



Notre Dame Seminary

Propaedeutic Formation Program Handbook

“Men After the Heart of Christ”



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The Mission of Notre Dame Seminary

93. The immediate aim of the theologate level formation program at Notre Dame Seminary is to assist seminarians in their preparation for ordained ministry. Seminarians at the theologate stage of priestly formation have already participated in a seminary program discerning a priestly vocation and therefore bring to the theologate stage of formation a mature experience of formation.

94. Notre Dame Seminary also provides a propaedeutic program and a two year pre-theology program for seminarians who possess an undergraduate or graduate degree and seek to discern if they are called to the diocesan priesthood. The pre-theology program is structured according to the norms of the USCCB's *Program of Priestly Formation* by which seminarians are fulfilling the philosophical, theological and language requirements necessary for formal study of theology.

95. While discernment of a priestly vocation does not formally conclude until ordination to the diaconate, a seminarian who has completed college or pre-theology formation enters the theologate stage of formation with a commitment to prepare for ordination.

96. The seminarian therefore embraces completely and unconditionally the expectations of the seminary program. Seminarians who enter the pre-theology program (the discipleship phase) are men who have sufficiently demonstrated their readiness to embrace priestly formation, academic rigor, and communal living. Seminarians who enter into first theology (the configurative phase) have demonstrated proficiency in all four dimensions of priestly formation and therefore are understood as Candidates for theologate formation.

97. The seminary program consists of an integrated array of formation experiences centered on the human, spiritual, intellectual, liturgical, pastoral, and personal aspects of the seminarian's life. Notre Dame Seminary supports seminarians in the discipleship, configurative, and pastoral synthesis aspects of priestly formation.

98. Every human community exists for a purpose, and each community strives to articulate the principles by which it lives. Notre Dame Seminary follows the guidelines of the governing documents on priestly formation in its formation program. These guidelines express the intent and purpose of the seminary community.

99. A priest is expected to serve God's people wholeheartedly. This loving, unselfish response to the needs of others may at times conflict with personal needs or desires. The world in which we live may view unselfish love and service to others as foolish or unfulfilling. The pursuit of a vocation to ordained ministry in the Roman Catholic Church,

therefore, should be understood as a decision that may not be appreciated by everyone. It is, in that sense, a radical decision against some prevailing cultural visions.

100. The role of the priestly formation program is to assist the seminarian to understand the human dimension of life while also challenging him to direct his life toward the loving service of God's people. In order to accomplish this ideal, the seminary formation program places emphasis upon a seminarian's ability to show initiative and progress within the formation program in a personal yet verifiable manner. Each seminarian is to take personal accountability in accomplishing the demands of seminary formation.

101. The policies that order the lived experience of any community are essential in articulating the purpose for which the community exists. While they must not obscure the purpose, they are nonetheless essential to its achievement. Seminarians are expected to follow closely and purposefully the *horarium* established by the priestly formation program at Notre Dame Seminary as well as the *Rule of Life*.

102. This handbook contains policies and procedures for the purpose of allowing seminarians to discern and pursue their formation with a deliberate intent to accomplish what the Lord is asking of them. The Formation Handbook does not contain all the directives of priestly formation rather highlights for seminarians how Notre Dame Seminary implements the governing documents on priestly formation.

103. The Board of Trustees reviews and approves the following mission statement on an annual basis.

- a) From its establishment as a free-standing seminary in 1923 by the Archdiocese of New Orleans, Notre Dame Seminary has as its primary mission the preparation of men for the ministerial priesthood in the Roman Catholic Church. The seminary, through an integrated and balanced program of priestly formation, seeks to prepare competent pastors for the Church in the Spirit of Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd. Additionally, in order to foster a broader outreach in service to the needs of the local Church, the seminary offers educational and formational opportunities to the lay faithful.
- b) As a graduate school of theology, the seminary offers those preparing for the priesthood a Master of Divinity degree program of study. A pre-theology program is also offered to prepare seminarians for entry into this graduate theology program. Additional degree and formation programs are offered for those who aim to deepen their understanding of the Catholic intellectual tradition while preparing for leadership in the Church.
- c) While primarily preparing men to serve as priests in the southern region of the United States, Notre Dame Seminary participates in the missionary activity of the Church by promoting a spirit of mission among its candidates for priesthood and lay leadership and by assisting certain missionary dioceses in other areas of the world (Spring 2019).

