The Formation of Third Year Theologians

FALL 2013
August 26, 2013
   Evening of Reflection (Community, Bishop Fabre)

August 28, 2013
   Rector’s Conference (Community)

August 30, 2013
   Transitions in Ministry

September 6, 2013
   Discerning a Life Decision

September 13, 2013
   Preparing to Take the Promise of Chaste Celibacy

September 18, 2013
   Rector’s Conference (Community)

September 20, 2013
   Seminarian Association Business Meeting

September 27, 2013
   Preparing to Take the Promise of Obedience

September 29, 2013
   Evening of Reflection (Community, Dr. Neal)

October 4, 2013
   Simplicity of Life

October 11, 2013
   Scriptural Reflections on the Diaconal Rite of Ordination

October 11, 2013
   A Pox on Both Your Houses: Moving Beyond Conservative and Liberal Labels in the Church
   (Father Mark Massa, SJ)

October 16, 2013
   Rector’s Conference (Community)

October 18, 2013
   Seminarian Association Business Meeting

October 25, 2013
   History and Symbolism of Clerical Attire
November 1, 2013
   Day of Recollection (Community, Father Fortunato)

November 8, 2013
   The Social Teaching of the Church and the New Evangelization: Implications for Parish Ministry
      (Global Workshop)

November 15, 2013
   Pastoral Integration: The Homily as Locus of Integration and Assimilation

November 20, 2013
   Rector’s Conference (Community)

December 1, 2013
   Advent Evening of Reflection (Community, Archbishop Aymond)

SPRING 2014

January 7-12, 2014
   Annual Retreat (Father Champagne)

January 14, 2014
   Rector’s Conference (Community)

January 15, 2014
   Ecumenical Presentation (Community)

January 31, 2014
   Saint Thomas Aquinas Lecture (Community, Father James Schall, SJ)

February 7, 2014
   The Deacon as Servant

February 14, 2014
   Preaching the New Evangelization: Homily, Exegesis, and the Modern Culture

February 17, 2014
   The Synod of Bishops and the New Evangelization (Community)
      Donald Cardinal Wuerl

February 21, 2014
   Seminarian Association Business Meeting

February 28, 2014
   The Deacon as a Promoter of Lay Spirituality

March 5, 2014
   Day of Recollection (Community, Mother Galindo)

March 7, 2014
   The Deacon as Minister of Pastoral Charity
March 14, 2014
Seminarian Association Business Meeting

March 20-21, 2014
Ministering to Those with a Homosexual Orientation (Community)

March 21, 2014
Interpersonal Relationships in a Parish Setting

March 28, 2014
Growth in Prayer

March 30, 2014
Desert Day of Prayer (Community, Father Palermo)

April 7, 2014
Preparing Ourselves for the Triduum (Community)

April 4, 2014
Seminarian Association Business Meeting

April 11, 2014
Pastoral Competence

April 22, 2014
Easter Day of Recollection (Community, Bishop Provost)

April 23, 2014
Rector’s Conference (Community)

April 25, 2014
The Rule of Life During the Parish Internship
CONFERENCE ONE (TRANSITIONS IN MINISTRY)

Seminarians in their third year of theological studies historically have reported a difficult time “getting back into the swing of formation” after the energy they expend in Clinical Pastoral Education or other pastoral assignments. This conference will present practical insights about making transitions in ministry.

Discussion Questions
1. What is my level of tiredness, physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually, as I return to seminary formation following my summer ministry experience?
2. Was I faithful to my rule of life during the summer? Did I progress or regress in living my rule of life?
3. Where do I go and what do I do for healthy refreshment and rest?
4. Do I feel passive about formation, as if I am floating through seminary, or am I investing myself in formation as something worthwhile?

Formational Reflection
It is important not to sacrifice human, spiritual, and intellectual formation for practical experience. Still, it is essential to cultivate pastoral formation and to enhance and integrate other dimensions of formation so that the seminarian has opportunities to experience pastoral life firsthand (PPF 239.7).

