited to those priests, both in the external forum and internal forum, who are engaged with the
355 seminarian in his formation. The term “formator” is limited to priests. The term “biweekly” refers
356 to an event that occurs every other week.

357 9. Care has been taken in this document to limit the use of prescriptive and exhortative
358 language to two terms. The word “must” means that an action is required. Authorization from the
359 competent authority is required for an exception from following the required course of action. The
360 word “should” means that an action is highly recommended, such that a nonarbitrary reason is
361 necessary for the decision not to pursue this course of action.

362

Introduction

363 PRIESTLY FORMATION: ONE, INTEGRAL, GROUNDED IN COMMUNITY, AND MISSIONARY
364 IN SPIRIT

365 10. The journey of priestly formation begins at Baptism, when the new disciple of Jesus Christ
366 begins to live the call to follow Christ in holiness. It is the same call disciples of Jesus have received
367 since the foundation of the Church. St. John Paul II described seminary formation as “a
368 continuation in the Church of the apostolic community gathered about Jesus, listening to his word,
369 proceeding toward the Easter experience, awaiting the gift of the Spirit for the mission.”⁸ This
370 singular “journey of discipleship,” begun in Baptism, “comes to be appreciated as the center of
371 one’s life at the beginning of Seminary formation, and continues through the whole of life.”⁹

372 11. Priestly formation is an integral journey in which the four dimensions of human, spiritual,
373 intellectual, and pastoral formation are woven together in such a way that, while identified as
374 distinct dimensions, they can be seen as an “integrated journey of the disciple called to
375 priesthood.”¹⁰

376 12. This integrated journey of discipleship is aimed at conforming the heart to the heart of
377 Christ.¹¹ Being thus conformed to Christ leads the priest to pastoral charity, which animates all

⁸ *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 60.

⁹ *Ratio Fundamental*, Introduction, no. 3.

¹⁰ *Ratio Fundamental*, Introduction, no. 3.

¹¹ See *Ratio Fundamental*, no. 89; *Optatam Totius*, no. 4; *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 57.

378 aspects of the life of the priest.¹²

379 13. The call to priesthood is essentially communitarian in nature. It is within the community
380 of the family, parish, or ecclesial movement, or through interaction with an institute of consecrated
381 life or society of apostolic life, that a vocation to priesthood is discovered. This vocation is
382 discerned and nurtured within the seminary community. “This community leads the seminarian,
383 through ordination, to become part of the ‘family’ of the presbyterate, at the service of a particular
384 community.”¹³

385 14. All Christians are prompted by the Holy Spirit to share the love of Jesus Christ with others;
386 they are called to missionary discipleship. Baptism and Confirmation equip them to evangelize in
387 all that they say and do.¹⁴ Ministerial priesthood flows from this same call to missionary
388 discipleship yet remains distinct.¹⁵ The goal of priestly formation is to form missionary disciples
389 so that they are ready for consecration as shepherds for God’s People, sharing in the authority of
390 Christ the Redeemer, who sent the Apostles to preach and heal.¹⁶ In this way, priestly formation
391 clearly must have a missionary character.¹⁷

392 15. Priestly formation today continues in the spirit of the response of the first disciples and
393 their communion of life. The Gospel foundation of priestly formation precedes programs,

¹² See *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 57.

¹³ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, Introduction, no. 3.

¹⁴ See *Evangelii Gaudium*, nos. 120-121.

¹⁵ See *Lumen Gentium*, no. 10.

¹⁶ See Lk 9:1-6, Mt 10:1-15, Mk 6:7-13.

¹⁷ See *Ratio Fundamentalis*, Introduction, no. 3.

394 structures, and plans. What was vital and essential for that first community of disciples remains so
395 today for those engaged in priestly formation: “As he was walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw
396 two brothers, Simon who is called Peter, and his brother Andrew, casting a net into the sea; they
397 were fishermen. He said to them, ‘Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men.’ At once
398 they left their nets and followed him” (Mt 4:18-20).

399 16. The Church continues to place the highest value on the work of priestly formation, because
400 it is linked to the very mission of the Church, especially the evangelization of humanity:¹⁸ “Go,
401 therefore, and make disciples of all nations” (Mt 28:19). The apostolic origins of the Church,
402 which bind all believers in communion with the Lord and his mission, motivate those who engage
403 in the ministry of priestly formation, underscore the urgency of their task, and remind them of their
404 great responsibility.

¹⁸ See *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 2.

405 PRIESTLY FORMATION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE WORLD AND THE CHURCH TODAY

406 17. Priestly formation takes place in a given ecclesial and historical context. Identifying that
407 context is a critical task for giving specific shape to particular programs of formation. The
408 importance of context is highlighted in *Pastores Dabo Vobis*: “God always calls his priests from
409 specific human and ecclesial contexts, which inevitably influence them; and to these same contexts
410 the priest is sent for the service of Christ’s Gospel.”¹⁹

411 18. Worldwide, the current secular culture—“the economy of exclusion, the idolatry of money,
412 the iniquity that generates violence, the primacy of appearance over being, postmodern
413 individualism and globalization, as well as the reality of ethical relativism and religious
414 indifference”²⁰—presents many questions and challenges.

415 19. There are also many significant challenges, blessings, and opportunities that are particular
416 to the United States in the twenty-first century. These play an important part in shaping seminary
417 formation today. They also set the horizon for priestly ministry in the years ahead. Some of the
418 more significant challenges are related to (1) American culture, (2) the Catholic Church in the
419 United States, and (3) the discerners and seminarians themselves.

420 20. (1) First, as it relates to American culture:

421 a. The United States is a nation with a rich cultural heritage of freedom, equality, justice
422 for the oppressed, and open dialogue.²¹ However, an “economy of exclusion and

¹⁹ *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 5.

²⁰ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 175.

²¹ Pope Francis recognized this in his address to the US Congress during his 2015 papal visit: “A

423 inequality” leaves many families trapped in a cycle of poverty.²² Migrants and
424 refugees fleeing hardship and violence continue to arrive in US communities. The evil
425 of racism continues to be a factor in the social fabric of the United States; Catholic
426 institutions are not immune to the persistence of racism in society.²³

427 b. In most areas of the United States, the norm is a high level of cultural, linguistic, and
428 economic diversity. Continued Catholic immigration has situated numerous newly
429 arrived people, who present their own economic and religious issues, alongside
430 numerous other Catholic laity who are native-born. Both groups share a common
431 Church, have very different backgrounds, and can be mutually enriched by the
432 exchange of their gifts.

433 c. In the United States at this time, there is the paradox of a widespread thirst for
434 spirituality and, at the same time, a prevailing secular ethos. From another perspective,
435 the nation finds itself more intensely called to build a “civilization of life and love,”
436 even as it struggles against a “culture of death.” In United States society at large, many
437 persons are unchurched or unaffiliated with any denomination or faith tradition but
438 remain open to evangelization. So too, there is a growing number of persons,

nation can be considered great when it defends liberty as [Abraham] Lincoln did, when it fosters a culture which enables people to ‘dream’ of full rights for all their brothers and sisters, as Martin Luther King sought to do; when it strives for justice and the cause of the oppressed, as Dorothy Day did by her tireless work, the fruit of a faith which becomes dialogue and sows peace in the contemplative style of Thomas Merton.” Francis, “Visit to the Joint Session of the United States Congress” (address, US Capitol, Washington, DC, September 24, 2015), www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/september/documents/papa-francesco_20150924_usa-us-congress.html (accessed December 23, 2021).

²² *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 53; see Francis, “Visit to the Joint Session of the United States Congress.”

²³ See *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 53.

439 particularly young people, who are unchurched and who have rejected religious
440 beliefs as irrelevant to their lives.

441 d. Weaknesses of ethical standards and a moral relativism have a corrosive effect on
442 American public life as seen, for example, in marriage and family life, in business,
443 and in politics.

444 e. The redefinition of marriage in culture and civil law and shifting understandings of
445 gender and sexuality have transformed society such that the anthropological
446 presuppositions that were once commonly shared are being called into question,
447 making it more difficult for the seeds of the Gospel to take root and sprout.

448 f. Advances in technology have brought great progress to humanity but at the same time
449 present new challenges.²⁴ These challenges are particularly present to young adults,
450 who seem alienated from any authority or institution and who are accustomed to
451 virtual relationships and constant recourse to social media. In addition, the widespread
452 availability of pornography on the internet is a pervasive reality and a pernicious threat
453 to human and moral development.

454 21. (2) Second, many factors within the Catholic Church in the United States also present

²⁴ “The gift of discernment has become all the more necessary today, since contemporary life offers immense possibilities for action and distraction, and the world presents all of them as valid and good. All of us, but especially the young, are immersed in a culture of zapping. We can navigate simultaneously on two or more screens and interact at the same time with two or three virtual scenarios. Without the wisdom of discernment, we can easily become prey to every passing trend.” *Gaudete et Exsultate*, no. 167. See also *Laudato Si'*, no. 47; Pope Benedict XVI, Vespers Homily, Pastoral Visit to Lamezia Terme and Serra San Bruno, October 9, 2011, w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2011/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20111009_vespri-serra-san-bruno.html (accessed May 5, 2018).

455 opportunities and challenges that directly affect seminary formation:

456 a. The Catholic Church in the United States is reinvigorated especially by the new
457 ecclesial realities born of the Second Vatican Council, which have offered a more
458 positive context for vocations.

459 b. With a renewed sense of mission, the Church wants to engage in the *new*
460 *evangelization* in these areas: evangelization through ordinary pastoral ministry,
461 evangelization through ministry to the baptized who lack a relationship with the
462 Church, and evangelization to those who do not yet know Jesus Christ or who have
463 rejected him.²⁵

464 c. The Catholic Church in the United States continues to be firmly committed to and
465 engaged in ecumenical and interreligious dialogue and cooperation, something that
466 “belongs to the very essence of” the community of the Lord’s disciples.²⁶

467 d. Globalization has underscored the need for greater coordination and deeper
468 communion with the Church in other parts of the world. *Ecclesia in America* bears
469 witness to this reality and responsibility, especially in our own hemisphere.

470 e. The ministerial collaboration of priests with bishops, other priests, deacons, men and
471 women in consecrated life, and lay men and women is an important feature of the life

²⁵ See *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 15.

²⁶ St. John Paul II, *Ut Unum Sint* (*On Commitment to Ecumenism*, 1995), no. 9, www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25051995_ut-unum-sint.html.

- 472 of the Church in the United States.
- 473 f. The important presence and unique contribution of women in society and in the
474 Church need to be acknowledged and nurtured. They offer an edifying example of
475 humility, generosity, and selfless service.²⁷
- 476 g. The demographics of the Catholic Church in the United States demonstrate the
477 challenging situation of fewer priests and a large Catholic population.
- 478 h. There are large numbers of inactive or “semi-active” Catholics, as well as poorly
479 catechized Catholics, who need to be called back to active participation in the life of
480 the Church and, as needed, full initiation.
- 481 i. The cultural acceptance of the individual’s right to exploration and expression of
482 differences of belief brings Catholics in the United States into continuing and
483 sometimes significant differences between their perceptions and the reality of what is
484 essential to Catholic belief. These differences in perception strain many dimensions
485 of the life of the Church and diminish the impact of the mission of the Church
486 on society.
- 487 j. Within the Church, clericalism and abuse of power have had a corrosive effect. The
488 scandalous and criminal behavior of some clergy who have abused minors and
489 engaged in sexual misconduct with adults, including seminarians, has caused great
490 suffering for the victims and damaged the Church’s witness in society. This scandal

²⁷ See *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 151.

491 has resulted in a loss of credibility for the Church and an overall lack of respect for
492 religion. Both the nation and the Church are summoned to renewal and to a greater
493 integrity of life. The *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* and the
494 *Essential Norms for Diocesan/Eparchial Policies Dealing with Allegations of Sexual*
495 *Abuse of Minors by Priests or Deacons* adopted by the Catholic bishops in the United
496 States in 2002 (revised in 2005, 2011, and 2018) provide an example of moving in
497 this direction. Also providing a way forward are the apostolic letter *motu proprio* of
498 Pope Francis titled *Vos Estis Lux Mundi (You Are the Light of the World)* and the
499 documents adopted at the USCCB’s June 2019 general assembly.²⁸

500 22. (3) Finally, the Church in the United States continues to benefit from the blessings that the
501 variety of men in initial formation for priesthood bring. They also, as in every age, bring some
502 unique challenges as well. The background of men preparing for priestly ministry also forms an
503 important context for priestly formation in the United States.

504 a. They may be, for example, the following:

505 i. Men who are older and who bring previous life and work experiences

506 ii. Men born outside the United States who speak English as a second language

507 iii. Men whose faith has been rediscovered and rekindled in a powerful way

508 through significant religious experiences, and men who are converts to

²⁸ See USCCB, “Directives for the Implementation of the Provisions of *Vos Estis Lux Mundi* Concerning Bishops and their Equivalents,” “Acknowledging Our Episcopal Commitments,” and “Protocol Regarding Available Non-Penal Restrictions on Bishops,” in *A Continuous and Profound Conversion of Hearts* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2019), 9-21.

509 Catholicism

510 iv. Men born and raised in the United States who find themselves struggling
511 intensely with particular cultural counterpoints to the Gospel, especially
512 regarding sexual permissiveness, the drive to acquire and consume material
513 resources, utilitarianism, and the exaltation of freedom as merely personal and
514 individual autonomy, divorced from personal responsibility and objective
515 moral standards

516 b. An increasing number of priestly vocations now come from diverse and sometimes
517 dysfunctional family situations.

518

The Ministerial Priesthood

519 INTRODUCTION

520 23. Christ instituted the ministerial priesthood to continue his work of salvation in the world.
521 “The ministerial priesthood renders tangible the actual work of Christ, the Head, and gives witness
522 to the fact that Christ has not separated Himself from his Church; rather He continues to vivify her
523 through his everlasting priesthood.”²⁹ All priestly formation must have its foundation in an
524 adherence to the truths of faith about the nature and mission of the ministerial priesthood. Members
525 of the seminary community who are involved in the process of priestly formation must adhere to
526 these teachings. The priest is called to serve the great work of evangelization which Christ has
527 entrusted to his Bride, the Church.

528 Without priests the Church would not be able to live that fundamental obedience which is
529 at the very heart of her existence and her mission in history, an obedience in response to
530 the command of Christ: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations” (Mt 28:19) and
531 “Do this in remembrance of me” (Lk 22:19; cf. 1 Cor 11:24), i.e., an obedience to the
532 command to announce the Gospel and to renew daily the sacrifice of the giving of his
533 body and the shedding of his blood for the life of the world.³⁰

²⁹ Congregation for the Clergy, *Directory on the Ministry and the Life of Priests* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2013), no. 1, www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cclergy/documents/rc_con_cclergy_doc_31011994_directory_en.html.

³⁰ *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 1.

534 TRINITARIAN FOUNDATION

535 24. The mission of the priest flows from his identity. The identity of the priest, like that of
536 every Christian, is fundamentally rooted in a relationship with the Trinity. “It is within the
537 Church’s mystery, as a mystery of Trinitarian communion in missionary tension, that every
538 Christian identity is revealed, and likewise the specific identity of the priest and his ministry.”³¹

539 Indeed, the priest, by virtue of the consecration which he receives in the sacrament of
540 orders, is sent forth by the Father through the mediatorship of Jesus Christ, to whom he is
541 configured in a special way as head and shepherd of his people, in order to live and work
542 by the power of the Holy Spirit in service of the Church and for the salvation of the
543 world. . . . Consequently, the nature and mission of the ministerial priesthood cannot be
544 defined except through this multiple and rich interconnection of relationships which arise
545 from the Blessed Trinity and are prolonged in the communion of the Church, as a sign
546 and instrument of Christ, of communion with God and of the unity of all humanity.³²

547 The Church has “a responsibility to be a living sign of the Father’s love in the world,”³³ a
548 responsibility which the priest assumes as his own upon ordination. In this way priests “are visible
549 signs of the merciful love of the Father in the Church and in the world.”³⁴

³¹ *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 12.

³² *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 12.

³³ *Misericordiae Vultus*, no. 4.

³⁴ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 35.

550 CHRISTOLOGICAL NATURE

551 25. For the priest to understand his identity, he must understand two central relations: his
552 relationship with Christ, the Son of the Father, and his relationship with the Church. The primary
553 point of reference for priestly identity is Christ himself: “The priest finds the full truth of his
554 identity in being a derivation, a specific participation in and continuation of Christ himself, the one
555 high priest of the new and eternal covenant. The priest is the living and transparent image of Christ
556 the priest.”³⁵ As priests “are configured to Christ, Head and Shepherd, Servant and Spouse,”³⁶ they

557 are called to prolong the presence of Christ, the One High Priest, embodying his way of
558 life and making him visible in the midst of the flock entrusted to their care. . . . In the
559 Church and on behalf of the Church, priests are a sacramental representation of Jesus
560 Christ—the head and shepherd—authoritatively proclaiming his word, repeating his acts
561 of forgiveness and his offer of salvation—particularly in baptism, penance, and the
562 Eucharist, showing his loving concern to the point of a total gift of self for the flock,
563 which they gather into unity and lead to the Father through Christ and in the Spirit. In a
564 word, priests exist and act in order to proclaim the Gospel to the world and to build up
565 the Church in the name and person of Christ the head and shepherd.³⁷

566 Calling to mind the image of the suffering servant (Is 53:4ff.), we are reminded that priestly
567 ministers are called to embody the life of Christ, who accepted suffering and death as part of his

³⁵ *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 12.

³⁶ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 35.

³⁷ *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 15.

568 mission to bring salvation to the whole world.³⁸ Because the priest is objectively configured to
569 Christ through ordination, he must seek to make a personal gift of his life in response to this
570 consecration.³⁹ The sacramental configuration to Christ the Servant was also conferred on the
571 priest at his diaconate ordination. This configuration is not lost when he is ordained a priest but
572 rather continues in imitation of Christ, who came not “to be served but to serve and to give his life
573 as a ransom for many” (Mt 20:28).

574 26. Finally, Christ is the Bridegroom, a title which “expresses the truth about the love of God
575 who ‘first loved us’ (cf. 1 Jn 4:19) and who, with the gift generated by this spousal love for man,
576 has exceeded all human expectations: ‘He loved them to the end’ (Jn 13:1).”⁴⁰ “Hence Christ
577 stands ‘before’ the Church and ‘nourishes and cherishes her’ (Eph 5:29), giving his life for her.
578 The priest is called to be the living image of Jesus Christ, the spouse of the Church. Of course, he
579 will always remain a member of the community as a believer alongside his other brothers and
580 sisters who have been called by the Spirit, but in virtue of his configuration to Christ, the Head
581 and Shepherd, the priest stands in this spousal relationship with regard to the community.”⁴¹

582 27. This Christological foundation is particularly important for the life of the celibate priest.
583 By the grace of the virtue of celibate chastity, a priest is a sign of the chastity of Christ. Formation
584 for living priestly celibacy should take the chastity of Christ as a point of reference at every stage

³⁸ See *Lumen Gentium*, nos. 14-16.

³⁹ See *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 39.

⁴⁰ St. John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem (On the Dignity and the Vocation of Women on the Occasion of the Marian Year, 1988)*, no. 25, www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/1988/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_19880815_mulieris-dignitatem.html.

⁴¹ *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 22.

585 in all of its dimensions. As Pope Benedict XVI affirms, “The fact that Christ himself, the eternal
586 priest, lived his mission even to the sacrifice of the Cross in the state of virginity constitutes the
587 sure point of reference for understanding the meaning of the tradition of [priestly celibacy in] the
588 Latin Church.”⁴²

589 ECCLESIOLOGICAL EXPRESSION

590 28. The second point of reference for priestly identity, following the priest’s relationship with
591 Christ, is his relationship to the Church. “As a mystery, the Church is essentially related to Jesus
592 Christ. She is his fullness, his body, his spouse.”⁴³ The priest’s specific configuration to Christ
593 brings about this special relationship to his Body, the Church. Within the Body, he represents
594 Christ, Head and Shepherd, Servant and Spouse, as a co-worker with the bishop. The nature and
595 mission of the ministerial priesthood can only be fully understood within the mystery of the
596 Church, “as a service to the glory of God and to the brothers and sisters in their baptismal
597 priesthood.”⁴⁴ “The ministry of the priest,” then, “is entirely on behalf of the Church; it aims at
598 promoting the exercise of the common priesthood of the entire People of God.”⁴⁵ To understand
599 who he is, and therefore how he should live, the priest must understand himself in relationship
600 with the Church. His participation in Christ’s priesthood is called “ministerial” precisely for its
601 service to the members of the Body.

⁴² *Sacramentum Caritatis*, no. 24.

⁴³ *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 12.

⁴⁴ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 31.

⁴⁵ *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 16.

602 29. *Pastores Dabo Vobis* expands our understanding of the ecclesiological scope of the
603 ministerial priesthood by noting that it “is ordered not only to the particular Church but also to the
604 universal Church, in communion with the bishop, with Peter and under Peter. Through the
605 priesthood of the bishop, the priesthood of the second order is incorporated in the apostolic
606 structure of the Church. In this way priests, like the Apostles, act as ambassadors of Christ
607 (cf. 2 Cor 5:20). This is the basis of the missionary character of every priest.”⁴⁶

608 PRIESTHOOD IN PRESBYTERAL COMMUNION

609 30. These Trinitarian, Christological, and ecclesiological dimensions give us a sense of the
610 nature, mission, and ministry of priests. It is important, however, to add that these dimensions only
611 become real and operative in a presbyterate, one that is in communion with its bishop. “By its very
612 nature, the ordained ministry can be carried out only to the extent that the priest is united to Christ
613 through sacramental participation in the priestly order, and thus to the extent that he is in
614 hierarchical communion with his own bishop. The ordained ministry has a radical ‘communitarian
615 form’ and can only be carried out as a ‘collective work.’”⁴⁷ This “communitarian form” also means
616 that priests are to develop and foster bonds of fraternity and cooperation among themselves, so
617 that the reality of the presbyterate may take hold of their lives.⁴⁸ Furthermore, seminaries and
618 houses of initial formation are encouraged to foster mutual relations among members of institutes
619 of consecrated life, societies of apostolic life, and seminarians in formation for the diocesan
620 priesthood, so as to lay the foundation for a spirit of unity among future priests and ministers of

⁴⁶ *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 16.

⁴⁷ *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 17.

⁴⁸ See *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, no. 8; CIC, c. 275 §1; CCEO, c. 379.

621 the Church.

622 31. Priestly ministry, whether lived out in a particular Church or in an institute of consecrated
623 life or society of apostolic life, can appear to be very different: one more geographically and
624 parishbound, the other wider-ranging and rooted in a particular charism. Still, all priests share a
625 common ministerial priesthood, belong to a presbyterate in communion with the diocesan bishop,
626 and serve the same mission of the Church.⁴⁹ A common sacramental bond links all priests, although
627 particular circumstances of ministry and life may be diverse. It is, therefore, essential for all priests
628 and those in priestly formation to understand and to see themselves as engaged in the Church's
629 ministry, subject to the same formation laid out in the *Program of Priestly Formation*.⁵⁰ Depending
630 on the type of ecclesiastical entity, the details for the stages of formation may differ. For example,
631 the propaedeutic stage for institutes of consecrated life or societies of apostolic life is handled by
632 the postulancy or novitiate. In all cases the applicant, postulant, and so on must meet the
633 benchmarks as noted in each dimension later in this document.

634 PRIESTHOOD: A JOURNEY OF DISCIPLESHIP

635 32. Discipleship is a lifelong journey of following Jesus Christ; this is certainly the case for
636 the priest. Throughout his initial and ongoing formation, he continually learns to listen more
637 attentively to the voice of the Master who calls him. Thus, formation serves him best when it can

⁴⁹ “It is of great importance that all priests, whether diocesan or regular [religious], should help each other, so that they may be fellow-helpers of the truth. Each is joined to the rest of the members of this priestly body by special ties of apostolic charity of ministry and of brotherhood.” *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, no. 8.

⁵⁰ This means not only that diocesan priests form a presbyterate, but that “religious clergy who live and work in a particular church also belong to the one presbyterate, albeit under a different title.” *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 74.

638 be experienced as an ever-advancing journey of conversion and growth. Gradually, as a disciple
639 on this journey, he is able to make decisions that are permanent and that he will always be called
640 upon to deepen and expand. The first stage of initial formation is the propaedeutic stage. During
641 this stage, the man is introduced to the life of the Church as a community in which excellence of
642 character is nurtured, to the practice of daily participation in the Holy Mass, to love for Sacred
643 Scripture, to the prayer of the Church (the Divine Office, or the Divine Praises in the Eastern
644 Catholic Churches), and to the basic elements of the Christian faith as he discerns attentively and
645 purposefully his potential vocation to priesthood in the presence of a supportive community of
646 fellow seminarians and formators. This community is an ideal environment for growth in self-
647 knowledge. In the discipleship stage, systematic formation as a disciple of Jesus Christ is the aim.
648 The seminarian develops his principal strengths and grows to identify, acknowledge, and begin to
649 overcome his shortcomings. In the configuration stage, the seminarian hones his capacity to serve
650 and become a man for others. In the vocational synthesis stage,⁵¹ the transitional deacon
651 experiences a life of self-giving in a pastoral setting, as he begins the transition to full-time
652 ministry.

653 33. This journey of discipleship and growth in Christian faith and service continues after
654 ordination with ongoing formation, in which the ordained priest seeks an ever-deepening
655 conformity to Christ under the guidance of the diocesan bishop or competent authority of the
656 institute of consecrated life or society of apostolic life and in fraternal communion with the
657 diocesan presbyterate and, in the case of nondiocesan priests, the presbyterate within his

⁵¹ Throughout this document the term “vocational synthesis” is used to identify the last stage of initial formation, described in the *Ratio Fundamentalis* as “the ‘pastoral stage’ or ‘stage of vocational synthesis.’” *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 57.

658 community.⁵²

659 34. The human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral dimensions of formation are present in each
660 stage and “must be seen through a unifying lens. . . . Together, these dimensions give shape and
661 structure to the identity of the seminarian and the priest, and make him capable of that ‘gift of self
662 to the Church,’ which is the essence of pastoral charity. The entire journey of formation must never
663 be reduced to a single aspect to the detriment of others, but it must always be an integrated journey
664 of the disciple called to priesthood.”⁵³

665 35. Community is an integral aspect of formation.⁵⁴ The gift of vocation appears in a Christian
666 community; it is fostered and developed in the seminary community, with a view to serving the
667 People of God in the community of the presbyterate.⁵⁵ The community of formators serves as a
668 living model for the wider seminary community by “sharing a common responsibility, with due
669 regard to the duties and the office entrusted to each member.”⁵⁶

670 36. Finally, the missionary aspect of formation emerges from the ecclesial dimension of the
671 ministerial priesthood, directed toward the growth of the Church. “Formation is clearly missionary
672 in character. Its goal is participation in the one mission entrusted by Christ to His Church, that is

⁵² “Every priest should always feel that he is a disciple on a journey, constantly needing an integrated formation, understood as a continuous configuration to Christ.” *Ratio Fundamentalis*, Introduction, no. 3.

⁵³ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, Introduction, no. 3.

⁵⁴ See *Ratio Fundamentalis*, Introduction, no. 3.

⁵⁵ See *Ratio Fundamentalis*, Introduction, no. 3.

⁵⁶ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, Introduction, no. 3.

673 evangelization, in all its forms.”⁵⁷

⁵⁷ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, Introduction, no. 3.

The Life of Priests

674

675 37. When the Second Vatican Council’s decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis* speaks of “the life of
676 priests,” it refers to the whole of their existence but especially to the spiritual dimension that is at
677 the center of all life. In a world that is increasingly secular in its outlook, it is especially important
678 to note and hold fast to the one necessary thing (see Lk 10:42).

679 38. Along with all the baptized who have been given new life in Christ by the power of the
680 Holy Spirit, priests are called with their brothers and sisters to live out their baptismal call as
681 disciples of Jesus Christ and to grow in holiness.⁵⁸ While growth in discipleship is a lifelong
682 journey, seminary formation is a privileged time for the future priest to discover that he is a
683 “mystery to himself.”⁵⁹ He will need to discover his talents and gifts and to recognize his limits
684 and frailty, so that “the vocation to the priesthood does not become imprisoned in an abstract ideal,
685 nor run the risk of reducing itself to a merely practical and organizational activism, removed from
686 the conscience of the person.”⁶⁰

687 39. At the same time, priests are called to a specific vocation to holiness in virtue of their new
688 consecration in the Sacrament of Holy Orders, a consecration that configures them to Christ the
689 Head and Shepherd, Servant and Spouse. This configuration to Christ, a sacramental character
690 effected by the Holy Spirit, prepares the priest for the mission and ministry which is specific to

⁵⁸ See *Lumen Gentium*, nos. 39-42; *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 20; CIC, c. 210; and CCEO, c. 13.

⁵⁹ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 28.

⁶⁰ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 43.

691 him⁶¹ and which obliges him to be a “living instrument of Christ the eternal priest” and to act “in
692 the name and in the person of Christ himself” and with his entire “life,” called to witness in a
693 fundamental way to the “radicalism of the Gospel.”⁶²

694 40. For priests, the specific arena in which their spiritual life unfolds is their exercise of
695 ministry in fulfillment of their mission.⁶³ The life of priests in the Spirit means their continuous
696 transformation and conversion of heart centered on the integration or linking of their *identity* as
697 configured to Christ, Head and Shepherd, Servant and Spouse, with their *ministry* of Word,
698 Sacrament, and pastoral governance (leadership).⁶⁴ “In contemplating the Lord, who offered His
699 life for others, he will be able to give himself generously and with self-sacrifice for the People of
700 God.”⁶⁵ He will more closely imitate Jesus, who came to serve and not to be served.

701 41. The ministry itself, by which the priest brings Christ’s redemptive gifts to his people,
702 transforms the priest’s own life. In a particular way, the celebrations of the sacraments lead the
703 priest to a holy encounter with God’s all-transforming, merciful love.

704 42. When the priest’s identity as sacramentally configured to Christ culminates in his ministry
705 on behalf of Christ, which is called *amoris officium* (a work of love), he finds his unity of life in
706 pastoral charity. “Priests will achieve the unity of their lives by joining themselves with Christ in

⁶¹ See *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1563.

⁶² *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 20.

⁶³ See *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 24; *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, no. 12; Synod of Bishops, *The Ministerial Priesthood and Justice in the World* (1971), part 2, I, iii.

⁶⁴ See *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, nos. 24-26.

⁶⁵ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 41.

707 the recognition of the Father’s will and in the gift of themselves to the flock entrusted to them. In
708 this way, by adopting the role of the good shepherd they will find in the practice of pastoral charity
709 itself the bond of priestly perfection which will reduce to unity their life and activity.”⁶⁶

710 43. Priestly life lived in configuration to Jesus Christ must necessarily manifest and give
711 witness to the radicalism of the Gospel. In other words, priests are called to a way of life that gives
712 evident and transparent witness to the power of the Gospel at work in their lives. A life of continual
713 conversion allows the priest to become and remain “a ‘man of discernment,’ able to read the reality
714 of human life in the light of the Spirit. In this way he will be able to choose, decide and act
715 according to the will of God.”⁶⁷ The elements of such a lifestyle—named here and to be developed
716 elsewhere in this document—include the following:

- 717 a. A way of life permeated by the threefold charge given priests at ordination to teach,
718 to sanctify, and to govern⁶⁸
- 719 b. A life of steady prayer centered first and foremost on Sacred Scripture and the
720 prayerful celebration of the sacraments, especially Penance and the Eucharist,⁶⁹ the
721 Liturgy of the Hours (the Divine Praises, in the Eastern Catholic Churches), and the
722 liturgical cycles, but also on devotional and contemplative prayer⁷⁰

⁶⁶ *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, no. 14.

⁶⁷ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 43.

⁶⁸ See *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, nos. 4-6, 13; *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 26; *Optatam Totius*, no. 21.

⁶⁹ See *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, no. 31.

⁷⁰ See *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 33.

- 723 c. “Living intimately united” to the person of Jesus Christ, Lord and Savior, Son of God
724 and Son of Mary⁷¹
- 725 d. Devotion to Mary, the Mother of God and Mother of priests⁷²
- 726 e. A life of obedience that is apostolic, communal, and pastoral⁷³
- 727 f. A life lived in communion with one’s bishop and the presbyterate, a communion that
728 includes sacramental, apostolic, and fraternal bonds⁷⁴
- 729 g. For priests who are members of a religious institute or a society of apostolic life, a life
730 in community with one’s confreres in accord with the institute’s Rule of Life and
731 charism or with the constitution of the society of apostolic life
- 732 h. A life of celibate chastity that serves both as “a sign and stimulus of love, and as a
733 singular source of spiritual fertility in the world”⁷⁵ and, being freely accepted, shows
734 that the priest is “consecrated in a new way to Christ”⁷⁶ and offers in himself a
735 reflection of the chaste love of Christ for the Church⁷⁷

⁷¹ See *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 46.

⁷² See CIC, c. 246 §3; CCEO, c. 346 §2, 5°.

⁷³ See *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 28.

⁷⁴ See *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 26; *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, nos. 7-8, 14; *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 17.

⁷⁵ *Lumen Gentium*, no. 42. See *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, no. 16.

⁷⁶ *Rites of Ordination of a Bishop, of Priests, and of Deacons*, no. 177.

⁷⁷ See *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, no. 16; CIC, c. 277 §1; CCEO, c. 374.

736 i. A “simple and austere lifestyle”⁷⁸ that cares for and is in solidarity with the poor,
737 works for universal justice for all those who are in need, and, with gratitude for the
738 material blessings of God’s creation, administers the goods of the community with
739 utmost honesty and offers a courageous prophetic witness in the world⁷⁹

740 j. A life that embraces “the mind and heart of missionaries open to the needs of the
741 Church and the world”⁸⁰

742 k. A life that promotes the array of ecclesial vocations⁸¹

743 44. The diocesan priest entrusted with the care of souls in many ways normally serves in
744 parochial ministry. In the parish he will encounter the day-to-day joys and sorrows of the faithful
745 as he accompanies them throughout life, continually leading them to encounter Christ. This art of
746 accompaniment, which develops in the heart of the seminarian and continues to deepen in the heart
747 of the priest, allows him lovingly to accompany the flock entrusted to him; he thus becomes a
748 spiritual father to his people.

749 45. The life of priests in religious institutes and societies of apostolic life encompasses
750 everything that has been said about the life of priests generally. It also adds to the exercise of the

⁷⁸ *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 29.

⁷⁹ See *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 30; CIC, cc. 282, 287 §1; CCEO, cc. 385 §1, 384 §1. Pope Francis reminds us that “the natural environment is a collective good, the patrimony of all humanity and the responsibility of everyone. If we make something our own, it is only to administer it for the good of all.” *Laudato Si’*, no. 95.

⁸⁰ *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 32. See St. John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio (On the Permanent Validity of the Church’s Missionary Mandate)* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 1990), nos. 15-16; CIC, cc. 245, 257; CCEO, c. 352 §3.

⁸¹ CIC, cc. 233, 275 §2; CCEO, cc. 329 §1, 2°, 381 §3.

751 ministerial priesthood the distinctive aspects of a religious institute’s Rule of Life or of the
752 constitution of a society of apostolic life. These aspects include the spirituality of the institute or
753 society, common life, and distinctive apostolates that witness to the community’s charism as a gift
754 of the Spirit to the Church. Priestly formation for those men belonging to a form of consecrated
755 life must therefore always situate the vocation to the priesthood within the charism and thus
756 reference the spirituality, history, and mission of the particular institute of consecrated life or
757 society of apostolic life, with fidelity to its founder, the institute’s or society’s mission, and the
758 Church which receives that charism.

759 46. The primary context of priesthood for members of an institute of consecrated life or society
760 of apostolic life ordinarily comes from the nature of the life itself as a deepening and fulfillment
761 of a baptismal commitment to Christ by observing the evangelical counsels in an institute of
762 consecrated life or a society of apostolic life approved by the Church.⁸² Those men belonging to
763 an institute of consecrated life or society of apostolic life who are called to priesthood exercise that
764 ministry within the context of their institute or society. “In reality, the charism of the religious life,
765 far from being an impulse born of flesh and blood or one derived from a mentality which conforms
766 itself to the modern world, is the fruit of the Holy Spirit, who is always at work within the
767 Church.”⁸³ The exercise of priesthood takes on a distinctive quality for a man who belongs to an
768 institute of consecrated life or a society of apostolic life, depending upon the Rule of Life,
769 constitution, and charism of a particular institute or society. Nevertheless, the priest always

⁸² “By the profession of the evangelical counsels *the characteristic features of Jesus*—the chaste, poor and obedient one—*are made constantly ‘visible’ in the midst of the world* and the eyes of the faithful are directed towards the mystery of the Kingdom of God already at work in history, even as it awaits its full realization in heaven.” *Vita Consecrata*, no. 1.

⁸³ *Evangelica Testificatio*, no. 11.

770 exercises his ministry in union with the diocesan bishop as his co-worker.⁸⁴

771 47. To a great extent, the deeper identification of those in consecrated life with the charism of
772 their community's founder is due to their obedience to the directives of the Second Vatican
773 Council. "The up-to-date renewal of the religious life comprises both a constant return to the
774 sources of the whole of the Christian life and to the primitive inspiration of the institutes, and their
775 adaptation to the changed conditions of our time."⁸⁵

776 48. Centuries of tradition bear witness to a difference between formation for the consecrated
777 life and formation of seminarians for the priesthood. Formation for the consecrated life ordinarily
778 precedes formation for priestly ministry—as an institute of consecrated life or society of apostolic
779 life joyfully accepts its responsibility to form a man into its charism, and as the man owns and
780 expresses the joy of the Gospel in the Rule of Life of the institute or constitution of the society—
781 and accompanies a man in deepening his desire to serve Christ through ministerial priesthood.
782 Aspects of formation to the priesthood that are addressed in the propaedeutic stage are addressed
783 within early stages of consecrated life, that is, candidacy, postulancy, novitiate, and the time of
784 temporary profession when a foundation is laid for public witness to the evangelical counsels as
785 expressed in a particular institute or society. Nevertheless, the religious institute or society of
786 apostolic life also assumes responsibility for forming the man for Holy Orders according to the
787 mind of the Church and thus recognizing the human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral
788 requirements incumbent upon all who are called to ministerial priesthood, and how these exist in

⁸⁴ See *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 35.

⁸⁵ *Perfectae Caritatis*, no. 2.

789 addition to the formation for the consecrated life itself.

790 49. This *Program of Priestly Formation* outlines the requirements shared by diocesan
791 seminarians and by the men in formation for priesthood who are members of an institute of
792 consecrated life or society of apostolic life, while recognizing the different process of formation
793 incumbent both upon those whose primary call is to be of service to the Church through
794 consecrated life, in a fidelity and witness to the charism of their founder in the gift that is shared,⁸⁶
795 and upon those whose primary call is to be of Christlike service to the Catholic faithful through a
796 commitment in obedience, simplicity of life, celibacy, and holiness.

⁸⁶ See Sacred Congregation for Religious and for Secular Institutes/Sacred Congregation for Bishops, *Mutuae Relationes (Directives for the Mutual Relations Between Bishops and Religious in the Church, 1978)*; Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, *Directives on Formation in Religious Institutes* (1990).

Priestly Vocations in the Church's Pastoral Work

ACCOMPANIMENT OF PRIESTLY VOCATIONS

50. The whole Church receives and accompanies the gift of vocations from God and is responsible for promoting and discerning vocations.⁸⁷ The entire Church is to be engaged in the pastoral work of promoting vocations.⁸⁸ It is integral to the mission of the Church “to care for the birth, discernment and fostering of vocations, particularly those to the priesthood.”⁸⁹ Within that ecclesial context, there are various responsibilities.

a. *The Church*: The whole Church through prayer, active cooperation, and the witness of living full Christian lives takes responsibility for vocations.⁹⁰ “Both the family and the parish of origin, or the parish to which he belongs, as well as other ecclesial communities, contribute significantly to sustaining and nourishing the vocation of those called to the priesthood.”⁹¹

b. *The family*: “A very special responsibility falls upon the Christian family, which by virtue of the sacrament of matrimony shares in its own unique way in the educational

⁸⁷ See *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, nos. 34-41.

⁸⁸ See CIC, c. 233 §1; CCEO, c. 329.

⁸⁹ *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 34.

⁹⁰ See *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 41.

⁹¹ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 148.

812 mission of the Church—teacher and mother.” Families can become “‘a first seminary’
813 in which children can acquire from the beginning an awareness of piety and prayer
814 and love for the Church.”⁹²

815 c. *The parish*: The parish is where vocations are first explored and nourished in the faith
816 and where those who are called come into contact with the clergy, men and women in
817 consecrated life, and lay leaders who accompany them on this journey and encourage
818 them into service. It is vital that the parish develop a culture of vocations to invite
819 youth, young adults, and adults to consider the calls to marriage, the priesthood, the
820 permanent diaconate, and consecrated life. Catholic schools and parish religious
821 education programs are supportive environments that foster intellectual curiosity and
822 encourage the development of love of God and neighbor. Rooted in the teachings of
823 the Catholic faith, schools and programs provide an invaluable setting in which
824 vocations to marriage, priesthood, and consecrated life can be nurtured.

825 d. *The diocesan bishop*: “The first responsibility for the pastoral work of promoting
826 priestly vocations lies with the bishop, who is called to be the first to exercise this
827 responsibility even though he can and must call upon many others to cooperate with
828 him.”⁹³ Although he shares his responsibility, the pastoral task of promoting priestly
829 vocations remains his task, for which he must continue to offer supervision and direct
830 involvement.⁹⁴ As the one responsible for the unity of the local Church and its

⁹² *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 41.

⁹³ *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 41.

⁹⁴ See CIC, cc. 233, 385; CCEO, cc. 195, 329 §1, 3°; Congregation for Bishops, *Apostolorum*

831 communion with the Universal Church, the bishop, especially in the context of the
832 United States, must encourage a wide range of men who represent the cultural and
833 linguistic diversity of his ecclesiastical entity.

834 e. *The presbyterate*: “The bishop can rely above all on the cooperation of his
835 presbyterate. All its priests are united to him and share his responsibility in seeking
836 and fostering priestly vocations.”⁹⁵ They do this by inviting men to consider the
837 priesthood as a possible vocation. For those who are discerning the call, priests can
838 nurture their sense of vocation and be invaluable mentors, accompanying them along
839 the path of discernment. Through their priestly ministry, especially in parish
840 assignments, priests are able to recognize the prayerfulness, the talents, and the
841 character of men who may be called to priestly ministry. “At the same time the
842 diligence of priests in carrying out their Eucharistic ministry, together with the
843 conscious, active and fruitful participation of the faithful in the Eucharist, provides
844 young men with a powerful example and incentive for responding generously to God’s
845 call. Often it is the example of a priest’s fervent pastoral charity which the Lord uses
846 to sow and to bring to fruition in a young man’s heart the seed of a priestly calling.”⁹⁶

847 f. *The vocation director*: In ecclesiastical entities in the United States, generally there is
848 a vocation director (or team) who serves on behalf of the diocesan bishop and
849 presbyterate or of the competent authority to promote vocations (the work of

Successores (Directory for the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops, 2004), no. 91.

⁹⁵ *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 41.

⁹⁶ *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, no. 31.

850 *recruitment*) and to direct those discerning a call to the priesthood.