The Purpose of a Priestly Formation Program

12. The formation of men for the priesthood of Jesus Christ is one of the Church's most

sacred duties. It comprised a significant portion of Christ's earthly ministry as he himself formed the apostles to carry out the mission of salvation. The Church has been entrusted with the same mission; thus, the priesthood becomes an essential ministry in proclaiming the Gospel of Christ. Saint Pope John Paul the Great writes in his post-synodal apostolic exhortation on priestly formation *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (PDV 1):

Without priests the Church would not be able to live that fundamental obedience which is at the very heart of her existence and her mission in history, an obedience in response to the command of Christ: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations" (*Mt 28:19*) and "Do this in remembrance of me" (*Lk 22:19*).

13. The fundamental connection between priestly formation and the pastoral ministry of the Church is so intimate that any variance of this relationship becomes a disservice both to the nature of pastoral ministry and the purpose of priestly formation. Yet, priestly ministry is exercised in collaboration with all ministry in the Church. Therefore, Notre Dame Seminary emphasized the collaborative nature of pastoral ministry which requires both ordained and non-ordained cooperation.

14. *You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide* (John 15:16). These words spoken by Jesus Christ to his apostles remind us that He is the one who calls everyone to the universal vocation to holiness. Our vocation to discipleship as Christians is rooted in the sacrament of baptism. The Lord also gives each person a specific vocation to holiness, according to the mystery of His divine will. The priestly formation program therefore assists the seminarian with his discernment of a vocation by challenging him to consider first the call to holiness.

15. A call to the priesthood demands that the recipient freely respond to it, that the call be answered. In order to answer the call, the seminarian must place his "total trust in God's unconditional faithfulness to His promise" (PDV 2). The seminarian must also express an unconditional trust in God by placing himself before the Church who must verify with the seminarian the authenticity of a priestly vocation.

Governing Documents on Priestly Formation

16. Notre Dame Seminary strives to implement the ideals of the governing documents on priestly formation that exist both nationally and universally. The vision of priestly formation expressed so beautifully by Blessed Pope John Paul the Great in *Pastores Dabo Vobis* is the instrument that provides the vision for the faculty and administration of Notre Dame Seminary.

17. The theological and ecclesial understanding of priesthood is treated in the documents of the Second Vatican Council particularly in *Lumen Gentium*, *Christus Dominus*, and *Presbyterorum Ordinis*. The specific direction of priestly formation is addressed in the Council's document *Optatum Totius*. The Holy See's guidelines for establishing national directives for priestly formation are contained in the *Ratio fundamentalis institutionis sacerdotalis* (1970, revised in 1985, revised again 2016).

18. The Holy See has given further direction in many cases regarding specific elements of priestly formation since the Council. Additionally, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

and the *Code of Canon Law* (CIC) provide a clear understanding of the theological nature of priesthood with the rights and duties accorded to priests. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has also given direction to the formation of priests in various documents specifically in the *Program of Priestly Formation* (PPF, 6th edition, 2019).

The Unique Mission of Notre Dame Seminary

19. The brief history of Notre Dame Seminary outlined earlier reflects the missionary dimension of seminary formation. The seminary has always been inspired by the pastoral realities of Church and the needs of the faithful. Hence, the language and vision of seminary formation considers the practicalities of pastoral ministry while always preserving the universal theological ideals of priestly formation.

20. The pontificates of Saint John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI, and Pope Francis continue to frame the vision of priestly formation at Notre Dame Seminary. The “new evangelization” is the integrating force that unifies the dimensions of formation. Rector conferences, formation conferences, course syllabi, homilies, and workshops use regularly the language of the new evangelization thus providing the seminarians a consistent direction to their discernment and formation.