Scripture Reflection
My son, conduct your affairs with humility, and you will be loved more than a giver of gifts. Humble yourself the more, the greater you are, and you will find favor with God. For great is the power of God; by the humble he is glorified. What is too sublime for you, seek not, into things beyond your strength search not. What is committed to you, attend to; for what is hidden is not your concern. With what is too much for your meddle not, when shown things beyond human understanding (Sirach 3:17-22).
CONFERENCE TWO (DISCERNING A LIFE DECISION)
During the third year of theological studies, seminarians are admitted to Candidacy and asked to declare their intention for diaconal orders. Despite being in formation for many years, some seminarians become anxious and uncertain when the time for commitment arrives. This conference will discuss time-honored spiritual principles for discerning a life decision.

Discussion Questions
1. What are the major reasons why I entered seminary? Why have I remained in seminary?
2. What is the deepest desire of my heart in terms of a life vocation?
3. Am I spiritually and humanly free to choose a vocation?
4. What affirmations have I received, interior and exterior, in support of a vocation to priesthood? What are any vocational questions or doubts?

Formational Reflection
Seminarians who lack the positive qualities for continuing in formation should not be advanced in the seminary program. They should be advised to leave the seminary. Seminarians not recommended for advancement should be notified as early as possible and in a constructive manner (PPF 287). Seminarians are accountable for all aspects of priestly formation within the parameters of the external forum (PPF 275).

Scripture Reflection
Rely not on your wealth; say not: “I have the power.” Rely not on your strength in following the desires of your heart. Say not: “Who can prevail against me?” for the Lord will exact the punishment. Say not: I have sinned, yet what has befallen me?” for the Lord bides his time. Delay not your conversion to the Lord, put it not off from day to day (Sirach 5: 1-4, 8).
CONFERENCE THREE (PREPARING TO TAKE THE PROMISE OF CHASTE CELIBACY)
As the third year men prepare for diaconate ordination, this conference will reflect upon how affective maturity and a healthy psychosexual development brings to human relationships “a strong, lively, and personal love for Jesus Christ” (PPF 79; PDV 44). Having clarity in their sexual identity and with prudence in their relationships, seminarians should be able to renounce anything that is a threat to chaste priestly celibacy, so that as future deacons and priests they will be able to live celibate chastity with faithfulness and joy and with realistic expectations about the challenges to the celibate life which they will confront.

Discussion Questions
1. How has my understanding of spiritual fatherhood grown?
2. What does it mean to care for the Bride of Christ?
3. What does it mean to give of myself to the Church?
4. What are some of the challenges to priestly celibacy (e.g., internet pornography), and how am I dealing with them?
5. How do I conduct myself affectively in the presence of others?

Formational Reflection
Spiritual formation in celibacy cultivates the evangelical motivations for embracing this commitment and way of life: the undivided love of the Lord, the spousal love for the Church, apostolic availability, and the witness of God’s promises and Kingdom (PPF 110.12).

Scripture Reflection
Beloved, let us love one another because love is of God; everyone who loves is begotten of God and has knowledge of God. The man without love has known nothing of God, for God is love. Love has no room for fear; rather, perfect love casts out all fear. And since fear has to do with punishment, love is not yet perfect in one who is afraid. We, for our part, love because he first loved us (1 John 4: 7-8, 18-19).
CONFERENCE FOUR (PREPARING TO TAKE THE PROMISE OF OBEDIENCE)
Seminarians in their third year will examine their willingness to cooperate and to be held accountable as signs of maturity in obedience as works of grace, goodwill, and human effort that play a part in the life of every priest. Seminarians should demonstrate a spirit of joyful trust, open dialogue, and generous cooperation with those in authority. They are to manifest in heart and mind adherence to the Word of God, the Church’s Magisterium, and their own bishop or superior, as they seek the truth in charity. (PDV 27-28; PPF 100-102).