851 i. The diocesan vocation director supports, inspires, and equips pastors, parishes,
852 and diocesan personnel to create a culture of vocations in which men can be
853 better equipped to answer God’s prompting. Pastors and other members of the
854 community are invaluable in assisting the vocation director in accompanying
855 discerners along the path of discipleship and mission. Once a discerner has
856 been identified, the vocation director works in conjunction with the parish or
857 another community of the faithful to assist in nourishing the seeds of a
858 vocation with divine grace, for example by helping the man to find a spiritual
859 director, maintain an active prayer life, develop a network of relationships
860 with others who bring forth fruits of authentic discernment in one another, and
861 actively seek out a solid participation in the mission of the parish or other
862 community of the faithful. It is important that the vocation director actively
863 develop relationships by his presence, such as regular visits to parishes, youth
864 groups, young adult gatherings, and university campus ministry events.

865 ii. In cooperating with the formation process, a diocesan vocation director may
866 manage the diocesan process of admission, serve as a liaison between the
867 diocesan bishop and the seminary, and link the seminarian to the diocese and
868 presbyterate, for example, through pastoral placements. He collaborates with
869 the bishop, with the presbyterate, with a diocesan vocation commission if one
870 is in place, and with the seminary. The role of a vocation director for other
871 ecclesiastical entities may vary according to the division of labor in a given

872 ecclesiastical entity. All vocation directors should collaborate to create a
873 culture of vocations. In all cases, the relationship with the seminary merits
874 special attention. Mutual respect and collaboration should mark the relations
875 between vocation and seminary personnel. Each possesses different
876 responsibilities; yet cooperation, mutual knowledge, and trust are vital for the
877 good of the seminarians and the benefit of the Church. Such collaboration is
878 especially important concerning applicants' ongoing evaluation and their
879 recommendation for admission.

880 iii. The vocation director accompanies others along their journey, possibly for
881 several years, through their initial discernment, seminary formation, and
882 ordination to the priesthood, if that is the local custom. The vocation director
883 should not attempt to develop a process of formation that competes with or
884 parallels that of the seminary. It is vital that all those responsible for the
885 formation of priests collaborate fully in this work. Regardless of the length of
886 the relationship, the vocation director has a lasting influence on the lives of
887 those he encounters.

888 g. *National vocations promotion:* Peer organizations such as the National Conference of
889 Diocesan Vocation Directors (NCDVD) and the National Religious Vocation
890 Conference (NRVC) seek to promote vocations to priesthood in various ecclesiastical
891 entities, as well the other various expressions of consecrated life. Each in its own way
892 is a resource to vocations personnel, formators, seminaries, parishes, dioceses,
893 eparchies, personal ordinariates, schools, universities, and those discerning a priestly

894 vocation or a vocation to the various forms of consecrated life. This exchange of ideas,
895 sharing of resources, and development of best practices in promotion, discernment,
896 and formation help those involved in vocational accompaniment. Organizations such
897 as NCDVD and NRVC help members to build fraternity and support, learn from one
898 another, and serve the discerners and seminarians with the best resources available.

899 h. *The seminary*: The seminary plays a collaborative role in the promotion of vocations
900 and an important role in the discernment of vocations. A seminary attached to a
901 particular diocese often subsumes the responsibilities of a diocesan vocation director.
902 The seminary community is especially important in promoting, assessing, and
903 developing priestly vocations.

904 i. *Seminarians*: Seminarians also play a significant role in promoting priestly vocations
905 through the friendships they form outside the seminary setting, through their visible
906 presence in their home parishes, through their involvement in Christian service
907 activities and field education, through their assistance with vocation programs, and
908 through the welcome they extend to visitors at the seminary.

909 THE DISCERNMENT OF VOCATIONS

910 51. Discerners for the priesthood must be in prayerful dialogue with God and with the Church
911 in the discernment of their vocation. The linkage of this divine and ecclesial dialogue is especially
912 important because “in the present context there is . . . a certain tendency to view the bond between
913 human beings and God in an individualistic and self-centered way, as if God’s call reached the

914 individual by a direct route, without in any way passing through the community.”⁹⁷ It may be
915 difficult to heed the voice of God in our world of constant distraction.⁹⁸ Today’s reality makes the
916 role of the vocation director for any ecclesiastical entity essential in helping someone discern a
917 call to the priesthood.

918 52. It is important for the vocation director, as much as possible, to enter into dialogue with
919 the discerner and accompany him in this process. Listening is important as well: “Listening, in
920 communication, is an openness of heart which makes possible that closeness without which
921 genuine spiritual encounter cannot occur. Listening helps us to find the right gesture and word
922 which shows that we are more than simply bystanders. Only through such respectful and
923 compassionate listening can we enter on the paths of true growth and awaken a yearning for the
924 Christian ideal: the desire to respond fully to God’s love and to bring to fruition what he has sown
925 in our lives.”⁹⁹ Although he does not serve as a spiritual director for the discerners in his care, the
926 vocation director should have training in sound principles of vocational discernment to be able to
927 assist them in their discernment in the external forum. A joyful witness by the vocation director
928 makes the reality of the priesthood attractive to the one who is called to this vocation. For all
929 discerners, listening and personal accompaniment are critical.

⁹⁷ *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 37.

⁹⁸ “Nowadays listening is becoming more and more difficult, immersed as we are in a society full of noise, overstimulated and bombarded by information. The outer noise that sometimes prevails in our cities and our neighborhoods is often accompanied by our interior dispersion and confusion. This prevents us from pausing and enjoying the taste of contemplation, reflecting serenely on the events of our lives, going about our work with confidence in God’s loving plan, and making a fruitful discernment.” Pope Francis, Message for the 2018 World Day of Vocations, December 3, 2017, www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/vocations/documents/papa-francesco_20171203_55-messaggio-giornata-mondiale-vocazioni.html.

⁹⁹ *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 171.

930 GROWTH IN HISPANIC VOCATIONS

931 53. As the Church in the United States continues to become increasingly Hispanic, promotion
932 and discernment of vocations in this segment of the Catholic population of the United States is
933 essential, as are vocation promotion and discernment in other populations present in an
934 ecclesiastical entity.¹⁰⁰ At this historical moment, particular attention should be given to US-born
935 Hispanics, who constitute the majority of young people within this population.¹⁰¹ It may be
936 desirable that a vocation director himself be able to speak Spanish and be well acquainted with
937 specific Hispanic cultures present in his ecclesiastical entity, because vocations recruitment in
938 these cultures often entails building relationships not only with discerners but also with their
939 families. Vocation directors and admission boards must embrace a missionary spirit in their own
940 ecclesiastical entity, with the goal of encountering Hispanics where they are and accompanying
941 them on their discernment journeys. Such commitment sometimes requires offering academic
942 assistance, counseling, and tutoring to help those discerning a priestly call to prepare for formation.
943 Pastoral leaders and communities fostering vocations among Hispanics must be attentive to
944 cultural differences, which will vary greatly across the broad segment of the Hispanic Catholic
945 population in the United States.

946 HIGH SCHOOL SEMINARIES AND ACCOMPANIMENT OF ADOLESCENTS

947 54. There are few high school seminaries in the United States. Those that remain should look

¹⁰⁰ For more information on culturally diverse populations in the Catholic Church in the United States, see Mark Gray, Mary Gautier, and Thomas Gaunt, SJ, *Cultural Diversity in the Catholic Church in the United States* (Washington, DC: Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, 2014).

¹⁰¹ See USCCB, *V National Encuentro of Hispanic/Latino Ministry Working Document* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2018), 150-155.

948 to the *Ratio Fundamentalis* for guidance in maintaining their formation programs.¹⁰²

949

¹⁰² See *Ratio Fundamentalis*, nos. 16-23.

Admission into a Formation Program

950

951

952 55. In contrast to previous generations, when a more homogenous population presented itself
953 for entrance to the seminary, today's applicants represent considerable diversity—not only of
954 personal gifts and levels of maturity but also of significant cultural differences—that must be taken
955 into account. All those involved in the evaluation of applicants for priestly formation must
956 appreciate cultural, generational, educational, and familial differences and be able to recognize
957 which are gifts, which are liabilities, and which are simply indications of a need for further growth.

958 56. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the diocesan bishop or major superior of the institute
959 of consecrated life or society of apostolic life to decide whether to admit applicants into priestly
960 formation, in accordance with the criteria which have been properly established.¹⁰³ The diocesan
961 bishop or major superior of the institute of consecrated life or society of apostolic life shares his
962 responsibility with the vocation director or vocation team, perhaps also with an admissions board,
963 and with the local parishes. The admissions process requires sacramental records, an
964 autobiography, a review of psychological and medical assessments (with due regard for CIC,
965 c. 220; CCEO, c. 23), interviews, transcripts, criminal background checks, and immigration
966 documentation as well as letters of reference.¹⁰⁴ Diocesan bishops, major superiors, and rectors
967 must have moral conviction about the psychological and physical health of those they admit into

¹⁰³ See CIC, c. 241 §1.

¹⁰⁴ See CIC, c. 241 §2; CCEO, c. 342 §2; *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, art. 13.

968 priestly formation. In particular, they must be assured that applicants have a requisite level of
969 affective maturity and the capacity to live celibate chastity. They will determine the means
970 necessary to arrive at such certitude, including, for example, their own interviews with applicants,
971 the reliable testimony of those who have known the applicant, and psychological and physical
972 assessments made by expert consultants.

973 57. Once an applicant is admitted to the propaedeutic stage, the application process contributes
974 to the seminarian's personal plan for priestly formation. Specifically, the observations and
975 conclusions that emerge from the admissions process serve as a significant resource for the
976 seminarian's human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral formation. The sharing of this information
977 presumes a due respect for the rights of the seminarian and a strict maintenance of confidentiality.
978 A written consent, signed by the seminarian, is required before any confidential information can
979 be shared.

980 58. Without denying the importance of evaluating minimal thresholds in all areas of an
981 applicant's development, high standards and strict vigilance are especially necessary in evaluating
982 human thresholds pertaining to sexuality. "*Sexuality* affects all aspects of the human person in the
983 unity of his body and soul. It especially concerns affectivity, the capacity to love and to procreate,
984 and in a more general way the aptitude for forming bonds of communion with others."¹⁰⁵ For the
985 seminary applicant, thresholds pertaining to sexuality serve as the foundation for living a lifelong
986 commitment to healthy, celibate chastity.

987 59. In forming a prudent judgment about the suitability of an applicant for priestly formation,

¹⁰⁵ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 2332.

988 the principle of gradualism should be used. According to the principle of gradualism, progressively
989 higher levels of expectations should be sought as an individual advances to progressively higher
990 levels of preparation, moving from the propaedeutic stage into the discipleship, configuration, and
991 vocational synthesis stages. In short, the further a seminarian advances in the program toward
992 priestly ordination, the greater should be his development of the requisite qualities. The principle
993 of gradualism recognizes that it would be unrealistic to expect an applicant for seminary formation
994 who is beginning the propaedeutic stage to be fully mature in all areas. The time devoted to the
995 propaedeutic stage is especially important in determining if the seminarian has the qualities
996 necessary for further priestly formation in the stages that follow.

997 60. The principle of gradualism, however, does not deny that a minimal level of development
998 is necessary for admission to a priestly formation program. The minimal qualities necessary for
999 admission are properly understood as *thresholds* or *foundations*. All applicants need to have
1000 reached certain thresholds of human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral development, which will
1001 serve as foundations for further development.

1002 61. Applicants for admission should have attained, at least in some measure appropriate to their
1003 chronological age, qualities in those areas represented by the integrated dimensions of formation
1004 identified in *Pastores Dabo Vobis*: human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral. In trying to
1005 determine what is *sufficient* growth or development in these areas, admission criteria must be clear
1006 and specific. For example:

1007 a. Thresholds in the human dimension considered sufficient for admission into the
1008 propaedeutic stage mean not only an absence of serious pathology but also a proven
1009 capacity to function competently in ordinary human situations without a need for

1010 extensive therapeutic or remedial work to be fully functioning, a psychosexual
1011 maturity commensurate with chronological age, a genuine empathy that enables the
1012 applicant to connect well and personally with others, a demonstrated ability to initiate
1013 and sustain friendships, a capacity for growth or conversion, and a deep desire to be a
1014 man for others in the likeness of Christ.

1015 b. Sufficient spiritual thresholds include a person who prays regularly, is active in parish
1016 life, participates in the Sunday Eucharist and regularly in the Sacrament of Penance,
1017 and is drawn to explore and deepen his spiritual life and share it with others. In the
1018 case of an applicant for an institute of consecrated life or society of apostolic life, the
1019 man should demonstrate a firm acceptance and adherence to the Rule of Life of the
1020 institute or the constitution of the society, especially regarding its practices of
1021 liturgical, sacramental, and personal prayer.

1022 c. Sufficient intellectual thresholds include proven capacities for critical thinking, an
1023 ability to understand both abstract and practical questions, and the capacity to
1024 understand other persons and to communicate effectively with them in both oral and
1025 written form.

1026 d. Sufficient pastoral thresholds include having a fundamental sense of the Church's
1027 mission and a generous willingness and enthusiasm to promote it, having a sensitivity
1028 to the needs of others and a desire to respond to them, and having a willingness to
1029 initiate action for the good of individuals and communities.

1030 e. Finally, applicants should also have the *right intention* when they present themselves

1031 for admission to a priestly formation program. Their intention to pursue preparation
1032 for priestly ordination and ministry should correspond to the Church’s understanding.
1033 Given the probationary nature of the propaedeutic stage to provide a solid basis for
1034 the spiritual life and to nurture a greater self-awareness for personal growth—and
1035 given that men begin this stage from various backgrounds, levels of maturity, and life
1036 experiences—it will take time during the propaedeutic stage for these qualities to be
1037 observed and strengthened.

1038 NORMS FOR ADMISSION INTO A FORMATION PROGRAM

1039 62. Dioceses, along with other ecclesiastical entities, as well as seminaries must have clear
1040 written statements of admission policies, including thresholds, which are to be regularly reviewed
1041 and updated. These policies include behavioral criteria that place on applicants the burden of
1042 qualification for admission to a priestly formation program. In cases of doubt, caution should be
1043 taken and the benefit of the doubt given to the Church. It is also important that the seminary
1044 admission procedure carefully weigh the potential impact of the admission of each individual on
1045 the whole seminary community.

1046 63. A formation program is not the place for long-term therapy or remedial work, which should
1047 be completed prior to a decision concerning admission.¹⁰⁶ If during the admission process or during
1048 the propaedeutic stage it is determined that long-term or intensive therapy or remedial work is
1049 necessary, this work should be completed prior to beginning the propaedeutic stage or the
1050 discipleship stage, respectively.

¹⁰⁶ *Guidelines for the Use of Psychology in the Admission and Formation of Candidates for the Priesthood*, no. 8.

1051 64. Applicants must give evidence of an overall personal balance, good moral character, a love
1052 for the truth, and proper motivation. This evidence includes the requisite human, moral, spiritual,
1053 intellectual, physical, and psychological qualities for priestly ministry.¹⁰⁷

1054 65. All applicants should give witness to their conviction that God has brought them to the
1055 formation program to discern whether they are really called to the priesthood; and they should
1056 commit themselves wholeheartedly to carrying out that discernment, demonstrate dedication to the
1057 formation program, and exhibit appropriate respect to their formators. The applicant should be
1058 alert both to signs that seem to confirm that call and to counterindications. As the applicant and
1059 then seminarian journeys through the stages of formation, there should be a growing sense of
1060 confirmation of that call.

1061 66. Applicants must undergo a thorough screening process appropriate to the admission
1062 processes. Personal interviews with the applicants, evaluations from their pastors and teachers,
1063 records and evaluations from a previous seminary or institute of consecrated life or society of
1064 apostolic life if applicable,¹⁰⁸ academic records, standardized test scores, psychological
1065 evaluations, and criminal background checks¹⁰⁹ are all components of an effective admission
1066 program, and they are weighed together with an assessment of the applicant's motivation. Those

¹⁰⁷ See CIC, c. 241 §1; CCEO, c. 342 §1. Regarding psychological assessments see *Guidelines for the Use of Psychology in the Admission and Formation of Candidates for the Priesthood*; *Guidelines for the Use of Psychology in Seminary Admissions*; and *Ratio Fundamentalis*, nos. 191-196. Regarding persons with homosexual tendencies, see *Instruction Concerning the Criteria for the Discernment of Vocations with Regard to Persons with Homosexual Tendencies in View of Their Admission to the Seminary and to Holy Orders* (2005) and also *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 199. Regarding physical health see *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 190.

¹⁰⁸ See *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 198.

¹⁰⁹ See *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, art. 13.

1067 who do not fulfill minimal thresholds for admission must not be admitted.

1068 67. It is the responsibility of the vocation director of the ecclesiastical entity to provide the
1069 admissions board with a summary of the results of the screening process. It is his responsibility to
1070 provide to the rector of the seminary, in a timely and complete fashion, the results of the screening
1071 process used by the ecclesiastical entity. Such provision is to be made only with the applicant's
1072 previous written consent. In the event that further consultation is needed in a particular case,
1073 additional release forms must be obtained.

1074 68. Applicants from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds should be given every
1075 encouragement. An effort must be made by vocation directors and seminaries to honor every
1076 vocational stirring. Propaedeutic programs and seminaries are responsible for ensuring the
1077 possession of adequate resources to serve the formative needs of such applicants. Formation
1078 requirements should not be lessened, but necessary adaptations may be made to enable admission
1079 into the regular course of study. Applicants must have an adequate command of the English
1080 language to begin intellectual formation in a seminary in which English is the language of
1081 instruction. English-language studies may be undertaken in the seminary before admission into the
1082 full, regular courses of seminary study. It is also important that applicants from other countries
1083 receive special help in gaining the necessary understanding of the religious and cultural context
1084 for priestly ministry and life in the United States.¹¹⁰

1085 69. Seminaries and ecclesiastical entities must draw up guidelines for psychologists and

¹¹⁰ For more information on assessment, acceptance, reception, and orientation of international candidates, see *Guidelines for Receiving Pastoral Ministers in the United States*, especially E1-E5; *Guidelines for the Use of Psychology in Seminary Admissions*, 6.

1086 admission personnel that describe those human traits and qualities that are consonant with an
1087 authentic vocation to the priesthood as well as those counterindications that suggest that the
1088 applicant is not suitable for priestly formation. Seminaries as well as ecclesiastical entities must
1089 ensure that those who conduct psychological evaluations for them have a sound understanding and
1090 acceptance of Christian anthropology and are well versed in and supportive of the Church's
1091 expectations for men in priestly formation, especially expectations concerning celibacy, chastity,
1092 obedience, and permanence of commitment, as well as the human traits and qualities that are
1093 consonant with an authentic priestly vocation.¹¹¹

1094 70. A psychological assessment is an integral part of the admission procedure. Psychological
1095 assessments must be administered using methods that do not violate the applicant's right to privacy
1096 and confidentiality or do harm to the reputation of the applicant. Further, they "must always be
1097 carried out with the previous, explicit, informed and free consent of the candidate."¹¹² The
1098 applicant has an obligation to be honest during the application process regarding any known
1099 difficulties of a psychological nature he has experienced as well as any professional counseling he
1100 has received.¹¹³ At the same time, the applicant should understand that the testing results will be
1101 shared with the diocesan bishop, the vocation director, the rector, and his agent¹¹⁴ in a way that
1102 permits a thorough review. At times formators may need to work with the seminarian on matters
1103 related to the evaluation, and thus they will need some knowledge of the assessment. Due care

¹¹¹ See *Guidelines for the Use of Psychology in Seminary Admissions*, 5-7.

¹¹² *Guidelines for the Use of Psychology in the Admission and Formation of Candidates for the Priesthood*, no. 5. See CIC, c. 220; CCEO, c. 23.

¹¹³ See *Ratio Fundamental*, no. 193.

¹¹⁴ See *Ratio Fundamental*, no. 195.

1104 should be observed in correctly interpreting the results of psychological testing in light of the
1105 cultural background of applicants.¹¹⁵ Care must be taken to ensure that psychological records are
1106 maintained in a secure manner, respecting the civil laws of the state regarding records retention
1107 and divulging of facts contained in the records.¹¹⁶ In the event that further consultation is needed
1108 in a particular case, additional release forms must be obtained.

1109 71. Admission processes should give sufficient attention to the emotional health of applicants.
1110 Special care and scrutiny should be given to those who manifest dysfunction or come from
1111 dysfunctional families. It is possible for some individuals to address these issues in the course of
1112 a formation program through counseling or other means. Their willingness, however, to confront
1113 these or other personal issues should be determined prior to the decision about admission. If long-
1114 term therapeutic work is indicated, this is best accomplished before the decision is made
1115 concerning admission into a priestly formation program. At times, the gravity of family or personal
1116 issues is such that, if the discernor has not yet adequately dealt with these issues, entrance into a
1117 priestly formation program should be delayed or denied. Similarly, the gravity of family or
1118 personal issues is such that, if a seminarian in the propaedeutic stage has not yet adequately dealt
1119 with these issues, entrance into the discipleship stage should be delayed or denied.

1120 72. Admission procedures should include an open and frank discussion of the life experiences
1121 that applicants bring to the formation program. Their level of insight or self-knowledge and their

¹¹⁵ See *Ratio Fundamentalis*, nos. 191-196; *Guidelines for the Use of Psychology in Seminary Admissions*, 3. Regarding linguistic competency and intercultural competency for those conducting psychological testing, see *Guidelines for the Use of Psychology in Seminary Admissions*, 6; *Guidelines for Receiving Pastoral Ministers in the United States*, E1-E2.

¹¹⁶ See *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 196; *Guidelines for the Use of Psychology in Seminary Admissions*, 10-11.

1122 willingness to address important human issues—such as their interpersonal abilities, evidence of
1123 sound peer relationships, their manner of dealing with authority, and their psychosexual
1124 development—can be important gauges of their readiness to enter a formation program. If an
1125 individual has any significant unresolved human issues, the seminary is well advised to delay
1126 admission until greater clarity or resolution is evident. Concerning the capacity to live the charism
1127 of celibacy, the applicant is to have lived in continence for a sustained period of time before
1128 entering the propaedeutic stage of priestly formation, so that he may give a strong indication to the
1129 vocation director and formators of his capacity for continence and self-possession. In discerning
1130 the minimal length of this sustained period of time, indicators in the applicant himself—such as
1131 age, life experiences, and capacity for growth in psychosexual maturity—should be considered by
1132 admissions personnel.

1133 73. Admission procedures should include an evaluation of all internet and social media use,
1134 including gaming, by the applicant up to the point of application. It will be necessary for formation
1135 personnel to assist the discerner and seminarian with any recommended ongoing support.

1136 74. Any evidence of criminal or compulsive sexual activity or an inclination toward such
1137 activity disqualifies the applicant from admission.¹¹⁷

1138 75. With regard to the admission of men with same-sex experiences and/or inclinations, the
1139 guidelines provided by the Holy See must be followed.¹¹⁸ To this end a distinction must be made

¹¹⁷ See *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 202. See also *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, art. 13.

¹¹⁸ See *Instruction Concerning the Criteria for the Discernment of Vocations with Regard to Persons with Homosexual Tendencies in View of Their Admission to the Seminary and to Holy Orders*.

1140 between deep-seated and transitory tendencies. Persons who “practice homosexuality, present
1141 deep-seated homosexual tendencies or support the so-called ‘gay culture’” cannot be admitted to
1142 either the seminary or Holy Orders.¹¹⁹ “Different, however, would be the case in which one were
1143 dealing with homosexual tendencies that were only the expression of a transitory problem—for
1144 example, that of an adolescence not yet superseded. Nevertheless, such tendencies must be clearly
1145 overcome at least three years before ordination to the diaconate.”¹²⁰ It is important that formators
1146 and, if necessary, outside professionals pastorally accompany a person “in a relationship of sincere
1147 dialogue and mutual trust,”¹²¹ especially a discernor or seminarian, as he and the Church discern
1148 whether his homosexual tendencies are transitory or deep-seated.

1149 76. Concerning the results of psychological testing and other confidential materials, the
1150 ecclesiastical entity and seminary must observe all Canon Law and civil law requirements, inform
1151 the applicant in writing of his specific rights to privacy and confidentiality, and utilize appropriate
1152 release forms.¹²² Throughout the admission process and the priestly formation program, the man’s
1153 rights to privacy and a good reputation must be respected, and the careful management of
1154 confidential materials is to be observed.¹²³ The wording of any release forms must indicate which
1155 persons may have access to the information and with whom they can share it, making it explicit

¹¹⁹ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 199.

¹²⁰ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 200.

¹²¹ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 200.

¹²² See CIC, c. 220; CCEO, c. 23.

¹²³ See *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 196. Due to the diversity of state laws, each ecclesiastical entity and seminary is to determine the length of time for which “documentation related to the physical and psychological health of seminarians is to be stored,” respecting all applicable civil laws.

1156 that no other sharing is to be allowed without the man's explicit written permission. In the event
1157 that further consultation is needed in a particular case, additional release forms must be obtained.

1158 77. In the initial admission process, an evaluation should be made of an applicant's
1159 indebtedness, his ability to handle finances (for example, responsible record keeping and payment
1160 of personal taxes), spending patterns, and perhaps a willingness to cover a portion of his formation
1161 expenses. Applicants should demonstrate an aptitude for learning principles of good stewardship,
1162 avoiding any attitudes of entitlement. They should also show an openness to developing
1163 professional approaches to personal and Church-related business matters.

1164 78. The admission process should be attentive to older, experienced applicants, who often
1165 bring a mature spirituality, experience in pastoral life, and other significant life experiences but
1166 who might also be less docile to formation. The admission processes must be no less rigorous,
1167 thorough, or comprehensive than it might be for other applicants.

1168 79. If an applicant has never been in a formation program, then he must complete a
1169 propaedeutic stage lasting not less than one calendar year and a discipleship stage lasting not less
1170 than a two-year calendar period. Discipleship stage programs that form men with prior life and
1171 education experience (bachelor's degree or equivalent) must be designed to address all four
1172 dimensions of formation, not simply to meet academic requirements.

1173 80. If applicants have been in a formation program previously, with due regard for what has
1174 already been stated regarding criminal or compulsive sexual activity, ecclesiastical entities and
1175 seminaries must consult all previous institutions about the past record of these applicants as
1176 prescribed in the *Norms Concerning Applications for Priestly Formation from Those Previously*

1177 *Enrolled in a Formation Program.*¹²⁴ While remaining confidential, “the reasons [for dismissal]
1178 should be given with the greatest possible objectivity, avoiding ambiguity and the use of
1179 euphemisms.”¹²⁵ It is also important to learn the reasons for leaving, if a seminarian left a formation
1180 program on his own initiative. Regardless of whether a seminarian was dismissed or left, if the
1181 records indicate difficulties, the ecclesiastical entity and seminary should proceed with due caution
1182 and prudence before admitting the applicant and should ascertain whether problems have been
1183 resolved and sufficient positive growth has taken place. In serious cases involving issues with
1184 Church doctrine or behavior, inside or outside a formation program, admittance is unwise.

1185 81. If an applicant has been dismissed from a program of priestly formation or from an institute
1186 of consecrated life or society of apostolic life, no subsequent application will be considered in the
1187 two years following such dismissal. If the departure was other than a dismissal, sufficient time
1188 should be allotted to evaluate carefully his application and background.

1189 82. Prior to admission into a formation program, the ecclesiastical entity, usually through the
1190 vocation director, is obliged to ensure (and the seminary must verify) that recent certificates of
1191 Baptism and Confirmation (or Chrismation with holy Myron) have been obtained and to determine
1192 (if applicable) into which Eastern Catholic Church *sui iuris* the applicant is ascribed.¹²⁶ The

¹²⁴ See USCCB, *Norms Concerning Reapplication for Priestly Formation*, www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/vocations/priesthood/priestly-formation/norms-concerning-reapplication-for-priestly-formation.cfm; CIC, c. 241 §3; CCEO, c. 342 §3. These *Norms* are to be followed in reviewing an application for enrollment in a program of priestly formation that is submitted by one who has previously been enrolled in such a program or who has belonged to an institute of consecrated life or a society of apostolic life.

¹²⁵ *Scrutinies*, no. 8.

¹²⁶ See CIC, c. 241 §2; CCEO, c. 342 §2.

1193 diocese must also obtain the following documentation from others: summaries of personal
1194 interviews with the applicant, evaluations from his pastor and teachers, academic records,
1195 standardized test scores, assessments of the applicant's motivation conducted by experienced
1196 formators, and, if applicable, previous seminary evaluations. The seminary must verify the
1197 completion of all documentation before an applicant is admitted.

1198 83. The admission process by the ecclesiastical entity also must include a thorough physical
1199 examination to ensure that applicants possess the good health necessary for seminary training and
1200 priestly ministry. This exam should include HIV and drug testing along with screening that verifies
1201 biological maleness.

1202 84. A thorough assessment of an applicant's marital history is a necessary part of the admission
1203 process. An applicant for the priesthood in the Latin Church must testify that he is not married,
1204 even if only civilly, or that, if he is married, he has received a dispensation from the Apostolic
1205 See.¹²⁷ If an Eastern Catholic discernor is married, a certificate of marriage is required along with
1206 the written consent of his wife¹²⁸ and any necessary consultations required by the Apostolic See.¹²⁹
1207 Applicants who have received a declaration of matrimonial nullity should be carefully screened.
1208 Although these men may have canonical freedom to pursue the priesthood, it is important to
1209 ascertain if and how previous obstacles to a marriage commitment or possible scandal might affect
1210 their viability as fit applicants for priestly formation. Care must be taken to review the canonical

¹²⁷ See CIC, c. 1047 §2, 3°.

¹²⁸ See CCEO, c. 769 §1, 2°.

¹²⁹ See Congregation for the Oriental Churches, *Pontificia Praecepta de Clero Uxorato Orientali*, June 14, 2014, AAS 106: 496-499.

1211 declaration of nullity and the relevant documentation to ensure that the reasons and circumstances
1212 that serve as warrants for the declaration of nullity are fully disclosed to the sponsoring bishop or
1213 competent authority, rector, and the seminary admissions committee. If a previously married
1214 person has natural obligations toward a previous spouse, and/or primary responsibility for a minor
1215 child, this information should be carefully considered. All such cases should be carefully weighed.

1216 85. Careful screening should also be given to applicants who are recent converts to the Catholic
1217 faith or who have lapsed in the practice of their faith and have recently returned. It is advisable
1218 that at least two years pass between their entry into the Church and their admission into the
1219 propaedeutic stage. A suitable period of time should pass before entrance into a formation
1220 program, in cases of Catholics for whom a sudden conversion experience seems to precipitate a
1221 priestly vocation. Similarly, those who return to the practice of the faith after an extended period
1222 away from the Church should not enter a formation program directly.

1223 86. The seminary is obligated to determine the freedom of the applicant from the impediments
1224 and irregularities for receiving Holy Orders and from conditions that must be addressed prior to
1225 the reception of Holy Orders, namely, that sufficient time has passed for a neophyte;¹³⁰ that the
1226 applicant does not hold a position forbidden to clerics;¹³¹ that the applicant does not “labor under
1227 some form of amentia or other psychic illness”;¹³² that he has not committed the delict of apostasy,
1228 heresy, or schism;¹³³ and that he has not committed voluntary homicide, positively cooperated in

¹³⁰ See CIC, c. 1042, 3°; CCEO, c. 762 §1, 8°.

¹³¹ See CIC, cc. 285-286, 289, 1042, 2°; CCEO, cc. 762 §1, 7°, 382-385.

¹³² See CIC, c. 1041, 1°; CCEO, c. 762 §1, 1°; *Ratio Fundamentalis*, nos. 191-196.

¹³³ See CIC, c. 1041, 2°; CCEO, c. 762 §1, 2°.

1229 a completed abortion,¹³⁴ gravely and maliciously mutilated himself or another, attempted
1230 suicide,¹³⁵ or simulated an act reserved to priests or bishops.¹³⁶ If any of these conditions exist,
1231 then prior to admission, appropriate dispensations or remedies must be obtained, including, when
1232 necessary, recourse to the tribunal of the Apostolic Penitentiary when the existence of the
1233 impediment is not a publicly known fact.

1234 87. The diocesan bishop must investigate whether the applicant is allergic to wheat and
1235 whether he is able to consume the Precious Blood.¹³⁷

1236 88. The diocesan bishop must investigate whether the applicant has a criminal background.

1237 89. Furthermore, the diocesan bishop must investigate whether the applicant is abusing alcohol
1238 or drugs, whether he suffers from an addiction or compulsive disorder to pornography, and whether
1239 he is capable of beginning formation.

1240 90. If an applicant has ever been sexually abused, the diocesan bishop or competent authority,
1241 with compassionate solicitude for the good of the man and for the good of the Church, must
1242 determine whether it is prudent to admit the applicant into a formation program.

¹³⁴ See CIC, c. 1041, 4°; CCEO, c. 762 §1, 4°.

¹³⁵ See CIC, c. 1041, 5°; CCEO, c. 762 §1, 5°.

¹³⁶ See CIC, c. 1041, 6°; CCEO, c. 762 §1, 6°.

¹³⁷ “Given the centrality of the celebration of the Eucharist in the life of a priest, one must proceed with great caution before admitting to Holy Orders those candidates unable to ingest gluten or alcohol without serious harm.” Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Circular Letter to All Presidents of the Episcopal Conferences Concerning the Use of Low-Gluten Altar Breads and Mustum as Matter for the Celebration of the Eucharist*, July 24, 2003, www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20030724_pane-senza-glutine_en.html.

Seminary Formation: Those Who Accompany Seminarians

1243

1244

1245 INTRODUCTION

1246 91. Integral formation is successful when it is supported by a trusting atmosphere of personal
1247 and communal accompaniment. “The purpose of personal accompaniment is to carry out
1248 vocational discernment and to form the missionary disciple.”¹³⁸ So too the role of the community
1249 is crucial in accompaniment. “Formation comes about every day through interpersonal
1250 relationships, moments of exchange and discussion which result in the development of that ‘fertile
1251 soil,’ in which a vocation matures concretely.”¹³⁹

1252 92. Relationships characterized by trust are essential for accompaniment to be successful. “The
1253 program of formation should explore and outline the concrete ways in which this trust can be
1254 encouraged and safeguarded. Above all, those conditions should be sought and fostered, which
1255 can, in some way, create a peaceful climate of trust and mutual confidence: fraternity, empathy,
1256 understanding, the ability to listen and to share, and especially a coherent witness of life.”¹⁴⁰

1257 93. The relationships in the external forum are those between a seminarian and his bishop or
1258 competent authority, including the agents of the bishop or competent authority (rector, vice rector,
1259 vocation director, director of seminarians, and other formators, with the exception of the spiritual

¹³⁸ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 44.

¹³⁹ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 50.

¹⁴⁰ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 47.

1260 director). The term “external forum” includes discussions surrounding any observable behavior of
1261 the seminarian and the attitudes and motivations related to these behaviors. The Church has a right
1262 and responsibility to know the man she is ordaining, and therefore the seminarian has a
1263 corresponding responsibility to let himself be known. These discussions generally include, but are
1264 not limited to, vocational discernment, growth in maturity in all four dimensions, integration and
1265 behaviors regarding interior freedom, and behaviors related to the promises of prayer, obedience,
1266 and celibacy.

1267 94. The primary relationship in the internal forum is that between a seminarian and his spiritual
1268 director. The purpose of the “internal forum” is to protect the manifestation of conscience of the
1269 seminarian and to provide him the space to share about his interior life with the moral freedom
1270 that is necessary for genuine growth and discernment. These discussions generally include, but are
1271 not limited to, movements in prayer, vocational discernment, growth in interior freedom, and
1272 struggles and growth in preparation for the promises of prayer, obedience, and celibacy.

1273 95. While the manifestation of conscience and sacramental confession are never part of the
1274 external forum, over time the seminarian will grow comfortable discussing appropriate interior
1275 matters related to his vocation with formators in the external forum. A solid relationship of trust
1276 with his formators in both fora will benefit the seminarian as he receives guidance from all
1277 formators. This relationship will allow major decisions to be reached following regular discussions
1278 throughout the formation process, so that the seminarian will not be surprised by decisions reached
1279 by those responsible for his formation, and vice versa. It must be clear that the material of spiritual
1280 direction and confession are not to be shared by spiritual directors with external forum

1281 personnel.¹⁴¹

1282 AGENTS OF FORMATION

1283 96. Accompaniment is the work of the agents of formation. “The principal agent of formation
1284 is the Most Holy Trinity, who shapes every seminarian according to the plan of the Father, both
1285 through the presence of Christ in His word, in the sacraments and in the brothers and sisters of the
1286 community, and through the many actions of the Holy Spirit.”¹⁴² In his docility to the Holy Spirit
1287 and the program of initial formation, “each seminarian is the protagonist of his own formation.”¹⁴³
1288 He is ultimately responsible for his ongoing growth in the human, spiritual, intellectual, and
1289 pastoral dimensions of his formation.

1290 The Diocesan Bishop

1291 97. “It is the Bishop who is primarily responsible for admission to the Seminary and formation
1292 for the priesthood.”¹⁴⁴ This is expressed in his choice of rector and members of the community of
1293 formators, as well as his approval of the seminary Rule of Life. In addition to his administrative
1294 responsibilities concerning the seminary, the bishop should “establish a trustful dialogue with
1295 seminarians, so as to enable them to be sincere and open.”¹⁴⁵ For this to occur, it is important that
1296 bishops spend regular time with seminarians, both in one-on-one meetings and in visits to the

¹⁴¹ See Congregation for Catholic Education, *Report on the Apostolic Visitation of the American Seminaries*, December 15, 2008.

¹⁴² *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 125.

¹⁴³ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 130.

¹⁴⁴ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 128.

¹⁴⁵ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 128.

1297 seminary.¹⁴⁶ The presbyterate, in communion with the diocesan bishop, can serve as companions
1298 in helping men to attain formation benchmarks.

1299 The Rector

1300 98. The rector, because of his responsibility for the formation program as a whole, must take
1301 an active part in the accompaniment of seminarians. The rector is “to be a priest distinguished by
1302 prudence, wisdom and balance, someone highly competent,”¹⁴⁷ who is seen as the father of the
1303 entire seminary community. It is the rector who sets the tone for the seminary—a tone which must
1304 be characterized by trust and mutual respect. “With fraternal charity, he will establish a profound
1305 and loyal cooperation with the other formators. He is the legal representative of the Seminary, both
1306 ecclesiastically and civilly.”¹⁴⁸ It is the rector who has daily care for supervision of all aspects of
1307 formation in the seminary.¹⁴⁹ He provides regular (at least annual) reports to the diocesan bishop
1308 or competent authority of the ecclesiastical entity on the status of each seminarian. Therefore,
1309 while other formators, professors, and specialists will assist the rector in his duties, it is important
1310 that he know each seminarian personally.

1311 Priestly Accompaniment

1312 99. A seminarian must be assigned to an individual priest formator who is in residence in the
1313 seminary. This priest is responsible for accompanying the seminarian through that particular stage

¹⁴⁶ See CIC, cc. 259 §2, 396-397, 628; CCEO, cc. 205, 356 §2, 420. Similarly, the competent authority of the ecclesiastical entity should foster and promote the vocations of his men preparing for priesthood.

¹⁴⁷ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 134.

¹⁴⁸ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 134.

¹⁴⁹ See CIC, c. 260.

1314 of formation. This formator accompanies the seminarian in the external forum and is responsible
1315 for personalizing the work of seminary formation for an individual seminarian as well as engaging
1316 in the discernment process that oversees the suitability of the seminarian for continuation.¹⁵⁰ The
1317 formator is at the service of the mystery of vocation in the seminarian. He helps to discern whether
1318 such a call is present and to foster it to its fullness by relating to the man as a shepherd and a father.

1319 100. Just as Jesus accompanied his Apostles and offered them individual formation along the
1320 way, so also “seminarians need to be accompanied in a personal way in the various stages of their
1321 journey by those entrusted with the work of formation.”¹⁵¹ The growth of human formation
1322 happens generally in a threefold process of self-knowledge, moving to self-possession, and finally
1323 to self-gift, and all this in a context of faith.¹⁵² This is a gradual process of growth that integrates
1324 both the human and spiritual life of the man and leads to a deepening of interior freedom. The
1325 growth of interior freedom leads ultimately to a configuration to Christ and thus makes him capable
1326 and willing to live the Paschal Mystery of Christ in his own life. The formator accompanies the
1327 man in this gradual growth process and assists “the seminarian in becoming aware of his condition,
1328 of the talents that he has received, and of his frailties, so that he can become ever more receptive
1329 to the action of grace.”¹⁵³ This dialogue will involve challenge and encouragement, correction and
1330 accountability, as the formator listens to the deeper motives behind the actions of the seminarian
1331 and helps him to integrate the various aspects of his life. It will require cultivating in the seminarian

¹⁵⁰ See *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 132.

¹⁵¹ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 44.

¹⁵² See USCCB Committee on Priestly Formation, *Spiritual Formation in the Catholic Seminary* (1982).

¹⁵³ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 46.

1332 attitudes that promote living a life of virtue. It requires truly knowing the seminarian and his
1333 particular growth needs. To this end, “it is important that every seminarian be aware of his own
1334 life history, and be ready to share it with his formators. This would include especially his
1335 experience of childhood and adolescence, the influence that his family and his relatives have
1336 exercised upon him, his ability to establish mature and well balanced interpersonal relationships,
1337 or his lack thereof, and his ability to handle positively moments of solitude.”¹⁵⁴ Such
1338 accompaniment must bring together all the aspects of the human person, allowing him to surrender
1339 his whole life to Christ in obedience and interior freedom. “In fact it is only in the crucified and
1340 risen Christ that this path of integration finds meaning and completion; all things are united in him
1341 (see Eph 1:10).”¹⁵⁵

1342 101. The key element in this formative accompaniment is mutual trust. It is essential that “the
1343 seminarian should know himself and let himself be known.”¹⁵⁶ This openness is required for real
1344 formation to happen. If a man hides his struggles in formation, growth cannot happen. The
1345 seminary community should seek to create the conditions that foster this peaceful climate of trust
1346 and mutual confidence through relationships marked by “fraternity, empathy, understanding, the
1347 ability to listen and to share, and especially a coherent witness of life.”¹⁵⁷ This climate of mutual
1348 confidence will be helped by the formators accompanying the seminarians outside of formal
1349 meetings in meals, recreation, and other potentially formative experiences. These times can

¹⁵⁴ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 94.

¹⁵⁵ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 29.

¹⁵⁶ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 45.

¹⁵⁷ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 47.

1350 provide excellent opportunities to know the seminarians and provide the formation that comes
1351 from witness of life and ordinary encounters. When the seminarian experiences that the priest
1352 formators live true fatherhood seeking his good, and that the life of the seminary is marked by a
1353 spirit of true fraternity, this trust will not be difficult to establish.¹⁵⁸

1354 102. To arrive at the necessary depth of formation, conversations between the formator and the
1355 seminarian should normally occur about once a month.¹⁵⁹ Just as it is beneficial for seminarians to
1356 remain with the same spiritual director for longer periods of time, it is preferable that one formator
1357 work with the seminarian in the external forum throughout each particular stage of formation.
1358 When possible it is advantageous for a seminarian to have the same formator for even longer than
1359 one stage of formation.

1360 103. The Church is clear about the importance of the role of this priest formator and the needed
1361 formation for it:

1362 The formator must exercise discretion when it comes to the lives of seminarians. Each
1363 formator should be possessed of human, spiritual, pastoral and professional abilities and
1364 resources, so as to provide the right kind of accompaniment that is balanced and
1365 respectful of the freedom and the conscience of the other person, and that will help him in
1366 his human and spiritual growth. Moreover, those who are marked out to become
1367 formators need a specific preparation and generous dedication to this important task.