21. The formational theme that captures the direction of the formation program is: “*Disciples of the Lord: Missionary Priests for the New Evangelization.*” This theme summarizes the understanding of the new evangelization as articulated by the USCCB’s document *Disciples Called to Witness: The New Evangelization* (2012) as well as the priority of the new evangelization discussed at the Synod of Bishops in October 2012. The post-synodal exhortation on the new evangelization by Pope Francis also gives practical inspiration to the formation program as well as his Magisterium expressed in encyclicals and pastoral directives. A description of the formational theme is on the seminary’s website and is reviewed annually with the seminarians and faculty by the rector at the start of each academic year.

22. Discernment of a priestly vocation involves formation – the seminary is not a retreat center but rather a home of God’s Word forming in men the virtues and charisms needed for priestly ministry. This requires from the seminarian a deliberate readiness to cooperate with the work of God. The seminarian therefore is the chief protagonist of his own formation taking accountability for how he will use the resources made available to him.

23. To be a successful priest, the seminarian will learn that he must be an agent of authentic Christian humanism, a promoter of culture, a patron of all that is good in the human condition lived in society.

24. The seminarian therefore discerns his own faith formation, the transformation needed to put aside the “old self” and put on Christ, and his cultivation of the human virtues. Notre Dame Seminary provides a priestly formation that will create in the seminarian a renaissance man.

25. By “renaissance” the formation program emphasizes the need for an integrated formation that considers the human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral formation of a seminarian with an outlook of living priesthood in the particular culture of man.

26. Following the incarnational paradigm of God's Word becoming man within a particular culture and in a particular family, so too the Church seeks to incarnate herself in the family of man. Priestly ministry serves to communicate the grace of God through the life of the Church into each culture.

27. Notre Dame Seminary places before the seminarian the mission of the new evangelization as articulated and defined by the Magisterium of Pope John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI, and Pope Francis. Through conferences, homilies, formation and spiritual direction, classroom instruction, and discussions with faculty and peers, the seminarian discerns his call as a Catholic to be a missionary of evangelization, considering if the Lord is calling him to the priesthood.

28. Seminarians who are aggressive in receiving a priestly formation will be prepared to shoulder the joys and burdens of pastoral ministry. They will be motivated for the mission of the new evangelization, prepared to engage culture, be spiritual fathers for the People of God, and celebrate the sacred mysteries of our Faith with joy and apostolic vigor.

PRESUPPOSITIONS TO FORMATION

Formation in the Present Context

29. The human character of the priesthood is affirmed as necessary in the exercise of priestly ministry. God himself verifies this throughout the sacred scriptures. Moreover, the call of the apostles to priestly service presumed the human qualities of each man. Priestly formation in the seminary is attentive to the realities of the candidates who come with societal influences that demand a formational response that supports those characteristics consistent with priestly vocations and purifies the elements which would be contrary. The influence of faith indeed brings the seminarian to a certain appreciation of the role that the Church exercises in his formation.

God always calls his priests from specific human and ecclesial contexts, which inevitably influence them; and to these same contexts the priest is sent for the service of Christ's Gospel (PDV 5).

30. The human and ecclesial contexts influencing the seminarian are the very arena for preaching the Gospel of Christ. Priestly formation presumes that after ordination the former seminarian returns as a priest to similar human and ecclesial contexts. This particular dynamic of priestly formation parallels the new evangelization, which Blessed John Paul II had called the Church to embrace (*cf.* PDV 2). Priestly formation prepares the seminarian for pastoral ministry to the community of believers in which the seminarian finds his origin.

The call to priesthood is essentially communitarian in nature. It is within the community of the family, parish, or ecclesial movement, or through interaction with an institute of consecrated life or society of apostolic life, that a vocation to priesthood is discovered. This vocation is discerned and nurtured within the seminary community (PPF 13).

31. Notwithstanding the necessary considerations of present circumstances, the

objectivity of priestly formation is clearly defined in the related governing documents. The Priesthood of Christ is not redefined with every age or generation. Priestly formation of the present day considers both the unchanging nature of priesthood and the circumstances of life which influence the faithful.