Discussion Questions
1. Do I get resentful or angry when I am told to do something I don’t want to do?
2. How do I respond when my bishop, superior, or formation advisor gives me an assignment that I find exceedingly difficult? What do I do when I think I know better than my superiors? How willing am I to submit my will to that of my bishop/superior?
3. Since coming into the seminary, how have I grown in living out obedience?
4. What aspects of pastoral ministry do I find difficult and should my bishop/superior know of this in advance in order to avoid any future conflicts?
5. How do I possess a sense of personal freedom about myself that will enable me to live a life of obedience without hesitation?
6. Do my brother seminarians see in me a person who is docile and humble? In what ways?

Formational Reflection
Seminaries should articulate that priestly obedience begins with humble and willing cooperation in seminary life, docility to direction, and wholehearted compliance with the seminary’s policies and programs. This will prepare seminarians to cooperate with their bishop or superior, especially in the very practical matter of undertaking and faithfully fulfilling whatever sacred duty is given to them (PPF 102).

Scripture Reflection
Let everyone obey the authorities that are over him, for there is no authority except from God, and all authority that exists is established by God. As a consequence, the man who opposes authority rebels against the ordinance of God; those who resist thus shall draw condemnation down upon themselves. Rulers cause no fear when a man does what is right but only when his conduct is evil. Do you wish to be free from the fear of authority? Do what is right and you will gain its approval, for the ruler is God’s servant to work for your good. Only if you do wrong ought you to be afraid. It is not without purpose that the ruler carries the sward; he is God’s servant, to inflict his avenging wrath upon the wrongdoer. You must obey, then, not only to escape punishment but also for conscience’s sake (Romans 13:1-5).
CONFERENCE FIVE (SIMPLICITY OF LIFE)
Seminarians in their third year of theological studies will examine the development of a healthy asceticism demonstrated by the appropriate stewardship of resources and the avoidance of extravagance in the use and possession of material goods. In order to be in communion with the underprivileged, the poor and the weakest among us, the candidate for the priesthood must be “capable of witnessing to poverty with a simple and austere lifestyle, having learned the generous renunciation of superfluous things” (PDV 30).

Discussion Questions
1. What is my understanding of simplicity of life, and how am I living this in the present time?
2. How do simplicity and poverty lead to greater charity and ongoing almsgiving?
3. How does my freedom lead me to charitable dialogue in the New Evangelization?
4. In living a simple life-style, how does my use of technology – email, facebook, internet, smart phones, texting – demonstrate detachment?
5. As I embrace this ancient charism of the Church, do I promote the preferential option for the poor?

Formation Reflection
Human formation should cultivate a spirit of generosity, encouraging the seminarian to become a man for others and to curb expectations of entitlement. Manifestations of undue materialism and consumerism in the seminarian’s behavior should be confronted and corrected (PPF 97).

Scripture Reflection
This is what I mean, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; no more can corruption inherit incorruption. The corruptible body must be clothed with incorruptibility, this mortal body with immorality. When the corruptible frame takes on incorruptibility and the mortal immorality the will the saying of Scripture be fulfilled: “Death is swallowed up in victory.” “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” The sting of death is sin, and sin gets its power from the law. But thanks be to God who has given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15: 50, 53-57).
CONFERENCE SIX (SCRIPTURAL REFLECTIONS ON THE DIACONAL RITE OF ORDINATION)

Seminarians in their third year of theological studies will prepare for diaconal ordination by studying the text of the rite of ordination. Particular attention will be paid to the passages from Sacred Scripture quoted or alluded to in the rite of ordination, as well as the mystagogy of the symbolic actions, such as the giving of the book of the Gospels.

Discussion Questions
1. What passages from Sacred Scripture are alluded to in the rite? What is their theological significance when used in this liturgical context?
2. What particular lines from the rite of ordination stood out for you personally as you read through it? Why?
3. Do any parts of the ordination rite particularly excite you or make you nervous? Why?
4. Do you have any reflections on the importance of the commitment to celibacy in the rite?
5. How has the scriptures helped you understand the servant dimension of diaconal ministry?