1368 Formators are needed who can ensure their full-time presence and who, above all else,

¹⁵⁸ See *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 52.

¹⁵⁹ See *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 46.

1369 are witnesses of how to love and serve the people of God, giving themselves without
1370 reserve for the Church.¹⁶⁰

1371 The Spiritual Director

1372 104. Seminarians must meet regularly with a priest spiritual director, normally biweekly.¹⁶¹
1373 Spiritual directors must be chosen freely from a list prepared by the coordinator of spiritual
1374 formation. They should have proper training and adequate credentials for the work. These priests
1375 must be approved by the rector and appointed by the competent authority.¹⁶² In the case of
1376 seminarians for an institute of consecrated life or society of apostolic life, the formation director
1377 or competent authority of the institute or society offers guidance on an appropriate spiritual
1378 director for the seminarians under his care.

1379 105. Seminarians should confide their personal history, personal relationships, prayer
1380 experiences, their cultivation of virtues, their temptations, and other significant topics to their
1381 spiritual director. If, for serious reason, there is a change of director, the new director should give
1382 attention to continuity in the seminarian's spiritual development.

1383 106. The spiritual director should foster an integration of spiritual formation, human formation,
1384 and character development consistent with priestly formation. The spiritual director assists the
1385 seminarian in acquiring the skills of spiritual discernment and plays a key role in helping the
1386 seminarian discern whether he is called to priesthood or to another vocation in the Church.

¹⁶⁰ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 49.

¹⁶¹ See *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 107.

¹⁶² See CIC, c. 239 §2; CCEO, c. 339 §1.

1387 107. Those priests who engage in spiritual direction for seminarians must understand and
1388 support the full formation program. They also need to be integrated into the priestly community
1389 of the seminary. The spiritual directors are thus aware that they are part of the whole seminary
1390 program and community.¹⁶³

1391 108. Care is to be taken to ensure that issues of human formation that properly belong to the
1392 external forum are not limited to the spiritual direction relationship for their resolution. Likewise,
1393 the spiritual director should be prepared to encourage that a seminarian bring to the external forum
1394 characteristics within him which would preclude the freedom to be advanced or ordained.

1395 109. Because spiritual direction in a seminary context differs from spiritual direction more
1396 generally experienced in the Church, the seminary must explain to seminarians the purpose and
1397 process of spiritual direction in the seminary. This should include, for example, an understanding
1398 that spiritual direction is not an optional possibility but a seminary requirement; a recognition that
1399 seminary spiritual direction is concerned not only with the personal spiritual growth of seminarians
1400 but also with their preparation for service in the Church as priests; a knowledge that the spiritual
1401 direction process must take into account preparation for ordination and that, therefore, one should
1402 have passed certain thresholds of spiritual development and commitment at different points in the
1403 seminary program (in contrast to the open-ended nature of nonseminary spiritual direction); and
1404 an acceptance that a lack of readiness for spiritual direction itself should prompt a seminarian to
1405 question his continuance in the seminary and seriously consider withdrawing from the program

¹⁶³ See *Ratio Fundamentalis*, nos. 132-133.

1406 until he is ready.¹⁶⁴

1407 110. Meetings with spiritual directors are to be of sufficient frequency, normally biweekly, and
1408 sufficient duration to allow adequate opportunity to assist the seminarian in ongoing vocational
1409 discernment, proximate preparation for the reception of ministries and Holy Orders, and formation
1410 for celibacy.

1411 111. Disclosures that a seminarian makes in the course of spiritual direction belong to the
1412 internal forum. Consequently, the spiritual director is held to the strictest confidentiality
1413 concerning information received in spiritual direction. He may neither reveal it nor use it.¹⁶⁵
1414 Although the civil legal requirements might vary from state to state, the only possible exception
1415 to this standard of confidentiality would be the case of grave, immediate, or mortal danger
1416 involving the directee or another person.¹⁶⁶ If what is revealed in spiritual direction coincides with
1417 the celebration of the Sacrament of Penance (in other words, what is revealed is revealed *ad*
1418 *ordinem absolutionis*)—that is, the exchange takes place not only in the nonsacramental internal
1419 forum but also in the sacramental internal forum—then the absolute canonical strictures of the seal
1420 of confession hold, and no information may be revealed or used.

1421 112. Although the rector may never ask a spiritual director about the content of a seminarian's
1422 conversation, he can expect a spiritual director to confirm that a seminarian sees him biweekly.

¹⁶⁴ For example, see *Instruction Concerning the Criteria for the Discernment of Vocations with Regard to Persons with Homosexual Tendencies in View of Their Admission to the Seminary and to Holy Orders*.

¹⁶⁵ See CIC, c. 240 §2; CCEO, c. 339 §3.

¹⁶⁶ See *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, art. 4.

1423 The spiritual director must notify the rector if the director decides to discontinue spiritual direction
1424 with any seminarian or if the seminarian discontinues direction with him.

1425 Lay Accompaniment

1426 113. Although priestly formation necessarily includes agents of formation who must be priests,
1427 it is essential that a seminarian's formation be truly ecclesial through the formal participation of
1428 lay members of the seminary community. The laity, particularly women, offer insightful
1429 recommendations, opinions, and points of view to the rector and community of formators. In
1430 addition, families and other communities within the Church are an integral part of the initial stages
1431 of formation.

1432

Seminary Formation: Structural Elements

1433

1434

1435 AN INTEGRAL FORMATION

1436 114. Formation, as the Church understands it, is not equivalent to a secular sense of schooling
1437 or, even less, of job training. It begins for all Christians at Baptism and continues throughout life.
1438 God uses the entirety of one’s life experiences continually to invite the believer to draw closer to
1439 him. He is always at work in the soul as the master craftsman, shaping and molding us. So too, for
1440 those he has chosen to pursue the path of priesthood, whether in a diocesan or a consecrated
1441 vocation, his quiet yet constant presence is always at work. “The formation of priests means
1442 following a singular ‘journey of discipleship,’ which begins at Baptism, is perfected through the
1443 other sacraments of Christian Initiation, comes to be appreciated as the center of one’s life at the
1444 beginning of Seminary formation, and continues through the whole of life.”¹⁶⁷ While formation is
1445 a lifelong journey, the time spent preparing for ordained ministry is a privileged time of growth in
1446 self-knowledge and deepening intimacy with Jesus Christ. At the beginning of the seminary
1447 journey, “the seminarian is a ‘mystery to himself,’ in which two aspects of his humanity, that need
1448 to be integrated, are intertwined and exist side by side. On the one hand he is characterized by
1449 talents and gifts that have been molded by grace; on the other he is marked by his limits and frailty.
1450 The task of formation is to help the person to integrate these aspects, under the influence of the
1451 Holy Spirit, in a journey of faith and of gradual and harmonious maturity, avoiding fragmentation,

¹⁶⁷ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, Introduction, no. 3.

1452 polarization, excesses, superficiality or partiality.”¹⁶⁸

1453 Formation to the priesthood is described in the human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral
1454 dimensions. However, one must always keep in mind that these dimensions are not
1455 compartmentalized but are held in concert with one another. In a similar way, discipleship,
1456 configuration, and vocational synthesis, while recognized as stages on the journey toward
1457 priesthood, are never finished. Following ordination, the priest always remains a disciple of Jesus
1458 Christ, who is called throughout his life to cooperate with God’s grace in configuring his life more
1459 each day to that of the great High Priest.

1460 115. Integral formation attempts to bring together, as much as possible, the four dimensions of
1461 formation in the seminarian as he matures into an authentic priestly identity. The four dimensions
1462 of human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral formation are interrelated aspects of a human
1463 response to God’s transforming grace. Without attention to integration in all stages of formation,
1464 the overall goal of formation, configuration to the heart and life of the Lord Jesus, cannot be
1465 achieved. While each seminary must have a structured plan of formation for all seminarians, the
1466 integration of the four dimensions must be personalized in each particular man “to achieve a serene
1467 and creative interior synthesis between strength and weakness.”¹⁶⁹

1468 116. Through human formation the foundation is laid upon which the other dimensions can be
1469 received and lived. Through spiritual formation, the seminarian learns to bring everything from
1470 the other dimensions into his relationship with Jesus Christ. Through intellectual formation he
1471 comes to a deeper understanding of the truths of faith and the human person, enriching his

¹⁶⁸ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 28.

¹⁶⁹ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 29.

1472 relationship with God, his understanding of himself, and his service to others. Through pastoral
1473 formation he learns how to express the other three in pastoral charity, the overall goal of priestly
1474 formation. It is through the integration of all four dimensions that the seminarian comes to the
1475 affective maturity and freedom needed for priestly service.

1476 Each of the dimensions of formation is aimed at “transforming” or “assimilating” the
1477 heart in the image of the heart of Christ [cf. *Optatam Totius*, no. 4; *Pastores Dabo Vobis*,
1478 no. 57], who was sent by the Father to fulfill his loving plan. He was moved when faced
1479 with human suffering (cf. Mt 9:35-36), he went to seek out the lost sheep (cf. Mt 18:12-
1480 14), even to offering his life for them (cf. Jn 10:11). He came not to be served but to
1481 serve (cf. Mt 20:24-28). As the Second Vatican Council indicates [see *Optatam Totius*,
1482 nos. 4, 19], the entire process of formation in preparation for priestly ministry, in fact, has
1483 as its aim the preparation of seminarians to “*enter into the communion with the charity of*
1484 *Christ the Good Shepherd.*”¹⁷⁰

1485 The goal is the development not just of a well-rounded person, a prayerful person, or an
1486 experienced pastoral practitioner, but rather of one who understands his formation within the
1487 context of his call to service in the Church.

1488 117. In the beginning stages of formation, the seminarian must be presented with specific areas
1489 of growth in each dimension so that he is able immediately to see the need for formation within
1490 himself, no matter how challenging this may be for him. In the later stages of formation there needs
1491 to be a systematic approach to growth in each of the stages of formation with the hopes that the

¹⁷⁰ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 89, quoting *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 57.

1492 man will naturally see the areas of growth needed in himself and will therefore continue to desire
1493 to be formed even after priestly ordination.

1494 SEMINARY STAGES OF FORMATION

1495 118. Formation in the seminary begins by focusing in a concentrated way on the seminarian's
1496 relationship with Jesus Christ. The seminarian first became a disciple of Christ at his Baptism;
1497 formation in the seminary will enable him to grow as a disciple who is discerning and preparing
1498 for ordained ministry. He is gradually formed into a shepherd who is called to make a gift of his
1499 life in pastoral charity for the People of God. This gradual development of the future priest has as
1500 its goal growth in holiness, so as to become configured to Christ, Head and Shepherd, Servant
1501 and Spouse.

1502 Propaedeutic Stage

1503 119. The propaedeutic stage seeks to provide seminarians with the basic groundwork they need
1504 to engage in priestly formation. Through no fault of their own, the requisite qualities for formation
1505 are often missing in new seminarians. A significant imbalance is present between the lifestyle
1506 promoted by contemporary society and priestly formation. There are many generous young men
1507 open to a priestly call who nevertheless need more intensive preparation before they are ready to
1508 enter into the discipleship stage of formation; thus, a propaedeutic stage prior to the discipleship
1509 stage is essential. Indeed, even men who have benefited from stronger formation from family and
1510 parish life can still profit from a period of consolidation and growth in prayer, trust, and fraternity.
1511 Given that men discern a priestly vocation and apply to a formation program for an ecclesiastical
1512 entity from a variety of life circumstances, the propaedeutic stage satisfies the "need to dedicate a
1513 period of time to preparation of an introductory nature, in view of the priestly formation to follow

1514 or, alternatively, of the decision to follow a different path in life.”¹⁷¹ While the way in which the
1515 propaedeutic stage is accomplished in ecclesiastical entities will vary,¹⁷² nonetheless, the stage is
1516 mandatory for all men in initial formation.

1517 120. Formation is a lifelong journey. It is important to lay a solid foundation for this journey in
1518 the propaedeutic stage, especially in the human and spiritual dimensions, such that the seminarian
1519 can thrive in the discipleship, configuration, and vocational synthesis stages of formation. Thus
1520 “the propaedeutic stage is an indispensable phase of formation with its own specific character.”¹⁷³
1521 This stage allows the seminarian to lay a foundation for a new way of life by developing a life of
1522 prayer, study, fraternity, and appropriate docility to formation.

1523 121. “In the formation that is offered, emphasis should be placed on communion with one’s
1524 Bishop, with the presbyterate and with the entire particular Church.”¹⁷⁴ Gaining a greater
1525 understanding of the local Church and an awareness of the pastoral situations present in one’s
1526 ecclesiastical entity will assist the seminarian in discerning his vocation. The propaedeutic stage
1527 should also offer an opportunity to develop “the dynamic of self-giving through experiences in the
1528 parish setting and charitable works.”¹⁷⁵

1529 122. Another central goal of the propaedeutic stage is an intense and profound vocational

¹⁷¹ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 59.

¹⁷² For example, in an institute of consecrated life or society of apostolic life, the propaedeutic stage is accomplished during the postulancy and/or novitiate.

¹⁷³ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 59.

¹⁷⁴ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 60.

¹⁷⁵ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 59.

1530 discernment, undertaken within a community.¹⁷⁶ A first discernment was made during the
1531 admission process within the diocese by the bishop, pastor, and vocation director. The
1532 propaedeutic stage provides for a second discernment of the seminarian who is living a daily
1533 community life for at least twelve months. During this time, it should become clear whether he has
1534 the qualities and the maturity to integrate the four dimensions of priestly formation going forward.
1535 The propaedeutic stage should conclude with the seminarian’s making a firm resolution to dedicate
1536 himself to the work of priestly formation or, alternatively, “to follow a different path in life” as a
1537 faithful lay Catholic.¹⁷⁷ A decision to proceed to priestly formation must always be confirmed by
1538 the Church.

1539 123. Conferences that teach a man how to pray, especially scriptural meditation and the art of
1540 *lectio divina*, are essential to the propaedeutic stage. Time for silence, mental prayer, and spiritual
1541 reading will help to lay a solid foundation for future stages of formation and ongoing formation. It
1542 is encouraged that men in this stage experience retreats that focus on an ability to discern the
1543 promptings of the Holy Spirit, an opportunity to develop a strong relationship with Jesus Christ,
1544 and vocational discernment.

1545 124. The propaedeutic stage must always be the first of the four stages of initial formation.¹⁷⁸

1546 125. The propaedeutic stage is “not to be less than one year or more than two”;¹⁷⁹ the minimum

¹⁷⁶ See *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 60.

¹⁷⁷ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 59.

¹⁷⁸ See *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 59.

¹⁷⁹ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 59.

1547 one-year duration of the propaedeutic stage is twelve calendar months (not an academic year). A
1548 third year is permissible provided that the overall character of the stage is preserved throughout.
1549 A three-year propaedeutic stage presumes two years of full-time academic studies of a general
1550 nature (without philosophical studies, which are restricted to the discipleship stage), followed by
1551 one year focused on human, spiritual, and pastoral formation. If this option is utilized, the first two
1552 years are not considered part of the discipleship stage, which must not begin until the propaedeutic
1553 stage has been completed.

1554 126. The propaedeutic stage should not be confined to times in which a university or college is
1555 in session. There might be fewer vacation periods during the propaedeutic stage. For example,
1556 while a break may be envisioned for the Christmas holidays, the celebrations of Holy Week and
1557 Easter might take place within the propaedeutic community. Further, since this period lasts a full
1558 year, a set period at the beginning and again at the end of the propaedeutic stage, without any
1559 courses for academic credit, would assist in ensuring that the goals of this stage are met.

1560 127. “It is fitting that the propaedeutic stage be lived in a community distinct from the Major
1561 Seminary and, where at all possible, that it should have its own house.”¹⁸⁰ Normally the
1562 propaedeutic stage would take place within the ecclesiastical entity, yet it must have an appropriate
1563 number of seminarians to support a healthy community. Community life helps the human
1564 dimension bear maximum fruit during the propaedeutic stage. These interactions in the normal
1565 course of events will contribute to the seminarian’s personal plan of formation in this and future
1566 stages. The propaedeutic stage must always be lived in a specific community with a team of priest
1567 formators. An individualized, “personal” propaedeutic stage, such as an apprenticeship to a pastor

¹⁸⁰ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 60.

1568 living in a rectory, is no substitute, since it cannot fulfill the objectives proper to this stage. If the
1569 propaedeutic stage takes place within the ecclesiastical entity, the priests delegated by the
1570 competent authority are charged with the responsibility of accompanying the seminarians so that
1571 they meet the appropriate benchmarks.

1572 128. The propaedeutic stage may take place in a seminary building as long as it remains distinct
1573 from the discipleship and configuration stages. The propaedeutic stage must be truly clear and
1574 distinct, with its own formators dedicated to this distinct stage.¹⁸¹ The *horarium*, scope, and
1575 sequence of the propaedeutic stage should be different from the other stages. The propaedeutic
1576 stage may have a dress code distinct from that of the discipleship stage, or vice versa. Clerical
1577 attire at this stage is premature. Retreats, pilgrimages, and days of reflection may occur more
1578 frequently during this stage than in other stages.

1579 129. A seminarian can earn college credit for some of his general studies during the propaedeutic
1580 stage. Such coursework should not exceed nine credit hours per semester, so that the stage's goals
1581 and objectives will be accomplished. Classes proper to the propaedeutic stage's intellectual
1582 formation (e.g., biblical literacy, catechesis, prayer and spirituality) must compose the bulk of the
1583 intellectual formation of this stage and can be taken for credit.¹⁸² Philosophical studies must not
1584 begin until the discipleship stage.

1585 130. Care must be taken that the number of courses does not lay an excessive burden on the
1586 man, which could compromise the integrity of the goals and objectives of the propaedeutic stage.

¹⁸¹ See *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 60.

¹⁸² See intellectual formation chapter in this document (nos. 260-364).

1587 131. The propaedeutic stage allows for flexibility in accord with the principles of the *Ratio*
1588 *Fundamentalis*, adapted to particular needs of seminarians and ecclesiastical entities. The
1589 following are options or models to consider.¹⁸³

1590 a. For men entering the seminary with college degrees: the propaedeutic stage should
1591 last a minimum of one calendar year followed by a discipleship stage of no less than
1592 two years.

1593 b. For men entering the seminary who lack undergraduate degrees, there are three
1594 proposed models:

1595 i. First, a propaedeutic stage of one year followed by a discipleship stage of three
1596 to four years.

1597 ii. Second, a propaedeutic stage of two years followed by a discipleship stage of
1598 two to three years.

1599 iii. Third, a propaedeutic stage of three years followed by a discipleship stage of
1600 two to three years. This third model for men entering the seminary who lack
1601 undergraduate degrees presumes two years of full-time academic studies of a
1602 general nature (without philosophical studies, which are restricted to the
1603 discipleship stage), followed by one year focused on human, spiritual, and
1604 pastoral formation.

¹⁸³ While a diocesan bishop or major superior may decide initially to observe one of the models indicated, time may reveal that a shift to another of the models would be more beneficial for the seminarian as well as the seminary.

1605 Discipleship Stage

1606 132. In the discipleship stage, which must not last less than two years,¹⁸⁴ there is a systematic
1607 and rigorous formation that has at its core the goal of growing in an intimate relationship with
1608 Jesus Christ through the life of meditation and contemplation,¹⁸⁵ as well as the training of one's
1609 character in Christian virtue, so as to lay a solid foundation for future stages. The study of
1610 philosophy occurs during the discipleship stage.

1611 133. Men enter the discipleship stage at varying levels of life, work, and educational experience.
1612 Initial formation programs for the discipleship stage should be designed to take these
1613 circumstances into account. There are programs designed to meet the needs of young men who
1614 have recently completed high school and who may have minimal work and education experience.
1615 Other priestly formation programs or variants of programs can be developed to meet the needs of
1616 older men who come to the discipleship stage with life, work, and educational experience.¹⁸⁶

1617 134. The seminarian intensely discerns his vocation to the priesthood during the discipleship
1618 stage, and thus he can clearly articulate his call and his conviction to be a priest. Having received
1619 positive confirmation from formators, the seminarian is advanced into the configuration stage, at

¹⁸⁴ See *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 66.

¹⁸⁵ *Optatam Totius*, no. 8, describes the careful development of spiritual training so that “the students might learn to live in intimate and unceasing union with God the Father through his Son Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit.”

¹⁸⁶ In the past these programs have been referred to as pretheology programs. The term “pretheology” 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; a formation program should take these unique circumstances into account.

1620 which time candidacy is received.¹⁸⁷

1621 Configuration Stage

1622 135. In the configuration stage, the seminarian models his life on the self-donation of Jesus
1623 Christ, Shepherd and Servant, as he prepares more immediately for Holy Orders. “This
1624 configuration demands that the seminarian enter profoundly into the contemplation of the person
1625 of Jesus Christ, the beloved Son of the Father, sent as Shepherd of the People of God. It will make
1626 the relationship with Christ more intimate and personal and, at the same time, will lead to an
1627 awareness and an assumption of priestly identity.”¹⁸⁸ Formation in priestly spirituality involves a
1628 heartfelt dedication to his ecclesiastical entity in loving obedience.

1629 136. The configuration stage demands from the seminarian a great commitment, as it challenges
1630 him to acquire a proper priestly spirituality; this includes a greater awareness and personal
1631 assumption of priestly identity as he conforms himself to the sentiments and attitudes of the Son,
1632 understood as self-offering for the pastoral care of the sheep. Conferral of the ministries of lector
1633 and acolyte is appropriate during this stage, marking the progressive deepening of this self-
1634 configuration to Christ both liturgically and in catechesis, evangelization, and active service to
1635 the poor.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁷ See *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 67.

¹⁸⁸ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 68.

¹⁸⁹ See *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 72; CIC, c. 230 §1; USCCB, “Complementary Norms, Canon 230, §1 - Installed Lay Ministries,” (2000).

1636 Vocational Synthesis Stage

1637 137. The vocational synthesis stage begins upon the completion of the configuration stage. It is
1638 intended primarily as a time not of evaluation, but of integration and transition. Based on the
1639 principle of gradualism as found in the *Ratio Fundamentalis*, the vocational synthesis stage is a
1640 gradual realization of the cleric’s responsibility for the care of souls while he resides full-time in
1641 a pastoral setting, usually the parish. The goal of the vocational synthesis stage is to help the deacon
1642 make this essential transition before assuming the full responsibilities of priestly life and ministry
1643 in the context of his particular ecclesiastical entity. Thus, the vocational synthesis stage is distinct
1644 from what is commonly referred to as a “pastoral year.”¹⁹⁰

1645 138. The purpose of the vocational synthesis stage is to allow a deacon to enter into the life of
1646 a cleric, incorporating the entirety of the formation he has received from the moment of Baptism
1647 until his reception of Holy Orders. Rather than “on-the-job training,” this stage is the living of a
1648 vocation as an ordained minister, because the diaconate is a new ontological and existential reality.
1649 The vocational synthesis stage is not a period of discernment for the priesthood, which began
1650 intensely in the propaedeutic stage and was confirmed during the discipleship and configuration
1651 stages. The goal is not so much acquiring new pastoral skills—though these certainly will be
1652 gained—but more adjusting well to the life of ministry before advancing to priestly ordination. It
1653 is about the deacon’s readiness to assume the duties of full-time priestly ministry. Therefore, it is
1654 not a question of suitability for Holy Orders, which was judged during the scrutiny prior to
1655 diaconate ordination, but a preparation for the final judgment regarding the conferral of the Order

¹⁹⁰ See CIC, c. 1032 §2.

1656 of Priesthood which should be made upon the completion of the vocational synthesis stage.¹⁹¹

1657 139. The vocational synthesis stage takes place “outside the Seminary building”¹⁹² and “is the
1658 time from leaving the Seminary until the subsequent priestly ordination, which obviously is
1659 brought about by the conferral of the diaconate.”¹⁹³ The vocational synthesis stage takes place
1660 within the ecclesiastical entity which the deacon is preparing to serve, since by diaconal ordination
1661 the cleric is incardinated into the particular local Church, institute, or society. Thus, another
1662 purpose of this stage is the integration of the deacon into the clergy of his diocese, institute, or
1663 society, a process that should precede his entrance into the Order of Priests. In this way, the
1664 vocation of the deacon is consolidated within a concrete reality, within his own ecclesiastical
1665 entity, accompanied by his bishop, superior, presbyterate, religious community, and parish. This
1666 provides for a particular formation which most seminaries cannot offer. While every seminary
1667 should be capable of forming men to become priests, most seminaries cannot form men to be
1668 priests of their own particular ecclesiastical entity.

1669 140. During this stage, the primary formator of the newly ordained cleric is the pastor of the
1670 parish where the deacon is assigned, or the bishop or major superior may delegate another priest
1671 of the diocese, institute, or society to fulfill this task. The pastor—who should be an exemplary
1672 model of the priesthood,¹⁹⁴ aware of his formative task and of his duty to accompany the
1673 transitional deacon—should ensure that there are opportunities for discussion of pastoral situations

¹⁹¹ See CIC, cc. 1028, 1030.

¹⁹² *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 75.

¹⁹³ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 74.

¹⁹⁴ See *Ratio Fundamentalis*, nos. 75, 77.

1674 and opportunities for priestly fraternity that will help the deacon transition well to active ministry
1675 and ongoing formation.

1676 141. In this way, the deacon may experience the life of clerical ministry in an environment of
1677 openness and dialogue with the pastor, who should accompany him personally and directly
1678 regarding his ministerial experiences. This would be accomplished through fraternal and formal
1679 exchanges between the deacon and the pastor, such that the preparedness of the deacon for entrance
1680 into full priestly life can be evaluated. The trust which has been established and strengthened
1681 throughout his years of seminary formation allows him to trust his brothers in ordained ministry,
1682 the pastoral team responsible for guiding and evaluating him, and above all his diocesan bishop or
1683 the competent authority of his institute of consecrated life or society of apostolic life, whose
1684 decisions he accepts with docility.

1685 142. The formation of the deacon in this stage is essentially different from the formation he
1686 received in the seminary, in that it involves the accompaniment of the newly ordained cleric to
1687 appreciate his new status in the Church as an official representative and a public figure:
1688 incorporating, again, all of the human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral formation he has received
1689 preceding his entrance into the clerical state. In the vocational synthesis stage, the deacon focuses
1690 directly on the needs of the people he is called to serve. He applies what he has learned to pastoral
1691 situations and recognizes where he needs and desires ongoing growth. The deacon also seeks to
1692 become more integrated into the presbyterate and local Church to which he belongs or in which
1693 his institute of consecrated life or society of apostolic life is located.

1694 143. Though the vocational synthesis stage takes place outside the seminary, in some dioceses
1695 it may be desirable that deacons be accompanied by formators from the seminary. For example,

1696 the deacons could gather at the seminary monthly, once every two months, or quarterly for days
1697 of prayer, group reflection, and fraternity in order to process the experience of diaconal ministry
1698 and engage in sacramental and pastoral *practica*. Whatever role the seminary may play, a
1699 substantial majority of the deacon’s time should be spent engaged in ministry in his diocese,
1700 institute, or society. Virtual technology could also be used by the seminary to assist in this
1701 accompaniment.

1702 144. The minimum duration of the vocational synthesis stage is six months of residence and
1703 diaconal ministry in the diocese, institute, or society.

1704 145. This stage always takes place after the completion of the configuration stage (i.e., the stages
1705 are never concurrent). A seminarian petitions for diaconate ordination at the conclusion of the
1706 configuration stage or during the vocational synthesis stage.¹⁹⁵

1707 146. Because the mission of the diaconate is oriented toward ministry, rather than academic
1708 study, it would be optimal for the seminarian to complete the equivalent of four years of theological
1709 studies before petitioning to receive diaconal ordination.¹⁹⁶ Having completed all of his academic
1710 requirements, a man can peacefully turn his attention toward diaconal and priestly ministry.

1711 147. With the foregoing in mind, the following are three flexible models regarding the
1712 vocational synthesis stage that meet the requirements of the *Ratio Fundamentalis* and are adapted

¹⁹⁵ See *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 73. Although CIC, c. 1032 §1, says that “those aspiring to the presbyterate can be promoted to the diaconate only after they have completed the fifth year of the curriculum of philosophical and theological studies,” it does not mandate this practice; CIC specifies the minimum amount of time prior to diaconate ordination. The *Ratio Fundamentalis* specifies that a man may not petition for orders until the completion of the configuration stage.

¹⁹⁶ See *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 73.

1713 to the realities of priestly formation in the United States.

1714 a. *Model A.* Configuration stage lasting four years: diaconate ordination upon successful
1715 completion of the configuration stage (including four full years of theological studies),
1716 and vocational synthesis stage lasting at least six months in a parish after leaving the
1717 seminary).¹⁹⁷

1718 b. *Model B.* Configuration stage lasting three and three-quarters years: diaconate
1719 ordination upon successful completion of the configuration stage, and vocational
1720 synthesis stage lasting one to three months in the seminary (to complete the four years
1721 of theological studies) and then at least six months in a parish after leaving the
1722 seminary.

1723 c. *Model C.* Configuration stage lasting three and one-half years: diaconate ordination
1724 upon successful completion of the configuration stage and the equivalent of four years
1725 of theological studies, and vocational synthesis stage lasting at least six months in a
1726 parish after leaving the seminary.¹⁹⁸

1727 148. After an initial decision to observe one of the models indicated above for the vocational
1728 synthesis stage, time may reveal that a shift to another of the models would be more beneficial for
1729 an individual deacon or a particular diocese.

¹⁹⁷ See CIC, c. 1031 §1.

¹⁹⁸ In this last model, it could be possible for a candidate to take what is equivalent to four years of theological studies, eight semesters, in three and one-half years, possibly using summer sessions. It must be kept in mind that an exaggerated emphasis on the intellectual dimension should not restrict growth in the other three dimensions of formation.

1730 COMMUNITY

1731 149. Priestly formation occurs in the context of a community, whether a seminary or a house of
1732 formation. It is “a continuation in the Church of the apostolic community gathered about Jesus” in
1733 which men called to share in a unique way in the priesthood of Christ relive today the formation
1734 offered to the Twelve by the Lord.¹⁹⁹ What follows also applies to religious seminarians *mutatis*
1735 *mutandis*.

1736 150. The seminary’s life in community mirrors ecclesial communion, which itself is rooted in
1737 the Blessed Trinity. This ecclesiology of communion lived out in seminary community is “decisive
1738 for understanding the identity of the priest, his essential dignity, and his vocation and mission
1739 among the People of God and in the world.”²⁰⁰ Viewed in this way, the seminary community is
1740 the essential formational matrix for those preparing for ordained ministry, which itself “has a
1741 radical ‘communitarian form’ and can only be carried out as a ‘collective work.’”²⁰¹ The seminary
1742 community, then, is committed to fostering the human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral
1743 formation of future priests.²⁰²

1744 151. The essential work of the seminary takes place in the context of community. Personal
1745 growth and character development should progress together harmoniously within a deepening
1746 spiritual life. Community life can help overcome difficulties caused by excessive individualism.
1747 “Formation comes about every day through interpersonal relationships, moments of exchange and

¹⁹⁹ See *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, nos. 60-61.

²⁰⁰ *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 12.

²⁰¹ *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 17.

²⁰² See *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 61.

1748 discussion which result in the development of that ‘fertile soil,’ in which a vocation matures
1749 concretely.”²⁰³ The seminary is a school of human virtue and of growth in honesty, integrity,
1750 intellectual rigor, hard work, and tolerance, where the common good is built with solidarity and
1751 discipline—all leavened by humor and healthy enjoyment. The seminary is also a school of
1752 spiritual growth in which seminarians are formed into men of prayer, imbued with those virtues
1753 that only grace can bring: faith, hope, and charity. “In fact, fraternity is fostered through spiritual
1754 growth, which requires a constant effort to overcome various forms of individualism. A fraternal
1755 relationship ‘cannot just be left to chance, to fortuitous circumstances,’ but is rather a conscious
1756 choice and an ongoing challenge.”²⁰⁴ The seminary helps the seminarians develop the relationship
1757 and dialogue skills necessary for healthy interpersonal relationships as priests.

1758 152. Seminary programs of formation have two focal points: (1) the seminary community and
1759 its public life as an environment for growth and development that includes many different kinds
1760 of relationships, and (2) individual seminarians as they strive to interiorize the values of the
1761 spiritual life and integrate the lessons of human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral formation. The
1762 interplay between individual and community, founded on Christ, lies at the heart of formation.

1763 153. The experience of the seminary community plays a significant role in the personal and
1764 spiritual growth of seminarians. Each stage of formation will shape community in a particular way.
1765 Still, at every stage, community is formative in similar ways. The give-and-take among those who
1766 share the priesthood as a common vocation sets the right context for formation. Such interaction

²⁰³ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 50.

²⁰⁴ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 52. See also Pope Francis, “Meeting with Diocesan Priests in the Cathedral of Cassano all’Jonio” (June 21, 2014), *L’Osservatore Romano* 140 (June 22, 2014): 7.

1767 provides mutual support, promotes tolerance and fraternal correction, and gives an opportunity for
1768 the development of leadership and talent among seminarians. It also can motivate seminarians to
1769 develop a sense of self-sacrifice and a spirit of collaboration.²⁰⁵ The seminarians and the
1770 community of formators form the heart of the seminary community, and this reality needs careful
1771 cultivation so that the distinctive aims of seminary formation can be achieved.

1772 NORMS FOR COMMUNITY

1773 154. Seminarians are to be fully committed to the life of the seminary community and are to
1774 learn how to contribute generously to it and to receive humbly from its resources.

1775 155. With an eye toward the exercise of future pastoral responsibilities, seminarians should give
1776 evidence of an ability to follow a schedule with community prayer at its heart, allowing time for a
1777 healthy balance of personal prayer, study, enjoyment of the arts, physical exercise, leisure, and
1778 social interaction; seminarians should develop discerning habits in reading, the use of various
1779 media, the internet, and entertainment in general.²⁰⁶

1780 156. Each seminary must have a handbook based on the *Program of Priestly Formation*,
1781 approved by the diocesan bishop or major superior, in which the expectations of the formation
1782 program of the seminary are clearly stated. These expectations specify the human, spiritual,
1783 intellectual, and pastoral components of that formation program and include a Rule of Life as

²⁰⁵ “Seminarians are bound, both individually and as a group, to demonstrate—and not only in their external behavior—that they have internalized an authentically priestly way of life, in humility and in service of their brothers. This is a sign of a mature choice to give themselves to following Christ in a special way.” *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 131.

²⁰⁶ See *Ratio Fundamentalis*, nos. 99-100.

1784 mandated by the *Code of Canon Law* and the *Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches*.²⁰⁷ The
1785 handbook forms the basis of an annual evaluation of the seminarians and is regularly reviewed and
1786 updated. In addition to a Rule of Life, the handbook also includes the seminary’s statutes, mission
1787 statement, policies and procedures, criteria for admission and ongoing evaluation, process of
1788 evaluation, appropriate calendars and schedules, and a description of seminary community roles
1789 and house jobs.

1790 157. A Rule of Life—approved by the diocesan bishop or, in the case of an interdiocesan
1791 seminary, the bishops involved—is necessary to regulate day-to-day living and to articulate the
1792 common values that give a community integrity and purpose. The Rule adapts the *Program of*
1793 *Priestly Formation* to particular circumstances and especially determines more precisely the points
1794 of discipline that pertain to daily life of seminarians and the order of the community. A Rule of
1795 Life addresses the essentials of community living while avoiding excessive detail that would stifle
1796 individual initiative or talent. It also seeks to balance freedom, responsibility, accountability,
1797 activities, and solitude.

1798 158. The rector’s conferences are especially helpful in aiding seminarians to interpret rightly
1799 their life in common, their discernment of vocation to the priesthood, and the human and spiritual
1800 virtues they strive to appropriate.

1801 159. The expectations and procedures of the evaluation process must be detailed in the
1802 handbook and explained clearly to the seminary community by the rector or his delegate each year.

1803 160. Matters pertaining to celibate and chaste living must be included in the seminary Rule of

²⁰⁷ See CIC, c. 243; CCEO, c. 337 §§2-3.

1804 Life. This Rule should also “cultivate the spirit of poverty in practical ways. . . . through simplicity
1805 and austerity of life,”²⁰⁸ encouraging fasting, almsgiving, and the asceticism demanded by a
1806 Christian life and the priestly state. In imitating Christ who “became poor although he was rich”
1807 (2 Cor 8:9), the seminarian is able to grow in freedom and is able to develop in his heart a special
1808 place for the poor and the weak. The seminary environment itself should foster a simple way of
1809 life and a spirit of forthright detachment. Seminarians should be made aware that they are
1810 accountable for the proper stewardship of material goods and personal health. The Rule of Life
1811 must encourage appropriate respect for those in authority and a mature sense of obedience.

1812 161. The seminary should create a climate for mutual respect, communication, and collaboration
1813 as a contribution to the overall development of the seminarians as they interact with many other
1814 individuals and communities as well. Men and women mingle with seminarians in a variety of
1815 settings: personal, academic, pastoral, and ecumenical. The interaction of seminarians with
1816 seminary administrative staff and service personnel in the seminary community often reveals
1817 attitudes toward others in general. Seminarians’ ongoing contact with their own family and parish
1818 or ecclesial movement should continue to form a significant dimension of their life. “The
1819 community forms the seedbed of a priestly vocation, since the seminarian emerges from it, in order
1820 to be sent back to serve it after ordination. The seminarian to begin with, and later the priest, must
1821 have a living bond with the community.”²⁰⁹ Seminarians should participate in parish activities and
1822 volunteer for service on a regular basis.

²⁰⁸ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 111.

²⁰⁹ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 90. The bonds between formators and seminarians and among the seminarians themselves are also important and “must be marked by a sense of fatherhood and fraternity.” *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 52.

1823 162. The seminary community and individual seminarians should appreciate the presence of a
1824 multicultural, multiethnic, and international community within the seminary. This environment
1825 provides a mutually enriching dimension to a seminary community and reflects the realities of
1826 pastoral life awaiting seminarians. This diversity should also help seminarians develop a quality
1827 of adaptability to varied pastoral settings in their future priestly ministry.

1828 THE CONTINUING EVALUATION OF SEMINARIANS

1829 163. The continuing evaluation of seminarians is linked to their formation as well as to the
1830 Church's responsibility to discern vocations to priesthood as a gift from God. Since formation
1831 assumes that a seminarian will be growing both in God's grace and in his free, human response to
1832 that grace, it is important that there be a process to note the benchmarks of that growth. In this
1833 way, the Church provides seminarians with encouragement to continue their formation and also
1834 with wisdom to identify ways in which that formation may take deeper root. The Church's
1835 responsibility to discern the authenticity of vocations also implies some process whereby the
1836 Church, usually working through the seminary, scrutinizes the seminarian's aptness and readiness
1837 to assume the responsibilities of ordained ministry. This ongoing evaluation of seminarians, then,
1838 affirms, strengthens, and fosters growth in formation while continuing the process of discernment.

1839 NORMS FOR THE CONTINUING EVALUATION OF SEMINARIANS

1840 164. The seminary is responsible for the continuing evaluation of seminarians regarding their
1841 progress in priestly formation. The process of evaluation must be clearly described in detail in the
1842 seminary handbook. The seminary should have a written statement of the criteria used in
1843 evaluating seminarians. Such evaluation is primarily the responsibility of the rector and the
1844 community of formators. It should also involve the input of the seminarians themselves, their

1845 various supervisors, and their peers.

1846 165. Each seminary must provide a procedure for the evaluation of seminarians. As part of this
1847 procedure, each seminary should ensure that seminarians are apprised of their progress as early as
1848 possible in their formation, particularly if there are concerns; that the priest formator regularly
1849 communicates with the seminarians; that the seminarians have a procedure for responding to
1850 matters raised in the evaluation process; that confidentiality, as articulated by the seminary, is
1851 observed; and that all doubts are resolved in favor of the Church.²¹⁰ The process of evaluation
1852 should be conducted in an atmosphere of mutual trust and confidence. It should promote the
1853 continued growth of the seminarian in the four dimensions of formation. Each seminarian should
1854 be evaluated on the basis of his actual progress and maturation, not on the basis of the mere passage
1855 of time.²¹¹

1856 166. Seminarians are accountable for all aspects of priestly formation within the four
1857 dimensions of human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral formation. This accountability includes
1858 participation in spiritual exercises, the spiritual direction program, liturgical exercises, and
1859 community life as well as the intellectual and pastoral dimensions of priestly formation. This
1860 approach is taken because all the aspects of priestly formation are “intimately interwoven and
1861 should not be separated from one another.”²¹² “The concept of integral formation is of the greatest
1862 importance, since it is the whole person, with all that he is and all that he possesses, who will be

²¹⁰ The unity of the good must always be remembered; that is, the good of the Church can never contradict the good of the individual but always implicitly includes it.

²¹¹ See *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 58.

²¹² Association of Theological Schools (ATS), The Commission of Accrediting, *General Institutional Standards*, 3.1.1.

1863 at the Lord's service in the Christian community."²¹³

1864 167. A seminarian's self-evaluation can be a valuable instrument. Seminarians should prepare
1865 such evaluations with an honest and candid examination of themselves in the areas of human,
1866 spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral formation. They should recognize their strengths and
1867 weaknesses, their positive qualities as well as their areas of needed growth. It is the responsibility
1868 of the seminarian to show positive qualities that recommend his advancement in formation. This
1869 self-evaluation is done best in consultation with a priest formator.

1870 168. Peer evaluations are recommended as helpful in the evaluation process. Such evaluations
1871 must be conducted in a responsible and confidential manner. Seminarians completing peer
1872 evaluations should be exhorted to do so with honesty and in a spirit of charity. Positive or negative
1873 opinions concerning the suitability of a peer for advancement should be expressed clearly.

1874 169. The seminary should require an evaluation of a seminarian's pastoral activities from his
1875 appropriate supervisor. This report should give attention to all dimensions of formation.

1876 170. The evaluative process culminates in a yearly written report from the rector to the diocesan
1877 bishop or major superior that provides a clear estimation of the seminarian's progress in the areas
1878 of human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral formation.²¹⁴ The annual report should include the
1879 results of the vote of the community of formators regarding the seminarian's advancement,
1880 supplying the number of affirmative and negative votes as well as the number of abstentions. Both

²¹³ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 92.

²¹⁴ See *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 204.

1881 negative votes and abstentions should be explained.

1882 171. The annual evaluation should include a well-founded judgment concerning the suitability
1883 of the seminarian for advancement to the next year or stage of formation. The evaluation report
1884 should be detailed. The qualities listed in Canon Law for promotion to Holy Orders are considered
1885 at each stage of advancement: integral faith, right intention, requisite knowledge, good reputation,
1886 integral morals and proven virtues, and the requisite physical and psychological health.²¹⁵ The
1887 evaluation should provide a judgment of the seminarian's aptitude for priestly life and ministry as
1888 well as an estimation of his capacity to lead a chaste, celibate life. The seminarian's current stage
1889 in formation should be considered in assessing his readiness for advancement. The individual
1890 benchmarks pertaining to each stage of formation are presented for each dimension of formation
1891 in the chapters that follow. These are to be considered and applied, according to the principle of
1892 gradualism, at each stage of formation.

1893 172. The content of the annual evaluation must be communicated to each seminarian with a
1894 signed acknowledgment of having reviewed the evaluation. A written copy may be given to him.

1895 173. The annual evaluation may be concurrent with the scrutiny required for each liturgical
1896 ritual that marks the seminarian's advancement toward the priesthood, providing clear indications
1897 regarding his suitability.²¹⁶ The norms of the Church are to be observed regarding admission to
1898 candidacy and institution into the ministries of lector and acolyte (Latin Church)²¹⁷ or lower orders

²¹⁵ See CIC, c. 1029; CCEO, c. 758.