32. Nevertheless, each seminary must provide a vision of priestly formation considering its particular charism. The previous section introduces the pontifical character of Notre Dame Seminary as it serves the seminarians in this discernment and formation.

Hopes and Obstacles of Today

33. *Pastores Dabo Vobis* succinctly identifies the hopes and obstacles of the present day which undoubtedly offer a challenge not only for preaching the Gospel but also for priestly formation since seminarians enter the seminary as products of their culture (see PDV 6-9).

34. The obstacles to conversion that bring unique challenge for the believer include rationalism, subjectivity, individualism, practical and existential atheism, breakdown of the family, distortion of human sexuality, lure of consumer society, catechetical deficiencies, theological pluralism, and resistance to the Magisterium. All of these obstacles to conversion can influence the seminarian's approach to faith.

35. Priestly formation in the present day also has some unique opportunities for forming seminarians since young people in the United States today are often very open to values inherent in the Gospel and to attitudes which foster life in Christ. These include a renewed desire for justice and peace, care for creation, search for the truth, efforts to safeguard human life and dignity, international solidarity, the contribution of science and technology for human advancement, decrease in libertarian tendencies, an increased love for sacred scripture, a desire to share faith, and a renewed appreciation for sacramental faith.

36. A dialogue between faith and culture is present in priestly formation. The post-synodal exhortation *Ecclesia in America* provides a framework in which this conversation can take place and, at the same time, encourages the development of a true, authentic humanism to which culture aspires.

Priestly Formation and the Call to Holiness

37. Ongoing conversion is the vocation of any disciple of Christ. The seminarian pursues ongoing conversion in the priestly formation program in a particular way considering how he might be serving the Church as a diocesan priest. The call to holiness is the vocation of all believers in Christ. Yet each lives their discipleship according to their state in life. The particular vocation to holiness must be proper and specific to the priest who is configured at ordination to Christ as Head of the Church.

38. The pursuit of holiness is a call to perfection in the ways of the Lord. The seminarian grows in his understanding of faith, hope and love and come to understand how the priest, configured to Christ, is called to be Head, Shepherd and Spouse of the Church.

Priests are bound in a special way to strive for this perfection, since they are consecrated to God in a new way by their ordination. They have become living instruments of Christ the eternal priest (PDV 20).

39. Following the ways of the Lord constitutes the path to perfection. The seminarian must learn that the exercise of pastoral ministry in the Church is conducted in the name of Christ himself. “In this way the exercise of his ministry deeply involves the priest himself as a conscious, free and responsible person.” Priestly formation enables the seminarian to understand the ontological bond existing between the ministry performed and the holiness of the priest, thereby emanating a truly authentic representation of Christ, the Good Shepherd. “The bond tends by its very nature to become as extensive and profound as possible, affecting one’s way of thinking, feeling and life itself: in other words, creating a series of moral and spiritual dispositions” (PDV 25).

The Identity and Life of the Priest

40. The call to holiness and the disciplines of conversion move the seminarian from the internal dispositions of spirituality to the external realities of ministry.

And so it is that they are grounded in the life of the Spirit while they exercise the ministry of the Spirit and of justice, as long as they are docile to Christ’s Spirit, who gives them life and guidance. For by their everyday sacred actions, as by the entire ministry which they exercise in union with the bishop and their fellow priests, they are being directed towards perfection of life (*Presbyterorum Ordinis* [PO] 12).

41. The priestly formation program teaches the seminarian the relationship between the spiritual life and the exercise of pastoral ministry.

Pastoral formation is intimately linked with spiritual formation. In the process of spiritual formation, men are formed to receive the love of God in such a way that they desire to share that love by making a gift of their entire lives (PPF 233).

42. The spirituality of the priest, which involves attention to the spiritual life and the exercise of pastoral ministry, requires that the seminarian have a clear and unequivocal understanding of the priesthood.

Knowledge of the nature and mission of the ministerial priesthood is an essential presupposition, and at the same time the surest guide and incentive towards [...] training those called to the ordained ministry [...] A correct and in-depth awareness of the nature and mission of the ministerial priesthood is the path which must be taken (PDV 11).