Formation Reflection
A judgment concerning the suitability of a candidate to receive the diaconate as a transitional step to priesthood includes a judgment concerning his suitability for priestly ministry. It is not possible to admit a candidate to the diaconate in the face of doubts concerning his suitability for the priesthood. For this reason the judgment reached by the scrutiny undertaken with a view to ordination to the diaconate is decisive (PPF 284).

Scripture Reflection
Jesus—fully aware that he had come from God and was going to God, the Father who had handed everything over to him—rose from the meal and took off his cloak. He picked up a towel and tied it around himself. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples’ feet and dry them with the towel he had around him. Thus he came to Simon Peter, who said to him, “Lord, are you going to wash my feet?” Jesus answered, “You may not realize now what I am doing but later you will understand.” Peter replied, “You shall never wash my feet!” If I do not wash you,” Jesus answered, “you will have no share in my heritage.” “Lord,” Simon Peter said to him “then not only my feet, but my hands and head as well.” Jesus told him, “The man who has bathed has no need to wash [except for his feet]; he is entirely cleansed, just as you are; though not all” (John 13:3-10).
CONFERENCE SEVEN (HISTORY AND SYMBOLISM OF CLERICAL ATTIRE)
One of the major moments in the life of third year theologian is the entry, by way of ordination, into the clerical state. One of the most visible signs of this new state in life is clerical attire. Seminarians in their third year of theological studies will consider the history and symbolism of clerical attire in the Old Testament, early Church, medieval, and modern periods, and reflect on the meaning and diversity of contemporary clerical attire.

Discussion Questions
1. Which aspects of clerical attire from any of the periods in history struck you as theologically significant? Why?
2. Does clerical attire have any personal meaning for you?
3. What feelings do you have as you think about wearing clerical attire? What opportunities do you expect to encounter? What practical challenges do you expect to face?
4. What are the pastoral implications of wearing contemporary clerical attire in today’s world? How would you explain the meaning of clerical attire to the lay faithful or to a secular person, say, on an airplane, who asks you: ‘Why do you dress that way’?
5. How do you envision wearing clerical attire in the parish? When would you feel it appropriate to not wear clerical attire?

Formation Reflection
Priestly life lived in configuration of Jesus Christ, Head and Shepherd, must necessarily manifest and give witness to the radicalism of the Gospel. In other words, priests are called to a way of life that gives evident and transparent witness to the power of the Gospel at work in their lives (PPF 26).

Scripture Reflection
Are you not aware that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone destroys god’s temple, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, and you are that temple. Let no one delude himself. If any one of you thinks he is wise in a worldly way, he had better become a fool. In that way he will really be wise, for the wisdom of this world is absurdity with God. Scripture says, “He catches the wise in their craftiness” (1 Corinthians 3:16-19).
CONFERENCE EIGHT (PASTORAL INTEGRATION: THE HOMILY AS LOCUS OF INTEGRATION AND ASSIMILATION)

One of the places where the deacon brings his four-fold formation and preparation to bear is the homily. Assuming the role of preacher, he is to deliver a homily that, if done well, will call upon his intellectual formation, utilize his pastoral sensitivity to the people of his flock, and engage his spiritual and human formation as well. In other words, the Homily is the *locus integritatis*, where seminary formation finds its consummation. Seminarians in their third year of theological studies will consider how to integrate the four pillars of formation in preparing homilies.

**Discussion Questions**

1. What should go into Sunday Homily preparation? How many hours should be devoted to preparation?
2. What sources should be consulted? What resources will you use in preparing homilies?
3. How does one integrate the various pillars of formation into this preparation?
4. How scholarly (or not) should a homily be?
5. What are the basic dos and don’ts of giving a homily?
6. What strengths and weaknesses do you anticipate seeing in yourself as a homilist?