²¹⁶ See *Scrutinies*.

²¹⁷ See CIC, cc. 1034-1035; St. Paul VI, apostolic letters given *Motu Proprio: Ministeria Quaedam* and *Ad Pascendum* (August 15, 1972).

1899 (Eastern Catholic Churches).²¹⁸ The proper documentation must be collected for the scrutiny for
1900 each stage. The procedures and documentation required prior to ordination to the diaconate and to
1901 the priesthood are to be completed.²¹⁹

1902 174. Seminarians must have exercised the ministries of lector and acolyte (Latin Church) or
1903 lower orders (Eastern Catholic Churches) for a suitable period of time before ordination to the
1904 diaconate (CIC, c. 1035 §1; CCEO, c. 758 §1, 5°). There is to be an interval of at least six months
1905 between the conferral of the ministry of acolyte (Latin Church) and ordination to the diaconate
1906 (CIC, c. 1035 §2). Prior to ordination to the diaconate, the candidate is to make a canonical retreat
1907 (CIC, c. 1039; CCEO, c. 772), take the Oath of Fidelity,²²⁰ and make the Profession of Faith (CIC,
1908 c. 833, 6°). The candidate is to be at least twenty-three years of age (CIC, c. 1031 §1; CCEO,
1909 c. 759). He is to have completed at least five years of philosophy and theology (CIC, c. 1032 §1;
1910 CCEO, c. 760); is to have received candidacy, except for vowed members of clerical institutes
1911 (CIC, c. 1034); is to be able to articulate the theology and expectations of the diaconate (CIC,
1912 c. 1028); and in writing is to petition his diocesan bishop or major superior to be ordained,
1913 expressing his free intention and permanent commitment (CIC, cc. 1034 §1, 1036; CCEO, c. 761).
1914 The seminary is to certify to the diocesan bishop or major superior that all these requirements have
1915 been met (CIC, c. 1050, 1°; CCEO, c. 769, §1 1°). The rector verifies that the candidate for the
1916 diaconate accepts the teachings of the Church, prays the complete Liturgy of the Hours (or the
1917 Divine Praises, for the Eastern Catholic Churches), attends daily Mass, receives the Sacrament of

²¹⁸ See CCEO, c. 758 §1, 5°.

²¹⁹ See CIC, cc. 1050-1052; CCEO, cc. 769-770.

²²⁰ See *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* (AAS) 81 (1989): 104-106.

1918 Penance regularly, and is committed to a life of celibacy.

1919 175. A judgment concerning the suitability of a candidate to receive the diaconate as a
1920 transitional step to priesthood includes a judgment concerning his suitability for priestly ministry.
1921 It is not possible to admit a candidate to the diaconate in the face of doubts concerning his
1922 suitability for the priesthood. For this reason the judgment reached by the scrutiny undertaken with
1923 a view to ordination to the diaconate is decisive. If this judgment is positive, it should be changed
1924 only in the light of new and grave information in the course of the next scrutiny prior to priestly
1925 ordination.²²¹

1926 176. Deacons must exercise the diaconal order for a suitable period of time before being
1927 ordained to the priesthood (CIC, c. 1032 §2). This vocational synthesis stage “has a twofold
1928 purpose: on the one hand it is about being inducted into the pastoral life, with a gradual assumption
1929 of responsibilities in a spirit of service; on the other hand it is about making a suitable preparation,
1930 with the help of a specific accompaniment, in view of priesthood.”²²² There is to be an interval of
1931 at least six months between a seminarian’s ordination to the diaconate and his ordination to the
1932 priesthood (CIC, c. 1031 §1). He is to be at least twenty-five years of age and possess sufficient
1933 maturity (CIC, c. 1031 §1; CCEO, c. 759 §1). He is to have completed six years of philosophy and
1934 theology (CIC, c. 1032 §2; CCEO, c. 760 §2) and is to be able to articulate the theology and
1935 expectations of the priesthood (CIC, c. 1028). He is to petition his diocesan bishop or major
1936 superior in writing to be ordained, expressing his free intention and permanent commitment (CIC,
1937 c. 1036; CCEO, c. 761). The vocation director, the pastor of the parish where the deacon is

²²¹ See *Scrutinies*, no. 11.

²²² *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 74.

1938 assigned, or the bishop's or religious superior's delegated priest formator is to certify to the
1939 diocesan bishop or major superior that all these requirements have been met (CIC, c. 1050, 1°;
1940 CCEO, c. 769, 3°). The vocation director, the pastor of the parish where the deacon is assigned, or
1941 the bishop's or religious superior's delegated priest formator verifies that the candidate for the
1942 priesthood is ready to assume the teaching, sanctifying, and governing mission of Christ.
1943 Furthermore, he should demonstrate pastoral love for others and faithful obedience, in conformity
1944 with Christ.²²³ Prior to ordination to the priesthood, the candidate is to make a canonical retreat
1945 (CIC, c. 1039; CCEO, c. 772) and take the Oath of Fidelity.²²⁴

1946 177. The final judgment about a seminarian's admission to candidacy (or perpetual profession,
1947 for members of institutes of consecrated life or societies of apostolic life), institution into the
1948 ministries of lector and acolyte, and ordination to the diaconate and priesthood belongs to the
1949 diocesan bishop or major superior. He must issue his official call in the name of the Church on the
1950 basis of a moral certitude that is founded upon positive evidence proving the suitability of a
1951 candidate for Holy Orders (CIC, cc. 1052 §1, 1025 §§1-2, and 1029; CCEO, c. 770). The
1952 seminary's evaluations are important in providing this evidence. If such positive evidence is
1953 lacking, the seminary must not recommend the advancement of a seminarian.²²⁵

²²³ The diocesan bishop or competent superior may make use of a formation commission, consisting, for example, of the vocation director, the vicar for clergy, other priests, religious, and laity. This commission could provide discernment regarding readiness for priestly ordination at the conclusion of the vocational synthesis stage. The commission should ordinarily proceed by consensus, but the final recommendation to the diocesan bishop or religious superior belongs to the vocation director.

²²⁴ See *Scrutinies*, Enclosure IV.

²²⁵ Regarding moral certitude, "the fundamental principle in this matter consists in the fact that the competent authority must issue the official call in the name of the Church on the basis of a moral certitude that is founded upon positive reasons regarding the suitability of the candidate (c. 1052, §1, with c. 1025,

1954 178. Seminarians who lack the positive qualities for continuing in formation should not be
1955 advanced in the seminary program. They should be advised to leave the seminary. In these cases
1956 an opportunity should be provided for the seminarian to present his self-assessment, including the
1957 possibility of others who can speak on his behalf. Seminarians not recommended for advancement
1958 should be notified as early as possible and in a constructive manner.

1959 179. When there is doubt about the readiness of a seminarian for advancement, consideration
1960 can be given to a recommendation of a period of probation outside the seminary. The time period
1961 involved should be specified, not open-ended. The period of probation should have clearly
1962 identified goals and means to assess the achievement of goals. Likewise, appropriate supervision
1963 is necessary so that this period away from the seminary might bring about needed growth for the
1964 seminarian's possible return to the seminary. If doubts remain after this period, the seminarian
1965 should not continue in formation.

1966 180. Houses of formation should maintain appropriate collaborative relationships with the
1967 administration and professors of universities and colleges to aid in the evaluation of their
1968 seminarians.

§§1-2, and c. 1029).” Further, “Although the call [to Holy Orders] is a canonical act which pertains to a personal authority it is clear that such an authority ought not proceed merely on the basis of his convictions or intuitions, but should give a hearing to the opinion of persons and councils and not depart from these except on the strength of well-founded reasons (c. 127, §2, 2°).” *Scrutinies*, nos. 2-3.

Human Dimension

1969

1970 181. The foundation and center of all human formation is the Word made flesh. In his fully
1971 developed humanity, he was truly free and with complete freedom gave himself totally for the
1972 salvation of the world.²²⁶ *Pastores Dabo Vobis* expresses the Christological foundation of human
1973 formation: “The Letter to the Hebrews clearly affirms the ‘human character’ of God’s minister”:
1974 “he comes from the human community and is at its service, imitating Jesus Christ ‘who in every
1975 respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin’ (Heb 4:15).”²²⁷

1976 182. The basic principle of human formation is found in *Pastores Dabo Vobis*: the human
1977 personality of the priest is to be a bridge and not an obstacle for others in their meeting with Jesus
1978 Christ, the Redeemer of the human race. As the humanity of the Word made flesh was the
1979 *instrumentum salutis*, so the humanity of the priest is instrumental in mediating the redemptive
1980 gifts of Christ to people today.²²⁸ The disciple of Jesus Christ is a person who is free *to be* who he
1981 is in God’s design: someone who does not—in contrast to the popular culture—conceive or pursue
1982 freedom as the expansion of options or as individual autonomy detached from others, but who
1983 rather overcomes every form of self-promotion or emotional dependency.²²⁹ So that the seminarian

²²⁶ See Jn 10:17-18; Mk 10:45.

²²⁷ *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 5.

²²⁸ From this foundation would stem those particular human qualities identified by St. John Paul II in *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 43: “These qualities are needed for them to be balanced people, strong and free, capable of bearing the weight of pastoral responsibilities. They need to be educated to love the truth, to be loyal, to respect every person, to have a sense of justice, to be true to their word, to be genuinely compassionate, to be men of integrity and, especially, to be balanced in judgment and behavior.”

²²⁹ See *Veritatis Splendor*, no. 34.

1984 might act with interior freedom rather than simply demonstrating a “veneer of virtuous habits,”
1985 human formation seeks to help the seminarian grow in interior maturity.²³⁰ As *Pastores Dabo*
1986 *Vobis* emphasizes, human formation is the “necessary foundation” of priestly formation.²³¹

1987 183. The human formation of men for the priesthood aims to prepare them to be apt instruments
1988 of Christ’s grace. It does so by fostering the growth of a man who can be described in these ways:

1989 a. *A person of solid moral character with a finely developed moral conscience, a man*
1990 *open to and capable of conversion:* A man who demonstrates the human virtues of
1991 prudence, justice, fortitude, temperance, humility, chastity, constancy, sincerity,
1992 patience, good manners, truthfulness, and keeping his word, and who also manifests
1993 growth in the practice of these virtues.

1994 b. *A prudent and discerning man:* Someone who demonstrates a “capacity for critical
1995 observation” so that he “can discern true and false values, since this is an essential
1996 requirement for establishing a constructive dialogue with the world of today.”²³²

1997 c. *A man of communion:* A person who has real and deep relational capacities, someone
1998 who can enter into genuine dialogue and friendship, a person of true empathy who can
1999 understand and know other persons, a person open to others and available to them
2000 with a generosity of spirit. The man of communion is capable of making a gift of
2001 himself and of receiving the gift of others. This ability, in fact, requires the full

²³⁰ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 41.

²³¹ *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 43.

²³² *Ecclesia in America*, no. 40.

2002 possession of himself. This life should be one of inner joy and inner peace—signs of
2003 self- possession and generosity.

2004 d. *A good communicator*: Someone who listens well, is articulate, and has the skills of
2005 effective communication and public speaking.

2006 e. *A person of affective maturity*: Someone whose life of feelings is in balance and
2007 integrated into thought and values; in other words, a man of feelings who is not driven
2008 by them but who freely lives his life enriched by them. This might be especially
2009 evident in his ability to live well with authority, in his ability to take direction from
2010 another, and in his ability to exercise authority well among his peers, as well as an
2011 ability to deal productively with conflict and stress.

2012 f. *A man who demonstrates growth in respect for, care of, and vigilance over his body*:
2013 A person who pays appropriate attention to his physical well-being (including weight,
2014 exercise, consumption of food and drink, and hygiene), so that he has the energy and
2015 strength to accomplish the tasks entrusted to him and the self-knowledge to face
2016 temptation and resist it effectively.

2017 g. *A man who relates well with others, free of prejudice, and who is willing to work with*
2018 *people of diverse cultural backgrounds*: A man capable of wholesome relations with
2019 women and men²³³ as relatives, friends, colleagues, staff members, and teachers and
2020 as people encountered in areas of apostolic work.

²³³ See *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 95.

2021 h. *A good steward of material possessions*: Someone who is able to live a simple style
2022 of life and to “refrain from all things that have a semblance of vanity”;²³⁴ someone
2023 who has the right attitude toward the goods of this world, since his portion and
2024 inheritance is the Lord;²³⁵ someone who is generous in making charitable
2025 contributions and sustaining the poor.²³⁶

2026 i. *A man who can take on the role of a public person*: Someone both secure in himself
2027 and convinced of his responsibility, who is able to live not just as a private citizen but
2028 as a public person in service of the Gospel and representing the Church.

2029 184. Education in the awareness and mature use of social media is a vital component of human
2030 formation in seminaries. Prudence and discernment are more important in our current environment
2031 than they perhaps were in the past because information technology in our era advances
2032 exponentially faster than at any other time in human history. On the one hand, information
2033 technology can be used as a powerful tool for pastoral ministry, most notably evangelization. On
2034 the other hand, it habituates us to substituting the virtual for the real, desensitizing us to reality. In
2035 addition, careless and undiscerning use of information technology is morally dangerous and may
2036 lead to addictive behavior. Seminarians must be taught “how to use these technologies in a
2037 competent and appropriate way, shaped by sound theological insights and reflecting a strong
2038 priestly spirituality grounded in constant dialogue with the Lord.”²³⁷ Seminarians must use social

²³⁴ CIC, c. 282 §1; CCEO, c. 385 §1.

²³⁵ See Ps 16:5-6.

²³⁶ See *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, no. 17; CIC, c. 282 §2; CCEO, c. 385 §1.

²³⁷ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 97; see *Ratio Fundamentalis*, nos. 97-100.

2039 media and technology in accordance with local diocesan/eparchial policies, especially in regard to
2040 communication with minors.

2041 185. Human formation comes together in a particular way in the domain of human sexuality,
2042 and this is especially true for those who are preparing for a life of celibacy. The various dimensions
2043 of being a human person—the physical, the psychological, and the spiritual—converge in affective
2044 maturity, which includes human sexuality. Education is necessary for understanding sexuality and
2045 living chastely. Those preparing to live out a celibate commitment face particular challenges,
2046 especially in today’s cultural context of permissiveness and easy access to pornography.

2047 186. Education for chastity, a virtue incumbent on all Christians and in a unique way embraced
2048 in celibacy, presents it as a “virtue that develops a person’s authentic maturity and makes him or
2049 her capable of respecting and fostering the ‘nuptial meaning’ of the body.”²³⁸ For all Christians,
2050 whatever their state of life, chastity cultivates the capacity for authentic self-gift in generative and
2051 faithful love. The celibate person renounces the realization of this capacity in marriage but
2052 embraces it in a universalizing love extended to all people. At the same time, the celibate
2053 commitment requires the development of particular habits and skills of living and relating in order
2054 to live the commitment with integrity. “Since the charism of celibacy, even when it is genuine and
2055 has proved itself, leaves one’s affections and instinctive impulses intact, candidates to the
2056 priesthood need an affective maturity which is prudent, able to renounce anything that is a threat
2057 to it, vigilant over both body and spirit, and capable of esteem and respect in interpersonal

²³⁸ *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 44.

2058 relationships between men and women.”²³⁹

2059 187. Seminary formation in sexuality and celibacy communicates to men in priestly formation
2060 and enables them to appropriate the following:

2061 a. Their call to priestly celibacy as a share in the chastity of Christ, Head and Shepherd,
2062 Servant and Spouse²⁴⁰

2063 b. The physiological and psychological understanding of human sexuality

2064 c. The meaning of the virtue of chastity, which includes a formation in authentic
2065 principles of sexual maturity and chastity, including virginity,²⁴¹ and which also
2066 includes “a proper knowledge of the duties and dignity of Christian marriage, which
2067 represents the love which exists between Christ and the Church”²⁴²

2068 d. The requisite skills for living chastely: ascetical practice, prudent self-mastery, and
2069 paths of self-knowledge, such as a regular personal inventory and the examination of
2070 conscience

2071 e. The meaning of celibate chastity, especially the theological rationale that makes clear
2072 how it pertains to the logic of the ordained priesthood

²³⁹ *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 44.

²⁴⁰ See *Sacramentum Caritatis*, no. 24.

²⁴¹ See Congregation for Catholic Education, *Training for Priestly Celibacy* (1993), and Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, *A Guide to Formation in Priestly Celibacy* (1974), 46.

²⁴² *Optatam Totius*, no. 10.

- 2073 f. The means to live celibate chastity well, including genuine friendships; priestly
2074 fraternity; a mentoring relationship; spiritual direction; priestly asceticism, which
2075 honestly reckons with the sacrifices that celibacy entails; and especially the Sacrament
2076 of Penance
- 2077 g. The ability to form mature, chaste relationships with both “men and women of various
2078 ages and social conditions,” both in his personal life and in pastoral ministry²⁴³
- 2079 h. The spiritual path that transforms the experience of loneliness into a holy solitude
2080 based on a “strong, lively and personal love for Jesus Christ”²⁴⁴
- 2081 i. An attitude that discerns the culture in the light of the Gospel,²⁴⁵ seeing the positive
2082 and negative potentials of mass communications, various forms of entertainment, and
2083 technology, such as the internet²⁴⁶
- 2084 j. The capacity—for seminarians who are married or are discerning marriage in those
2085 jurisdictions that permit the priestly ordination of married men—to “shine forth with
2086 the splendor of chastity” and “to offer an outstanding example to other Christian
2087 faithful” in conducting family life and in educating children²⁴⁷
- 2088 188. In general, human formation happens in a threefold process of self-knowledge, self-

²⁴³ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 95.

²⁴⁴ *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 44.

²⁴⁵ See *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 4.

²⁴⁶ See CIC, c. 666.

²⁴⁷ CCEO, cc. 374 and 375.

2089 possession, and self-gift—and all of this in faith.²⁴⁸ As this process unfolds, the human person
2090 becomes more perfectly conformed to the perfect humanity of Jesus Christ, the Word made
2091 flesh.²⁴⁹ The resources for fostering this process of human formation in a seminary context are
2092 many. They include the following:

2093 a. *Instruction*: The rector and other members of the seminary community offer the
2094 seminarians instruction in human formation through conferences, courses, and other
2095 educational means.

2096 b. *Personal reflection*: Seminarians are trained to live life reflectively and to examine,
2097 with regularity, their behavior, their motivations, their inclinations, and in general
2098 their appropriation of life experience, especially suffering.

2099 c. *Community life and feedback*: “A seminarian who freely chooses to enter a seminary
2100 must also freely accept and respect its terms.”²⁵⁰ The general demands and the rewards
2101 of life in community expand self-knowledge and self-control and cultivate generosity
2102 of spirit. The community’s attachment to Sacred Scripture and the sacramental life
2103 provides a reflective mirror that helps individuals know themselves and summons
2104 them to a fuller, more human, more spiritual life. A community’s Rule of Life fosters
2105 discipline, self-mastery, and faithful perseverance in commitments.

²⁴⁸ See USCCB Committee on Priestly Formation, *Spiritual Formation in the Catholic Seminary* (1982).

²⁴⁹ See Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, *A Guide to Formation in Priestly Celibacy* (1974), 19.

²⁵⁰ Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, *A Guide to Formation in Priestly Celibacy* (1974), 74.

2106 d. *Application to the tasks of seminary life*: Human formation develops through
2107 interaction with others in the course of the seminary program. This growth happens,
2108 for example, when seminarians learn to accept the authority of superiors, develop the
2109 habit of “using their freedom with discretion,” learn to act on their own initiative and
2110 to do so energetically, and learn to work “harmoniously with their confreres and with
2111 the laity.”²⁵¹

2112 e. *Psychological counseling*: On occasion, consultation with a psychologist or other
2113 licensed mental health professional can be a useful instrument of human formation.
2114 Some patterns of behavior, for example, which became set in the seminarian’s early
2115 family history, may impede his relational abilities. Understanding one’s psychological
2116 history and developing strategies to address elements of negative impact can be very
2117 helpful in human formation. This kind of counseling or consultation is distinguished
2118 from extensive psychotherapy, which may be needed to address deeply entrenched
2119 personal issues that impede full functioning of the person. The seminarian already
2120 completed psychological testing as part of the application process. At that time, if
2121 extensive and in-depth therapy was necessary, it took place outside of the seminary
2122 context prior to the decision concerning admission. It can also be the case that the
2123 necessity for such extensive therapy emerges after admission. In the latter case the
2124 seminarian is to withdraw from the program and pursue the therapy before being
2125 considered for readmission to the seminary and resuming his advancement to Holy
2126 Orders.

²⁵¹ *Optatam Totius*, no. 11.

2127 Those who provide these psychological services may not be voting members
2128 of the formation team in discerning the admission, continuance, or ordination of a
2129 man.²⁵² Normally, any in-depth assessment regarding the admission or continuance of
2130 a man in formation should be made by an outside mental health professional to avoid
2131 dual relationships. If the psychologist or other representative of the psychological
2132 sciences is a member of the seminary community, their roles are confined to training,
2133 teaching, and consulting for therapeutic issues that do not involve serious
2134 psychopathology. There should be a very clear agreement of understanding that limits
2135 the role and boundaries of such persons in seminary formation, under the purview of
2136 the rector. A psychologist might be offered for a seminarian who is asked to explore
2137 some issue in formation. Voluntary appointments initiated by seminarians with a
2138 psychologist must include a clear discussion of the limits of confidentiality and the
2139 need to integrate—implicitly or explicitly—the work of counseling with the priest
2140 formator and/or spiritual director.

2141 189. It is advisable for each seminary to develop “benchmarks of human formation” and to
2142 identify them clearly for the seminary community and seminarians.²⁵³

2143 190. It is both possible and necessary to integrate human formation with the other three
2144 dimensions of formation—the spiritual, the intellectual, and the pastoral. Human formation is
2145 integrated with spiritual formation by the Incarnate Word and by the fact that grace builds on

²⁵² See *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 192.

²⁵³ The benchmarks for the initial stages of formation are presented for each dimension in this document and may be useful for seminaries in developing this list.

2146 nature and perfects nature. Human formation is integrated with intellectual formation by the
2147 cultivation of the human functions of perception, analysis, and judgment. It also contributes to
2148 intellectual formation by enabling seminarians to pursue theology as a response to the questions
2149 of the human condition. Human formation is integrated with pastoral formation, which enables a
2150 priest to connect with and care for others with his human personality. Conversely, pastoral
2151 formation sharpens his human skills and empathic capacities.

2152 PROPAEDEUTIC STAGE BENCHMARKS

2153 191. Self-knowledge and awareness are key themes in the area of human formation during the
2154 propaedeutic stage. Before he begins the discipleship stage, it is important that the seminarian,
2155 with the help of formators, be able to reflect upon his personal history (e.g., family of origin, use
2156 of technology, personal habits) and his needed areas of growth. Other aspects of the human
2157 dimension necessary for beginning the discipleship stage include relational skills (e.g., capacity
2158 for healthy and deep friendships, basic social skills and good manners, flexibility, adaptability, a
2159 basic capacity for empathy); self-discipline (e.g., capacity for hard work, awareness of the
2160 appropriate use of time, basic self-control); a trusting relationship with formators (e.g., openness
2161 to correction, awareness of the importance of transparency in formation, growing sense of
2162 accountability); and healthy habits of self-care (e.g., beginning an exercise regimen, good personal
2163 hygiene, beginning to address any health concerns or unhealthy habits).

2164 DISCIPLESHIP STAGE BENCHMARKS

2165 192. The discipleship stage places special emphasis on human formation²⁵⁴ and on the necessity

²⁵⁴ See *Ratio Fundamentalis*, nos. 62-63.

2166 of self-awareness and pastoral correction on behalf of the seminarian’s formators for continued
2167 growth in affective maturity. It is a period marked by the understanding of and growth in the human
2168 virtues, informed and perfected by charity. “This process of formation is intended to educate the
2169 person in the truth of his being, in freedom and in self-control. It is meant to overcome all kinds
2170 of individualism, and to foster the sincere gift of self, opening him to generous dedication to
2171 others.”²⁵⁵

2172 193. During the discipleship stage, the seminarian continues to learn how to integrate his own
2173 self-awareness into a desire to grow in affective maturity as he relates to others in the seminary
2174 community. Self-awareness can lead to self-acceptance, self-possession, and eventually to self-
2175 gift, as seen in his relational skills.

2176 194. In addition to demonstrating appropriate boundaries, by the end of this stage he will have
2177 the ability to self-reflect on and communicate appropriately emotions surrounding conflict and
2178 stress; he exhibits deepening friendships with other seminarians and manifests growth in the
2179 virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance. He demonstrates growth in the admirable
2180 human qualities of humility, chastity, constancy, sincerity, patience, good manners, truthfulness,
2181 keeping his word, gratitude, affability, liberality, meekness, magnanimity, and perseverance. He
2182 exhibits racial sensitivity in his words and actions.

2183 195. Regarding self-discipline, he develops the tools to manage stress and maintain balance in
2184 his life, as well as the ability to use freedom with prudence and discretion. He has greater
2185 awareness of the dynamics of his family of origin, and he shares that knowledge appropriately. He

²⁵⁵ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 63.

2186 exhibits growing transparency with his formators, an openness to formation, and accountability
2187 regarding seminary expectations.

2188 196. The Church needs and deserves healthy priests. By the completion of the discipleship stage,
2189 the seminarian demonstrates discipline with his personal and communal *horarium* (e.g., having a
2190 regular bedtime and being on time to events) and is developing an exercise regimen or participating
2191 in some form of communal exercise. He has demonstrated growth in addressing any health
2192 concerns, such as unhealthy weight or unhealthy habits.²⁵⁶ By the end of the discipleship stage, the
2193 seminarian is able to regulate his personal use of social media, gaming, and the internet, and he
2194 understands and practices healthy alternatives to the overuse of media.

2195 197. By the end of the discipleship stage, the seminarian will determine with firm resolve
2196 whether God is calling him to present himself for the priesthood. His transition to the configuration
2197 stage is marked by a level of self-knowledge that permits ongoing growth, especially in his
2198 relationships with others. God's grace will then build upon a human nature that is more mature.

2199 CONFIGURATION STAGE BENCHMARKS

2200 198. The seminarian shows evidence of affective maturity in his ability to take direction from
2201 another in a healthy manner, especially from those in authority; he also exercises authority and
2202 leadership well among his peers. He demonstrates that he deals appropriately with conflict and
2203 stress. The completion of the configuration stage is marked by continued growth in interiority and
2204 communion; in other words, he demonstrates interior freedom, self-possession, self-motivation,

²⁵⁶ Some examples of unhealthy habits are the poor use of time; excessive engagement with social media, gaming, television, or other forms of entertainment; and lack of discipline regarding monetary spending habits.

2205 direction, and the capacity for self-donation. The seminarian has internalized seminary
2206 expectations and is an example for younger seminarians. He demonstrates this, for example, in his
2207 willingness to volunteer for additional responsibilities in the seminary and in his avoidance of
2208 gossip and cynicism. The seminarian's life in the community should reveal his ability for selfless
2209 leadership and the relational qualities of solidarity, compassion, empathy, and attentive listening.
2210 Continued growth in self-discipline means that he can plan and follow through on assignments,
2211 academic and pastoral; that he sets appropriate priorities in his schedule and resolves scheduling
2212 conflicts; and that he possesses a strong work ethic.

2213 199. The seminarian further consolidates the healthy habits of self-care in the configuration
2214 stage that he began in the discipleship stage. By the end of the configuration stage, he can be
2215 described as a man who cares for, respects, and has vigilance over his body. He exhibits continued
2216 growth in addressing any health concerns, and he demonstrates balanced habits of exercise and
2217 rest. He has also developed a workable strategy for handling psychological issues in his life. As
2218 part of his overall health and well-being, he has well-established habits regarding the proper use
2219 of technology (meaning that he limits the entertainment uses of technology and demonstrates
2220 appropriate accountability with peers and formators regarding his use of technology). Also,
2221 through evaluations, apostolic work, and community living, the seminarian demonstrates an
2222 awareness of and capacity to manage appropriate boundaries.²⁵⁷

²⁵⁷ In formulating criteria for evaluating candidates, seminaries will find the 1997 *Scrutinies* from the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments an invaluable and authoritative resource.

2223 VOCATIONAL SYNTHESIS STAGE BENCHMARKS

2224 200. The personality of the transitional deacon is to be a bridge, not an obstacle, to pastoral
2225 ministry, such that he can relate to and accompany the many diverse peoples living in various
2226 states of life and different cultures. During this stage he works to overcome any human fears, and
2227 he grows in the freedom of natural self-confidence to be able to bring the Gospel to all those who
2228 need it.²⁵⁸ To that end, during this stage it is evident that he is capable of having and invested in
2229 maintaining wholesome friendships with priests and others and that he willingly participates in
2230 presbyteral gatherings. He is committed to mentoring relationships with men and women who
2231 assist in his pastoral placement. He demonstrates appropriate transparency in his relationships with
2232 his supervisor and staff and is accountable to them regarding his responsibilities and schedule.
2233 Being a healthy member of a presbyterate also includes the ability to initiate and spend time with
2234 priests and people from diverse generations, ethnicities, and viewpoints; it demonstrates the ability
2235 to live the communal nature of the priesthood.

2236 201. As the transitional deacon transitions to full-time ministry, it is important that he shows the
2237 ability to maintain regular habits of prayer, rest, exercise, and study and that he exercises good
2238 stewardship in a rectory or other communal setting. Having already established healthy habits and
2239 strategies of addressing any ongoing health concerns, in this stage he identifies (if necessary) and
2240 completes visits to long-term health care professionals (e.g., physician, dentist, and so on). He
2241 recognizes the need for and demonstrates ongoing vigilance regarding the use of technology, and
2242 he exhibits appropriate accountability with peers and his supervisor regarding the use of

²⁵⁸ See *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 119.

2243 technology.

2244

NORMS FOR HUMAN FORMATION

2245 ***Aim of the Human Formation Program***

2246 202. Every seminary must have a program of human formation appropriate to each stage of
2247 formation, which seeks to prepare men to be bridges for, not obstacles to, the spread of the Gospel.
2248 The identity to be fostered in the seminarian is that he becomes a man of communion, that is,
2249 someone who makes a gift of himself and is able to receive the gift of others.²⁵⁹ He needs integrity
2250 and self-possession in order to make such a gift. The capacity to be fostered is the affective ability
2251 to engage in pastoral leadership with Jesus as the model Shepherd.²⁶⁰

2252 203. This program must have a clear focus on the ordained priesthood as a vocation that brings
2253 the seminarians to full human and spiritual potential through love of God and service of others.
2254 Through conferences offered by the rector and others and through other formation activities, as
2255 well as by the theology taught in the academic program, the seminary should make explicit the
2256 Church's doctrinal understanding of the ministerial priesthood on which its programs are based.

2257 ***The Goals of Human Formation***

2258 204. The qualities to be fostered in a human formation program are freedom, openness, honesty,
2259 flexibility, empathy, joy and inner peace, generosity and justice, chastity, personal maturity,

²⁵⁹ See *Ratio Fundamentalis*, nos. 41, 52.

²⁶⁰ See ATS, *Degree Program Standards*, A 2.4.2. See CCEO, c. 346 §2, 8°: "Let them also esteem and cultivate those virtues that are most valued by people and commend the minister of Christ, among which are sincerity, a keen concern for justice, a spirit of poverty, fidelity to one's promises, good manners, modesty in conversation joined with charity."

2260 interpersonal skills, common sense, aptitude for ministry, and growth “in moral integrity and
2261 public witness.”²⁶¹ Following St. Thomas Aquinas, human formation should be understood as
2262 education in the human virtues perfected by charity.

2263 205. Seminarians should give evidence of having interiorized their seminary formation. Growth
2264 in self-awareness and a sound personal identity are the hallmarks of a healthy personality that
2265 establishes a secure basis for the spiritual life. Such growth may be demonstrated by sound
2266 prudential judgment, a sense of responsibility and personal initiative, a capacity for courageous
2267 and decisive leadership, an ability to establish and maintain wholesome friendships, and an ability
2268 to work in a collaborative, professional manner with women and men, foregoing self-interests in
2269 favor of cooperative effort for the common good.

2270 *The Seminarian in Human Formation*

2271 206. Seminarians bear the primary responsibility for their human formation. The role of the
2272 seminary is to assist them in achieving the integral human maturity.

2273 207. The seminarian’s human formation is very much affected by the character formation he
2274 has received in his family, cultural background, and society. Just as the seminary recognizes that
2275 the positive qualities of a seminarian’s prior formation can both indicate a vocation and provide a
2276 solid foundation for further growth, it should also address possible deficiencies in his earlier
2277 formation and find means to address them.

2278 208. Human formation programs in the seminary should begin with the assumption that the
2279 seminarians have the potential to move from self-preoccupation to an openness to transcendent

²⁶¹ ATS, *Degree Program Standards*, A 2.4.

2280 values and a concern for the welfare of others. Seminarians should have a history of sound and
2281 rewarding peer relationships, an ability to be honest with themselves and with others, and an ability
2282 to trust the Church and the agents of formation. Formation programs will not be effective for those
2283 who manifest extreme inflexibility, narcissism, antisocial behavior or any serious personality
2284 disorders or pathology,²⁶² a lack of sexual integration, deep and unresolved anger (especially
2285 against authority), a deep attachment to a materialist lifestyle, or compulsive behaviors or
2286 addictions.

2287 *Preparation for Celibate Chastity*

2288 209. Preparation for celibacy is one of the primary aims of the human formation program of any
2289 seminary. The seminary must have a coordinated and multifaceted program of instruction,
2290 prayerful discernment, dialogue, and encouragement that will aid seminarians to understand the
2291 nature and purpose of celibate chastity and to embrace it wholeheartedly in their lives. Sexuality
2292 finds its authentic meaning in relation to mature love. Seminarians should understand and manifest
2293 a mature love as preparation for a celibate life. The insights of modern psychology can be a
2294 considerable aid. The goal of psychosexual, social, and spiritual development should be to form
2295 seminarians into chaste, celibate men who are loving pastors of the people they serve.²⁶³

2296 210. The rector should hold periodic conferences on this topic, at least on a yearly basis, in
2297 which basic attitudinal and behavioral expectations about the practice of celibacy for priests and
2298 seminarians are detailed. He should clearly delineate the kinds of attitudes and behaviors that are
2299 acceptable and praiseworthy and the kinds that are not, including an awareness of appropriate

²⁶² See *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 191.

²⁶³ See *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 44.

2300 boundaries. The rector should address the responsibilities of individual seminarians, both now and
2301 later, for themselves and for the common reputation of the community and the priesthood. Clear,
2302 concrete terms must be used about the actual meaning of the celibate commitment in the seminary
2303 community and later in priestly ministry, if presentations about the value of celibacy are to be
2304 persuasive or taken seriously.

2305 211. Human formation for celibacy should aim toward an affective maturity, which is the ability
2306 to live a true and responsible love. Signs of affective maturity in the seminarian are prudence,
2307 vigilance over body and spirit, compassion and care for others, an ability to express and
2308 acknowledge emotions, and a capacity to esteem and respect interpersonal relationships between
2309 men and women. Therefore, true friendship is an education in affective maturity.

2310 212. To live fully an effective life of celibate chastity, in imitation of Christ's sacrificial love,
2311 requires knowledge of one's own sexuality and rightly ordered sexual desires.²⁶⁴ Certain habits or
2312 skills are necessary instruments on the path to healthy celibate chastity, and these are to be
2313 encouraged in seminary programs. Among these habits and skills are appropriate self-disclosure,
2314 a cultivated capacity for self-reflection, an ability to enter into peaceful solitude, ascetical practices
2315 that foster vigilance and self-mastery over one's impulses and drives, and a habit of modesty. An
2316 especially important practice is holding all persons in the mystery of God, whether they are
2317 encountered in the course of formal ministry or ordinary life. This practice means viewing all
2318 persons in God, interceding for them before God, and claiming responsibility to direct them
2319 to God.

²⁶⁴ A rightly ordered sexual desire is ordered toward a monogamous, exclusive marriage between a man and woman for the procreation of children.

2320 213. A seminary human formation program should inculcate additional skills for celibate living
2321 as care for others, a deepening of the capacity to give and receive love, an ability to practice
2322 appropriate self-disclosure, an ability to develop and maintain healthy and inclusive peer
2323 friendships, and an ability to set appropriate boundaries by choosing not to act on romantic feelings
2324 and by developing self-discipline in the face of temptation. A seminarian must be prepared to
2325 accept wholeheartedly the Church's teaching on sexuality in its entirety, be determined to master
2326 all sexual temptations, be prepared to meet the challenge of living chastely in all friendships, and
2327 finally be resolved to fashion his sexual desires and passions in such a way that he is able to live a
2328 healthy, celibate lifestyle that expresses self-gift in faithful and life-giving love: being attentive to
2329 others, helping them reach their potential, not giving up, and investing all one's energies in the
2330 service of the Kingdom of God. Given the pervasive reality of pornography in today's culture,
2331 each program is to address this problem, as well as the appropriate use of electronic media, with
2332 pertinent policies and training in virtue.²⁶⁵

2333 214. The seminary must have written guidelines for admission, evaluation, and community life
2334 that spell out its expectations regarding those attitudes, behaviors, and levels of psychosexual
2335 maturity that indicate a right mentality, proper motivation, and a commitment to celibate chastity.
2336 These guidelines should also specify unacceptable attitudes and behaviors that run counter to such
2337 a commitment.

2338 215. Any seminarian found to have pathological sexual attraction to minors is to be dismissed

²⁶⁵ See USCCB, *Create in Me a Clean Heart: A Pastoral Response to Pornography* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2015).

2339 from the seminary with no possibility for readmission to the same or another seminary.²⁶⁶

2340 ***Preparation for Simplicity of Life***

2341 216. Human formation should cultivate a spirit of generosity, encouraging the seminarian to
2342 become a man for others and to curb expectations of entitlement; seminarians should learn practical
2343 ways of living simplicity of life.²⁶⁷ Manifestations of undue materialism and consumerism in the
2344 seminarian’s behavior should be confronted and corrected.

2345 217. The formation program should articulate the distinctive qualities of simplicity of life
2346 appropriate for one preparing for priestly leadership. Simplicity of life is particularly important in
2347 our own age when human needs and desires are so consciously manipulated and exploited. A
2348 consumer society often reduces people to things, which are used and then discarded, plunging
2349 society more deeply into a world of objects, which ironically seem to possess us. In a consumer
2350 society, a right attitude toward the world and earthly goods is easily lost. That is why a seminarian
2351 has to be helped to cultivate personal self-discipline and asceticism. It is an important pastoral
2352 obligation of all priests who accompany people through the journey of life to acquire a sound and
2353 balanced perspective about earthly goods and possessions so that they can impart right attitudes
2354 to others.²⁶⁸

²⁶⁶ See *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 191.

²⁶⁷ “A right attitude to the world and to earthly goods . . . is of great importance for priests for this reason, that the Church’s mission is carried out in the midst of the world and that created goods are absolutely necessary for man’s personal progress. Let priests be thankful then for everything that the heavenly Father has given them towards a proper standard of living. However, they ought to judge everything they meet in the light of faith, so that they will be guided towards the right use of things in accordance with God’s will and will reject anything that is prejudicial to their mission.” *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, no. 17.

²⁶⁸ “Already being used to sacrificing willingly and generously what is not needed, they . . . [can]

2355 218. The seminary should foster simplicity of life. Such an attitude does not disparage the world
2356 but sees it in light of freedom and service. Priests are able to understand correctly “that the
2357 Church’s mission is carried out in the midst of the world and that created goods are absolutely
2358 necessary for man’s personal progress.”²⁶⁹ They can also better appreciate that when the passion
2359 for acquisition and possession is curbed, the human capacity for appreciation and enjoyment of
2360 the world often is enhanced.

2361 ***Preparation for Obedience***

2362 219. The seminary should articulate appropriate behaviors that manifest a healthy understanding
2363 of obedience. The exercise of authority and the response of obedience are works of grace, goodwill,
2364 and human effort that play a part in the life of every priest. Seminarians should appreciate and
2365 integrate the necessary role that authority and organization play in achieving and maintaining any
2366 community’s goals and purposes, as well as recognize the theological and spiritual dimension of
2367 reverence and obedience in the Catholic Church. Belief with divine and Catholic faith is owed to
2368 Divine Revelation, as given by God and proposed by the Church.²⁷⁰ Doctrine concerning faith or
2369 morals, proposed definitively by the Holy Father or the college of bishops, is to be firmly embraced
2370 and retained.²⁷¹ Additionally, religious submission of the intellect and will is due to doctrine
2371 declared by the Holy Father or the college of bishops concerning faith and morals, even if they do

become sincere and credible promoters of true social justice.” *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 111.

²⁶⁹ *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, no. 17.

²⁷⁰ See CIC, c. 750 §1; CCEO, c. 598 §1; St. John Paul II, *Ad Tuendam Fidem* (1990).

²⁷¹ See CIC, c. 750 §2; CCEO, c. 598 §2; St. John Paul II, *Ad Tuendam Fidem*.

2372 not intend to proclaim it definitively.²⁷² Every bishop is an authentic teacher and instructor of the
2373 faith;²⁷³ seminaries should inculcate in each seminarian a capacity to live in communion with his
2374 diocesan bishop.

2375 220. Seminaries should expect of seminarians a spirit of joyful trust, open dialogue, and
2376 generous cooperation with those in authority. As seminarians advance in their training, they should
2377 be given more opportunity to exercise responsibility and freedom. At the same time, they should
2378 understand that accountability is always part of the exercise of freedom.

2379 221. Seminaries should articulate that priestly obedience begins with humble and willing
2380 cooperation in seminary life, docility to direction, and wholehearted compliance with the
2381 seminary's policies and programs. Seminarians are not expected to surrender their ecclesial rights
2382 to express their opinion or to make known their needs.²⁷⁴ This docility will prepare seminarians to
2383 cooperate with their bishop²⁷⁵ or superior, especially in the very practical matter of undertaking
2384 and faithfully fulfilling whatever sacred duty is given to them.²⁷⁶

2385 ***Resources for Human Formation***

2386 222. The rector of the seminary has the responsibility to delineate attitudinal and behavioral
2387 expectations regarding all aspects of human formation, especially those appropriate to a life of

²⁷² See CIC, c. 752; CCEO, c. 599.

²⁷³ See CIC, c. 753; CCEO, c. 600.

²⁷⁴ CIC, c. 212 §§2-3.

²⁷⁵ See *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, no. 7: "Priests for their part should . . . [respect in their bishop] the authority of Christ the supreme Pastor. They should therefore be attached to their bishop with sincere charity and obedience."

²⁷⁶ See *Christus Dominus*, no. 28.

2388 celibacy, a life of simplicity, and a life of obedience.

2389 223. The community of formators should provide the guidance and direction necessary to help
2390 seminarians meet the challenge of emotional and psychosexual growth. In the area of emotional
2391 and personal development, the best guidance the seminary formator can give is the wholesome
2392 witness of his own life. Seminarians need the example of outstanding priests who model a
2393 wholesome way of life in the challenging circumstances of contemporary society. Regularly
2394 coming together for prayer, recreation, and theological reflection encourages growth in priestly
2395 fraternity and enables priests to act more effectively as authentic role models. The entire seminary
2396 staff—composed of priests, consecrated men and women, and lay men and women—constitutes
2397 another significant group who can model collaboration for the seminarians. Ways to foster the
2398 unity of this larger circle should also be developed.