43. The goal of priestly formation is to form in the seminarian the proper identity of a priest. *Pastores Dabo Vobis* exclaims that “the priest’s identity like every other Christian identity has its source in the Blessed Trinity.” And, it is the Church who possesses the character of this Trinitarian mystery since she has been endowed with all of the gifts of God necessary for leading mankind to the Kingdom (*cf.* PPF 24).

44. The priestly formation program of the seminary must, therefore, delineate the

relational dimensions of priesthood which are ultimately sustained in and through the Church. The seminarian must be careful to not search for his identity apart from the *mystery, communio, and mission* of the Church.

The nature and mission of ministerial priesthood cannot be defined except through this multiple and rich interconnection of relationships which arise from the Blessed Trinity and are prolonged in the communion of the Church. In this context the ecclesiology of communion becomes decisive for understanding the identity of the priest, his essential dignity, and his vocation and mission among the People of God and in the world (PDV 12).

45. The life of the priest radiates the identity of being a priest in the image of Jesus Christ. The fundamental relationship that the seminarian comes to cultivate with Christ is that of recognizing the Lord as being Head and Shepherd of his Church (*cf.* PPF 25-27). The *tria munera* charge of the priest, the *munus docendi, munus sanctificandi, and munus regendi* is the life and ministry of the priest. It is for this reason that the seminarian begins to live a life of Gospel radicalism in order that the faithful can see in the priest a true representation of Christ, as Head and Shepherd of the Church.

46. The priestly formation program must challenge the seminarian to embrace the radicalism of the Gospel “through a commitment in obedience, simplicity of life, celibacy, and holiness” (PPF 49). Each of these counsels has an apostolic, communal and pastoral character that challenges the seminarian to orient his life to service of the People of God.

47. The priestly formation program keeps the seminarian focused on the person of Jesus Christ in the way he lived his earthly life. The disciplines of the spiritual life connect directly to how Jesus conducted himself particularly in his relationship with the Father and those whom he encountered.

To live in intimate and unceasing union with God the Father through his Son Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit is far more than a personal or individual relationship with the Lord; it is also a communion with the Church, which is his Body. (PPF 227).

Priestly Consciousness of the Church

48. “Reference to the Church is therefore necessary, even if it is not primary, in defining the identity of the priest” (PDV 12). Priestly formation attempts to form in the seminarian a healthy sense of ecclesial *communio*, the multitude of relationships that a priest is necessarily involved in. “These Trinitarian, Christological, and ecclesiological dimensions give us a sense of the nature, mission, and ministry of priests. It is important, however, to add that these dimensions only become real and operative in a presbyterate, one that is in communion with its bishop.” (PPF 30).

49. Because of the strong emphasis on individualism that is so dominant in the culture of the United States and because a diminished Catholic culture, the seminarian who lives in the circumstances of the present day can nurture a false understanding of spirituality which places oneself in a relationship with the Lord apart from the Church herself who is the Body of Christ (PPF 151). In developing relationships, it must be noted that special caution in observing “boundaries” is necessary in mature relationships.

50. “Like every authentically Christian spiritual life, the spiritual life of the priest has an essential and undeniable ecclesial dimension which is a sharing in the holiness of the Church herself” (PDV 31). Priestly formation is to foster the seminarian’s appreciation of and dedication to the particular church of which he is a part. This involves his relationship to his bishop and the local presbyterate.

The priest’s relationship with his bishop in the one presbyterate, his sharing in the bishop’s ecclesial concern, and his devotion to the evangelical care of the People of God in the specific historical and contextual conditions of a particular Church are elements which must be taken into account in sketching the proper configuration of the priest and his spiritual life (PDV 31).

51. These ecclesial foundations of priesthood must be incorporated into the priestly formation program in order that the seminarian be properly disposed to exercising pastoral ministry with the mind of the Church. The ministry of the priest is exercised entirely in the name of the Church and in collaboration with the diocesan bishop who charges the priest with a particular assignment (PPF 28).