**Formation Reflection**

This proclamation ministry is aimed at the conversion of sinners and is rooted in the seminarian/preacher’s ability to listen deeply to the lived experiences and realities of the faithful. This listening is followed by the preacher’s ability to interpret those lived experiences in the light of Sacred Scripture and the Church’s Tradition (PPF 239).

**Scripture Reflection**

As for myself, brothers, when I came to you I did not come proclaiming God’s testimony with any particular eloquence or “wisdom.” No, I determined that while I was with you I would speak of nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified. When I came among you it was in weakness and fear, and with much trepidation. My message and my preaching had none of the persuasive force of “wise” argumentation, but the convincing power of the Spirit. As a consequence, your faith rests not on the wisdom of men but on the power of God (1 Corinthians 2:1-5).
CONFERENCE NINE (THE DEACON AS SERVANT)

The Second Vatican Council identified the duties of the deacon: "to administer baptism solemnly, to be custodian and dispenser of the Eucharist, to assist at and bless marriages in the name of the Church, to bring Viaticum to the dying, to read the Sacred Scripture to the faithful, to instruct and exhort the people, to preside over the worship and prayer of the faithful, to administer sacramentals, to officiate at funeral and burial services" (LG 29). In addition to these sacramental, liturgical, and catechetical duties, the deacon is ordained for the ministry of charity of justice. Seminarians preparing for the priesthood will live the diaconal order for an extended period of time hence he understands that before he exercises the ministry of Christ as Head of the Church, he must first exercise the ministry of Jesus as servant.

Discussion Questions
1. What is the connection between the ministries of lector and acolyte and the order (and attendant duties) of the deacon?
2. What is the connection between the larger role of service performed by the deacon and the special role he plays in the liturgical celebration of the Church?
3. What virtues are especially called for in the deacon’s service at the altar?
4. Is there any aspect of diaconal ministry, as envisioned by Vatican Council II, which you think tends to be neglected or underemphasized? How can you live out the vision?
5. How does your diocese understand and view the ministry of deacon?

Formation Reflection
A life of gratitude for the material blessings of God’s creation coupled with a simple and generous lifestyle that cares for and is in solidarity with the poor, works for universal justice, makes itself ready and available for all those in need, administers the goods of the community with utmost honesty, and offers a courageous prophetic witness in the world (PPF 26f).

Scripture Reflection
My son, when you come to serve the Lord, prepare yourself for trials. Be sincere of heart and steadfast, undisturbed in time of adversity. Cling to him, forsake him not; thus will your future be great. Accept whatever befalls you, in crushing misfortune be patient; for in fire gold is tested, and worthy men in the crucible of humiliation. Trust God and he will help you; make straight your ways and hope in him (Sirach 2:1-6).
CONFERENCE TEN (PREACHING THE NEW EVANGELIZATION: HOMILY, EXEGESIS, AND THE MODERN CULTURE)

Due to the corroding effects of a secular and materialistic culture in the West, many Catholics have imbibed the spirit of the world instead of the mind of the Church. Recognizing this, the Church has called for a new evangelization of the faithful. This need to evangelize the faithful makes the homily all that more important as a vehicle for re-proposing the Gospel, in all its fullness, to the faithful.

Discussion Questions

1. What would the Church have deacons do in homilies that especially addresses the new evangelization?
2. Where might one find resources on this?
3. How does one “naturally” address the modern culture when working to expound on a scriptural text?
4. How can you take what you have learned at seminary and share it with lay faithful?
5. Besides preaching, in what other areas of parish life can deacons seek to advance the new evangelization?

Formation Reflection

The sacramental dimension: The celebration of the sacraments is central to the priest’s ministry. Although the seminarian cannot celebrate the sacraments as a priest does, he can accompany priests who do and he can prepare those who participate in them. In this way, he begins to have a sense of what his sacramental ministry will entail. He will come to appreciate the sacraments as part of his future public ministry for the salvation of souls and understand more clearly how the Church’s sacraments, especially the Eucharist, nourish and sustain God’s people (PPF 239b).