2399 224. The rector together with the coordinator of human formation should make provision for
2400 psychological and counseling services. He therefore ensures that those employed as counselors for
2401 seminarians are professionally licensed or certified; are well versed in and supportive of the
2402 Church’s expectations of seminarians, especially concerning celibacy; and will not encourage
2403 behaviors contrary to Church teachings. These services are made available to seminarians for their
2404 personal and emotional development as they prepare for the priesthood. The counseling that is
2405 given should be consistent with the policy and practice of the total seminary program.

2406 Counseling is often a helpful tool in human formation. Its role, however, should not be
2407 overestimated. While psychology and the human sciences are resources that can aid the process of
2408 human formation, they are not the same as human formation. Seminaries must draw up guidelines
2409 for psychologists, describing objectively those traits and attitudes that indicate satisfactory

2410 progress toward the priesthood and those that indicate a lack of the requisite qualities needed for
2411 growth in human formation. The basis for such guidelines are the qualities articulated in this
2412 *Program of Priestly Formation*. Seminarians in need of long-term therapy should avail themselves
2413 of such assistance before entering the seminary or should leave the seminary program until therapy
2414 has been completed. If such a departure occurs, there is to be no expectation of automatic
2415 readmission. A seminarian should not be considered for advancement to Holy Orders if he is
2416 engaged in long-term psychological therapy. Issues being addressed in counseling should be
2417 satisfactorily settled prior to the call to Holy Orders. Clear and prudent guidelines are necessary
2418 for fostering the personal, emotional, and psychosexual development of seminarians in the context
2419 of a wholesome community.

2420

Spiritual Dimension

2421

2422 225. For every Christian, human formation leads to and finds its completion in spiritual
2423 formation. Human formation continues in conjunction with and in coordination with the spiritual,
2424 intellectual, and pastoral dimensions of formation. “Spiritual formation is directed at nourishing
2425 and sustaining communion with God and with our brothers and sisters, in the friendship of Jesus
2426 the Good Shepherd, and with an attitude of docility to the Holy Spirit. This intimate relationship
2427 forms the heart of the seminarian in that generous and sacrificial love that marks the beginning of
2428 pastoral charity.”²⁷⁷

2429 226. The basic principle of spiritual formation is expressed in *Pastores Dabo Vobis* and is a
2430 synthesis of the teachings in *Optatam Totius*: The seminarian is called “to live in intimate and
2431 unceasing union with God the Father through his Son Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit.”²⁷⁸ This is
2432 the foundational call to discipleship and conversion of heart. Those who aspire to be sent on
2433 mission, as the Apostles were, must first acquire the listening and learning heart of disciples. Jesus
2434 invited these Apostles to come to him before he sent them out to others. St. Augustine alluded to
2435 this double identity and commitment as disciple and apostle when he said to his people, “With you
2436 I am a Christian, for you I am a bishop.”²⁷⁹

2437 227. To live in intimate and unceasing union with God the Father through his Son Jesus Christ
2438 in the Holy Spirit is far more than a personal or individual relationship with the Lord; it is also a

²⁷⁷ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 101.

²⁷⁸ *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 45.

²⁷⁹ St. Augustine, *Sermo* 46, 1-2.

2439 communion with the Church, which is his Body. The spirituality that belongs to those who are
2440 priests or preparing for priesthood is at one and the same time Trinitarian, Christological,
2441 pneumatological, and ecclesial. It is a spirituality of communion rooted in the mystery of the
2442 Triune God and lived out in practical ways in the mystery of ecclesial communion.

2443 228. The spirituality cultivated in the seminary is specifically priestly. Through the Sacraments
2444 of Initiation, seminarians already share in the Paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ with other members
2445 of the Church. They also aspire to become priests who are configured to Christ, Head and Shepherd
2446 of the Church, our great High Priest. The seminarian is invited to put everything he is and
2447 everything he has at the service of the Gospel, deepening his total self-gift through simplicity of
2448 life, celibacy and obedience. His interior life gradually draws him deeper into the priestly, self-
2449 sacrificial path of Jesus. Jesus is the one whose service finds its high point in giving his life as a
2450 ransom for the many,²⁸⁰ as the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep “so that they
2451 might have life and have it more abundantly,”²⁸¹ and as the Bridegroom who loves his Bride, the
2452 Church, “and handed himself over for her.”²⁸² Spiritual formation is about forming the heart so
2453 that it will interiorize the sentiments and ways of acting of Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, who
2454 always acted in communion with the Holy Spirit.

2455 229. Given these basic dimensions of priestly spirituality that are foundational to the program
2456 of spiritual formation in the seminary, the seminary should identify those characteristics and

²⁸⁰ See Mk 10:45.

²⁸¹ Jn 10:10; see Jn 10:17-18.

²⁸² Eph 5:25; see Eph 5:26-27.

2457 practices that foster its growth. It is a formation that includes the following:

2458 a. *Eucharist*: Spiritual formation is first and foremost a participation in public worship
2459 of the Church that is itself a participation in the heavenly Liturgy offered by Christ,
2460 our great High Priest. “In the earthly liturgy we take part in a foretaste of that heavenly
2461 liturgy which is celebrated in the Holy City of Jerusalem toward which we journey as
2462 pilgrims, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God, Minister of the holies and of
2463 the true tabernacle.”²⁸³ In the Eucharistic sacrifice, the seminarian learns to offer
2464 himself with Christ to the Father and receives spiritual sustenance, Christ’s own Flesh
2465 and Blood. In Holy Communion, he encounters Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, and
2466 opens himself to the transforming power of his self-giving and redeeming love. The
2467 Eucharist is the source of pastoral charity, the love that animates and directs those
2468 who walk in the footsteps of the Good Shepherd, who gives his life for his sheep so
2469 that they may live. As source and summit of the Christian life, the daily celebration
2470 of the Eucharist is the essential moment of the day.²⁸⁴ “The priestly soul strives to
2471 make its own what is enacted on the altar of sacrifice. But this cannot be achieved
2472 except through priests themselves penetrating ever more intimately through prayer
2473 into the mystery of Christ.”²⁸⁵

2474 b. *Sacrament of Penance*: The Sacrament of Penance fosters the mature recognition of

²⁸³ *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 8; see Heb 8:2.

²⁸⁴ See CIC, c. 246 §1; CCEO, c. 346 §2, 2°. See *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 46; *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*.

²⁸⁵ *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, no. 14.

2475 sin, continuous conversion of heart, growth in the virtues, and conformity to the mind
2476 of Christ. It is a school of compassion that teaches penitents how to live out God’s
2477 compassionate mercy in the world. The frequent celebration of the Sacrament of
2478 Penance is aided by the practice of a daily examination of conscience.²⁸⁶

2479 c. *Liturgy of the Hours*: Through the Liturgy of the Hours (or the Divine Praises, in the
2480 Eastern Catholic Churches), seminarians learn to pray with the Church and for the
2481 Church, assimilating the language of prayer of the Church that is pleasing to God and
2482 transformative, forming both mind and spirit. They unite themselves with the Body of
2483 Christ in unceasing praise and petition. This prayer prepares them for their lifelong
2484 ministry as priests who pray on behalf of the whole Church. It also cultivates a mind
2485 and heart attuned to the whole Body of Christ, its needs, its sufferings, its graces, and
2486 its hopes.²⁸⁷

2487 d. *Spiritual direction*: Biweekly meetings with an approved spiritual director is an
2488 essential part of spiritual direction, especially in arriving at the interiorization and
2489 integration needed for growth in sanctity, virtue, and readiness for Holy Orders.
2490 Seminaries should offer clear expectations regarding the frequency at which spiritual
2491 direction is scheduled.

2492 e. *Bible*: “A relationship with the Word of God holds a preeminent place in the process

²⁸⁶ See CIC, cc. 246 §4, 276 §2, 5°; CCEO, cc. 369 §1, 346 §2, 4°.

²⁸⁷ See CIC, c. 246 §2; CCEO, c. 346 §2, 3°. See *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 48.

2493 of spiritual growth.”²⁸⁸ Receiving the Word of God proclaimed and preached in the
2494 Church and in the quiet and personal assimilation of that holy word in *lectio divina*
2495 enables those in formation to hear God’s communication to them as a transforming
2496 challenge and hope. To take on more fully the mind of Christ and to be steadily
2497 transformed by the Word of God, the seminarian should develop the habit of daily
2498 reflection on Sacred Scripture by daily meditation on the lectionary readings and/or
2499 other reflective reading of Sacred Scripture.²⁸⁹

2500 f. *Retreats and days of recollection*: Regular periods of more intensive prayer will be
2501 part of the seminary year.²⁹⁰ “The annual retreat, a time of profound reflection in
2502 prolonged prayerful encounter with the Lord in an atmosphere of silence and
2503 recollection, must then be continued during the rest of the year in occasional periods
2504 of recollection and in daily prayer.”²⁹¹

2505 g. *Personal meditation*: “The heart of spiritual formation is personal union with Christ,
2506 which is born of, and nourished in, a particular way by prolonged and silent prayer.”²⁹²
2507 The habit of daily prayer and meditation enables seminarians to acquire a personalized
2508 sense of how God’s salvation has taken hold of their lives and how they might respond
2509 to that great grace. This prayer happens in a context of silence and solitude in which

²⁸⁸ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 103.

²⁸⁹ See CCEO, c. 346 §2, 1°. See *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 47.

²⁹⁰ See CIC, 246 §5; CCEO, c. 346 §2, 6°.

²⁹¹ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 108.

²⁹² *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 102.

2510 they learn to be attuned to God’s movements in their lives. It grows and develops into
2511 a “contemplative attitude” that learns to find God in all things. It matures in such a
2512 way that it allows for a balanced and unified rhythm of life in action and
2513 contemplation, work and prayer, while providing the future priest with the strength,
2514 meaning, and focus he will need in his life.

2515 h. *Praying with the Fathers of the Church*: Studying and meditating on the writings of
2516 the Fathers of both the East and the West provide “reliable sources of inspiration” to
2517 help address “the emergence of new currents of spirituality” that may be detrimental
2518 to the Christian faith or one’s vocation.²⁹³

2519 i. *Devotions*: Devotional prayer, especially centered on Eucharistic Adoration, the
2520 Blessed Virgin Mary—in particular the Rosary—and the saints, assists seminarians in
2521 assimilating the mystery of Christ and hearing the invitation to live that mystery in
2522 the particular circumstances of their own life. Devotional prayer helps to sustain and
2523 place in its proper context affective communication with the Lord and his Church. It
2524 also helps them to connect with the rich cultural diversity of devotional life in the
2525 United States and to appreciate devotional practices of other cultures.²⁹⁴

2526 j. *Apostolic dimensions*: “Spiritual formation also involves seeking Christ in people.”²⁹⁵
2527 Especially in a seminary context, seminarians are to learn how prayer is to be lived

²⁹³ Congregation for Catholic Education, *Instruction on the Study of the Fathers of the Church in the Formation of Priests*, November 10, 1989, in *Origins* 19:34 (January 25, 1990): 551.

²⁹⁴ See CIC, 246 §3; CCEO, c. 346 §2, 5°. See *Evangelii Gaudium*, nos. 122-126.

²⁹⁵ *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 49.

2528 out in service of others, particularly the poor, the sick, sinners, unbelievers, and the
2529 stranger, but extended to all in the outreach of charity and mercy and in the quest for
2530 justice. Prayer is apostolic also in the sense that seminarians learn to pray for the needs
2531 of those they serve in order to teach others how to pray. Whatever growth and
2532 formation in prayer takes place, it is not simply meant for the personal enhancement
2533 of the seminarian but as a gift to be given in the course of his priestly mission and
2534 ministry for the benefit of the Church—for he is a servant of this body.

2535 k. *Asceticism and penance*: Spiritual formation initiates seminarians to a path of
2536 voluntary renunciation and self-denial that makes them more available to the will of
2537 God and more available to their people. Asceticism and the practice of penance is a
2538 path of learning to embrace the Cross and, in an apostolic context, a way of rendering
2539 priests unafraid to bear their “share of hardship for the gospel with the strength that
2540 comes from God” (2 Tm 1:8).

2541 1. *Obedience*: The obedience of those in spiritual formation for priesthood must be
2542 characterized by the willingness to hear God, who speaks through his Word and
2543 through his Church, and to answer his call with generosity. It is also a surrender of
2544 one’s own will for the sake of the larger mission. In this regard, the seminarian must
2545 develop a growing and deepening solidarity with the Church established by Christ; a
2546 solidarity with Church teaching so as to be able to present that teaching with
2547 conviction—having appropriated it as true; and a solidarity with one’s diocesan

2548 bishop or superior to strengthen and sustain Church unity.²⁹⁶

2549 m. *Celibacy*: Spiritual formation in celibacy cultivates the evangelical motivations for
2550 embracing this commitment and way of life: the undivided love of the Lord, the
2551 spousal love for the Church, apostolic availability, and the witness to God’s promises
2552 and Kingdom.²⁹⁷ A man in formation for ministry must demonstrate the necessary
2553 freedom and affective maturity.²⁹⁸

2554 n. *Simplicity of life*: Spiritual formation encourages a simple approach to the material
2555 goods of this world, cultivating a “spirit of poverty in practical ways.”²⁹⁹ Freed from
2556 excessive concern about possessions, priests and seminarians, particularly those in
2557 religious institutes and societies of apostolic life, are able to serve in an unencumbered
2558 way. To live with evangelical simplicity is to exercise responsible stewardship over
2559 God’s creation by using material goods in a way that is both responsive to the call of
2560 the Gospel and ecologically responsible.³⁰⁰ The witness of a genuine simplicity of life

²⁹⁶ See CIC, cc. 260, 273, 601; CCEO, c. 346 §2, 7°, and 370.

²⁹⁷ See CIC, c. 247 §1. “It is especially important that the priest understand the theological motivation of the Church’s law on celibacy. Inasmuch as it is a law, it expresses the Church’s will, even before the will of the subject expressed by his readiness. But the will of the Church finds its ultimate motivation in the link between celibacy and sacred ordination, which configures the priest to Jesus Christ the head and spouse of the Church. The Church, as the spouse of Jesus Christ, wishes to be loved by the priest in the total and exclusive manner in which Jesus Christ her head and spouse loved her. Priestly celibacy, then, is the gift of self in and with Christ to his Church and expresses the priest’s service to the Church in and with the Lord.” *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 29. See also *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 50.

²⁹⁸ See *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 110.

²⁹⁹ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 111.

³⁰⁰ See *Laudato Si’*, nos. 216-221. “Living our vocation to be protectors of God’s handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience.” *Laudato Si’*, no. 217.

2561 and of detachment from riches³⁰¹ is especially important in the context of affluence in
2562 the United States. Spiritual directors and priest formators must be sensitive to
2563 seminarians' stewardship of their own, the seminary's, and the Church's material
2564 resources. Spiritual formation for simplicity of life and stewardship flows directly
2565 from striving to have the mind of Christ Jesus, "who, though he was in the form of
2566 God, / did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. / Rather, he emptied
2567 himself" (Phil 2:6-7). This is the Lord Jesus who, again according to St. Paul, "for
2568 your sake . . . became poor although he was rich, so that by his poverty you might
2569 become rich" (2 Cor 8:9).

2570 o. *Reconciliation*: Spiritual formation fosters a reconciling spirit in those who aspire to
2571 be priests in the spirit of Jesus, who prayed that "all might be one." A peacemaking
2572 and nonviolent way of life marks out those who have been entrusted with the ministry
2573 of reconciliation (see 2 Cor 5:18). The power that is entrusted to God's ministers, a
2574 power that takes many forms, must always be used for the good, peaceably and in a
2575 way that expresses the trust invested in God's priests.

2576 p. *Solidarity*: The post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Ecclesia in America* identified the
2577 critical importance of the path of solidarity for the Church in the Americas.

2578 "Solidarity is thus the fruit of the communion which is grounded in the mystery of
2579 the Triune God, and in the Son of God who took flesh and died for all. It is
2580 expressed in Christian love which seeks the good of others, especially of those

³⁰¹ See *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 2544.

2581 most in need.” For the particular Churches of the American continent, this is the
2582 source of a commitment to reciprocal solidarity and the sharing of the spiritual
2583 gifts and material goods with which God has blessed them, fostering in
2584 individuals a readiness to work where they are needed.³⁰²

2585 This means that seminarians are to have a spiritual formation grounded in Trinitarian
2586 communion that leads them to solidarity with others, especially those most in need;
2587 to a commitment to justice and peace; to a reciprocal exchange of spiritual and
2588 material gifts; and to an authentic missionary spirit, expressed in a willingness to serve
2589 where needed.

2590 q. *Solitude*: Spiritual formation must not neglect the art of “being alone with God,”
2591 moving the man from being alone or lonely to entering a holy solitude in communion
2592 with God.

2593 r. *A life of discernment*: The *Ratio Fundamentalis* describes well how all of these means
2594 of spiritual growth help the seminarian to establish a life of discernment: “The gradual
2595 inner growth along the journey of formation should principally be aimed at making
2596 the future priest a ‘man of discernment,’ able to read the reality of human life in the
2597 light of the Spirit.” This discernment applies first to one’s personal life: “It is
2598 necessary to integrate one’s own personal situation and history into the spiritual life.
2599 . . . Discerning one’s life according to the Gospel means cultivating every day a deep
2600 spiritual life, so as to receive it and interpret it with full responsibility and a growing

³⁰² *Ecclesia in America*, no. 52.

2601 trust in God, directing the heart towards him each day.” It extends ultimately to the
2602 pastoral life so “he will be able to choose, decide and act according to the will of
2603 God.” All of the means included here “help to cultivate the virtues of prudence and
2604 right judgment. In this ongoing path of discernment the priest will learn how to
2605 interpret and understand his own motivations, his gifts, his needs and his frailties, so
2606 as to ‘free himself from all disordered affections and, having removed them, to seek
2607 out and find the will of God in the ordering of his life with a view to the salvation of
2608 the soul.’”³⁰³

2609 s. *Ongoing spiritual formation*: The final goal of spiritual formation in the seminary is
2610 to establish attitudes, habits, and practices in the spiritual life that will continue after
2611 ordination. Spiritual formation in the seminary is meant to set the foundation for a
2612 lifetime of spiritual growth in priestly ministry.

2613 230. The development of sound and lasting habits and attitudes in the spiritual life is a
2614 challenging process. Intensive spiritual formation experiences—such as an extended time period
2615 more exclusively focused on the interior life, a thirty-day retreat, a summer program, and so on—
2616 are examples of facilitating this process and may be considered for possible inclusion and
2617 integration into the seminary program.

2618 231. Spiritual formation needs to be integrated with the other three dimensions of formation—
2619 the human, the intellectual, and the pastoral. The necessary growth in the theological and moral
2620 virtues involves both nature and grace. The necessary integration takes place when spiritual

³⁰³ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 43. Here the *Ratio Fundamentalis* notes the particular value of the Ignatian rules of discernment.

2621 directors and priest formators work from a common vision of the relationship between grace and
2622 virtue. Spiritual formation also requires that the seminarian have a strong relational capacity. In
2623 other words, the seminarian must be able to enter into significant, even deep, relationships with
2624 other persons and with God, since he is to be a “man of communion.”³⁰⁴

2625 232. Intellectual formation contributes to spiritual formation by helping the seminarian grow in
2626 the love of the truth, who is the person of Jesus Christ. This love gives the seminarian the capacity
2627 to discern and understand his interior life within the life of the Church and her Tradition. Growth
2628 in knowledge of God and of his saving works can strengthen the seminarian’s faith, hope, and
2629 charity. Likewise, the study of the traditions and the experiences of faith among the saints and the
2630 People of God serves to deepen one’s own spiritual journey.

2631 233. Pastoral formation is intimately linked with spiritual formation. In the process of spiritual
2632 formation, men are formed to receive the love of God in such a way that they desire to share that
2633 love by making a gift of their entire lives. As their hearts are gradually formed in the image of
2634 Christ, the Good Shepherd and Bridegroom, their interior life becomes a source of pastoral charity
2635 that enables them to lay down their lives generously in service of others. “This intimate relationship
2636 forms the heart of the seminarian in that generous and sacrificial love that marks the beginning of
2637 pastoral charity.”³⁰⁵ In this the seminarian learns to eschew any false independence in his labors
2638 and to live the words of Jesus: “without me you can do nothing” (Jn 15:5).

2639 234. It is important that spiritual formation is integrated with the other three dimensions of

³⁰⁴ “The Eucharist commits us to the poor. To receive in truth the Body and Blood of Christ given up for us, we must recognize Christ in the poorest.” *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1397.

³⁰⁵ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 101.

2640 formation such that all formation allows the future priest to embrace pastoral charity as central to
2641 his ministry.³⁰⁶ Human, intellectual, and pastoral formation are equally indispensable in
2642 developing the seminarian's relationship and communion with God and his ability to communicate
2643 to others, in pastoral charity, God's truth and love in the likeness of Jesus Christ, the Good
2644 Shepherd and eternal High Priest.

2645 PROPAEDEUTIC STAGE BENCHMARKS

2646 235. One of the primary objectives of the propaedeutic stage is to provide an introduction to the
2647 spiritual life and to develop a solid foundation in the seminarian's life of prayer. Those elements
2648 in the spiritual dimension to be achieved prior to beginning the discipleship stage include growth
2649 in prayer and the spiritual life (e.g., elementary discipline in public and private prayer, interest in
2650 and attention to spiritual direction, understanding of the importance of silence, and a growing habit
2651 of silence), growth in an understanding of the celibate life (e.g., ability to articulate the Church's
2652 understanding of the promise of celibacy and the spiritual motivation for celibacy, growth in the
2653 virtue of chastity, and growth in the habit of healthy solitude), growth in the understanding of the
2654 priestly vocation, the ability to articulate a relationship with Jesus Christ, and growth in reading
2655 and meditating on Sacred Scripture.

2656 DISCIPLESHIP STAGE BENCHMARKS

2657 236. In the discipleship stage, the seminarian demonstrates a growing openness to the Holy
2658 Spirit as the primary agent of formation in his life; he recognizes God's grace enabling him to
2659 grow and discern with the grateful assistance of his formators. The seminarian continues to learn

³⁰⁶ See *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, no. 14.

2660 from Christ the Good Shepherd to do as he does. His deepening friendship with Jesus Christ and
2661 his understanding of the Good Shepherd’s call to ordained ministry will allow him to enter the
2662 next stage confident in his vocation to the priesthood. He develops greater insight into why he feels
2663 God is calling him to the priesthood and why he desires priesthood.

2664 237. Spiritual benchmarks related to prayer and the spiritual life that the seminarian should
2665 achieve by the end of the discipleship stage include consistent participation in communal spiritual
2666 exercises and liturgies, including prayerful participation in the Mass and Divine Office (or the
2667 Divine Praises, in the Eastern Catholic Churches); a demonstrated habit of regular spiritual
2668 reading; the ability to speak with facility about God’s work in his life; and a habit of personal
2669 prayer, spiritual direction, and participation in the Sacrament of Penance.

2670 238. By the end of the discipleship stage, the seminarian is able to articulate his understanding
2671 and awareness of God’s call to him of a lifelong commitment to celibate chastity.³⁰⁷ He continues
2672 to grow in the virtue of chastity. He has the ability to articulate and demonstrate appropriate
2673 boundaries with others, relating to all persons as beloved children of the Father, and possesses a
2674 solid understanding and desire of a habit of healthy solitude. He demonstrates a growing
2675 transparency in his relationship with Jesus Christ through his ability to describe this relationship

³⁰⁷ This includes a growing understanding of the positive reasons for a lifelong commitment to celibate chastity. St. Paul VI articulates these as “a real participation in His [Christ’s] own unique priesthood. . . . Christ remained throughout His whole life in the state of celibacy, which signified His total dedication to the service of God and men.” *Sacerdotalis Caelibatus (On the Celibacy of the Priest)*, 1967), nos. 19, 21; see also no. 23, www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_24061967_sacerdotalis.html. In addition to raising matrimony to the dignity of a sacrament, Christ “has also opened a new way, in which the human creature adheres wholly and directly to the Lord, and is concerned only with Him and with His affairs” (*Sacerdotalis Caelibatus*, no. 20). The “free choice of sacred celibacy . . . stimulates to a charity which is open to all” and “manifests the virginal love of Christ for the Church” (*Sacerdotalis Caelibatus*, nos. 24, 26).

2676 to others in a meaningful way; he nurtures this relationship through a well-established habit of
2677 reading and meditating on Sacred Scripture.

2678 CONFIGURATION STAGE BENCHMARKS

2679 239. The well-established friendship between the seminarian and Jesus Christ, which is
2680 necessarily characteristic of the man by the end of the configuration stage, is reflected in an
2681 internalized habit of reading and meditating on Sacred Scripture, as well as the ability to identify
2682 and communicate connections between meditation on Sacred Scripture, his relationship with
2683 Christ, and his personal spiritual growth. This friendship can be seen in his ability to live a simple
2684 life and articulate the reasons for it. He is able to recognize and articulate concretely God's grace
2685 active in his life and the lives of others, identifying in common life that *communio* which enriches
2686 and deepens his life with Christ for the sake of others.

2687 240. He demonstrates an ability to maintain fidelity to the Liturgy of the Hours (or the Divine
2688 Praises, in the Eastern Catholic Churches), daily Mass, and personal prayer, both in the seminary
2689 or religious house and away from those structures. Thus he demonstrates that his spiritual life has
2690 been internalized and that he is not only fulfilling external requirements. He can assist others in
2691 their spiritual growth through a prayerful familiarity with God's Word and the spiritual Tradition
2692 of the Church.

2693 241. By the end of the configuration stage, the seminarian can live the virtue of chastity and can
2694 communicate a free and joyful lifelong commitment to celibate chastity. With the ever-deepening
2695 awareness of his own humanity, with its gifts and limitations, he can recognize common and
2696 personal causes of loneliness and can develop a habit of healthy approaches to these challenges

2697 and improve his habit of solitude.³⁰⁸

2698 242. From the standpoint of his vocation, the seminarian can communicate a presumption of
2699 permanence to priesthood and share his joyful desire for lifelong priestly life and ministry, as well
2700 as a desire to live the sacramental life of a priest. He understands the importance of the evangelical
2701 counsels for priestly life. He manifests the identity of the priesthood—Head and Shepherd, Servant
2702 and Spouse.

2703 VOCATIONAL SYNTHESIS STAGE BENCHMARKS

2704 243. In this stage, the transitional deacon continues to grow in the solid foundations of prayer,
2705 discernment, and solitude as he moves to full-time ministry in the parish. It is important that during
2706 the vocational synthesis stage he continues to maintain his regular habits of spiritual direction,
2707 daily Mass, and personal prayer, demonstrating the ability to integrate into his own internal
2708 spiritual and prayer life his pastoral experiences and the people to whom he ministers. A formal
2709 process of theological reflection will aid this effort.

2710 244. His continued growth in the pursuit of holiness, essential to his priesthood, is aided through
2711 his faithful pursuit of ministry.³⁰⁹ Demonstrating an obedient heart in his pastoral assignment and
2712 in his relationship with his bishop and pastor, or with the competent authority of an institute of

³⁰⁸ Healthy habits in this area are crucial to his future well-being as a priest. “The *Causes and Context* data indicate that abuse is most likely to occur at times of stress, loneliness, and isolation. Such stressful or challenging situations triggered the desire in some priests to form inappropriate relationships with others—such relationships were most often with adults, but sometimes with minors.” John Jay College Research Team, *The Causes and Context of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Catholic Priests in the United States, 1950-2010: A Report Presented to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2011), 120.

³⁰⁹ See CIC, c. 276 §2, 1°; *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, nos. 12-14.

2713 consecrated life or society of apostolic life, is necessary for his future happiness as a priest. So too,
2714 his recognizing the need for appropriate and regular communication with his bishop, vicar general,
2715 and other diocesan officials or competent superiors is a way of demonstrating that he understands
2716 the spirit of an obedient priestly heart.

2717 245. To continue his growth in the virtue of chastity and strengthen his celibate commitment, it
2718 is vital that the transitional deacon demonstrate the ability to recognize and discuss potentially
2719 unhealthy relationships in ministry, not simply in generic terms but personally. This will assist him
2720 in having the necessary ability to maintain appropriate boundaries and safeguards in pastoral
2721 settings. Demonstrating the ability to spend time alone in his pastoral setting and continuing to
2722 master a healthy habit of fruitful solitude with himself and God are necessary benchmarks to
2723 achieve prior to ordination to the priesthood.

2724 NORMS FOR SPIRITUAL FORMATION

2725 ***Prayer***

2726 246. The celebration of the Eucharist takes place daily, and every member of the community
2727 ordinarily participates.³¹⁰ This includes a regularly scheduled Saturday morning Mass and Sunday
2728 community Mass. All priests who are not bound to celebrate individually for the pastoral benefit
2729 of the faithful should concelebrate at the community Mass insofar as possible.³¹¹ In like manner,
2730 unless excused for a just reason, it is preferable that priests concelebrate when they are present

³¹⁰ See CIC, c. 246 §1; CCEO, c. 346 §2, 2°; *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 104. In regard to the frequency of the celebration of the Eucharist, those seminaries forming men for Eastern Catholic Churches are to develop a schedule of liturgical services that best represents common liturgical practice in the jurisdictions they serve.

³¹¹ See *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, no. 114.

2731 for Mass.

2732 247. The seminary community must schedule the Liturgy of the Hours (or the Divine Praises,
2733 in the Eastern Catholic Churches), especially Morning and Evening Prayers, on a daily basis.³¹²

2734 248. The careful preparation and execution of liturgical celebrations should be supervised by
2735 the seminary coordinator of the liturgy. Because the liturgical life of the seminary shapes the
2736 sensitivities and attitudes of seminarians for future ministry, an authentic sense of the holy
2737 mysteries should be carefully preserved in all liturgical celebrations, along with a care for their
2738 beauty and dignity.³¹³ The laws and prescriptions of approved liturgical books are normative.
2739 Priests are to be particularly observant of the liturgical rubrics and must avoid the insertion of any
2740 personal liturgical adaptations, unless they are authorized by the liturgical books.³¹⁴ The seminary
2741 liturgy should also promote in seminarians a respect for legitimate, rubrically approved liturgical
2742 expressions of cultural diversity as well as the Church's ancient liturgical patrimony.³¹⁵ Seminaries
2743 in the Latin Church should include in their liturgies Gregorian chant, as the chant proper to the
2744 Roman Liturgy, as well as the forms of chant in the particular Churches.³¹⁶ Priests should always
2745 be aware that they have a particular and serious responsibility to model for seminarians the proper
2746 way to preside at the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, including concelebration. All other
2747 teachers of the liturgy as well as coordinators of music at the seminary are to be supportive of

³¹² See CIC, c. 246 §2; CCEO, c. 346 §2, 3°; *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 105.

³¹³ See *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, no. 5.

³¹⁴ See *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, no. 52.

³¹⁵ See *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, nos. 49-51; *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, no. 41.

³¹⁶ See *Sacramentum Caritatis*, no. 62.

2748 this norm.

2749 249. Meditation on Sacred Scripture holds pride of place in the personal prayer regimen of each
2750 seminarian, traditionally experienced as *lectio divina*. Deepening one's friendship with Jesus
2751 Christ necessarily involves daily meditation on the Word of God, in addition to the public prayer
2752 and liturgy in the seminary and other forms of private prayer and devotions.³¹⁷

2753 250. Instruction is to be given concerning the meaning and proper celebration of the Eucharist
2754 and the Liturgy of the Hours (or the Divine Praises, in the Eastern Catholic Churches) as well as
2755 their benefits for spiritual growth in the seminary and for the communities that seminarians later
2756 will serve. Seminarians must be instructed to incorporate progressively all of the hours of the
2757 Liturgy of the Hours or the Divine Praises, beginning with Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer,
2758 the Office of Readings, and finally the Daytime Hour and Night Prayer. This entire cycle should
2759 be a regular practice of each seminarian for at least a year prior to his diaconate ordination.

2760 251. Catechesis must be given concerning the Sacrament of Penance and its importance for
2761 priestly ministry and life. Communal celebrations of the Sacrament of Penance with individual
2762 confession and absolution should be scheduled regularly, especially during Advent and Lent. The
2763 seminary must schedule frequent opportunities at various times during the week and encourage the
2764 individual celebration of the Sacrament of Penance. In addition to regular confessors, the seminary
2765 should ensure that other confessors for the Sacrament of Penance are available on a regular basis.³¹⁸
2766 A priest who has sole responsibility for external formation is not to hear seminarians' confessions.

³¹⁷ See *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 103.

³¹⁸ See CIC, c. 240 §1; CCEO, c. 339 §2.

2767 Opinions of the spiritual director or confessor of a seminarian may never be sought regarding his
2768 advancement.³¹⁹ Each seminarian is encouraged to have a regular confessor, who fittingly is also
2769 his spiritual director, with whom he can be completely honest and fully manifest his conscience,
2770 and from whom he can receive ongoing guidance.³²⁰ This is not meant to limit the seminarian's
2771 liberty, since he is always free to approach other confessors, whether in the seminary or
2772 outside it.³²¹

2773 252. The seminary program and spiritual direction should teach seminarians to value solitude
2774 and personal prayer as a necessary part of priestly spirituality. Occasions for silence and properly
2775 directed solitude should be provided during retreats and days of recollection. An atmosphere of
2776 quiet should be provided within the seminary community on a daily basis to ensure an environment
2777 conducive for prayer.

2778 253. Conferences, days of recollection, workshops, and retreats should be well organized and
2779 sponsored by the seminary and should form a whole and coherent program of spiritual formation.
2780 An annual retreat lasting at least five days must take place during the configuration stage.³²²

2781 254. Guidance and instruction in methods of meditation, contemplation, *lectio divina*, daily
2782 examen, and meditation on the Fathers of the Church must be provided.³²³

³¹⁹ See CIC, c. 240 §2; CCEO, c. 339 §3.

³²⁰ See CIC, c. 246 §4.

³²¹ See CIC, c. 240 §1; CCEO, c. 339 §2.

³²² See CIC, c. 1039; CCEO, c. 772.

³²³ See CIC, c. 246 §3; CCEO, c. 346 §2, 1°; see *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 113.

2783 255. Devotion to the Blessed Sacrament must be encouraged. Scheduled hours of Eucharistic
2784 Exposition are particularly desirable to provide special opportunities for the Adoration of the
2785 Blessed Sacrament in the seminary. It is also desirable that seminarians develop a habit of personal
2786 visits to the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle.³²⁴

2787 256. Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, and to the saints must be
2788 encouraged.³²⁵ Opportunities for devotional prayer should be made available and encouraged. The
2789 Rosary, “a compendium of the Gospel,”³²⁶ is especially recommended as a means of contemplating
2790 Christ in “the school of Mary.”³²⁷ Devotion to the other saints, especially St. Joseph, is also an
2791 important element of the devotional life of seminarians and priests.³²⁸

2792 257. On appropriate occasions, the seminary should sponsor ecumenical events, including
2793 prayer services, with other Christians. Consideration should also be given to interaction with those
2794 of the Jewish faith and other religions.

2795 258. The seminary should provide seminarians with training on the proper use of sacramentals,

³²⁴ See Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship, *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside of Mass*, nos. 79-81.

³²⁵ See CIC, c. 246 §3; CCEO, c. 346 §2, 5°.

³²⁶ Pope Pius XII, letter *Philippinas insulas* to the Archbishop of Manila, AAS 38 (1946): 419. See St. Paul VI, *Marialis Cultus* (1974), no. 42, www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19740202_marialis-cultus.html; *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, no. 1.

³²⁷ *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, no. 1.

³²⁸ See *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 112.

2796 including consecrations, blessings, and reverence for sacred things.³²⁹

2797 ***Spiritual Direction***

2798 259. Seminarians must meet regularly with a priest spiritual director, normally biweekly.³³⁰ The
2799 seminarian freely chooses an available spiritual director from a list prepared by the coordinator of
2800 spiritual formation. Spiritual directors should have proper training and adequate credentials for the
2801 work. These priests must be approved by the rector and appointed by the competent authority.³³¹
2802 Spiritual direction should be offered in the language that allows the seminarian to best express
2803 himself. In the case of seminarians of an institute of consecrated life or society of apostolic life,
2804 the formation director or the competent authority of the institute or society offers guidance on an
2805 appropriate spiritual director for the seminarians under his care.

2806 260. Seminarians should confide their personal history, personal relationships, prayer
2807 experiences, cultivation of virtues, temptations, and other significant topics to their spiritual
2808 director. If, for serious reason, there is a change of director, the new director should give attention
2809 to continuity in the seminarian's spiritual development.

³²⁹ See CIC, cc. 1166-1172.

³³⁰ See CIC, c. 246 §4; CCEO, c. 346 §2, 4°.

³³¹ See CIC, c. 239 §2; CCEO, c. 339 §1.

Intellectual Dimension

2810

2811 261. There is a reciprocal relationship between spiritual and intellectual formation. The
2812 intellectual life nourishes the spiritual life, but the spiritual also opens vistas of understanding, in
2813 accordance with the classical adage *credo ut intelligam* (I believe in order to understand).
2814 Intellectual formation is integral to what it means to be human.

2815 262. “To ensure the adequate intellectual formation of future priests, all disciplines must be
2816 taught in such a way as to make their intimate connection stand out clearly, avoiding
2817 fragmentation. It is to be a unified, integral journey, in which each subject is an important ‘tile in
2818 the mosaic’ for presenting the mystery of Christ and the Church, and for allowing an authentic
2819 Christian vision of man and the world to mature.”³³²

2820 263. The basic principle of intellectual formation for seminarians is noted in *Pastores Dabo*
2821 *Vobis*: “For the salvation of their brothers and sisters they should seek an ever deeper knowledge
2822 of the divine mysteries.”³³³ Disciples are learners. The first task of intellectual formation is to
2823 acquire a personal knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the fullness and completion of God’s
2824 Revelation and the one Teacher. This saving knowledge is not acquired only once but rather is
2825 continuously appropriated and deepened, so that it becomes more and more part of the disciple.
2826 Seminary intellectual formation assumes and prolongs the catechesis and mystagogia that is to be
2827 part of every Christian’s journey of faith. At the same time, this knowledge is not simply for

³³² *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 153.

³³³ *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 51.

2828 personal possession but is destined to be shared in the community of faith; that is why it is “for the
2829 salvation of their brothers and sisters.” Intellectual formation has an apostolic and missionary
2830 purpose and finality.

2831 264. In the seminary program, intellectual formation culminates in a deepened understanding of
2832 the mysteries of faith that is pastorally oriented toward effective priestly ministry, especially
2833 preaching, which is “the touchstone for judging a pastor’s closeness and ability to communicate to
2834 his people.”³³⁴ This understanding, however, requires previous intellectual formation and
2835 academic integrity as foundational. The overall goal of every stage of seminary formation is to
2836 prepare a seminarian who is widely knowledgeable about the human condition, deeply engaged in
2837 a process of understanding Divine Revelation, and adequately skilled in communicating his
2838 knowledge to as many people as possible. Moreover, continuing education after ordination is a
2839 necessity for effective ministry.

2840 265. Intellectual formation must be directed to the ecclesial dimensions of priestly formation,
2841 namely, the teaching office (*munus docendi*) of the priesthood. The doctrinal, educational,
2842 catechetical, and apologetical aspects of training are to prepare the seminarian to be a faithful,
2843 loyal, and authentic teacher of the Gospel. As a man of the Church, the priest preaches and teaches
2844 in fidelity to the Magisterium, particularly the Holy Father and the diocesan bishop. The
2845 intellectual formation program must emphasize the intrinsic relationship between the knowledge
2846 gained in theological preparation and the ecclesial dimensions of priestly service, since the
2847 education of a priest is never seen in isolation from the Tradition of the Church.

³³⁴ *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 135.

2848 THE VARIOUS CONTEXTS OF INTELLECTUAL FORMATION

2849 266. The context of intellectual formation in the United States during the twenty-first century is
2850 important to note, because it highlights the specific challenges that both seminaries and
2851 seminarians face in the process of intellectual formation. Among the elements of context are the
2852 following:

- 2853 a. Many men approach the seminary with a significant educational background. They
2854 are, however, often narrowly educated; that is, they may have great expertise in a
2855 particular area and have a high level of technical training but lack a wide background.
2856 Often lacking is education in the humanities, which would enable them to study
2857 theology effectively and make pastoral connections with the lives of the people whom
2858 they will serve.
- 2859 b. Older men approach the seminary with considerable life experience, but they may
2860 have lost contact with formal patterns of study in school. Their age may seem to
2861 warrant that they be moved through the seminarian program quickly, or that they be
2862 given a program that has been reduced in expectations. This latter trend, however, is
2863 to be resisted.
- 2864 c. Men with an international background may arrive at the seminary with a limited
2865 knowledge of the English language as well as a limited understanding of US culture.
2866 These limitations present significant challenges for teaching and learning. Unless the
2867 seminarian has sufficient familiarity with language and culture, his study of theology

2868 will be severely impeded.³³⁵

2869 d. Men coming from a US cultural context, even though they may be young and have
2870 had exposure to the liberal arts in college, may bring with them the limitations of the
2871 culture's understanding of the human person as well as the limitations of a
2872 philosophical milieu that is suspicious of or even rejects enduring, absolute moral
2873 values and objective truths. Unless these men are grounded in an adequate
2874 philosophical and theological anthropology, they will struggle to make sense of their
2875 theological studies and their application in pastoral practice.

2876 e. Men apply to seminary programs with backgrounds of varied religious experiences
2877 and varied levels of catechetical formation.

2878 INTEGRATION OF INTELLECTUAL FORMATION WITH THE OTHER DIMENSIONS

2879 267. "Intellectual formation is a part of the integral formation of the priest. Moreover, it serves
2880 his pastoral ministry and has an impact upon his human and spiritual formation, which draw rich
2881 nourishment from it."³³⁶ Intellectual formation applies not only to a comprehensive understanding
2882 of the mysteries of the Catholic faith, but also to an ability to explain and even defend the reasoning
2883 that supports those truths. In this way, intellectual formation provides those who are being formed
2884 spiritually with a knowledge of the Lord and his ways, which they embrace in faith. Finally,
2885 intellectual formation through the study of theology enables priests to contemplate, share, and

³³⁵ See *Guidelines for Receiving Pastoral Ministers in the United States* cited earlier in the propaedeutic stage section for more information on reception and orientation of men from international backgrounds.

³³⁶ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 117.

2886 communicate the mysteries of faith with others. In this way, it has an essentially pastoral
2887 orientation.

2888 THE PROPAEDEUTIC STAGE

2889 268. The propaedeutic stage is “an ideal opportunity to acquire an initial and overall familiarity
2890 with Christian doctrine by studying the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.”³³⁷ Teaching new
2891 seminarians the basics of priestly identity and spirituality is also a chief aim of the intellectual
2892 formation of this stage. Seminarians should obtain an introductory knowledge of the Bible that
2893 equips them to thoughtfully read and pray with Sacred Scripture. Training in intercultural
2894 competency, including beginning to learn a new language to meet the pastoral needs of the diocese,
2895 should be included in the intellectual formation of seminarians.

2896 269. Other areas of study that support this broad foundational doctrinal formation could include
2897 introduction to the documents of the Second Vatican Council and other principle documents of the
2898 Magisterium, introductory reading of the Church Fathers and Doctors, and study of the lives the
2899 saints and blessed (especially American saints and blessed).³³⁸ In addition, intellectual formation
2900 could begin to familiarize the seminarian with the great schools of spiritual theology and the
2901 spiritual masters.

2902 270. For international seminarians, English-language study (for those for whom English is not
2903 the primary language) and an acculturation program should be completed prior to beginning the
2904 propaedeutic stage. Continued study of English and acculturation during the propaedeutic stage is

³³⁷ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 59.