52. The seminarian comes to understand that participation in the priesthood of Christ cannot be separated from his relationship to the bishop. “Through the priesthood of the bishop, the priesthood of the second order is incorporated into the apostolic structure of the Church. In this way priests, like the apostles, act as ambassadors of Christ” (PDV 16).

53. In a certain sense, therefore, priestly formation will always have an ecclesial orientation and will take the interests of a particular church to heart since it is to and for that church that a seminarian is preparing for ordination. Ecclesial orientation also includes a pursuit of skills necessary for ministry in the world and society.

54. Notre Dame Seminary is preparing men who are truly pastors of the Church. The formation program reflects the pastoral and practical aspects of priestly ministry. Leadership in today’s culture requires a collaborative and cooperative ministry that seeks to build up God’s Kingdom considering the many charisms and gifts given to both the ordained and the non-ordained.

55. Seminarians at Notre Dame Seminary are supported with a clear and unambiguous promotion of priestly identity and ministry while also challenging them to consider how leadership promotes ecclesial unity that considers the role of the lay faithful in their call to the apostolate.

56. This formation handbook reflects the efforts of the administration, faculty, staff, and seminarians to fully implement the norms of priestly formation and to discern how men are being formed to respond to the concrete pastoral needs of the Church. In this sense, priestly formation always has an organic character by which a certain flexibility of vision exists in order that true discernment of spirits prevails.

AGENTS OF THE PRIESTLY FORMATION PROGRAM

The Holy Spirit

57. “The Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you” (John 14:26).

58. The Holy Spirit is the principal agent of formation allowing and providing all the graces needed to be formed after that of Christ, the Good Shepherd. A spirit of humility in a seminarian is a clear sign of how that seminarian has embraced the Cross and has gained a true freedom to follow the formation program.

59. To this end, everyone engaged in the work of priestly formation discerns the ways in which the Holy Spirit is teaching and guiding us to the will of the Father.

The Seminarian

60. “All formation, priestly formation included, is ultimately a self-formation. No one can replace us in the responsible freedom that we have as individual persons” (PDV 69).

61. The seminarian demonstrates “his own convinced and heartfelt cooperation in this work of formation” (PDV 69) by active participation in all areas of the seminary program.

The Holy See

62. The Congregation for Clergy is a major dicastery of the Holy See with competence over all matters related to Catholic universities and seminarians. The Congregation is charged with establishing and approving governing documents on priestly formation for the Universal Church. The *Ratio Fundamentalis* (2016) provides universal principles and structure to priestly formation that Notre Dame Seminary has implemented in conjunction with national norms set forth by the Bishops of the United States.

63. The Board of Trustees and the faculty of Notre Dame Seminary review any documentation that pertains to priestly formation and implements accordingly all norms and guidelines of the Church including the review of this Formation Handbook.

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

64. The conference of bishops for the United States promulgated the national document on priestly formation the *Program of Priestly Formation* which is now in its fifth edition. The document is considered binding on all seminarians since it has the *recognitio* of the Holy See.

65. Notre Dame Seminary has structured the priestly formation program in conformity with the *Program of Priestly Formation*.

Chancellor

66. The Chancellor of Notre Dame Seminary is the Archbishop of New Orleans. After consultation with the Board of Trustees, the Chancellor appoints the Rector-President of Notre Dame Seminary.

67. The Rector-President consults with the Chancellor regarding faculty appointments, major revisions to the formation program, and any significant matters related to the temporal needs of the seminary.

Board of Trustees

68. The Board of Trustees acts as fiduciary body assuring that the priestly formation program has all the resources required to provide an effective, competent formation program to the seminarians.

69. The ex-officio members of the Board are the Archbishop of New Orleans (chair); all the bishops of the New Orleans Province, the Archbishop and Bishops of the Province of Mobile, the Abbot of Saint Joseph Abbey, the Rector of Saint Joseph Seminary, and the Rector-President of Notre Dame Seminary.

70. The By-Laws and the Articles of Corporation are filed in the Rector-President's office and are available for review by any person.