Scripture Reflection

I declare and solemnly attest in the Lord that you must no longer live as the pagans do—their minds empty, their understanding darkened. They are estranged from a life in God because of their ignorance and their resistance; without remorse they have abandoned themselves to lust and the indulgence of every sort of lewd conduct. That is not what you learned when you learned Christ! I am supposing, of course, that he has been preached and taught to you in accord with the truth that is in Jesus namely, that you must lay aside your former way of life and old self which deteriorates through illusion and desire, and acquire a fresh, spiritual way of thinking. You must put on that new man created in God’s image, whose justice and holiness are born of truth (Ephesians 4:17-24).
CONFERENCE ELEVEN (DEACON AS PROMOTER OF LAY SPIRITUALITY)
Seminarians in their third year of theological studies must have knowledge and concern for the spiritual well-being of the lay faithful. The diaconal ministry requires the ability to listen deeply to the lived experiences and realities of the faithful, and to interpret those lived experiences in the light of Sacred Scripture and the Church’s Tradition (PPF 239). This conference will consider the deacon’s role as promoter of lay spirituality.

Discussion Questions
1. What is your understanding of lay spirituality? How have you lived the lay spiritual life before coming into the seminary and even as a seminarian?
2. What is your familiarity with lay spiritual movements in the Church? What particular movements might you consider supporting when you are ordained as a priest?
3. How can the preached Word inform the human experience? How might your own human experiences be included in the homily and other pastoral activities?
4. What is the connection between Sacred Scripture, the homily, the Eucharist, and the spiritual well-being of the people of God?
5. What church resources are available to help one focus on developing lay spirituality?

Formation Reflection
Effective public ministry means, for example, the cultivation of a flexibility of spirit that enables the priest to relate to people across a number of different cultures and theological and ecclesial outlooks. Formation must help the seminarian put on both the mind and heart of Christ, the Good Shepherd (PPF 239e).

Scripture Reflection
It is he who gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers in roles of service for the faithful to build up the body of Christ, till we become one in faith and in the knowledge of God’s Son, and form that perfect man who is Christ come to full stature. Let us, then, be children no longer, tossed here and there, carried about by every wind of doctrine that originates inhuman trickery and skill in proposing error. “Rather, let us process the truth in love and grow to the full maturity of Christ the head. Through him the whole body grows, and with the proper functioning of the members joined firmly together by each supporting ligament, builds itself up in love (Ephesians 4:11-16).
The Social Doctrine of the Church is either poorly known or variously misunderstood by lay Catholics. Flowing from the efforts of the new evangelization, the deacon is in a special position to provide teaching and practical application of the social doctrine of the Church in and through his own diaconal ministries. Seminarians in their third year of theological studies will consider the role of the deacon as teacher and minister of pastoral charity.

Discussion Questions
1. What magisterial sources should be utilized for ministry in this area?
2. How might the social teaching of the Church be taught in the ministry of the deacon?
3. What are the crucial social issues of our time that need to be addressed?
4. How might certain social doctrines of the Church be realized, practically speaking, in the life of the lay faithful (e.g. pro-life activities, food banks)?

Formation Reflection
Priests will achieve the unity of their lives by joining themselves with Christ in the recognition of the Father’s will and in the gift of themselves to the flock entrusted to them. In this way, by adopting the role of the good shepherd they will find in the practice of pastoral charity itself the bond of priestly perfection which will reduce to unity their life and activity (PPF 25).