³³⁸ See *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 157.

2905 also vital. It is helpful, and sometimes necessary, that spiritual direction and some human
2906 formation during this stage be provided in the first or primary language of the seminarian to allow
2907 for adequate vocational discernment.³³⁹

2908 Propaedeutic Stage Benchmarks

2909 271. Gaining an initial understanding of Christian doctrine and anthropology as well as an initial
2910 familiarity of the Bible in its various parts are benchmarks that should be reached prior to
2911 embarking on philosophical studies in the discipleship stage.³⁴⁰ Benchmarks related to intellectual
2912 formation in preparation for the study of philosophy and theology include basic habits of study,
2913 signs of intellectual curiosity, and love of learning. Finally, if necessary, the propaedeutic stage
2914 can help to make up for anything that is missing in a seminarian's general education.³⁴¹

2915 THE DISCIPLESHIP STAGE

2916 272. A great number of seminarians enter the discipleship stage with a wealth of education and
2917 practical experience, yet many younger men enter discipleship stage with minimal or no higher
2918 education. The seminary intellectual program must meet the various needs of these men. All men
2919 in the discipleship stage must receive philosophical formation to train their minds in right reason
2920 and prepare them to study theology. In addition, as future pastors and leaders, these seminarians
2921 need to be broadly educated in order to develop as Christian men and engage with society. Thus,
2922 the discipleship stage envisions benchmarks for intellectual formation with two aspects: a broad

³³⁹ See *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 27.

³⁴⁰ See *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 157.

³⁴¹ See *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 59.

2923 grasp of the liberal arts and sciences, and particular knowledge of philosophy. Seminarians who
2924 enter the discipleship stage in possession of a broader intellectual formation (for example, with an
2925 undergraduate degree or more extensive education) may have already met the benchmarks for the
2926 liberal arts and sciences and will not need formation in this aspect but will focus on philosophy.
2927 Seminarians beginning the discipleship stage with minimal education beyond secondary school
2928 will need to pursue a liberal arts education as well as philosophical studies and should achieve a
2929 baccalaureate degree before beginning the configuration stage. The discipleship stage program
2930 promotes intellectual excellence and takes necessary steps to help seminarians to achieve it.

2931 273. Men who enter seminary without a substantial liberal arts education follow a twofold
2932 course of intellectual formation. They first pursue the liberal arts, through which they acquire a
2933 sense of the great human questions and the responses to them presented in the arts and sciences.
2934 Then they also synthesize and organize their study of the liberal arts through the study of
2935 philosophy, which also serves as a preparation for the study of theology.

2936 Liberal Arts

2937 274. A sound liberal arts education for seminarians provides multiple benefits. The study of the
2938 natural world and of humanity in all its historical and cultural diversity represents a significant
2939 value in its own right. Such an education encourages intellectual curiosity, promotes critical
2940 thought, and fosters disciplined habits of study, but above all it aims to hand on the truths about
2941 God and his creation that are the foundation of civilization. A liberal arts education also teaches
2942 seminarians to communicate with others in a clear and effective way.

2943 275. A liberal arts education gives seminarians an introduction to the wider range of human
2944 learning. Studies in mathematics and natural sciences; in the social and behavioral sciences; in

2945 history, literature, foreign languages—both ancient (Latin and Greek) and modern; and in
2946 communication skills, music, and the fine arts all define the content of a liberal arts curriculum.

2947 276. A liberal arts education also has a special value as a preparation for the study of theology.
2948 The liberal arts have traditionally provided seminarians with an understanding of the cultural roots
2949 of their faith. By understanding the human sciences, they can comprehend better the world in
2950 which God acts. By grasping how faith and culture have interacted in the past, they gain some
2951 insight into the working of God’s plan in larger historical events.

2952 277. The curriculum should also strive to take into consideration contemporary issues of the day
2953 in intellectual, cultural, social, economic, and political life as they pertain to moral and religious
2954 topics. Such an approach stimulates seminarians to deeper study by building on current knowledge
2955 and interests. The authentic social doctrine of the Church on such issues should be clearly and
2956 cogently presented.³⁴² The curriculum should introduce seminarians to the basic teachings of the
2957 faith as well as to the richness and diversity of the wisdom attained in the Catholic intellectual
2958 tradition.

2959 Philosophy

2960 278. All seminarians in the discipleship stage study philosophy. Men who come to the
2961 discipleship stage in possession of a broader intellectual formation must engage in the full
2962 philosophical intellectual formation program outlined below. The study of philosophy is central to
2963 the intellectual formation of seminarians. The temptation to abbreviate or circumvent requirements

³⁴² See *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 172.

2964 for seminarians in these circumstances must be avoided.

2965 279. “The study of philosophy is fundamental and indispensable to the structure of theological
2966 studies and to the formation of candidates for the priesthood [or seminarians]. It is not by chance
2967 that the curriculum of theological studies is preceded by a time of special study of philosophy.”³⁴³
2968 In priestly formation, at least two full years must be dedicated to the philosophical disciplines,
2969 which corresponds to the two-year period of the discipleship stage and composes a major aspect
2970 of intellectual formation.³⁴⁴ The particular focus of intellectual formation, as well as the other
2971 dimensions of formation during this period, is to help the seminarian deepen his identity as a
2972 disciple of Jesus Christ.

2973 280. There is an “intimate bond which ties theological work to the philosophical search for
2974 truth.”³⁴⁵ It is essential that seminarians develop an understanding of the relationship between faith
2975 and reason and of the relationship and interaction between philosophy and theology, especially the
2976 ways they mutually enrich one another. “A proper philosophical training is vital, not only because
2977 of the links between the great philosophical questions and the mysteries of salvation which are
2978 studied in theology under the guidance of the higher light of faith, but also vis-à-vis an extremely
2979 widespread cultural situation which emphasizes subjectivism as a criterion and measure of truth:
2980 Only a sound philosophy can help candidates for the priesthood to develop a reflective awareness
2981 of the fundamental relationship that exists between the human spirit and truth, that truth which is

³⁴³ *Fides et Ratio*, no. 62.

³⁴⁴ See CIC, c. 250; CCEO, c. 348 §1.

³⁴⁵ *Fides et Ratio*, no. 63.

2982 revealed to us fully in Jesus Christ.”³⁴⁶

2983 281. The study of philosophy is not just part of intellectual formation but is also connected to
2984 human, spiritual, and pastoral formation. Issues about priestly identity and about the apostolic and
2985 missionary dimensions of priestly ministry “are closely linked to the question about the nature of
2986 truth.” Philosophy serves “as a guarantee of that ‘certainty of truth’ which is the only firm basis
2987 for a total giving of oneself to Jesus and to the Church.”³⁴⁷

2988 282. The seminary philosophy program of studies should be balanced, comprehensive,
2989 integrated, and coherent. The philosophy program must include substantial studies in the history
2990 of philosophy, treating of ancient, medieval, modern, and contemporary philosophy.

2991 a. The study of the history of philosophy helps seminarians understand philosophical
2992 issues as they have developed in the Western philosophical tradition and, more
2993 particularly, in the Catholic intellectual tradition, which has been both shaped by and
2994 contributed to the shape of the Western philosophical tradition. This historical
2995 approach to the study of philosophy aids in the “integration of philosophical studies
2996 . . . [through] a specific ‘philosophical methodology.’”³⁴⁸ The knowledge of
2997 philosophy, with its powerful impact on theology and theologians, is necessary in
2998 order to appreciate the richness of our theological Tradition.

2999 b. At the same time, philosophy prepares seminarians for priestly ministry. By living

³⁴⁶ *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 52.

³⁴⁷ *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 52.

³⁴⁸ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 159.

3000 more reflectively in the historical Catholic intellectual tradition, seminarians are better
3001 equipped for their ministry of teaching the faith, better prepared to engage
3002 contemporary culture, and better prepared for the “evangelization of culture” that is
3003 integral to the new evangelization. In this regard, some treatment of American
3004 philosophy or social thought is also helpful for seminarians in understanding the
3005 dynamics of contemporary society in the United States.³⁴⁹

3006 283. The philosophy program must include the study of logic, epistemology, philosophy of
3007 nature, metaphysics, natural theology, anthropology, and ethics:

3008 a. The study of logic helps seminarians to develop their critical and analytical abilities
3009 and become clearer thinkers who will be better able rationally to present, discuss, and
3010 defend the truths of the faith.

3011 b. The study of epistemology, the investigation of the nature and properties of
3012 knowledge, helps seminarians see “that human knowledge is capable of gathering
3013 from contingent reality objective and necessary truths,”³⁵⁰ while recognizing also the
3014 limits of human knowledge. Moreover, it reinforces their understanding of the
3015 relationship between reason and Revelation. They come to appreciate the power of

³⁴⁹ For example, see the following resources from the USCCB: *Bishops’ Program for Social Reconstruction* (1919); *The Challenge of Peace* (1983); *Economic Justice for All* (1986); *Called to Global Solidarity* (1997); *Responsibility, Rehabilitation, and Restoration: A Catholic Perspective on Crime and Criminal Justice* (2000); *Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence and the Common Good* (2001); *Strangers No Longer: Together on a Journey of Hope* (2003); and *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship* (2015). Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Bible and Morality: Biblical Roots of Christian Conduct* (2008), is also a resource.

³⁵⁰ Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Study of Philosophy in Seminaries* (1972).

3016 reason to know the truth; yet as they confront the limits of the powers of human reason,
3017 they are opened to look to Revelation for a fuller knowledge of those truths that exceed
3018 the power of human reason.

3019 c. The study of the philosophy of nature—which treats of fundamental principles like
3020 substance, form, matter, causality, motion, and the soul—provides seminarians a
3021 foundation for the study of metaphysics, natural theology, anthropology, and ethics.

3022 d. The study of metaphysics helps seminarians to explore fundamental issues concerning
3023 the nature of reality and to see that reality and truth transcend the empirical. “A
3024 philosophy which shuns metaphysics would be radically unsuited to the task of
3025 mediation in the understanding of Revelation.”³⁵¹ As the seminarian confronts the
3026 questions about being itself, he gains a deeper understanding and appreciation of God
3027 as the source of all being and gains some sense of how profound is this truth. A strong
3028 background in metaphysics also gives him the structure and ability to discuss certain
3029 theological concepts that depend on metaphysics for their articulation and
3030 explanation.

3031 e. The study of natural theology, which treats of the existence of God and the attributes
3032 of God by means of the natural light of reason, provides a foundation for the
3033 seminarian’s study of theology and the knowledge of God by means of Revelation.

3034 f. The study of philosophical anthropology helps seminarians understand “the authentic
3035 spirituality of man, leading to a theocentric ethic, transcending earthly life, and at the

³⁵¹ *Fides et Ratio*, no. 83.

3036 same time open to the social dimension of man.”³⁵² The philosophical study of the
3037 human “person, his fulfillment in intersubjectivity, his destiny, his inalienable rights,
3038 [and] his ‘nuptial character’ as one of the primary elements which is expressive of
3039 human nature and constitutive of society”³⁵³ provides a foundation for the
3040 seminarian’s study of theological anthropology.

3041 g. The study of ethics, which treats of general principles of ethical decision making,
3042 provides seminarians with a solid grounding in themes like conscience, freedom, law,
3043 responsibility, virtue, and guilt. Ethics also considers the common good and virtue of
3044 solidarity as central to Christian social political philosophy. Ethics should consider
3045 the Church’s social doctrine as central to Christian social political philosophy.³⁵⁴ The
3046 social encyclicals and other documents foundational to the Church’s rich social
3047 doctrine should be utilized in the study of ethics. These principles and documents
3048 provide a foundation for the seminarian’s study of moral theology.³⁵⁵

3049 284. “Philosophical instruction must be grounded in the perennially valid philosophical heritage

³⁵² See Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Study of Philosophy in Seminaries* (1972).

³⁵³ Congregation for Catholic Education, *Directives Regarding the Formation of Seminarians for Ministry to Marriage and Family* (1995), no. 21, www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/vocations/priesthood/priestly-formation/upload/marriage.pdf.

³⁵⁴ See *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, nos. 160-208.

³⁵⁵ See Pope Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum* (1891); Pope Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931); St. John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra* (1961); St. John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris* (1963); Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes* (1965); St. Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio* (1967); St. Paul VI, *Octogesima Adveniens* (1971); St. John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens* (1981); St. John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (1987); St. John Paul II, *Centisimus Annus* (1991); St. John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae* (1995); Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est* (2005); Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate* (2009); Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013); Pope Francis, *Laudato Si’* (2015).

3050 and also take into account philosophical investigation over the course of time. It is to be taught in
3051 such a way that it perfects the human development of students, sharpens their minds, and makes
3052 them better able to pursue theological studies.”³⁵⁶ The philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas should
3053 be given the pride of place that the Church accords it.³⁵⁷ Especially in the courses on the history
3054 of philosophy, there should be a significant treatment of St. Thomas’s thought, along with its
3055 ancient sources and its later development. The fruitful relationship between philosophy and
3056 theology in the Christian tradition should be explored through studies in Thomistic thought as well
3057 as the thought of other great Christian theologians who were also great philosophers. These include
3058 certain Fathers of the Church, medieval Doctors, and recent Christian thinkers in the Western and
3059 Eastern traditions.³⁵⁸

3060 Theology

3061 285. Seminarians in the discipleship stage, build on the process they began in the propaedeutic
3062 stage and engage in courses that focus on the fundamental beliefs and practices of the Catholic
3063 faith. In particular, they should concentrate on those elements of the faith that stand as a
3064 presupposition for all forms of graduate theological study. Theology courses in the discipleship

³⁵⁶ CIC, c. 251; see CCEO, c. 349 §1.

³⁵⁷ See *Optatam Totius*, no. 16n36; *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 53; *Fides et Ratio*, nos. 43-44; CIC, c. 251; CCEO, c. 349 §1. In articulating the mind of the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council on this point, the Congregation for Catholic Education, in its document on *The Study of Philosophy in Seminaries*, observed that “the repeated recommendations of the Church about the philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas remain fully justified and still valid. In this philosophy the first principles of natural truth are clearly and organically enunciated and harmonized with revelation. Within it also is enclosed that creative dynamism which, as biographers attest, marked the teaching of St. Thomas and which must also characterize the teaching of those who desire to follow his footsteps in a continual and renewed synthesizing of the valid conclusions received from tradition with new conquests of human thought.” “Philosophy in Seminaries,” *Origins* 1, no. 39 (March 16, 1972): 659.

³⁵⁸ See *Fides et Ratio*, no. 74.

3065 stage should study the themes contained in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, including
3066 courses on Catholic doctrine, liturgy and the sacraments, Catholic morality, Christian prayer, and
3067 Sacred Scripture. All seminarians should be thoroughly acquainted with the *Catechism of the*
3068 *Catholic Church* and its contents as a source for “a full, complete exposition of Catholic doctrine”
3069 and for “the requirements of contemporary catechetical instruction.”³⁵⁹ From the beginning,
3070 students should learn to relate theology to the larger mission of the Church in the public sphere.
3071 Discipleship stage study is intended as preparation for further study of theology in the
3072 configuration stage, not as a replacement for it.

3073 286. Besides philosophical and theological studies for the intellectual dimension of discipleship
3074 stage, formation should provide seminarians with an understanding of the historical and cultural
3075 context of their faith. Men who have more extensive prior education but who might not have a full,
3076 systematic liberal arts formation should be provided a curriculum that supplies for lacunae in this
3077 area. The Catholic intellectual tradition (e.g., literature and the arts) should be a part of such a
3078 curriculum. In addition, education in rhetoric and communications as well as language study is
3079 appropriate. Latin and Greek are especially important, since competence in these languages is
3080 necessary for graduate theological studies. The study of Spanish or other pastoral languages should
3081 be included in the course of studies throughout the period of priestly formation, including the
3082 discipleship stage.

3083 Cultural Preparation Programs

3084 287. As stated earlier in the propaedeutic stage, international seminarians should complete an

³⁵⁹ St. John Paul II, *Laetamur Magnopere (In which the Latin Typical Edition of the Catechism of the Catholic Church Is Approved and Promulgated)*, in *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

3085 acculturation program and receive adequate instruction in the English language (if English is not
3086 their primary language), often in an ESL (English as a second language) program of study, prior
3087 to beginning the propaedeutic stage. Regional accrediting agencies require adequate proficiency
3088 in the English language as demonstrated by a TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language). In
3089 addition to the study of US history and culture and of the English language, these programs may
3090 also supplement the seminarians' academic and pastoral background as a preparation for the study
3091 of philosophy and theology.

3092 288. Seminarians from the mainstream culture of the United States whose native language is
3093 English continue the intercultural competency training received during the propaedeutic stage into
3094 the discipleship stage, including the continued study of another language to meet the pastoral needs
3095 of the ecclesiastical entity.

3096 Discipleship Stage Benchmarks

3097 289. His study of philosophy helps the seminarian to learn the first truths of the natural order,
3098 deepens his understanding of the human person, and gives him the framework upon which to build
3099 once he concentrates on the study of theology during the configuration stage. Philosophical
3100 insights, language, and concepts will enable him to engage with the pastoral reality of the people
3101 he is called to serve. During the discipleship stage, it is important that the seminarian begins to
3102 learn how to articulate the Christian understanding of the Creator and his creation, especially the
3103 human person, and understands how this differs from the ideologies that have shaped popular
3104 conceptions of the human person, the world, and its Creator. As a result of his studies during this
3105 stage of formation, the seminarian has the ability to understand the issues surrounding the
3106 intersection of faith and modern science, as well as the ability to articulate how faith and science

3107 can support one another.³⁶⁰ In addition to manifesting sufficient philosophical competence for the
3108 later study of theology in the configuration stage, the seminarian at the completion of the
3109 discipleship stage is also able to demonstrate a working knowledge of Sacred Scripture and the
3110 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Given the multicultural reality of the Catholic Church in the
3111 United States of the twenty-first century, the seminarian also should possess an adequate
3112 knowledge of languages necessary for ministry; the possession of this knowledge, which was
3113 introduced in the propaedeutic stage, deepens in this and subsequent stages.

3114 290. By the completion of the discipleship stage, the seminarian demonstrates the ability to
3115 communicate clearly in both the written and spoken word. He is also able to analyze modern and
3116 postmodern philosophy relative to basic Church teaching and the perennially valid philosophical
3117 heritage that is in harmony with it.

3118 THE CONFIGURATION STAGE

3119 Graduate Theology

3120 291. Ultimately, intellectual formation in the seminary program centers on theology as a search
3121 for “an ever deeper knowledge of the divine mysteries.”³⁶¹ This kind of theological study, which
3122 far exceeds a purely technical approach to “religious phenomena,” unfolds in the following ways:

3123 a. Theology in seminary intellectual formation is truly to be *fides quaerens intellectum*,

³⁶⁰ Given the complex nature of the issues surrounding the human person and the intersection of faith and science, as well as other matters, seminaries will benefit from sharing ideas at a national level through organizations such as the National Association of College Seminaries and the National Association of Catholic Theological Schools.

³⁶¹ *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 51.

3124 faith seeking understanding.³⁶² This direction is not the same as the approach of
3125 religious studies or the history of religions. The seminary study of theology begins in
3126 faith and ends in faith, as should all true theological inquiry and study.

3127 b. In a seminary or priestly formation context, the study of theology is oriented to one's
3128 own faith and also to the faith of others. In other words, the study of theology is
3129 apostolically motivated. "For the salvation of their brothers and sisters they should
3130 seek an ever deeper knowledge of the divine mysteries."³⁶³

3131 c. At the same time, this study of theology, as we have already noted, enriches and
3132 expands the personal faith of the seminarian studying it.³⁶⁴

3133 d. When theology is studied in the context of priestly formation, it cannot be detached
3134 from other human knowledge. In fact, it is to be integrated with other elements of
3135 human understanding, especially philosophy and the human sciences.³⁶⁵

3136 e. The seminary study of theology, because it begins in faith and ends in faith, must also
3137 flow from prayer and lead to prayer.³⁶⁶

3138 f. In a particular way, the theology studied in preparation for priestly ministry must find

³⁶² See *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 53.

³⁶³ *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 51.

³⁶⁴ See *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 53.

³⁶⁵ See *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 53.

³⁶⁶ See *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 54.

- 3139 integration and focus in the liturgy, the celebration of the Mystery of Christ.
- 3140 g. Because theology studied in light of priestly mission and ministry must be directed to
3141 a practical wisdom, it must offer a complete and unified vision of the truths of faith.³⁶⁷
3142 This wisdom and unified vision, then, can be conveyed in the priest's preaching and
3143 allow him to bring the Word of God into dialogue with the contemporary human
3144 situation.³⁶⁸
- 3145 h. Because theology is rooted in the Church's faith and serves the faith of the Church, it
3146 must be studied in complete and faithful communion with the Magisterium.³⁶⁹
- 3147 i. Theology studied in a seminary and destined to contribute to the mission of the Church
3148 through priestly ministry must necessarily be concerned about restoring Christian
3149 unity. Theological studies must impart an adequate grasp of the Catholic principles of
3150 ecumenism.³⁷⁰ The ecumenical imperative that flows from the prayer of Christ for his
3151 flock and the renewed vision of the Second Vatican Council demand this focus.
- 3152 j. Theology's theoretical and practical dimensions in priestly mission and ministry mean
3153 that it must be rigorous in its orientation, both academically and pastorally.³⁷¹

³⁶⁷ See *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 54.

³⁶⁸ See USCCB, *Fulfilled in Your Hearing: The Homily in the Sunday Assembly* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 1982), 13.

³⁶⁹ See *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 55.

³⁷⁰ See Second Vatican Council, *Unitatis Redintegratio* (1964), nos. 2-4.

³⁷¹ See *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, nos. 55-56.

3154 k. Finally, the study of theology must be an initiation into a lifelong study of the truths
3155 of faith. If the priest is to be a teacher, he must first be a student who continuously
3156 pursues an understanding of the faith to which he commits himself and invites
3157 his people.

3158 Configuration Stage Benchmarks

3159 292. It is expected that by the end of the configuration stage the seminarian demonstrates a well-
3160 established habit and desire to explore the Word of God and theological Tradition. He also can
3161 demonstrate the ability to uphold the truths of faith by the light of reason. He demonstrates the
3162 ability to integrate academic development with the spiritual and pastoral dimensions (e.g., the
3163 growth in knowledge about Jesus Christ deepens his friendship with Christ, his understanding of
3164 Christian anthropology influences his approaches to pastoral ministry). He also demonstrates
3165 fidelity to the Magisterium in his speech and actions. He can exercise the Ministry of the Word by
3166 proclaiming, explaining, and defending the Catholic faith.

3167 THE VOCATIONAL SYNTHESIS STAGE

3168 293. Intellectual formation during the vocational synthesis stage shifts to focus on ministerial
3169 application. Ongoing instruction and mentoring will help the transitional deacon to continue to
3170 grow as a preacher and teacher of the faith as he transitions into full-time ministry.³⁷² Liturgical
3171 and sacramental *practica* will help the man to develop ministerial competency in administering
3172 the sacraments and a proper *ars celebrandi*. Special attention can be given to prepare the deacon
3173 to be a minister of the Sacrament of Penance and help him to “translate the principles of moral

³⁷² See *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 177.

3174 theology in concrete cases, and to address the questions encountered in this delicate ministry with
3175 a merciful spirit.”³⁷³ Pastoral instruction can be offered addressing various situations that will arise
3176 in the life of the priest, for example, marriage preparation and ministry to the grieving. The
3177 vocational synthesis stage may include pastoral seminars as well as sacramental *practica* that the
3178 transitional deacon attends, or these seminars and *practica* may be given in the configuration stage.
3179 Given that the transitional deacon resides full-time in a pastoral setting, virtual meeting platforms
3180 may be useful during this stage. This stage will also see the deacon establishing a habit of
3181 individual study and ongoing intellectual formation that will serve him throughout his life as
3182 a priest.

3183 Vocational Synthesis Stage Benchmarks

3184 294. As the deacon nears completion of initial formation for the priesthood, the intellectual
3185 dimension of formation in this stage focuses on demonstrating competency in pastoral theology
3186 and its application in preaching, sacramental and pastoral ministry, and liturgical praxis.
3187 Regardless of whether continued meetings or seminars are required during limited visits to the
3188 seminary, it is important that the deacon demonstrate a commitment to continued growth in
3189 intellectual formation through personal study, workshops, and conferences. It is also important
3190 that he recognize and articulate areas for his personal ongoing intellectual growth.³⁷⁴

3191 NORMS FOR INTELLECTUAL FORMATION

3192 *Propaedeutic Stage*

³⁷³ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 178.

³⁷⁴ See CIC, c. 279; CCEO, c. 372.

3193 295. In the intellectual formation of the propaedeutic stage, the seminarians should develop
3194 familiarity with Christian doctrine by studying the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

3195 296. Intellectual formation will introduce the seminarians to priestly identity in order to aid in
3196 vocational discernment.

3197 297. The material proper to the propaedeutic stage, as expressed above, should form the bulk of
3198 the intellectual formation of this stage.

3199 298. Part-time general education college credits are permitted but never exceed nine credit
3200 hours each semester or its equivalent.³⁷⁵

3201 299. Classes proper to intellectual formation during the propaedeutic stage—such as courses on
3202 Scripture, catechesis, spirituality, and prayer—may be taken for credit in addition to the part-time
3203 general education credits. Courses that aid human formation, such as an introductory applied
3204 psychology course or a general physical well-being course, may also be offered for credit.

3205 300. The formal study of philosophy is not permitted during the propaedeutic stage.

3206 301. Care must be taken that the academic work does not interfere with the overall tenor of the
3207 propaedeutic stage and its objectives.

3208 302. Men entering the propaedeutic stage with a college degree may still need a more general
3209 liberal arts education and hence a longer propaedeutic stage, depending on their academic

³⁷⁵ The exception could be during the first two years of a three-year propaedeutic stage, where the third year would be free of academics.

3210 background.

3211 ***Discipleship Stage***

3212 303. Seminarians should have or be earning a bachelor's degree, preferably a bachelor of arts
3213 degree in philosophy, from an accredited institution. If such a degree is not available from their
3214 seminary, they may earn the degree at a college or university associated with the seminary.

3215 304. A discipleship stage program must offer courses in philosophy and theology or provide for
3216 them at a Catholic college or university that possesses a complete curriculum of philosophical and
3217 theological studies.

3218 305. Philosophy and theology professors should make a Profession of Faith³⁷⁶ and have a
3219 mandate from the diocesan bishop or a canonical mission, dependent upon the canonical nature of
3220 the institution.

3221 306. Sound philosophical formation requires a biennium of study, which is understood in the
3222 United States to be at least thirty semester credit hours,³⁷⁷ together with the out-of-classroom work
3223 associated with each credit hour traditionally expected in US higher education. The philosophical
3224 curriculum must include the study of the history of philosophy (ancient, medieval, modern, and
3225 contemporary), logic, epistemology, metaphysics, philosophy of nature, natural theology,
3226 anthropology, and ethics. Seminaries must ensure that the philosophy is appropriate for studying
3227 Catholic theology and explore creative curricular strategies so that seminarians can grasp the

³⁷⁶ See CIC, c. 833, 6°.

³⁷⁷ See *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 56; *Fides et Ratio*, no. 62.

3228 relationship between philosophical insights and theological frameworks.

3229 307. Discipleship stage should extend for at least two calendar years, regardless of previous
3230 academic or life experiences

3231 308. A minimum of twelve semester credit hours must be required in appropriate courses of
3232 undergraduate theology. These courses should study the themes of the *Catechism of the Catholic*
3233 *Church* (doctrine, liturgy and sacraments, morality, prayer) as well as Sacred Scripture.

3234 309. The coordinator of intellectual formation and the rector should be vigilant to ensure that
3235 the philosophical and theological instruction received at a college or university is consistent with
3236 magisterial teaching and with the requirements stated in this document. Ultimately, this obligation
3237 devolves upon the diocesan bishop in view of his teaching authority.

3238 310. Programs that utilize colleges and universities for philosophy and theological studies
3239 should carefully and consistently monitor the content and quality of their seminarians' courses as
3240 a preparation for theological studies. "Philosophical instruction must be grounded in the
3241 perennially valid philosophical heritage and also take into account philosophical investigation over
3242 the course of time."³⁷⁸

3243 311. Special attention is to be given to classical and foreign languages. A knowledge of Latin
3244 and Greek is foundational and should be given the emphasis that the Church accords these
3245 languages.³⁷⁹ Particular attention must be given to ensure that before they enter the theological

³⁷⁸ CIC, c. 251; see CCEO, c. 349 §1.

³⁷⁹ See *Optatam Totius*, no. 13; CIC, c. 249.

3246 study of the configuration stage, all seminarians can demonstrate that they have acquired that
3247 “knowledge of Latin which will enable them to understand and make use of so many scientific
3248 sources and of the documents of the Church,” according to the insistence of the Fathers of the
3249 Second Vatican Council.³⁸⁰ The study of the Spanish language and Hispanic cultures as well as
3250 other pastorally appropriate languages and cultures is recommended. In some cases, an English-
3251 language program may form an important part of the program. Since preaching is at the heart of
3252 priestly ministry, seminaries should include courses in writing and public speaking. Facility with
3253 other liturgical and spoken languages may be necessary for seminarians from the Eastern Catholic
3254 Churches.

3255 312. Educational standards should not be so rigid or restrictive as to close the door to men who
3256 are lacking in some dimension of the required educational background. Remedial help should be
3257 provided to such seminarians so that their academic deficiencies may be overcome. Such
3258 assistance should take the form of tutoring, academic advising, and counseling.

3259 313. Excellence in education at the college level demands access to a strong library that offers
3260 print, nonprint, and electronic resources and that is professionally staffed, as required by
3261 accrediting agencies.

3262 314. For men who enter the discipleship stage with a college degree, programs are encouraged
3263 to consider offering the civilly recognized bachelor in philosophy (PhB), a two-year degree
3264 program that presumes a previous bachelor’s degree (preferably in the liberal arts) but does not
3265 require a liberal arts component. Such a degree requires regional accreditation.

³⁸⁰ *Optatam Totius*, no. 13.

3266 ***Configuration Stage***

3267 315. At least four full years must be dedicated to graduate theological studies.³⁸¹

3268 316. Graduate theological studies require an appropriate and sound philosophical formation.

3269 Those requirements, identified in the norms on discipleship stage programs, are prerequisites for

3270 theological studies.

3271 317. Philosophy and theology professors in seminaries are expected to make a Profession of

3272 Faith³⁸² and have a mandate from the diocesan bishop or a canonical mission, dependent upon the

3273 canonical nature of the institution.

3274 318. The academic curriculum as a whole should have a discernible and coherent unity.

3275 319. The curriculum must reflect the specialized nature of priestly formation and assist

3276 seminarians in developing a clear understanding of the ministerial priesthood.

3277 320. Due consideration should be given to the pastoral aim of theological formation.

3278 Theological studies should be designed with the pastoral goal in view, recognizing that the pastoral

3279 character of priestly formation applies to intellectual formation as well as to the other areas of

3280 formation.³⁸³

3281 321. The core should include fundamental theology: the basis of the rational procedure of all

³⁸¹ See CIC, c. 250; CCEO, c. 348 §1. See also *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 154. The second and third models of the configuration stage are exceptions.

³⁸² See CIC, c. 833, 6°. For seminaries with ecclesiastical faculties, see also *Veritatis Gaudium*, no. 27 §1.

³⁸³ See *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, nos. 55, 57.

3282 theology and thus the introduction to the study of theology.³⁸⁴

3283 322. The various theological disciplines should recognize Sacred Scripture as foundational: as
3284 the point of departure from and as the soul of all theology.³⁸⁵

3285 323. In Sacred Scripture, the core should include the study of the Pentateuch; the historical,
3286 prophetic, and wisdom (especially the Psalms) books of the Old Testament; the Synoptic Gospels
3287 and Acts; Pauline and Johannine literature; and the Catholic epistles.

3288 324. The proper understanding of Sacred Scripture requires cultivation of a double awareness.
3289 On the one hand, “the books of the Old and New Testaments, whole and entire, . . . written under
3290 the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, . . . have God as their author, and have been handed on as such
3291 to the Church herself.” On the other hand, “to compose the sacred books, God chose certain men
3292 who . . . made full use of their own powers and faculties so that, though he acted in them and by
3293 them, it was as true authors that they consigned to writing whatever he wanted written, and no
3294 more.”³⁸⁶ “To interpret Scripture correctly, the reader must be attentive to what the human authors
3295 truly wanted to affirm and to what God wanted to reveal to us by their words.”³⁸⁷ This means “the
3296 reader must take into account the conditions of their [the human authors’] time and culture, the

³⁸⁴ See Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Theological Formation of Future Priests* (1976), nos. 107-113.

³⁸⁵ See *Dei Verbum*, no. 24; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 113; CIC, c. 252 §2; CCEO, c. 350 §2; Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Theological Formation of Future Priests*, no. 79.

³⁸⁶ *Dei Verbum*, no. 11.

³⁸⁷ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 109. See *Dei Verbum*, no. 12.

3297 literary genres in use at that time, and the modes of feeling, speaking and narrating then current.”³⁸⁸

3298 325. But if Sacred Scripture is to be taught *as Sacred Scripture* and not simply as an artifact of
3299 human culture, “there is another and *no less important* principle of correct interpretation, without
3300 which Scripture would remain a dead letter: ‘Sacred Scripture must be read and interpreted in the
3301 light of the same Spirit by whom it was written.’”³⁸⁹ “In their work of interpretation Catholic
3302 exegetes must never forget that what they are interpreting is the *word of God*. Their common task
3303 is not finished when they have simply determined sources, defined forms or explained literary
3304 procedures. They arrive at the true goal of their work only when they have explained the meaning
3305 of the biblical text as God’s word for today.”³⁹⁰ This requires (1) attention to “the content and unity
3306 of the whole Scripture”; (2) reading of Sacred Scripture within “the living Tradition of the whole
3307 Church”; and (3) attention to the “analogy of faith.”³⁹¹ Otherwise, the study of Sacred Scripture
3308 cannot serve as the “soul of sacred theology,”³⁹² and a dichotomy will arise between the study of
3309 Sacred Scripture and the rest of theology. “This dichotomy can create confusion and a lack of
3310 stability in the intellectual formation of candidates for ecclesial ministries.”³⁹³

3311 326. The study of Sacred Scripture and its interpretation should take into account the preparation
3312 of seminarians for the tasks of preaching homilies and applying Sacred Scripture to the lives of the

³⁸⁸ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 110.

³⁸⁹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 111, emphasis added; see *Dei Verbum*, no. 12.

³⁹⁰ Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church* (1993), III.C.1.

³⁹¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nos. 112-114. See *Dei Verbum*, no. 12.

³⁹² *Dei Verbum*, no. 24.

³⁹³ *Verbum Domini*, no. 35.

3313 Christian faithful.³⁹⁴

3314 327. Patristic studies constitute an essential part of theological studies. Theology should draw
3315 from the works of the Fathers of the Church because of their lasting value within the living
3316 Tradition of the Church. The core should include patrology (an overview of the life and writings
3317 of the Fathers of the Church) and patristics (an overview of the theological thought of the Fathers
3318 of the Church).³⁹⁵

3319 328. In dogmatic theology, the core must include theology of the Blessed Trinity, Christology,
3320 pneumatology, creation, the Fall and the nature of sin, redemption, grace and the human person,
3321 ecclesiology, sacraments, eschatology, Mariology,³⁹⁶ and missiology.³⁹⁷ A separate course on
3322 Holy Orders, with a thorough study of the nature and mission of the ministerial priesthood
3323 including a history and theology of celibacy, is required.³⁹⁸

3324 329. The Church enjoins pastors “to neglect nothing with a view to a well-organized and well-
3325 oriented catechetical effort”; and since “all pastors have the duty to provide” them, evangelization

³⁹⁴ Because “in the sacred books the Father who is in heaven comes lovingly to meet his children, and talks with them,” courses in Sacred Scripture must equip seminarians to identify those “divinely revealed realities, which are contained and presented” therein (*Dei Verbum*, nos. 21, 11), so that they can share these riches with those whom they serve.

³⁹⁵ See Congregation for Catholic Education, *Instruction on the Study of the Fathers of the Church in the Formation of Priests* (1989); see also *Optatam Totius*, no. 16.

³⁹⁶ See Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Virgin Mary in Intellectual and Spiritual Formation* (1988).

³⁹⁷ Missiology may be treated as a separate component or integrated into ecclesiology; it must form an integral part of every treatment of evangelization. See *Ratio Fundamental*, no. 171.

³⁹⁸ See *Sacramentum Caritatis*, no. 24.

3326 and catechesis should have a prominent place in the seminary curriculum.³⁹⁹ A sound study of the
3327 content and methods of catechesis not only prepares the seminarian for his task as a minister of
3328 the Word but also provides the possibility of a synthetic moment in the curriculum when an
3329 integrated unity can be brought to his years of theological study.⁴⁰⁰

3330 330. In moral theology, the core must include fundamental moral theology, health care ethics,
3331 sexual morality, and social doctrine.

3332 331. Moral theology should be taught in a way that draws deeply from Sacred Scripture,
3333 Tradition, and the Magisterium, in particular *Veritatis Splendor*. The Christian moral life should
3334 be presented in light of the new law of the grace of the Holy Spirit, who transforms the human
3335 person, gives him a new heart, and enables him to follow the example of Christ and live according
3336 to the moral law. Moral theology should treat the path to happiness which consists in following
3337 the inspirations and the Gifts of the Holy Spirit and living according to the Beatitudes, the virtues,
3338 and the moral law, including absolute moral norms.

3339 Therefore, moral theology should illustrate that the ultimate end of graced human acts is
3340 the beatitude to which God calls us: a participation in the life of the Blessed Trinity. The
3341 inseparable connections among moral theology, Sacred Scripture, spiritual theology, theological
3342 anthropology, and dogmatic theology should be evident, with particular attention paid to the
3343 synthesis of the Christian moral life in the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas. Moreover, an

³⁹⁹ St. John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae (On Catechesis in Our Time)* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 1979), no. 64.

⁴⁰⁰ See *Optatam Totius*, no. 19; CIC, cc. 254, 256; CCEO, c. 352 §§2-3.

3344 understanding of the moral sense of Sacred Scripture should be developed⁴⁰¹ to prepare future
3345 priests for preaching on Christian morality. The preparation of future priests to be ministers of the
3346 Sacrament of Penance should also be kept in mind in the teaching of moral theology. Finally, the
3347 contribution of the natural and human sciences to moral theology should be considered.

3348 332. It is vital that the intellectual dimension in teaching moral theology be integrated with the
3349 pastoral dimension in applying moral theology to the lives of the People of God. Pastoral ministry
3350 requires more than the presentation of moral principles. Helping seminarians understand this is
3351 critical to formation in pastoral charity. Priests are called upon to assist the faithful in the formation
3352 of a sound moral conscience in accord with Sacred Scripture, Tradition, and magisterial teaching.
3353 This formation will enable each person to grow in authentic prudence and virtuous Christian acts
3354 in the midst of difficult and at times oppressive circumstances. The formation of priests in moral
3355 theology should intersect with formation in compassionate listening and in thoughtful counseling,
3356 with the pastoral goal of gently but consistently fostering the love of God and neighbor. This is
3357 especially important in the areas of sexuality and family life.

3358 333. The importance of a clear grasp of the principles of health care ethics cannot be
3359 overestimated for the future priest in the contemporary culture. Special attention during his
3360 preparation should be given to the fundamental respect for human life from conception to natural
3361 death and to the moral evils of and pastoral means of addressing contraception, in vitro
3362 fertilization, abortion, and euthanasia.

3363 334. The teaching of sexual morality must be thorough and unambiguous in its presentation of

⁴⁰¹ See *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nos. 115-118.

3364 the authentic teaching of the Church in sexual moral matters—presuming a mature biological and
3365 basic social scientific understanding of human sexuality. Seminarians must be prepared to engage
3366 the contemporary world in dialogue regarding the complex issues of sexual morality and gender
3367 ideology. This is a matter of special import since the seminarian’s formation in celibate chastity
3368 includes the intellectual assent to, and embrace of, the Church’s moral teachings in all matters of
3369 sexuality.

3370 335. The social doctrine of the Church must be presented in its entirety with appropriate
3371 principles of reflection, criteria for judgment, and norms for pastoral practice. The systematic study
3372 of the social encyclicals of the popes is especially recommended.⁴⁰²

3373 336. Of particular importance today is the need for awareness of the ecological crisis facing the
3374 world. Seminarians must be familiar with Church teaching on the subject and be encouraged to
3375 experience an ecological conversion, “whereby the effects of their encounter with Jesus Christ
3376 become evident in their relationship with the world around them. Living our vocation to be
3377 protectors of God’s handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary
3378 aspect of our Christian experience.”⁴⁰³

3379 337. Adequate instruction must be given in professional ethics appropriate to priesthood and
3380 priestly ministry. In the process of this instruction, “seminarians must receive a careful training in
3381 the administration of goods, to be carried out according to canonical norms, soberly, with

⁴⁰² See Congregation for Catholic Education, *Guidelines for the Study and Teaching of the Church’s Social Doctrine in the Formation of Priests* (1988), www.humandevlopment.va/content/dam/sviluppoumano/pubblicazioni-documenti/archivio/dottrina-sociale-della-chiesa/orientamenti/ODSI_ENG.pdf. See also *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 172.

⁴⁰³ *Laudato Si’*, no. 217. See *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 172.

3382 detachment and moral transparency, along with the necessary skill.”⁴⁰⁴

3383 338. In historical studies, the core should include courses on the history of the Universal Church
3384 and the history of the Catholic Church in the United States, taught in a way that reflects the
3385 Church’s multicultural origins and ecumenical context. Among historical studies, the study of
3386 patristics and the lives of the saints are of special importance.

3387 339. In Canon Law, the core must include a general introduction to Canon Law and to the Canon
3388 Law of individual sacraments, including but not limited to the Sacrament of Matrimony.
3389 Additional courses in Canon Law, particularly on books II (“The People of God”), V (“The
3390 Temporal Goods of the Church”), and VI (“Penal Sanctions in the Church”) of the *Code of Canon*
3391 *Law* would assist seminarians in preparing for their pastoral ministry. There should also be a
3392 general introduction to the *Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches*, with emphasis on title II (cc.
3393 27-41) regarding Churches *sui iuris* and rites and on title XVI, chap. 7 (cc. 776-866) on marriage,
3394 especially the divergences between the Latin and Eastern Codes in sacramental discipline.⁴⁰⁵
3395 Seminarians should learn how to make appropriate referrals for issues that are beyond their
3396 competence.

3397 340. Studies in spiritual theology and spiritual direction are to be included. Spiritual theology
3398 includes studies in the Catholic spiritual Tradition, provides practical directives for the Christian
3399 call to perfection, and proposes principles of discernment. This study should also explore the

⁴⁰⁴ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 180.

⁴⁰⁵ See CIC, c. 256 §1; CCEO, c. 352 §§2-3; Congregation for Catholic Education, *On the Teaching of Canon Law to Those Preparing to Be Priests* (1975).

3400 spirituality of various vocations, especially the priesthood and consecrated life.⁴⁰⁶ Spiritual
3401 direction teaches the art of fostering the spiritual life of those entrusted to one’s care: “In view of
3402 the pastoral care of the faithful, formation in the discernment of spirits and in spiritual direction
3403 should receive attention as an integral part of priestly ministry.”⁴⁰⁷

3404 341. In liturgy, the core should include studies in the theological, historical, spiritual, pastoral,
3405 and juridical aspects of liturgy.⁴⁰⁸

3406 342. Seminarians must learn to celebrate the Church’s sacred rites according to the mind of the
3407 Church, without addition or subtraction. Liturgical *practica* should include the celebration of the
3408 Eucharist and the other sacraments, with particular attention given to the practicum for the
3409 Sacrament of Penance. Seminarians should be introduced to the official liturgical books used by
3410 the clergy and to the Church’s directives for music, art, and architecture.⁴⁰⁹ Knowledge of sacred
3411 art and music should be integrated into liturgical formations so that it “will contribute to the overall
3412 formation of seminarians, and provide them with another resource in view of evangelization and
3413 pastoral endeavor.”⁴¹⁰

3414 343. Homiletics should occupy a prominent place in the core curriculum and should be
3415 integrated into the entire course of studies. In addition to the principles of biblical interpretation,

⁴⁰⁶ See *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 169.

⁴⁰⁷ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 178.

⁴⁰⁸ See Congregation for Catholic Education, *Instruction on Liturgical Formation in Seminaries* (1979).

⁴⁰⁹ See *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, no. 5; *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, nos. 5-6.

⁴¹⁰ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 181.

3416 catechesis, and communications theory, seminarians should also learn the practical skills needed
3417 to communicate the Gospel as proclaimed by the Church in an effective and appropriate manner.
3418 Seminarians should be taught that “through the course of the liturgical year the homily sets forth
3419 the mysteries of faith and the standards of the Christian life on the basis of the sacred text.”⁴¹¹
3420 While the homily is reserved to a priest or deacon,⁴¹² seminarians should be afforded opportunities
3421 to preach outside of Mass and receive proper assessment. Examples of these opportunities could
3422 include seminarians giving reflections in their pastoral assignments to parish groups like youth
3423 groups or fraternal organizations, as well as offering meditations at communal devotions.⁴¹³ Where
3424 appropriate, seminarians should be able to demonstrate a capacity for bilingual preaching.

3425 344. The core curriculum should include an introductory course in ecumenism that treats of the
3426 Catholic Church’s commitment to the principles of ecumenism, the fundamental role of
3427 ecumenical dialogue, and current ecumenical issues. In addition, ecumenism should be fully
3428 integrated into other courses, thus permeating the theological curriculum. Issues concerning
3429 interreligious dialogue should also be discussed.⁴¹⁴ Seminarians should learn about the religious

⁴¹¹ *Praenotanda of the Lectionary for the Mass* (1981), no. 24.

⁴¹² CIC, c. 767 §1; CCEO, c. 614 §4. The 1997 interdicastery document *Instruction on Certain Questions Regarding the Collaboration of the Non-Ordained Faithful in the Sacred Ministry of Priest*, §1, states, “The practice, on some occasions, of entrusting the preaching of the homily to seminarians or theology students who are not clerics is not permitted. Indeed, the homily should not be regarded as a training for some future ministry” (www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/laity/documents/rc_con_interdic_doc_15081997_en.html).

⁴¹³ See CIC, c. 766; USCCB, “Complementary Norms, Canon 766 - Lay Preaching” (2002).

⁴¹⁴ See Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms of Ecumenism* (1993). See also Second Vatican Council, *Unitatis Redintegratio* and *Nostra Aetate* (1965); St. John Paul II, *Ut Unum Sint*; Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, *The Ecumenical Dimension of the Formation of Those Engaged in Pastoral Work* (1997) and “*The Gifts and the Calling of God Are Irrevocable*”: *Rom 11:29* (2015); and Pontifical Council for Interreligious

3430 traditions present in the United States.

3431 345. Studies in pastoral theology are required, should include treatment of the principles and
3432 criteria for pastoral action, and should provide for theological reflection where seminarians are
3433 involved in supervised pastoral placements.⁴¹⁵ Pastoral studies should include training in pastoral
3434 counseling, in which seminarians are to learn how to address concerns brought to them by
3435 parishioners for whom they can reasonably offer counsel and how to make appropriate referrals
3436 for issues beyond their competence.

3437 346. Due emphasis should be given in the various theological disciplines to the topics of
3438 consecrated life,⁴¹⁶ marriage, and the family. There should be interdisciplinary cooperation, and
3439 the curriculum should be organized so that these topics become an important dimension of pastoral
3440 and intellectual formation.⁴¹⁷

3441 347. Although various theological schools exist within the Catholic Tradition, in accord with
3442 Church teaching, the significance of St. Thomas Aquinas as the model and guide for study and
3443 research in theology must be recognized.⁴¹⁸

3444 348. Throughout the academic curriculum, questions of theological methodology should be

Dialogue, *Dialogue in Truth and Charity: Pastoral Orientations for Interreligious Dialogue* (2014).

⁴¹⁵ See *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 57; Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Theological Formation of Future Priests*, nos. 102-106.

⁴¹⁶ See *Ratio Fundamental*, no. 169.

⁴¹⁷ See Congregation for Catholic Education, *Directives on the Formation of Seminarians Concerning Problems Related to Marriage and the Family* (1995).

⁴¹⁸ See *Optatam Totius*, no. 16n36; CIC, c. 252 §3.

3445 emphasized so that seminarians learn to evaluate the strengths and limitations of various
3446 theological viewpoints in light of the Magisterium of the Church.

3447 349. All methodologies employed must be clear on the distinction and relation between truths
3448 revealed by God and contained in the Deposit of Faith and their theological mode of expression.⁴¹⁹

3449 350. The normative function of the Magisterium must be presented as Christ's gift to his
3450 Church: the vital, integral, and authoritative voice in the theological enterprise.

3451 351. Courses of theology, ecclesiology, spirituality, and history should include the development
3452 and nature of the Eastern Churches.⁴²⁰

3453 352. Studies in the beliefs and practices of other Churches, ecclesial communities, or religions
3454 may be profitably taught by members of those Churches or religions after seminarians have
3455 completed the regular course studies on ecclesiology and the Catholic principles on ecumenism,
3456 and with respect for the rule that in seminary studies the professors of the doctrinal courses should
3457 be Catholics.⁴²¹ The prescriptions of the *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on*
3458 *Ecumenism* (nos. 70-81, 192-95) and *The Ecumenical Dimension in the Formation of Those*
3459 *Engaged in Pastoral Work* are to be followed.

3460 353. The expansion of communications technology and social media is a phenomenon that must
3461 be taken into account in the intellectual formation of seminarians. "Considering the ample attention

⁴¹⁹ See International Theological Commission, *On the Interpretation of Dogmas* (1989).

⁴²⁰ See CCEO, c. 41; Congregation for Catholic Education, *Circular Letter Concerning Studies of the Oriental Churches* (1987).

⁴²¹ See Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism*.

3462 given by the Magisterium to the theme of social communications, and the promising area of
3463 evangelization found in the ‘new media,’ Seminaries must develop a specific awareness in
3464 seminarians in this regard.”⁴²²

3465 354. Theological formation in seminaries must clearly respect traditional doctrinal formulations
3466 of the faith while recognizing contemporary modes of theological expression and explanation that
3467 accord with the doctrine of the faith. Contemporary expressions are always to be presented with
3468 due deference for the Tradition and in continuity with it.⁴²³

3469 355. Theological education for the priesthood should resist any tendency to reduce theology to
3470 a merely historical, sociological investigation or to a comparative study of religions.

3471 356. The entire academic program should be taught in such a way that it makes seminarians
3472 aware that they have a responsibility to continue their theological and pastoral education after
3473 ordination.⁴²⁴

3474 357. The theological curriculum, in both its planning and its execution, should address the
3475 unique needs of a multicultural society, which entails not only the study of the Spanish language

⁴²² *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 182; see CIC, c. 666.

⁴²³ Pope Benedict XVI provides a helpful principle regarding contemporary expressions of the faith: “On the one hand, there is an interpretation that I would call ‘a hermeneutic of discontinuity and rupture’; it has frequently availed itself of the sympathies of the mass media, and also one trend of modern theology. On the other, there is the ‘hermeneutic of reform,’ of renewal in the continuity of the one subject-Church which the Lord has given to us. She is a subject which increases in time and develops, yet always remaining the same, the one subject of the journeying People of God.” Address to the Roman Curia Offering Them Christmas Greetings, December 22, 2005, www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2005/december/documents/hf_ben_xvi_spe_20051222_roman-curia.html.

⁴²⁴ See *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 56.

3476 and Hispanic cultures, but also direction regarding such matters as approved Marian apparitions
3477 and the lives of those Americans who have been canonized or beatified.⁴²⁵ Seminaries should offer
3478 resources for attaining proficiency in pastorally appropriate languages.⁴²⁶

3479 358. Throughout the curriculum, the biblical, theological, ethical, and historical foundations of
3480 the Church’s teaching on social justice should be included.⁴²⁷

3481 359. Seminarians must receive an introduction to the principles, methods, and skills of
3482 catechesis and teaching.⁴²⁸ Teaching opportunities may be offered as a part of field education and
3483 pastoral placements. In addition, seminarians should be given a doctrinal understanding of popular
3484 piety to teach them “to distinguish what belongs to the inculturation of the Gospel and constitutes
3485 a real treasure for the Church.”⁴²⁹

3486 360. In the United States, the first professional degree, a master of divinity, is the recognized
3487 standard for preparation of students for ordained ministry across the broad spectrum of institutions
3488 of graduate theological education. Its curriculum incorporates the requirements of the *Program of*
3489 *Priestly Formation*. Seminaries in the United States may offer a master of arts degree in theology
3490 to provide a deeper understanding of the theological disciplines for general educational purposes
3491 or for further graduate study. In addition, seminaries may also offer the ecclesiastical degrees of

⁴²⁵ See *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 157.

⁴²⁶ See USCCB, *Encuentro and Mission: A Renewed Pastoral Framework for Hispanic Ministry* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2002), 55.

⁴²⁷ See *Compendium of the Social Teaching of the Church*.

⁴²⁸ See CIC, cc. 528, 773, 776-777.

⁴²⁹ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 179.

3492 bachelor of sacred theology (STB) and the licentiate in sacred theology (STL) either by affiliating
3493 with an ecclesiastical faculty or by special arrangement with the Congregation for Catholic
3494 Education.

3495 361. Seminaries should have degree programs certified by appropriate accrediting agencies.
3496 Seminarians should not be excused from pursuing such degrees except for serious reasons. A
3497 seminarian is normally expected to obtain the master of divinity and/or the STB degree prior to
3498 ordination.

3499 362. As an essential resource for seminarians' life of study and reflection, the library collection
3500 of books and periodicals should be carefully maintained and appropriately expanded. Excellence
3501 in education at the graduate level demands access to a strong, professionally staffed library with
3502 print, nonprint, and electronic resources, as required by accrediting agencies.

3503 363. Contemporary pedagogical methods that incorporate technological advances should be
3504 encouraged.

3505 364. Diocesan bishops and major superiors should be encouraged to designate seminarians who
3506 complete their basic program with honors for further study after sufficient pastoral experience.

3507 *Vocational Synthesis Stage*

3508 365. The intellectual dimension of the vocational synthesis stage should focus on the practical
3509 application of theology needed for sacramental and pastoral ministry as well as preaching and
3510 teaching. The deacon will have completed his formal theological study and turned a greater focus
3511 to ministerial practice. Nevertheless, he is to cultivate the practice of ongoing study in theology
3512 and other vital disciplines.

Pastoral Dimension

3513

3514 366. All four dimensions of formation are interwoven and go forward concurrently. Still, in a
3515 certain sense, pastoral formation is the culmination of the entire formation process. “The whole
3516 formation imparted to candidates for the priesthood aims at preparing them to enter into
3517 communion with the charity of Christ the good shepherd”;⁴³⁰ therefore “priestly formation must
3518 be permeated by a pastoral spirit.”⁴³¹

3519 367. The goal of pastoral formation is to form shepherds of God’s People; this goal requires
3520 men who are not self-centered, aloof, judgmental, or self-imposing but instead are characterized
3521 by a “serene openness” and capable of listening and collaboration. True shepherds must have a
3522 desire to understand the hearts of others and engage in attentive accompaniment.⁴³²

3523 368. In virtue of the sacramental character of Holy Orders, a priest is able to stand and act in the
3524 community in the name and person of Jesus Christ, Head and Shepherd of the Church. The
3525 fruitfulness of this sacramental character requires the personal and pastoral formation of the priest,
3526 who appropriates “the mind of Christ” and effectively communicates the mysteries of faith through
3527 his human personality as a bridge, through his personal witness of faith rooted in his spiritual life,
3528 and through his knowledge of faith. These dimensions of formation converge in pastoral formation.

3529 369. The basic principle of pastoral formation is enunciated in *Pastores Dabo Vobis*: “The

⁴³⁰ *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 57.

⁴³¹ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 119.

⁴³² See *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 120. “The pastoral care of the faithful demands that the priest have a solid formation and interior maturity.” *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 41.

3530 whole training of the students should have as its object to make them true shepherds of souls after
3531 the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, teacher, priest, and shepherd.”⁴³³ To be a true “shepherd of
3532 souls” means to stand with and for Christ in the community, the Christ who teaches, sanctifies,
3533 and guides or leads the community. The grace to be a shepherd comes with ordination. That grace,
3534 however, calls for the priest’s personal commitment to develop the knowledge and skills to teach
3535 and preach well, to celebrate the sacraments both properly and prayerfully, and to respond to
3536 people’s needs as well as to take initiatives in the community that holy servant leadership requires.
3537 Developing this knowledge and these skills while still in the initial stages of formation enables
3538 him as a priest to assume the role of a shepherd, who learns to recognize God at work in the lives
3539 of his flock and who, ever present to them as a “man of communion,” directs the flock to Christ.⁴³⁴

3540 370. The aim of pastoral formation—the formation of a “true shepherd” who teaches, sanctifies,
3541 and governs or leads—implies that such formation must include a number of essential elements:

3542 a. *Proclamation of the Word*: Pastoral formation needs to emphasize the proclamation
3543 of God’s Word, which indeed is the first task of the priest.⁴³⁵ This proclamation is
3544 aimed at the spiritual nourishment of the people and the conversion of sinners and is
3545 rooted in the seminarian’s or preacher’s ability to listen deeply to the lived experiences
3546 and realities of the faithful. This listening is followed by the preacher’s ability to
3547 interpret those lived experiences in the light of Sacred Scripture and the Church’s

⁴³³ *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 57, citing *Optatam Totius*, no. 4.

⁴³⁴ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 119.

⁴³⁵ See *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, no. 4.

3548 Tradition.⁴³⁶

3549 Understanding this intersection of God’s Word and human experiences, the
3550 seminarian as preacher initiates a lifelong mission and ministry of bringing God’s
3551 Word to the world through preaching and teaching. This requires that the seminarian
3552 couple the deepest convictions of faith with the development of his communication
3553 skills, so that God’s Word may be effectively expressed.

3554 b. *The sacramental dimension:* The celebration of the sacraments is central to the priest’s
3555 ministry. Although the seminarian cannot celebrate the sacraments as a priest does, he
3556 can accompany priests who do, and he can prepare those who participate in them. In
3557 this way, he begins to have a sense of what his sacramental ministry will entail. He
3558 will come to appreciate the sacraments as part of his future public ministry for the
3559 salvation of souls and understand more clearly how the Church’s sacraments,
3560 especially Penance and the Eucharist, nourish and sustain God’s people.

3561 c. *Ecclesial formation:* All pastoral formation, on the universal, diocesan, and parochial
3562 levels, must be profoundly ecclesial and missionary in nature. Notwithstanding the
3563 specific situation of seminarians of an institute of consecrated life or society of
3564 apostolic life, diocesan seminarians must be familiarized with the local Church that
3565 they will serve and especially with the priests, with whom they will be co-workers

⁴³⁶ See USCCB, *Fulfilled in Your Hearing*, 20; USCCB Committee on CCLV, *Preaching the Mystery of Faith*. See also St. John Paul II, letter to Archbishop John L. May, president of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, August 8, 1987; *Notes on the Correct Way to Present Jews and Judaism in Preaching and Catechesis in the Roman Catholic Church* (1985); *We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah* (1998).

3566 with the bishop.

3567 This dimension of pastoral formation means not only absorbing information
3568 about the local Church and presbyterate but, more importantly, cultivating bonds of
3569 affective communion and learning how to be at home in the place where one will serve
3570 and with the priests with whom one will serve.⁴³⁷ Seminarians should see their future
3571 priestly assignments as something wider than their own preference and choice and as
3572 a sharing in a far wider vision of the needs of the local Church. At the same time,
3573 seminarians must understand that their hearts and minds should bear a concern for the
3574 Universal Church as well.⁴³⁸

3575 Lastly, it is necessary that all priests have the heart of missionaries.⁴³⁹ The
3576 Church is truest to her identity when she is an evangelizing Church, because the very
3577 nature of the Church is missionary.⁴⁴⁰ Seminarians must be taught the concern for all
3578 Churches and people and should be given an opportunity to become acquainted with
3579 the work of the Pontifical Mission Societies, the Missionary Congregations of
3580 Religious, the home missions, and the missionary tradition over the centuries. An

⁴³⁷ “The example of priests who have preceded the candidates into the priesthood will be a great help and incentive. This will include the elderly, the pastors who lead the Diocese, as well as the emeritus Bishops. It is a matter of making the ‘pastoral tradition’ of the local Church known and appreciated, the better to ease their future entry into pastoral life, for it is there that they will be incardinated and exercise the ministry.” *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 123.

⁴³⁸ “Seminarians ought to be moved by an authentically Catholic spirit. While loving their own Diocese sincerely, they ought to be open to placing themselves at the service of the Universal Church or of other particular Churches.” *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 123. See CIC, c. 257 §1; CCEO, c. 352 §3.

⁴³⁹ See St. John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, no. 67.

⁴⁴⁰ See Second Vatican Council, *Ad Gentes Divinitus (Decree on the Church’s Mission Activity)*, in Austin Flannery, ed., *Vatican Council II: Volume 1: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, new rev. ed. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996), no. 2; *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 19.

3581 exposure to the Church’s missionary work during the years of formation can be
3582 beneficial to the seminarian, his discernment, and his future ministry.

3583 d. *The community dimension*: Pastoral formation must initiate seminarians to the care,
3584 guidance, and leadership that are extended to a community. The pastor is to be a man
3585 of communion and the shepherd of a flock. In the context of individualism in the
3586 United States, the concern is that “pastoral formation” and “pastoral care” might
3587 otherwise be limited to one-to-one contact.

3588 Pastoral ministry is primarily directed to a community and then to individuals
3589 within that community. Seminarians need to learn how to integrate and make available
3590 in service to God’s People all the formation they have received from all dimensions.
3591 This means the acquisition of certain skills, for example, an ability to communicate
3592 the mysteries of faith in clear and readily comprehensible language⁴⁴¹ using media
3593 and technology appropriate to the social context.

3594 At the same time, pastoral formation means more than acquiring skills. It
3595 signifies a level of personal development, fitting for a priest who acts in the person of
3596 Jesus Christ, Head and Shepherd, Servant and Spouse. Effective ministry means, for
3597 example, the cultivation of a flexibility of spirit that enables the priest to relate to
3598 people across a number of different cultures and theological and ecclesial outlooks.
3599 Formators must help the seminarian put on both the mind and heart of Christ, the Good
3600 Shepherd,⁴⁴² including exposing him to cultural and linguistic diversity. This exposure

⁴⁴¹ See CIC, c. 255; CCEO, c. 352 §2.

⁴⁴² See *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 58.

3601 enables him to more fully welcome newcomers to the culturally rich society in which
3602 we live, while at the same time encouraging these newcomers to maintain the richness
3603 of their own cultural identity.⁴⁴³

3604 e. *Collaboration with others*: Pastoral formation must give the seminarian the
3605 experience of working with various leaders within the Church, such as permanent
3606 deacons, the laity, and those in the state of consecrated life, so as to prepare him for
3607 fruitful collaboration with others as a priest.⁴⁴⁴

3608 f. *Catholic education*: Pastoral formation must help seminarians develop an awareness
3609 and appreciation of the necessity of the education and formation of our young people.
3610 Catholic schools, parochial religious education, and youth ministry are all important
3611 means of evangelization and catechesis.

3612 g. *A personal synthesis for practical use*: Another way of viewing pastoral formation is
3613 to see it as a process linking the elements of human, spiritual, and intellectual
3614 formation in such a way that they can be put to practical use for others, especially in
3615 a parish context.⁴⁴⁵ In a parish internship experience, for example, the seminarian
3616 draws on the experience before him in the parish and asks how his human, spiritual,
3617 and intellectual formation makes a difference. With due attention to the discipline of
3618 the Church, preaching might be one instance of a theoretical, personal, and practical

⁴⁴³ Useful resources for formation in cultural competency are noted in the section on the propaedeutic stage.

⁴⁴⁴ See *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 119.

⁴⁴⁵ See *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 58.

3619 synthesis. Other examples include evangelization, catechesis, and participation in the
3620 Church’s social justice ministry. In these and other ways, he revisits his formation and
3621 views it through the lens of practice, application, and impact.⁴⁴⁶

3622 h. *An initiation to various practical, pastoral experiences, especially in parishes:* It is
3623 important not to sacrifice human, spiritual, and intellectual formation for practical
3624 experience. Still, it is essential to cultivate pastoral formation and to enhance and
3625 integrate the other dimensions of formation so that the seminarian has opportunities
3626 to experience pastoral life firsthand.⁴⁴⁷

3627 Seminaries must initiate seminarians into pastoral experiences and pastoral
3628 reflection in a variety of ways including concurrent field placements and internships.
3629 In the vocational synthesis stage, reflection with the pastoral team at his assignment
3630 and with his formators will help the newly ordained deacon to synthesize and
3631 strengthen the integration of all he has experienced in formation.

3632 Whatever the setting, it is necessary that it facilitates learning. It is also
3633 necessary that there be a guide, mentor, or teacher who accompanies the seminarian
3634 and helps him to learn from the experience. In addition, there must be a skilled priest
3635 supervisor who helps the seminarian enter into the specifically priestly dimension of
3636 the ministry.⁴⁴⁸

3637 In these experiences, the seminarian first enters the scene as an observer, then

⁴⁴⁶ The goal is “to help the seminarian to acquire the inner freedom to live the apostolate as service, able to see the work of God in the hearts and lives of the people.” *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 119.

⁴⁴⁷ See *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 58; CCEO, c. 353.

⁴⁴⁸ See CIC, c. 258.

3638 raises questions to understand what is happening, and finally relates it to his other
3639 formation. He should then practice or try to do what the situation requires. After that,
3640 he can profit from supervision that helps him to assess what happened and gives him
3641 feedback.

3642 A process of theological reflection follows that identifies the faith assumptions
3643 and convictions underlying both the situation and the ministerial response.
3644 Theological reflection thus provides an opportunity for personal synthesis, the
3645 clarification of motivations, and the development of directions for life and ministry.

3646 And the final step, of course, is in fact to return to the ministry or pastoral
3647 situation, but now with more knowledge and ability and a better inner sense of
3648 direction because of an enriched spiritual life and a more deeply grounded sense of
3649 priestly identity. It is the responsibility of the diocesan bishop, the major superior, and
3650 the rectors to ensure that the Catholic, sacramental dimension of pastoral care is
3651 integral to all such programs in which seminarians participate.

3652 i. *Cultural sensitivity*: Pastoral formation must flow from and move toward an
3653 appreciation of the multifaceted reality of the Church.⁴⁴⁹ In the United States, this
3654 means a genuine appreciation of the diversity that marks the Catholic Church as well
3655 as the diversity that typifies this society generally. Seminarians need exposure to the
3656 many cultures and languages that belong to the Catholic Church in the United States.
3657 They should know how to welcome migrants and refugees pastorally, liturgically, and
3658 culturally. Simultaneously, they should assist newcomers to adapt themselves into the

⁴⁴⁹ See *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 59.

3659 mainstream without losing their own identity.⁴⁵⁰ Seminaries that serve ecclesiastical
3660 entities that have a constant flux of immigrants should ensure that seminarians take
3661 courses and receive pastoral experience that can help them to hone applicable
3662 ministerial skills to serve immigrants.

3663 j. *Religious pluralism*: Seminarians also need to know, appreciate, and learn how to
3664 work within the ecumenical and interfaith context that forms a backdrop for life in the
3665 United States and for the Catholic Church in this nation.

3666 k. *The poor*: If seminarians are to be formed after the model of Jesus, the Good Shepherd,
3667 who came “to bring glad tidings to the poor,” then they must have sustained contact
3668 with those who are privileged in God’s eyes—the poor, the marginalized, the sick,
3669 and the suffering. In the course of these encounters, they learn to cultivate a
3670 preferential option for the poor. They also need to become aware of the social contexts
3671 and structures that can breed injustice as well as ways of promoting more just contexts
3672 and structures.

3673 l. *Ministry to all walks of life*: As much as possible, pastoral assignments are to give
3674 seminarians experience with all age groups in the Church; it is important they are
3675 taught to bring the mercy and love of God to everyone. In particular, the sick, the
3676 elderly, the disabled, those who live in isolation (such as migrants), and prisoners

⁴⁵⁰ See Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, *Erga Migrantes (Instruction on the Love of Christ Towards Migrants, 2004)*. The propaedeutic stage section lists resources for formation in cultural sensitivity and intercultural competency.

3677 deserve particular attention.⁴⁵¹ The social sciences serve pastoral theology by assisting
3678 future priests in grasping the context of ministry in all walks of life.

3679 m. *Leadership development*: Pastoral formation means that seminarians learn how to take
3680 spiritual initiatives and direct a community into action or movement. That leadership
3681 also includes a dimension of practical administration. The pastoral formation program
3682 should provide opportunities for seminarians to acquire the basic administrative skills
3683 necessary for effective pastoral leadership, recognizing that programs of continuing
3684 education and ongoing formation will be necessary to equip newly ordained priests to
3685 assume future responsibilities as pastors.

3686 Additional leadership skills include an ability to manage the physical and
3687 financial resources of the parish, including educating parishioners about the Gospel
3688 value of stewardship, supervising staff and volunteers, making effective use of
3689 pastoral and finance councils, and organizing parochial life effectively to achieve the
3690 goals of evangelization. It is important to recognize that lay persons, especially those
3691 working at diocesan offices, bring an essential expertise. Further, the experience of
3692 seasoned pastors is invaluable, as is the development of working relationships
3693 between future priests and diocesan officials.

3694 n. *Professional standards*: Every seminarian must become capable of practicing and
3695 promoting the professional standards of ministerial behavior that are expected of all
3696 Church employees and volunteers, including ministerial codes of conduct and policies
3697 regarding conflict of interest, financial transparency, appropriate boundaries, and the

⁴⁵¹ See *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 124.

3698 use of social media.

3699 o. *The cultivation of personal qualities:* In the current situation in the United States,
3700 parish life is blessed with many people who serve: permanent deacons, consecrated
3701 men and women, professional lay ministers, volunteers, and members of parish and
3702 diocesan consultative bodies. To direct others and to work well with them, priests
3703 need a number of personal qualities. A seminarian who aspires to serve as a priest
3704 needs to cultivate these qualities in the process of pastoral formation. They include a
3705 sense of responsibility for initiating and completing tasks, time management abilities,
3706 a spirit of collaboration with others, an ability to facilitate resolution of conflicts, a
3707 flexibility of spirit that can make adjustments for new and unexpected circumstances,
3708 an availability to those who serve and those who are served, and finally zeal—or the
3709 ardent desire to bring all people closer to the Lord.

3710 371. Pastoral formation depends in great measure on the quality of supervision. To serve as a
3711 supervisor of seminarians calls for experience, competence, and generosity. Priests and others who
3712 serve as supervisors, mentors, and professors are an extension of the seminary. It is important that
3713 this identification with priestly formation become part of the mindset of pastoral staffs who serve
3714 to initiate seminarians to pastoral life. When onsite pastoral formation is seen as an integral part
3715 of priestly formation, then pastoral staffs must accept a special responsibility in the name of the
3716 Church for the direction and help they provide to seminarians. These priests and those associated
3717 with them must have certain qualities that include loyal commitment to priestly formation,
3718 patience, honesty, an almost instinctive way of thinking theologically in pastoral situations, and a
3719 habit of prayer that permeates their ministry.

3720 372. Clearly, pastoral formation not only connects with the other three dimensions of priestly
3721 formation but, in itself, provides a goal that integrates the other dimensions. Human formation
3722 enables priests to be bridges to communicate Jesus Christ, a pastoral function. Spiritual formation
3723 enables priests to persevere in and give depth to their ministry. Intellectual formation provides
3724 criteria and content to ensure that pastoral efforts are directed correctly, properly, and effectively.

3725 PROPAEDEUTIC STAGE BENCHMARKS

3726 373. Seminarians in the propaedeutic stage should develop “the dynamic of self-giving through
3727 experiences in the parish setting and charitable works.”⁴⁵² Hands-on experiences that include
3728 contact with the poor are appropriate at this stage. Benchmarks in the pastoral dimension include
3729 an awareness of the pastoral situation of the local community or ecclesiastical entity, as well as an
3730 awareness of the multicultural reality of the Church in the United States and the nature of the
3731 Universal Church. Priests serving in the United States, regardless of their cultural background,
3732 often serve in a multicultural setting. Working toward cultural competency, including language
3733 competency, to meet pastoral needs in his diocese should be part of the formation a seminarian
3734 receives during the propaedeutic stage, so as to lay a solid foundation for continued formation in
3735 cultural competency in later stages.⁴⁵³ Pastoral charity is at the heart of the Church and the

⁴⁵² *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 59.

⁴⁵³ Useful resources for formation in cultural competency include USCCB Committee on Cultural Diversity in the Church, *Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love—A Pastoral Letter Against Racism* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2018); USCCB Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Island Affairs, under the direction of the USCCB Committee on Cultural Diversity in the Church, *Encountering Christ in Harmony: A Pastoral Response to Our Asian and Pacific Island Brothers and Sisters* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2018); USCCB Committee on Cultural Diversity in the Church, *Building Intercultural Competence for Ministers* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2014); USCCB Committee on Cultural Diversity in the Church, *Best Practices for Shared Parishes: So That They May All Be One* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2013).

3736 priesthood; so demonstrating a genuine concern for others, a spirit of generosity, and a developing
3737 habit of self-donation are also necessary benchmarks to be achieved prior to the seminarian's
3738 acceptance into the discipleship stage.

3739 DISCIPLESHIP STAGE BENCHMARKS

3740 374. “As the Second Vatican Council reminds us, the nature and mission of priests must be
3741 understood within the Church, the People of God, the Body of Christ, the Temple of the Holy
3742 Spirit, for the service of which they consecrate their lives.”⁴⁵⁴ The foundation in pastoral
3743 knowledge, pastoral skills, and pastoral charity, which is laid during the discipleship stage, will
3744 enable the seminarian in the following stages to continue to develop the skills necessary for a life
3745 of service in the Church. Pastoral knowledge acquired in the discipleship stage includes
3746 competency in the performance of liturgical roles in the seminary community as well as knowledge
3747 gained by actively participating in formation seminars. Pastoral skills adequately demonstrated by
3748 the end of the discipleship stage include relating well with others, both in the seminary and in
3749 pastoral settings; freedom from prejudices against any class or group of individuals; a willingness
3750 to work with people of diverse cultural backgrounds; demonstrated generosity to the poor given
3751 his limited means; demonstrated accompaniment of the poor; the ability to tithe; and a willingness
3752 and ability to work collaboratively as a member of a team. It is necessary that seminarians
3753 demonstrate that they relate well to women in authority and in peer situations. Seminarians
3754 demonstrate good stewardship of personal and communal property. They demonstrate the capacity
3755 to take initiative in leadership situations and express a missionary spirit with a zeal for

⁴⁵⁴ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 30.

3756 evangelization.

3757 375. Pastoral knowledge and pastoral skills are meaningless if they are not accompanied by
3758 pastoral charity. To aid in the development of pastoral charity, it is necessary for the seminarian
3759 to demonstrate by the end of the discipleship stage a commitment to apostolic works of Christian
3760 charity and an awareness of issues surrounding global poverty.

3761 CONFIGURATION STAGE BENCHMARKS

3762 376. Pastoral opportunities in the seminary and in pastoral ministry allow the seminarian, with
3763 the trusting guidance of his formators, to recognize and hone his pastoral leadership skills. As a
3764 servant leader he is called constantly to look to Jesus as his model. “Jesus, the Son of God, has
3765 assumed the condition of a slave even unto death (cf. Phil 2:6-8). Before dying on the cross, he
3766 washed the feet of his disciples, commanding them to do the same (cf. Jn 13:1-17).”⁴⁵⁵ As a human
3767 instrument of Jesus, he can demonstrate that he is articulate, good at listening, and capable of
3768 public speaking. He can take on the role of a public person in the Church. His intensive study of
3769 theology during the configuration stage is integrated with his pastoral skills and provides the
3770 intellectual tools to become an effective homilist and teacher.

3771 377. In his pastoral assignments, the seminarian demonstrates availability to commit his life to
3772 priestly ministry, growing to demonstrate the same compassion, generosity, understanding, love
3773 for all (especially the poor), and zeal for the Kingdom that characterized the ministry of the Son
3774 of God. “This can be summed up as pastoral charity.”⁴⁵⁶ The seminarian demonstrates pastoral

⁴⁵⁵ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 38.

⁴⁵⁶ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 119.

3775 charity in his sensitivity and prudence with behavior and language in pastoral settings. He
3776 demonstrates multicultural sensitivity and openness to people of all ages, religious backgrounds,
3777 and social status in speech and action. He demonstrates the ability to collaborate with both men
3778 and women. He demonstrates the capacity to abide prudently by safe environment guidelines and
3779 to maintain proper boundaries in all relationships, especially with minors and other vulnerable
3780 individuals. If a seminarian violates appropriate boundaries with adults or minors, including the
3781 sexual abuse of a minor, immediate action must be taken in accordance with diocesan or eparchial
3782 policies, the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, and Canon and civil law.

3783 378. By the end of the configuration stage the seminarian can organize a homily around a central
3784 point. He can reflect theologically on pastoral issues. He learns that offering his life in service to
3785 the Church involves understanding and following the will of Christ in the person of his diocesan
3786 bishop or the competent authority of an institute of consecrated life or society of apostolic life. The
3787 seminarian's continued growth in confidence allows him to discern and continue to discover how
3788 God will use his unique talents in ordained ministry. Given that he will be entrusted with the
3789 temporal goods of the Church, he also demonstrates the ability to manage his own personal
3790 finances. He also remains free from unnecessary debt.

3791 VOCATIONAL SYNTHESIS STAGE BENCHMARKS

3792 379. As in the other stages, during this stage the pastoral dimension of formation can be
3793 presented in terms of pastoral knowledge, pastoral skills, pastoral discernment, and pastoral
3794 charity. Regarding pastoral knowledge, the deacon demonstrates "a capacity for critical
3795 observation" so that he "can discern true and false values, since this is an essential requirement of

3796 establishing a constructive dialogue with the world of today.”⁴⁵⁷ It is essential that he demonstrates
3797 the ability to celebrate the sacraments and liturgies of the Church validly, licitly, and confidently,
3798 and that he also develops a knowledge about and understanding of the role of various movements
3799 and apostolates that are so essential to the pastoral life of the Church. He understands and knows
3800 how to encourage and support consecrated life. He sees the importance of various ecclesial
3801 movements in the evangelistic life of the Church. He understands the centrality of the apostolate
3802 of Catholic education. He is open to the various unique and beautiful ways the Holy Spirit is
3803 working to bring about a new evangelization in our time.

3804 380. The pastoral skills he demonstrates prior to ordination to priesthood include the ability to
3805 craft and successfully deliver homilies,⁴⁵⁸ the ability to plan and execute pastoral projects, the
3806 ability to accompany engaged couples (e.g., marriage preparation) and newly married couples,⁴⁵⁹
3807 the ability to assist those seeking a declaration of matrimonial nullity, and the ability to work in an
3808 ecumenical and interreligious context in the United States.

3809 381. Central to the vocational synthesis stage is learning the prudence of discernment. This
3810 discernment is twofold, both personal and pastoral.⁴⁶⁰ Having first experienced how God leads him

⁴⁵⁷ *Ecclesia in America*, no. 40.

⁴⁵⁸ “The homily is the touchstone for judging a pastor’s closeness and ability to communicate to his people. We know that the faithful attach great importance to it, and that both they and their ordained ministers suffer because of homilies: the laity from having to listen to them and the clergy from having to preach them! It is sad that this is the case. The homily can actually be an intense and happy experience of the Spirit, a consoling encounter with God’s word, a constant source of renewal and growth.” *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 135. See also USCCB Committee on Clergy, Consecrated Life, and Vocations, *Preaching the Mystery of Faith: The Sunday Homily* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2012).

⁴⁵⁹ See *Amoris Laetitia*, nos. 205-222.

⁴⁶⁰ See *Ratio Fundamentalis*, nos. 43, 120.

3811 interiorly as he has sought his own conversion and grown in a life of prayer, the transitional deacon
3812 must now learn how God will lead him in his pastoral ministry, learning “to listen to the conscience
3813 that judges his movements and the interior urges that motivate his actions. In this way, the priest
3814 learns to govern himself using the spiritual and mental powers of mind and body. He grasps the
3815 sense of what can be done and what it would be better not to do, or what should not be done.”⁴⁶¹
3816 Ultimately, he learns to coordinate the many obligations of his office by growing in union with
3817 Christ’s pastoral charity.⁴⁶²

3818 382. This personal discernment moves to pastoral discernment, through which the future priest
3819 learns to “listen deeply to real situations and [is] capable of good judgment in making choices and
3820 decisions.” An “evangelical style of listening. . . . frees the pastor from the temptation to
3821 abstraction, to self-promotion, to excessive self-assurance, and to that aloofness, that would make
3822 him a ‘spiritual accountant’ instead of a ‘good Samaritan.’”⁴⁶³ This discernment is especially
3823 important today because of the complexity of situations in which people come needing the help of
3824 the Church. “The gaze of the Good Shepherd, who seeks out, walks alongside and leads his sheep,
3825 will form a serene, prudent and compassionate outlook in him. He will exercise his ministry with
3826 a disposition of serene openness and attentive accompaniment in all situations, even those that are

⁴⁶¹ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 43.

⁴⁶² “Priests who are perplexed and distracted by the very many obligations of their position may be anxiously enquiring how they can reduce to unity their interior life and their program of external activity. This unity of life cannot be brought about by merely an outward arrangement of the works of the ministry nor by the practice of spiritual exercises alone, though this may help to foster such unity. Priests can however achieve it by following in the fulfillment of their ministry the example of Christ the Lord, whose meat was to do the will of him who sent him that he might perfect his work.” *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, no. 14.

⁴⁶³ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 120.

3827 most complex, showing the beauty and the demands of Gospel truth, without falling into legalistic
3828 or rigorist obsessions.”⁴⁶⁴

3829 383. Finally, pastoral formation must lead the transitional deacon to the desire to make a gift of
3830 his life for his people in pastoral charity, in imitation of Christ, the Good Shepherd. This will lead
3831 to an ability to convey the teachings of the Church in pastoral settings (e.g., teaching, preaching,
3832 and pastoral counseling) with charity and zeal at all times and to embrace a preferential option for
3833 the poor in pastoral settings. This desire will strengthen him, over the years of priestly ministry, to
3834 make a generous gift of himself without counting the cost.

3835 384. This stage, which leads to the transitional deacon’s public expression of his free, conscious,
3836 and definitive intention for the priesthood, must also encourage him to find a suitable time for his
3837 spiritual preparation to priestly ordination⁴⁶⁵ and to show his positive disposition for ongoing
3838 formation with his future brother priests after ordination.

3839 NORMS FOR PASTORAL FORMATION

3840 385. Every seminary is required to offer a coordinated program of pastoral formation that forms
3841 seminarians who are able, as shepherds of Christ’s flock, to serve men and women in answering
3842 their call to holiness.⁴⁶⁶

3843 386. The pastoral formation program should be an integral part of the seminary curriculum.

⁴⁶⁴ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 120.

⁴⁶⁵ See *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 77.

⁴⁶⁶ See *Lumen Gentium*, section V; *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 89.

3844 387. The goals and objectives of the pastoral formation program must be clearly stated and must
3845 serve as the basis for the evaluation of seminarians in this area. This statement should also include
3846 a description of professional ministerial ethics.

3847 388. The coordinator of pastoral formation must be a priest, possess the requisite parochial
3848 experience and professional expertise, and participate in professional organizations in the area of
3849 seminary pastoral formation. The coordinator must model a love for priestly ministry in
3850 the Church.

3851 389. The pastoral formation program should provide seminarians with a broad exposure to
3852 supervised pastoral service, with primary emphasis on parish ministry.

3853 390. Determinations about the concurrent or intensive residency (onsite) program should be
3854 made by the seminary in collaboration with the ecclesiastical entity it serves. Seminaries and
3855 ecclesiastical entities that make provision for onsite experiences are also responsible for ensuring
3856 that these experiences help seminarians develop skills and attitudes that will enhance their future
3857 priestly ministry and that when ecumenical in nature—for example, clinical pastoral education
3858 (CPE)—these experiences are respectful of Catholic teaching, especially on moral or ethical
3859 issues. It is the responsibility of the competent authority to ensure that the Catholic, sacramental
3860 dimension of pastoral care is integral to all such programs in which seminarians participate.

3861 391. Supervision, theological reflection, and evaluation are necessary components of an
3862 effective pastoral program. Although theological reflection can help the development of pastoral
3863 skills, its primary purpose is to interpret pastoral experience or activity in light of Sacred Scripture,
3864 Church teaching, personal faith, and pastoral practices. Reflection of this kind should become a

3865 lifelong habit in priestly ministry.

3866 392. Onsite supervisors should be carefully selected with an eye to their dedication to the
3867 Church and respect for the priesthood. They should be taught the skills of pastoral supervision and
3868 evaluation. In choosing pastoral internships, summer placements and their supervisors, bishops
3869 and vocation personnel should consider carefully the particular needs of individual seminarians
3870 and the available time and supervisory skills of the supervisors.

3871 393. In addition to onsite supervisors, others collaborating in the various ministries, as well as
3872 those served, should be asked to participate in the evaluation of seminarians in ministry.

3873 394. The pastoral formation program should provide the seminarians with experience in
3874 working with and for the poor. Participation in ecumenical and interreligious programs of social
3875 action and outreach is also helpful.⁴⁶⁷

3876 395. The program should include placements in which seminarians will experience the richness
3877 and diversity of the various cultural, racial, and ethnic groups that compose the Catholic Church
3878 in the United States. Such placements can also provide opportunities to sharpen language skills.

3879 396. However the pastoral formation program is organized, it must pay attention to the
3880 seminarians' need to root a life of service in personal prayer. Seminarians need supervision in
3881 developing the habit of prayer in the context of pastoral activity and in learning to establish a
3882 rhythm of life that provides an appropriate balance of prayer, service, study, exercise, and leisure.
3883 Priest supervisors and mentors should be chosen who model this balance in their own life and

⁴⁶⁷ See Second Vatican Council, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, no. 12; St. John Paul II, *Ut Unum Sint*, nos. 40 and 43.

3884 ministry. Evaluation of seminarians in ministerial placements should include observations leading
3885 to a growing accountability in these areas.

3886 397. The seminary should keep before its diocesan seminarians the prospect of their future
3887 incardination into a particular diocese and its presbyterate. Seminarians should have opportunities
3888 and receive encouragement to learn about their diocesan structures and offices as well as to become
3889 acquainted with the priests who compose the presbyterate.

3890 398. During the discipleship stage, seminaries should provide a required program of apostolic
3891 activity, under the direction of a qualified coordinator who is a priest. Evaluation of seminarians
3892 should include consideration of their apostolic zeal in pastoral formation programs. They should
3893 be encouraged to understand the relationship of their apostolic activity to their personal, spiritual,
3894 and academic formation as well as their ongoing discernment of a priestly vocation.