Scripture Reflection
Now, my brothers, we beg and exhort you in the Lord Jesus that even as you learned from us how to conduct yourselves in a way pleasing to God—which you are indeed doing—so you must learn to make still greater progress. You know the instructions we gave you in the Lord Jesus. It is God’s will that you grow in holiness: That you abstain from immorality, each of you guarding his member in sanctity and honor, not in passionate desire as do the Gentiles who know not God; and that each refrain from overreaching or cheating his brother in the matter at hand; for the Lord is an avenger of all such things, as we once indicated to you by our testimony. As regards brotherly love, there is no need for me to write you. God himself has taught you to love one another, and this you are doing with respect to all the brothers throughout Macedonia. Yet we exhort you to even greater progress, brothers. Make it a point of honor to remain at peace and attend to your own affairs. Work with your hands as we directed you to do, so that you will give good example to outsiders and want for nothing (1 Thessalonians 4: 1-6, 9-12).
CONFERENCE THIRTEEN (INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS IN A PARISH SETTING)

As the semester soon comes to a close and seminarians begin to learn about their parish assignment, this conference is designed to review the multiple relationships that the seminarian will encounter. As parish interns, seminarians will relate to pastors, parochial vicars, deacons, religious, parish staff, school staff, and laity. This conference will present practical insights for establishing healthy interpersonal relationships in a parish setting.

Discussion Questions

1. Do I set appropriate boundaries in relationships?
2. Do I respect the principle of subsidiarity?
3. Do I respect the role of religious and laity, including women, in parish ministry?
4. Am I charitable in speech and attentive in listening to others?
5. How do I exercise authority and delegate it?
6. How do I resolve disagreements and differences of opinion?

Formation Reflection

The community dimension: pastoral formation must initiate seminarians to the care, guidance, and leadership that are extended to a community. The pastor is to be a man of communion and shepherd of a flock. In the United States context of individualism, the concern is that “pastoral formation” and “pastoral care” might otherwise be limited to one-to-one contact. Pastoral ministry is primarily directed to a community and then to individuals within that community (PPF 239d).

Scripture Reflection

The consummation of all is close at hand. Therefore do not be perturbed; remain calm so that you will be able to pray. Above all, let your love for one another be constant, for love covers a multitude of sins. Be mutually hospitable without complaining. As generous distributors of God’s manifold grace, put your gifts at the service of one another, each in the measure he has received. The one who speaks is to deliver God’s message. The one who serves is to do it with the strength provided by God. Thus, in all of you God is to be glorified through Jesus Christ: to him be glory and dominion throughout the ages. Amen (1 Peter 4:7-11).
CONFERENCE FOURTEEN (GROWTH IN PRAYER)

In preparation for ordination to the diaconate, seminarians will reflect on how they have grown in their life of prayer since beginning seminary formation. It will be a time to look back on experiences of prayer in the early stages of seminary formation contrasted with the life of prayer in third theology. Particular attention will be paid to appropriation of the variety of “forms of prayer” described in the Catechism, such as Blessing and Adoration, Petition, Intercession, Thanksgiving, and as well as the three major “expressions of prayer”: Vocal Prayer, Meditation, and Contemplation.

Discussion Questions
1. What was your prayer life like when you began seminary? How has it changed? How has it grown? Where do you still need to grow?
2. What role do the public prayers of the Church such as the Liturgy of the Hours and the Mass play in your life of prayer? Are there any difficulties with these forms of prayer that you are facing which you could share with others?
3. Which forms and expressions of personal prayer come most naturally for you? Do you feel like you have grown in the practice of Meditation and Contemplation? In what way?
4. As a deacon in the parish, how do you anticipate your prayer life being influenced by the assignment and the people of your assignment?
5. How might a deacon discuss with his pastor the personal rule of life the seminarian observes so as to avoid any schedule conflicts?

Formation Reflection
The habit of daily prayer and meditation enables seminarians to acquire a personalized sense of how God’s salvation has taken hold of their lives and how they might respond to that great grace. This prayer happens in a context of silence and solitude in which they learn to be attuned to God’s movements in their lives (PPF 110g).