The Ongoing Formation of Priests

3895

3896

3897 399. The stages of priestly formation can appropriately be viewed as an initiation to sacramental
3898 life, not unlike the process envisioned in the Order of Christian Initiation for Adults. Just as the
3899 catechumen is introduced into a lifetime relationship of missionary discipleship with Jesus Christ,
3900 so too—for the one who is being formed for a lifetime of priestly service in the Church—“the term
3901 ‘ongoing formation’ is a reminder that the one experience of discipleship of those called to
3902 priesthood is never interrupted.”⁴⁶⁸ Sacramental preparation and initiation necessarily includes a
3903 period of postsacramental catechesis or mystagogia. Once celebrated, the sacraments are meant to
3904 be lived out, to be integrated into all dimensions of one’s life, and to be a source of continuing
3905 transformation. For those who prepare for priestly ordination and for those who serve the
3906 formational process, this pattern of sacramental initiation implies the analogous necessity of
3907 helping seminarians commit themselves wholeheartedly to ongoing formation after ordination.
3908 The process and journey of the ongoing formation of priests are both necessary and lifelong. Their
3909 purpose is not only the spiritual growth of the priest himself but also the continued effectiveness
3910 of his mission and ministry. Only by continually conforming their interior lives and their ministry
3911 to the life of Jesus are priests able to live a lifetime of healthy discipleship. This cannot be done
3912 unless priests, through prayer, continue to penetrate more deeply into the mystery of Christ.⁴⁶⁹

⁴⁶⁸ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 80.

⁴⁶⁹ “Pastoral charity demands that priests, if they are not to run in vain, should always work within the bond of union with the bishops and their fellow priests. If they act in this manner, priests will find unity of life in the unity of the Church’s own mission. In this way they will be united with their Lord and

3913 400. The basic principle of ongoing formation for priests is contained in *Pastores Dabo Vobis*:
3914 “one can speak of a vocation ‘within’ the priesthood. The fact is that God continues to call and
3915 send forth, revealing his saving plan in the historical development of the priest’s life and the life
3916 of the Church and of society. It is in this perspective that the meaning of ongoing formation
3917 emerges. Permanent formation is necessary in order to discern and follow this constant call or will
3918 of God” within the context of the universal call to holiness of all disciples of Jesus Christ.⁴⁷⁰

3919 401. The configuration stage and the vocational synthesis stage should lay the foundations for
3920 the ongoing formation of priests across a lifetime of ministry. This is done in several ways:

3921 a. The seminary formation program must be imbued with a vision of life after ordination.
3922 “It is particularly important to be aware of and to respect the intrinsic link between
3923 formation before ordination to the priesthood and formation after ordination.”⁴⁷¹

3924 b. Planning for ongoing formation, and learning how to plan, begins in the seminary.
3925 “Long-term preparation for ongoing formation should take place in the major
3926 seminary, where encouragement needs to be given to future priests to look forward to
3927 it, seeing its necessity, its advantages and the spirit in which it should be undertaken,
3928 and appropriate conditions for its realization need to be ensured.”⁴⁷²

3929 c. It is important that the seminary emphasize to seminarians that ongoing formation is

through him with the Father in the Holy Spirit, and can be filled with consolation and exceedingly abound with joy.” *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, no. 14.

⁴⁷⁰ *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 70.

⁴⁷¹ *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 70.

⁴⁷² *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 70.

3930 a regular and necessary aspect of the life of priestly ministry. This conviction,
3931 imparted to the seminarians and to ecclesiastical entities alike, will encourage them to
3932 engage in the process of ongoing formation in all its dimensions—human, spiritual,
3933 intellectual, and pastoral.

3934 d. The seminary must be vigilant that programs lead to future habits of study, prayer,
3935 and formational involvement.

3936 e. On occasion, the seminary may provide personnel and resources for transition
3937 programs into priesthood. Or it may invite newly ordained and more mature priests
3938 back to reflect on their experience of transition and to engage in mystagogical
3939 catechesis that focuses on the Rite of Ordination and subsequent experiences of
3940 ministry. The seminary could serve as a fraternal meeting point for ongoing formation.

3941 f. The seminary may assist the transitional deacon to develop a plan of ongoing
3942 formation for his first years of priestly ministry.

3943 402. In the United States, the seminary—in its various formational efforts—ought to lead
3944 seminarians to the vision and practice of ongoing formation contained in Canon Law⁴⁷³ and in the
3945 USCCB document *The Basic Plan for the Ongoing Formation of Priests*, which is the standard for
3946 those who are ordained priests. In the latter document, the texts dealing with the newly ordained
3947 are especially important for the formational journey of priests as they begin their ministry.⁴⁷⁴

⁴⁷³ CIC, c. 279; CCEO, c. 372.

⁴⁷⁴ “It is desirable that accompaniment by confreres of exemplary life and pastoral zeal be promoted, so that they can help young priests to experience a cordial and active participation in the life of the entire diocesan presbyterate.” *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 83.

3948 403. A newly ordained priest who begins his first pastoral assignment and the process of
3949 ongoing formation should expect to find the following elements:

3950 a. Formal and informal welcoming by the diocesan bishop and presbyterate

3951 b. A first pastor who is sensitive to the needs of the newly ordained and able and willing
3952 to offer advice and direction

3953 c. Some group interaction with peers to reflect on the process of transition and the
3954 development of priestly identity and sources of support

3955 d. A mentor, as considered appropriate or necessary, with whom the newly ordained can
3956 reflect on ministry and life as a priest

3957 404. The newly ordained priest should seek a spiritual director and celebrate the Sacrament of
3958 Penance regularly.

3959 405. In the process of beginning priestly ministry and life, significant formational roles are
3960 played by the diocesan bishop, the director of ongoing formation for priests, and the entire
3961 presbyterate. In a particular way, the bishops in the United States have committed themselves to
3962 work individually in their dioceses/eparchies and, at the national level, to strengthen programs for
3963 ongoing formation and assist priests in living out their vocations in faithful and integral ways.⁴⁷⁵
3964 Personal accompaniment, so critical in the stages of initial formation, is just as critical throughout
3965 the lifetime of the priest. Concrete expressions of accompaniment for the priest, in addition to
3966 those listed above, include retreats and conferences, a common table, common life, and priestly

⁴⁷⁵ *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, art. 17.

3967 associations.⁴⁷⁶

⁴⁷⁶ See *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 88.

Seminaries

3968

3969 INTRODUCTION

3970 406. Seminaries are to be a continuation in the Church of the apostolic community gathered
3971 around Jesus.⁴⁷⁷ This basic organizing principle means the seminary is first and foremost a learning
3972 community of the disciples of Jesus, that is, “a community of formation, wherever it is found.”⁴⁷⁸
3973 At the same time, the seminary is a community of charity and friendship, where fraternal bonds
3974 are anchored in genuine relationships to the Lord and his Body, the Church. Finally, the seminary
3975 is a worshipping and praying community that finds its source and summit in the celebration of the
3976 Eucharist.

3977 GOVERNANCE

3978 407. Governance is the responsibility of the diocesan bishop or major superior.⁴⁷⁹ To fulfill this
3979 responsibility, the diocesan bishop or major superior works in collaboration with the seminary
3980 board or boards and with others the bishop or major superior may delegate. The governing
3981 authority establishes the mission and exercises general oversight of the seminary; and it appoints
3982 the rector of the seminary, who remains in close collaboration with the board of the seminary
3983 regarding governance. The seminary should have a precise program “characterized by its being
3984 organized and unified, [and] by its being in harmony or correspondence with one aim which

⁴⁷⁷ See *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 60.

⁴⁷⁸ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 188.

⁴⁷⁹ In the case of an interdiocesan seminary, the governance pertains to the bishops involved (see CIC, cc. 243, 259, 263). However, one of the bishops may be designated the moderator of the group.

3985 justifies the existence of the seminary: preparation of future priests.”⁴⁸⁰

3986 408. In their efforts to “organize and unify,” diocesan bishops and major superiors, for their
3987 respective seminaries, ensure that the directives of the Holy See and the USCCB are fully and
3988 effectively implemented through the mission, goals, and programs of the seminary; through long-
3989 range planning; through the appointment of the rector; and through seminary policies. In keeping
3990 with the principle of subsidiarity, the governing authority does not normally enter directly into the
3991 day-to-day operation of the seminary, since such duties are the responsibility of the rector.⁴⁸¹

3992 The Role of the Diocesan Bishop or Major Superior

3993 409. The diocesan bishop or the major superior oversees the implementation of the *Decree on*
3994 *the Training of Priests* and this *Program of Priestly Formation*, and he ensures that the seminary
3995 statutes correspond to Canon Law. The diocesan bishop or major superior discharges these
3996 responsibilities personally and through the seminary board(s), the rector, and the rest of the
3997 seminary community. He is to visit the seminary regularly and exercise vigilance over it and the
3998 formation of his seminarians. A relationship of trust between the diocesan bishop or major superior
3999 and the rector will help to ensure that the bishop or major superior does not “undermine the Rector
4000 and other formators in the discernment of the vocations of the candidates and their adequate
4001 preparation.”⁴⁸² He should encourage and support the rector and the rest of the seminary
4002 community in their dedication to this apostolate.⁴⁸³ Bishops and major superiors are encouraged

⁴⁸⁰ *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 61.

⁴⁸¹ See CIC, c. 260.

⁴⁸² *Ratio Fundamental*, no. 128.

⁴⁸³ See CIC, c. 259 §2; CCEO, cc. 336 §1, 356 §2.

4003 to be generous in offering priests to serve in seminaries who exemplify the qualities that
4004 seminarians would be well-suited to emulate.

4005 410. The diocesan bishop or major superior ensures that the seminary offers a program in accord
4006 with the mind of the Church—including an approved written Rule of Life.

4007 411. It is essential that frequent and open communication be maintained among ecclesiastical
4008 authorities, the rector, and the rest of the seminary community to discuss the changing needs of
4009 the Church, the progress of seminarians, and developments in the seminary program.

4010 412. At times, seminarians for the diocesan priesthood may attend seminaries owned and
4011 operated by institutes of consecrated life or societies of apostolic life and not by a diocese. In such
4012 instances, the local diocesan bishop has canonical responsibility for the welfare of all diocesan
4013 seminarians in attendance there.⁴⁸⁴ Accordingly, he should be in regular communication with the
4014 seminary rector and be accorded a voice in the governance of the seminary.

4015 413. The formation of seminarians preparing for the priesthood in institutes of consecrated life
4016 or societies of apostolic life is the responsibility of each institute or society and is regulated by the
4017 constitutions and other canonical legislation or directives pertaining to them, as well as by the
4018 directives of this *Program of Priestly Formation*.

4019 414. Most seminaries sponsored by some form of consecrated life are collaborative ventures of
4020 several religious institutes or societies. Responsibility for the canonical form of governance
4021 belongs to those who hold ecclesiastical jurisdiction. The statutes of such institutions must be

⁴⁸⁴ See USCCB Committee on Priestly Formation, *Relationship of the Local Ordinary (Bishop) to the Seminary Owned and Operated by Religious* (1981).

4022 approved by the competent authority. The Holy See must approve priestly formation centers
4023 formed by a number of religious institutes or societies.

4024 Seminary Boards

4025 415. A variety of structures is legitimately used in the governance of seminaries in the United
4026 States. In situations with multiple boards, the bylaws of each should establish the clear jurisdiction
4027 and purpose of each board or corporation. Care is to be taken to guarantee that the bylaws of these
4028 corporations and boards are canonically proper and in accord with civil law, providing for suitable
4029 ecclesiastical oversight.

4030 416. An advisory board can provide a valuable service to the seminary by offering wise counsel
4031 to the diocesan bishop or major superior on governance of the seminary in accord with Church
4032 law, this *Program of Priestly Formation*, and the standards of the seminary's accrediting agency.

4033 417. Members of the board should represent the clergy, religious, and laity who share a concern
4034 for priestly formation in all its dimensions. They should be selected from the local Churches and
4035 from the religious institutes or societies that the seminary serves. The board should reflect the
4036 multicultural composition of the Church in the region and of the dioceses or eparchies it serves.

4037 418. Boards should have a well-articulated policy and an active practice of board development,
4038 so that board members can fulfill their responsibilities more effectively. This policy should include
4039 a provision for the regular evaluation of the board's own performance.

4040 419. When seminary boards have fiduciary responsibility for the seminary, the members should
4041 be well prepared for that role and discharge their responsibility effectively.

4042 Formation of a Governance Policy

4043 420. The process used to form governance policy⁴⁸⁵ should be clearly defined by the diocesan
4044 bishop or major superior in consultation with the seminary board(s) and the rector. The process
4045 should clearly identify the scope of governance authority and responsibility, while protecting the
4046 principle of subsidiarity and avoiding intrusion into administrative matters of the seminary.

4047 421. The most important administrative policy is the mission statement of the seminary. Each
4048 mission statement must incorporate a clear understanding of and commitment to the formation of
4049 men for the ministerial priesthood. It is also important for the seminary to respond to the priorities
4050 of local Churches and the communities it serves through the establishment of appropriate policies.

4051 422. Proposals regarding governance policy are often initiated at the level of the seminary
4052 community where concrete needs and problems occur. After review by the seminary leadership,
4053 policy proposals of major importance are presented by the rector to the seminary board and to the
4054 appropriate ecclesiastical authority, for approval and promulgation as particular legislation.
4055 Consultation of the seminary community, including seminarians themselves, should be
4056 characteristic of policy making in seminaries.

4057 PLANNING

4058 423. Planning provides for the long-range stability of the seminary, the effective implementation

⁴⁸⁵ “Governance policy” in this document refers to those norms, laws, and decrees that strictly speaking flow from the rights and obligations inherent in the authority of the diocesan bishop or major superior. Administrative policies are the responsibility of those deputed for the internal operation of the seminary, particularly the rector. Administrative policy means operational rules, regulations, and procedures that implement the mission and governance policy approved by the diocesan bishop or major superior.

4059 of its mission, and good stewardship of all associated resources. A realistic conception of the
4060 seminary's future should include effective planning regarding personnel, facilities, enrollment,
4061 finances, budget, and development. In their efforts to plan for the seminary's future, bishops and
4062 major superiors should enlist the assistance of the seminary board as well as the rector and other
4063 appropriate seminary leadership.

4064 424. Sacred Scripture imposes on ecclesiastical authorities the obligation of finding worthy and
4065 faithful co-workers in the service of God's People.⁴⁸⁶ Diocesan bishops and major superiors should
4066 encourage exemplary priests to enter the seminary apostolate and be willing to release them for
4067 such service. "Formators are needed who can ensure their full-time presence and who, above all
4068 else, are witnesses of how to love and serve the people of God, giving themselves without reserve
4069 for the Church."⁴⁸⁷ Seminaries should cooperate with diocesan bishops and major superiors in the
4070 preparation of priest formators.⁴⁸⁸ Deacons, consecrated men and women, and lay men and women
4071 should also be encouraged to prepare for work in seminary formation and receive assistance when
4072 appropriate. Ecclesiastical entities and seminaries must honestly plan for the financial commitment
4073 that this requires. "The presence of women in the Seminary journey of formation has its own
4074 formative significance. They can be found as specialists, on the teaching staff, within the
4075 apostolate, within families, and in service to the community."⁴⁸⁹

4076 425. Facilities should be adequate to the seminary's needs and suitable for an institution of either

⁴⁸⁶ See 1 Tm 5:22; *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 65.

⁴⁸⁷ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 49.

⁴⁸⁸ "Those who are marked out to become formators need a specific preparation and generous dedication to this important task." *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 49.

⁴⁸⁹ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 151.

4077 secondary or higher education. The seminary buildings should provide an atmosphere conducive
4078 to human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral formation.

4079 426. Effective formation requires other physical resources, such as libraries, laboratories,
4080 pastoral practica chapels, computer facilities, and other information technology centers.

4081 427. Adequate enrollment is a critical component of a healthy priestly formation program.
4082 Consistently low enrollment may endanger the effectiveness of community life and learning. It
4083 will normally result in poor stewardship of resources and may affect the morale of the seminary
4084 community. Careful monitoring of the enrollment of qualified seminarians is critical for realistic
4085 planning. In those seminaries where enrollment has been consistently low for a protracted period,
4086 consolidation into regional or interdiocesan seminaries should be investigated.

4087 428. A seminary must have sufficient financial resources to achieve its mission effectively, both
4088 now and in the future. The raising of annual operating income as well as endowments⁴⁹⁰ should be
4089 planned and developed in such a way as to allow the rector to fulfill his essential role as pastor of
4090 the seminary community.⁴⁹¹

4091 STRUCTURE

4092 429. The structure of the seminary community depends on the nature, size, model, and level of
4093 the priestly formation program. It is important that seminary structures and the responsibilities of
4094 the various members of the seminary community be clearly defined in light of the mission of the

⁴⁹⁰ See CIC, c. 264; CCEO, c. 341.

⁴⁹¹ See CIC, c. 262; CCEO, c. 336 §2.

4095 seminary. Descriptions given here should be adapted to each program.

4096 Leadership Principles of the Seminary Community

4097 430. All seminary leaders should be conscious that they are forming seminarians and modeling
4098 for them pastoral leadership and collaboration within a community. The exercise of authority
4099 should be clearly seen as service. Leadership is always relational:

4100 a. It values the life and potential of each member of the community.

4101 b. It nurtures and challenges growth in members of the community in accord with the
4102 Gospel and the Tradition of the Church.

4103 c. It models mature Christian behavior.

4104 d. It values interior responsibility over simple external conformity.

4105 e. It enables others to be of service to the community.

4106 f. It respects and values the dignity of others.

4107 g. It is always a ministry of love.

4108 h. It promotes communication within the seminary community and between the
4109 seminary and the ecclesiastical entities it serves.

4110 i. It operates by the principle of subsidiarity.

4111 j. It follows doctrinal and canonical principles related to the sound stewardship of
4112 resources, respect for donor intent, and the observance of all social teaching and

4113 employment laws.⁴⁹²

4114 431. Policies governing the seminary should be made by the appropriate authorities in an
4115 atmosphere of trust and understanding. While adhering to the goals of priestly formation, the
4116 leadership of the seminary community should respond appropriately to the needs and suggestions
4117 of seminarians. They should foster initiative as well as individual and group responsibility by
4118 observing the principles of subsidiarity and collaboration, while demonstrating forthright and
4119 confident leadership. Seminary leaders have a unique opportunity to serve as models for
4120 seminarians.

4121 Seminary Community Leadership Roles

4122 432. Seminaries may use different titles to describe necessary seminary community leadership
4123 roles. Whatever the determination of titles, the functions described below are needed for an
4124 effective priestly formation program. In keeping with the unique nature and purpose of the
4125 seminary, major posts within the seminary community are normally assigned to priests. All
4126 seminary leaders should have adequate preparation and the experience necessary to carry out the
4127 responsibilities they are assigned. They should understand the mission of the Church and seminary
4128 and be supportive of it.

4129 433. Seminary leaders bear a special responsibility for planning, organizing, directing, and
4130 evaluating the implementation of this *Program of Priestly Formation* in their respective
4131 institutions.

⁴⁹² See CIC, cc. 1267 §3, 1286 1°; CCEO, cc. 1016 §1, 1030, 1°.

4132 Roles Within the Community of Formators

4133 434. The community of formators must include a rector and a spiritual director.⁴⁹³ The number
4134 of formators must necessarily be sufficient for, and proportionate to, the number of seminarians.
4135 Thus, often there will be more than one spiritual director, vice rector, and other priest formators as
4136 necessary to provide personal accompaniment to the individual seminarians. To provide excellent
4137 and competent priest formators, diocesan bishops and religious ordinaries should be generous in
4138 encouraging priests to prepare for seminary work or in releasing their priests for this ministry, even
4139 if the seminary is not their own.

4140 **Rector**

4141 435. The rector, always a priest, serves as the pastor of the seminary community.⁴⁹⁴ He is to be
4142 “distinguished by prudence, wisdom and balance, someone highly competent, who coordinates the
4143 educational endeavor in the governance of the Seminary.”⁴⁹⁵ As the diocesan bishop or major
4144 superior’s direct delegate for the formation of seminarians, he serves as the father in the seminary
4145 community and takes an active part in the accompaniment of seminarians throughout their
4146 formation process.

4147 436. He sets the direction and tone of the seminary program. By creating a climate of mutual
4148 confidence and trust, he elicits the full cooperation and involvement of all members of the seminary
4149 community. His job description should be carefully drawn to ensure that he has the authority to
4150 discharge properly the responsibilities of his office. Given the extent and gravity of these

⁴⁹³ See CIC, c. 239; CCEO, cc. 338-339.

⁴⁹⁴ See CIC, c. 262; CCEO, c. 336 §2.

⁴⁹⁵ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 134.

4151 responsibilities, the diocesan bishop or major superior should ensure that the rector not have
4152 additional obligations outside the seminary community that detract from his primary duties.

4153 437. The rector is appointed by the appropriate ecclesiastical authority, who, according to local
4154 statutes, seeks consultation with the seminary board and other interested parties. The rector is to
4155 make a Profession of Faith⁴⁹⁶ and take the Oath of Fidelity at the beginning of his term. The rector
4156 is responsible to the diocesan bishop or competent authority of the institute of consecrated life or
4157 society of apostolic life and must consult with him in matters of major concern. As a rule the rector
4158 is also responsible to a seminary board, if a legal corporation exists. If the board is advisory, he
4159 should give thoughtful consideration to its counsel and take advantage of its expertise in
4160 administering the seminary. The rector continues in office until (1) a notification in writing of the
4161 lapse of a predetermined time, if the appointment was made for a specified term;⁴⁹⁷ (2) a
4162 resignation that is validly submitted and accepted;⁴⁹⁸ (3) legitimate removal by the competent
4163 authority for a just reason, if appointed for an indefinite period of time, according to the procedure
4164 established in the seminary's governance documents;⁴⁹⁹ or (4) privation as a penalty for a canonical
4165 offense effected according to the norm of law.⁵⁰⁰

4166 438. The rector serves as chief administrative officer and principal agent responsible for the

⁴⁹⁶ See CIC, c. 833, 6°.

⁴⁹⁷ See CIC, cc. 184-186; CCEO, cc. 965-966.

⁴⁹⁸ See CIC, cc. 187-189; CCEO, cc. 967-971.

⁴⁹⁹ See CIC, c. 193 §3; CCEO, c. 975 §2.

⁵⁰⁰ See CIC, c. 196; CCEO, c. 978.

4167 implementation of the seminary program and Rule.⁵⁰¹ He should also maintain close contact with
4168 the competent authorities of the ecclesiastical entities that the seminary serves. In addition, he is
4169 often responsible for public relations and development, though he may delegate these tasks to
4170 others. Although these duties may call him away from the seminary, it is important that the rector
4171 serve as leader of the internal life of the seminary both as pastor and priestly model.

4172 439. The spiritual and personal welfare of the seminary community is a central responsibility of
4173 the rector. Regularly, the rector should give conferences to the seminary community. He should
4174 frequently preside at prayer and at the Eucharist. He is not to hear the sacramental confessions of
4175 students residing in the same house unless a student freely requests it in particular cases.⁵⁰²

4176 440. The rector is to be carefully prepared “in sound doctrine, suitable pastoral experience and
4177 special training in spirituality and teaching methods.”⁵⁰³ The rector should be a model of priestly
4178 virtue, able to live himself the qualities he encourages in seminarians. A man of sound and prudent
4179 judgment, the rector should give evidence to a love of and dedication to the Church’s service.

4180 441. Depending on the size and structure of the seminary, the rector may also assume some of
4181 the responsibilities of other roles mentioned in this chapter, with the exception of the spiritual
4182 direction of seminarians.

4183 **Vice Rector**

4184 442. The vice rector, always a priest, assists the rector in areas determined by the rector and by

⁵⁰¹ See CIC, cc. 238 §2, 260, 261; CCEO, cc. 335 §2, 338 §2.

⁵⁰² See CIC, c. 985.

⁵⁰³ *Optatam Totius*, no. 5.

4185 the seminary's administrative structure. Tasks vary according to the needs of the particular
4186 seminary.⁵⁰⁴ He must "show strong pedagogical gifts, a joyful love of the service he renders and a
4187 spirit of collaboration."⁵⁰⁵

4188 **Coordinator of Spiritual Formation**

4189 443. This priest, who must be appointed by the diocesan bishop or major superior, assists the
4190 rector by coordinating the entire spiritual formation program, giving it unity and direction.

4191 444. The coordinator of spiritual formation makes provision for the individual spiritual direction
4192 of all seminarians and coordinates the regular visits of outside confessors to the seminary.⁵⁰⁶ He
4193 meets regularly with the spiritual directors, providing supervision and assistance for their work.

4194 445. Either the coordinator of spiritual formation or the coordinator of liturgy provides for the
4195 liturgical life and prayer of the seminary community, making provision for the daily celebration
4196 of the Eucharist, the Liturgy of the Hours (or the Divine Praises, in the Eastern Catholic Churches),
4197 and opportunities for celebration of the Sacrament of Penance. He is also responsible for retreats
4198 and days of recollection, making sure they are well planned and carefully executed.

4199 **Spiritual Directors**

4200 446. Seminary spiritual directors, who must always be priests and are designated for this

⁵⁰⁴ See CIC, c. 239 §1.

⁵⁰⁵ Congregation for Catholic Education, "Directives Concerning the Preparation of Seminary Educators," *Origins* 23:32 (January 27, 1994): no. 45. See *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 135.

⁵⁰⁶ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 136.

4201 function by the diocesan bishop or major superior,⁵⁰⁷ are responsible for the individual spiritual
4202 direction of seminarians. Spiritual direction “is one of the privileged ways of accompanying each
4203 seminarian in discerning his vocation.”⁵⁰⁸ Those who act in this capacity should be exemplary
4204 priests who are dedicated to the Church’s service and to the ministerial priesthood. They should
4205 be wise, seasoned priests and should possess some formal training in spirituality and related areas
4206 of expertise. Individual spiritual directors should continue to develop their skills and abilities
4207 through ongoing education programs and through inservice discussions with their fellow directors,
4208 taking care to preserve confidentiality in matters of the internal forum.

4209 447. Since spiritual direction takes place in the internal forum, the relationship of seminarians
4210 to their spiritual director is a privileged and confidential one. Spiritual directors may not participate
4211 in the evaluation of those whom they currently direct or whom they directed in the past.⁵⁰⁹

4212 **Coordinator of Human Formation**

4213 448. The coordinator of human formation is a priest who coordinates the human formation
4214 program of the seminary⁵¹⁰ in collaboration with the rector, other members of the community of
4215 formators, professors, and specialists. He works in the external forum as an agent of the rector.
4216 The coordinator of human formation may also oversee the discipline of the seminary and the
4217 implementation of the Rule of Life. He should be exemplary for his personal maturity, pastoral

⁵⁰⁷ See CIC, c. 239 §2; CCEO, c. 339 §1.

⁵⁰⁸ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 136.

⁵⁰⁹ See CIC, c. 240 §2; CCEO, c. 339 §3.

⁵¹⁰ See *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 137; see also *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, nos. 43-44.

4218 experience, and appreciation of the psychological and human sciences.

4219 449. The coordinator oversees the annual evaluation process of seminarians. The evaluation of
4220 seminarians can benefit from a team or group of priest formators assisting in the process.

4221 450. The coordinator of human formation makes provision for psychological and counseling
4222 services in areas distinct from spiritual direction. These services are made available to seminarians
4223 for their personal and emotional development in preparation for the priesthood. The counseling
4224 given should be consistent with the policy and practice of the total seminary program. The
4225 coordinator should ensure that those employed as counselors for seminarians are well versed in
4226 and supportive of the Church's expectations of seminarians, including a sound understanding and
4227 acceptance of Christian anthropology.

4228 **Priest Formators**

4229 451. Priest formators monitor seminarians assigned to them in all four areas of formation, and
4230 they assist in the evaluation process. Priest formators must be exemplary in their dedication to the
4231 Church and to the ministerial priesthood. Priest formators function exclusively in the external
4232 forum and are not to engage in matters that are reserved for the internal forum and the spiritual
4233 director.

4234 **Coordinator of Intellectual Formation**

4235 452. "The intellectual formation of the candidates is the responsibility of the Rector and of the
4236 community of formators. With the participation of the 'coordinator of intellectual formation,' the
4237 formators shall ensure the cooperation of the professors and other experts, and shall meet regularly
4238 with them, in order to address teaching-related matters, so as to promote more effectively the

4239 integral formation of the seminarians.”⁵¹¹ It is important that the rector and the coordinator of
4240 intellectual formation ensure that intellectual coursework is understood by all members of the
4241 seminary community as formation and that it is seen as an element integral to the other dimensions
4242 of formation; it is not the only or even the primary dimension of formation.

4243 453. In the case of collaborative seminaries, the coordinator of intellectual formation
4244 coordinates the academic work of the seminarians at the affiliated college or university.

4245 454. The coordinator of intellectual formation, a priest, who can also be the academic dean,
4246 normally should possess a terminal degree, and he assists the rector in intellectual formation,
4247 including the hiring and development of professors.

4248 455. The coordinator of intellectual formation may be assisted by a registrar, who is responsible
4249 for maintaining the academic records of students.

4250 **Coordinator of Pastoral Formation**

4251 456. The coordinator of pastoral formation must always be a priest. He assists the rector in the
4252 pastoral formation of seminarians. This priest coordinates the pastoral activities of seminarians, so
4253 that they engage effectively in pastoral programs, reflect on their work, and gain deeper insight
4254 into the mission of the Church.

4255 457. The coordinator provides an evaluation of the seminarians’ work, calling attention to their
4256 strengths and to their potential for general and specialized ministries.

4257 458. The coordinator provides adequate pastoral supervision for the seminarians, including the

⁵¹¹ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 141.

4258 orientation and training of adjunct field education supervisors, who work directly with the
4259 seminarians in their pastoral assignments.

4260 **Specialists**⁵¹²

4261 459. Priest formators are assisted by permanent deacons, consecrated men and women, and lay
4262 faithful who, in addition to their outstanding “human qualities and competence in their field,” are
4263 people of profound faith. They provide “valuable and professional assistance” in the work of
4264 priestly formation.⁵¹³

4265 460. Seminarians benefit from the mentorship of specialists who are permanent deacons,
4266 consecrated men and women, and laypersons.⁵¹⁴ Specialists serve as mentors only according to
4267 their proper expertise. They offer recommendations, opinions, and points of view to the rector and
4268 formation team, without making a formal judgment as to the suitability of the seminarians for the
4269 priesthood or advancement to the next stage of formation.⁵¹⁵ Seminaries should seek ways to fully
4270 integrate these mentoring relationships into the communal life of the seminary so that they have a
4271 genuine impact on the formation of the seminarians. These relationships add another facet of
4272 accompaniment to priestly formation distinct from spiritual direction and external formation
4273 advising, which are always done by priests.

4274 *Academic Dean*

⁵¹² The list of specialists that follows is not meant to be exhaustive but gives description and guidance regarding some common specialist positions a seminary could employ.

⁵¹³ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 146.

⁵¹⁴ See *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 143.

⁵¹⁵ See *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 146.

4275 461. The academic dean, under the direction of the coordinator of intellectual formation,
4276 administers the academic program of the seminary in all its aspects: curriculum, courses, methods
4277 of instruction, and the academic quality and performance of professors and students.

4278 *Librarian*

4279 462. The librarian administers the library according to the standards of the respective
4280 professional accrediting and educational associations. The librarian ordinarily reports to the
4281 academic dean.

4282 *Development and Public Relations Officer*

4283 463. A person may be appointed to assist the rector with planning, communications, public
4284 relations, and fundraising. This officer makes the seminary known to the general public—
4285 especially to priests, vocation directors, schools, parishioners, and others—in an effort to attract
4286 new seminarians and gain support for the seminary.

4287 *Business Manager*

4288 464. The business manager or treasurer assists the rector in the stewardship of the financial and
4289 physical resources of the seminary.⁵¹⁶ The business manager or treasurer assists the rector in
4290 budget preparation and implementation as well as supervision of service personnel.⁵¹⁷ This
4291 individual must be an expert in financial affairs and absolutely distinguished for honesty. The
4292 business manager or treasurer administers the goods of the seminary under the authority of the

⁵¹⁶ See CIC, c. 239 §1; CCEO, c. 338 §1.

⁵¹⁷ Given that the seminary is a juridic person in canon law (see CIC, c. 238 §1; CCEO, c. 335 §1), it is necessary for the seminary to have its own finance council or at least two counselors who assist the business manager in fulfilling his or her function. See CIC, c. 1280.

4293 rector, in accord with the budget determined by the appropriate authorities; from the income of the
4294 seminary, this specialist meets expenses that the rector or others designated by him have
4295 legitimately authorized. At the end of the year, the business manager or treasurer must render an
4296 account of receipts and expenditures to the seminary board or other legitimate authority of the
4297 seminary.⁵¹⁸

4298 465. This individual is to perform his or her duties with diligence. Specifically, this individual
4299 must do the following:

4300 a. Be vigilant that no goods placed in his or her care in any way perish or suffer damage;
4301 to this end the business manager or treasurer is, to the extent necessary, to arrange
4302 insurance contracts.

4303 b. Ensure that the ownership of ecclesiastical goods is safeguarded in ways that are valid
4304 in civil law.

4305 c. Observe the provisions of Canon Law and civil law and the stipulations of the donor
4306 or lawful authority; the Church might also unjustly suffer damage if Canon and civil
4307 law are disregarded.

4308 d. Seek accurately and at the proper time the income and produce of the goods, guard
4309 them securely, and expend them in accordance with the wishes of the rector, seminary
4310 board, or lawful norms.

4311 e. Pay, at the proper time, the interest due by reason of a loan or pledge, and take care

⁵¹⁸ See CIC, c. 1284 §2, 8°.

- 4312 that in due time the capital is repaid.
- 4313 f. With the consent of the rector or seminary board, make use of money which is surplus
4314 after payment of expenses and which can be profitably invested for the purposes of
4315 the seminary.
- 4316 g. Keep accurate records of income and expenditures.
- 4317 h. Draw up an account of his or her administration at the end of the year.
- 4318 i. Keep in order and preserve in a convenient and suitable archive the documents and
4319 records establishing the rights of the seminary to its goods; where conveniently
4320 possible, authentic copies must be placed in the seminary archives.⁵¹⁹

4321 **Seminary Professors**⁵²⁰

4322 **Conditions of Service**

4323 466. All professors of the seminary are approved and appointed by the competent authority on
4324 recommendation of the rector according to the approved statutes of the institution.⁵²¹ To teach on
4325 an ecclesiastical faculty, a professor requires a canonical mission from the appropriate
4326 ecclesiastical authority.⁵²² In both cases, such commissioning represents a collaborative link

⁵¹⁹ See CIC, c. 1284 §2, 1°-9°.

⁵²⁰ This section applies to both priests and laity who have teaching responsibilities in the seminary.

⁵²¹ See *Optatam Totius*, no. 5; CIC, c. 253 §1; CCEO, cc. 340 §1, 351.

⁵²² See *Veritatis Gaudium*, no. 27 §1; St. John Paul II, *Sapientia Christiana (On Ecclesiastical Universities and Faculties*, 1979); CIC, c. 818; CCEO, c. 644.

4327 between the professor and the Magisterium. “The theologian’s code of conduct, which obviously
4328 has its origin in the service of the Word of God, is here reinforced by the commitment the
4329 theologian assumes in accepting his office, making the profession of faith, and taking the oath of
4330 fidelity.”⁵²³ Professors are an integral part of the mission of the seminary community. “The
4331 professors should be regarded as part of a single teaching community, and true educators. They
4332 ought to guide seminarians towards that unity of knowledge that finds its fulfillment in Christ, the
4333 Way, the Truth and the Life.”⁵²⁴

4334 467. The professors should have advanced, preferably terminal, degrees in their teaching
4335 areas.⁵²⁵ Professors in the sacred sciences, as well as philosophy, should possess a doctorate or
4336 licentiate from a university or institution recognized by the Holy See.⁵²⁶ Priests who serve as
4337 professors should have appropriate experience in pastoral ministry.

4338 468. As a general rule, professors for significant portions of the course of studies in the major
4339 theological disciplines should be priests.⁵²⁷

4340 469. Seminaries should establish long-range plans for development of professors. These must

⁵²³ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Donum Veritatis (Instruction on the Ecclesial Vocation of the Theologian)*, 1990), no. 22, www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19900524_theologian-vocation_en.html. See CIC, c. 833 7°; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Formula to be used for the Profession of Faith and for the Oath of Fidelity to assume an office to be exercised in the name of the Church (*Professio fidei et iusiurandum fidelitatis*), AAS 90 (1998): 542-551.

⁵²⁴ *Ratio Fundamental*, no. 142.

⁵²⁵ Due consideration must be given to the requirements of national or regional accrediting bodies.

⁵²⁶ See CIC, c. 253 §1; CCEO, cc. 340 §1, 351.

⁵²⁷ See *Ratio Fundamental*, no. 143.

4341 include plans for recruiting and supporting professors, as well as plans for professors to improve
4342 their teaching skills and scholarship.

4343 470. The nature of undergraduate study as a part of seminary formation during the discipleship
4344 stage, and the breadth of expertise required for a liberal arts education, means that the dedicated
4345 presence of many laymen and laywomen will play an especially important role at this level. By
4346 modeling a love for the Church as she is, a wholehearted fidelity to her teaching, a loyalty to the
4347 pope and bishops, an appreciation of the priesthood, and a collaborative spirit in ministry, men and
4348 women in consecrated life and laymen and laywomen who teach subjects in the sacred sciences
4349 make an important contribution to priestly formation on all levels.

4350 471. All professors must be dedicated to the total formation of the seminarians. Professors teach
4351 first by the quality of their lives. Professors—that is, clerics, men and women in consecrated life,
4352 and laity—must therefore witness to the Gospel in their own lives.

4353 472. The rector will determine the appropriate means of consulting professors in the process of
4354 evaluating seminarians.

4355 473. Every professor influences seminarians' growth in priestly maturity. Love for the Eucharist
4356 as a source and sign of unity within the seminary program must be clearly evident in the life and
4357 attitude of professors. Therefore, regular participation in seminary liturgies is encouraged.

4358 474. Some of the seminary professors share responsibility in all areas of the priestly formation
4359 program, including the spiritual and the pastoral formation of men. Priest professors, who also
4360 serve as spiritual directors and priest formators, should as a rule reside in the seminary (insofar as
4361 this is possible).

4362 475. It is important to recruit well-trained and experienced professors from diverse ethnic,
4363 racial, and cultural backgrounds. This is especially important in those sections of the United States
4364 in which the Church and seminary community reflect such diversity.

4365 476. If the seminary has a multicultural community, the professors should be encouraged to
4366 participate in programs and workshops that acquaint them with the specific situation and
4367 formational needs of their seminarians.

4368 477. To inculcate in seminarians a sensitivity for issues of social justice, the seminary professors
4369 first must possess an awareness of the significance of questions of peace, justice, and respect
4370 for life.

4371 478. Because of the importance of a pastoral orientation in seminary programs, some
4372 involvement by professors in parish ministry or in other apostolic activities complements their
4373 work in the seminary. Likewise, seminary professors are often called upon to help with diocesan
4374 projects and responsibilities. In this way, the seminary professors contribute to the local Church
4375 or to the religious institute or society they serve. However, the demands of the seminary are to be
4376 given priority.

4377 **Organization**

4378 479. A unity and harmony of effort should be present among all professors. To achieve this
4379 state, professors' handbooks are to outline and clearly describe expectations and responsibilities,
4380 rights, benefits, review, and grievance procedures.

4381 480. To maintain qualified professors in accordance with ecclesiastical and professional
4382 standards, there should be a review process that regularly evaluates performance and offers

4383 direction for professional development, including participation in professional organizations.
4384 Review processes should consider the professor's teaching skills, academic competence, scholarly
4385 development (including publications), participation in professional societies, manner of life,
4386 personal dedication to the goals of priestly formation, and commitment to the Church.

4387 481. Seminaries are expected to hold regularly scheduled meetings of the full body of
4388 professors. Both standing and ad hoc committees should regularly present appropriate and
4389 pertinent reports to the full body of professors. The leadership of the seminary and the professors
4390 should periodically discuss the seminary's mission to educate men for the ministerial priesthood
4391 in light of the Church's doctrinal understanding of the presbyteral office.

4392 482. Together, professors should engage in a continuing evaluation of the academic programs
4393 of the seminary. This evaluation must consider the changing needs of the seminarians, the local
4394 Church in which they will serve, and the norms of higher education. To accomplish this continual
4395 renewal, professors need to be in regular communication with academic and ecclesial groups
4396 outside the seminary.

4397 483. The seminary should provide time and financial support for seminary professors to
4398 maintain professional competence in their fields of specialization through participation in
4399 professional associations, study leaves, and sabbaticals.

4400 484. An appropriate staff of secretaries should be provided for the professors and formators to
4401 free them for the more essential tasks of their assigned offices and for personal renewal, serious
4402 scholarship, and seminarian direction.

4403 **Doctrinal Responsibility**

4404 485. Professors must have a firm foundation in the teaching of the Church. A fundamental task
4405 of the professor is to present Catholic doctrine as formulated by the authoritative teaching office
4406 of the Church.⁵²⁸

4407 486. The freedom of expression required by the exigencies of theological science must be
4408 respected, as well as the ability to do the research required for its progress.⁵²⁹ Seminary statutes
4409 are to provide for appropriate freedom of inquiry that allows and encourages study and reflection
4410 in teaching and publishing. This freedom must be understood in the context of the purpose of the
4411 seminary and balanced by the rights of the seminarians, the institution, and the Church. “The
4412 freedom proper to theological research is exercised within the Church’s faith. . . . In theology this
4413 freedom of inquiry is the hallmark of a rational discipline whose object is given by Revelation,
4414 handed on and interpreted in the Church under the authority of the Magisterium, and received
4415 by faith.”⁵³⁰

4416 487. Professors must be mindful of the varying degrees of theological certainty and must
4417 carefully distinguish between their own insights and other theological developments or opinions
4418 on the one hand and Catholic doctrine on the other.

4419 488. Professors’ handbooks should contain clear procedures for the resolution of conflicts
4420 regarding the correctness of theological expression on the part of professors in accord with existing

⁵²⁸ See *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 67.

⁵²⁹ See CIC, c. 218; CCEO, c. 21.

⁵³⁰ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Donum Veritatis*, nos. 11-12.

4421 ecclesiastical norms.⁵³¹

⁵³¹ See USCCB, *Doctrinal Responsibilities: Approaches to Promoting Cooperation and Resolving Misunderstandings Between Bishops and Theologians* (1989); *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 67.

Conclusion

4422

4423 489. The Catholic Church in the United States is deeply grateful to those dedicated to the noble
4424 enterprise of priestly formation, mindful of its cherished heritage of seminary life. Likewise, the
4425 bishops of the Church in the United States are confident that this essential task will continue in a
4426 more effective way in the ongoing years of the third Christian millennium and are firmly
4427 committed to this mission. It is their hope that this sixth edition of the *Program of Priestly*
4428 *Formation* will serve this goal. Christ the Good Shepherd still calls men to follow him, to “put out
4429 into deep water” (Lk 5:4), and to respond to his invitation to become a priest after his own heart,
4430 eager to be transformed through human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral formation.

4431 490. May the Lord who has begun this good work among us bring it to completion.⁵³²

4432

⁵³² See Phil 1:6. See also *Ordination of a Bishop, of Priests, and of Deacons*, no. 125.