Scripture Reflection
Ever since we heard this we have been praying for you unceasingly and asking that you may attain full knowledge of his will through perfect wisdom and spiritual insight. Then you will lead a life worthy of the Lord and pleasing to him in every way. You will multiply good works of every sort and grow in the knowledge of God. By the might of his glory you will be endowed with the strength needed to stand fast, even to endure joyfully whatever may come, giving thanks to the Father for having made you worthy to share the lot of the saints in light. He rescued us from the power of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of his beloved Son. Through him we have redemption, the forgiveness of our sins (Colossians 1:9-14).
CONFERENCE FIFTEEN (PASTORAL COMPETENCE)
Seminarians in their third year of theological studies will receive practical insights about the best practices in time management, use of resources and stewardship. Practical tips will include learning how to collaborate in ministry, knowing when to seek assistance and from whom to ask, and developing a network of support for the life and mission of a parish.

Discussion Questions
1. Do I exercise prudent stewardship over my time and resources?
2. Do I collaborate well with others? Do I readily seek assistance when I need it?
3. Do I make friends and develop a support network easily, or is that a challenge for me?
4. Do I allow my strengths to enhance my pastoral work? Do I allow my weaknesses to inhibit my pastoral work?

Formation Reflection
Seminarians need to learn how to make available in service to God’s people all the formation that has preceded (the human, the spiritual, and the intellectual). This means the acquisition of certain skills, for example, an ability to communicate the mysteries of faith in clear and readily comprehensible language. It signifies a level of personal development, fitting for a priest who acts in the person of Jesus Christ, Head and Shepherd of the Church (PPF 239e).

Scripture Reflection
Simeon Peter, servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have been given a faith like ours in the justifying power of our God and Savior Jesus Christ: may grace be yours and peace in abundance through your knowledge of god and of Jesus, our Lord. That driving power of his has freely bestowed on us everything necessary for a life of genuine piety, through knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and power. By virtue of them he has bestowed on us the great and precious things he promised, so that through these you who have fled a world corrupted by lust might become sharers of the divine nature. This is reason enough for you to make every effort to undergird your virtue with faith, your discernment with virtue, and your self-control with discernment; this self-control, in turn, should lead to perseverance, and perseverance to piety, and piety to care for your brother, and care for your brother, to love. Qualities like these, made increasingly your own, are by no means ineffectual; they bear fruit in true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Any man who lacks these qualities is shortsighted to the point of blindness. He forgets the cleansing of his long-past sins (2 Peter 1:3-9).
CONFERENCE SIXTEEN (THE RULE OF LIFE DURING THE PARISH INTERNSHIP: LIVING THE FOUR PILLARS OF FORMATION)

One of the great challenges seminarians face upon entering the parish as ordained clergy is a shift from a structured rule of life in seminary into an environment where they must give structure to their rule of life. In this final conference, seminarians will consider practical strategies for maintaining a rule of life in the midst of ministry, so they can continue to develop in the other areas of formation—human, spiritual, intellectual—while engaging in pastoral work.

Discussion Questions
1. What challenges do you expect to face in parish ministry with regard to maintaining a rule of life?
2. How do you plan to continue to grow in the human, intellectual, and spiritual areas of formation while engaging in pastoral ministry (e.g., exercise, leisure, liturgy of the hours, holy hour, spiritual direction, theological reading, Scripture study)?
3. One particular challenge faced by anyone engaged in ministry is striking a balance between healthy generosity in ministry and over-commitment that leads to ministry burnout. What do you plan to do to achieve this balance?
4. Is there any area of formation in your life that you feel needs more integration?

Formation Reflection
In a parish internship experience, the seminarian draws on the experience before him in the parish and asks how his human, spiritual and intellectual formation makes a difference. He revisits his formation and views it through the lens of practice, application, and impact (PPF 239f).

Scripture Reflection
You have followed closely my teaching and my conduct. You have observed my resolution, fidelity, patience, love and endurance, through persecutions and sufferings in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra. You know what persecution I had to bear, and you know how the Lord saved me from them all. Anyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus can expect to be persecuted. But all the while evil men and charlatans will go from bad to worse, deceiving others, themselves deceived. You, for your part, must remain faithful to what you have learned and believed, because you know who your teachers were (2 Timothy 3:10-14).