Rector-President

71. The Rector-President, always a priest, is appointed by the Chancellor to be the chief administrator and principal agent responsible for the implementation of the programs of formation at Notre Dame Seminary.

72. The Rector-President seeks the counsel and expertise of the Board of Trustees to provide him the material resources to carry out the Church's vision of priestly formation.

Additional Formation Roles

(See NDS Formation Handbook for descriptions)

73. Vice Rector; Coordinators for Propaedeutic, Discipleship, Configurative, and Pastoral Synthesis; Coordinator of Spiritual Formation/Spiritual Director; Coordinator of Pastoral Formation and Field Education; Coordinator of Human Formation; Coordinator of Liturgy; Coordinator of Sacred Music; Academic Dean; Coordinator of Intellectual Formation Assistant Academic Dean; Coordinator of Hispanic Formation; Coordinator – Office of Academic Support and Instructional Services; Coordinator of Counseling Services; Business Manager; Administrative Assistant to the Rector-President; Director of Facilities; Coordinators of Admissions; Registrar; Director of Library Services; Information Technology Department; Director of Food Service; Director of the Development Office; Consultative Bodies; Formation Advisors; Faculty.



THE GOALS OF INTEGRATIVE FORMATION AT NDS

A Healthy Integration of all Priestly Formation

74. Seminarians will complete four stages of priestly formation (propaedeutic, discipleship, configurative, and vocational synthesis) that reflect an appropriate *integration* between human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral formation toward the end of configuring the seminarian to Jesus Christ for priestly ministry in the Church (PPF 119-31, 132-4, 135-6, 137-48).

75. Priestly formation recognizes that a seminarian is a “mystery to himself” in which he possesses talents and gifts that have been molded by the grace of God while also one who is marked by limitations and frailty. The goal of priestly formation is to integrate the aspects of a man’s formation in a journey of faith and of gradual and harmonious maturity, avoiding fragmentation, polarization, excesses, superficiality or partiality. The art of integration therefore includes a period of testing, maturing, and discernment by both the seminarian and the Church (cf. Ratio 28).

76. Notre Dame Seminary has identified broad and overall goals and thresholds for seminarians in each cohort of formation considering the four dimensions of priestly formation. The *Ratio Fundamentalis* provides the general norms for priestly formation while the USCCB’s *Program of Priestly Formation* implements those norms into the thresholds that Notre Dame Seminary identifies below as goals for the seminarians to work towards in their journey of discernment and formation.

The Human Dimension

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

78. “The basic principle of human formation is found in *Pastores Dabo Vobis*: the human personality of the priest is to be a bridge and not an obstacle for others in their meeting with Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of the human race. As the humanity of the Word made flesh was the instrumentum salutis, so the humanity of the priest is instrumental in mediating the redemptive gifts of Christ to people today. The disciple of Jesus Christ

is a person who is free to be who he is in God's design: someone who does not—in contrast to the popular culture—conceive or pursue freedom as the expansion of options or as individual autonomy detached from others, but who rather overcomes every form of self-promotion or emotional dependency. So that the seminarian might act with interior freedom rather than simply demonstrating a “veneer of virtuous habits,” human formation seeks to help the seminarian grow in interior maturity. As *Pastores Dabo Vobis* emphasizes, human formation is the “necessary foundation” of priestly formation” (PPF 182).

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

- A person of solid moral character with a finely developed moral conscience, a man open to and capable of conversion: A man who demonstrates the human virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude, temperance, humility, chastity, constancy, sincerity, patience, good manners, truthfulness, and keeping his word, and who also manifests growth in the practice of these virtues.
- A prudent and discerning man: Someone who demonstrates a “capacity for critical observation” so that he “can discern true and false values, since this is an essential requirement for establishing a constructive dialogue with the world of today.”
- A man of communion: A person who has real and deep relational capacities, someone who can enter into genuine dialogue and friendship, a person of true empathy who can understand and know other persons, a person open to others and available to them with a generosity of spirit. The man of communion is capable of making a gift of himself and of receiving the gift of others. This ability, in fact, requires the full possession of himself. This life should be one of inner joy and inner peace—signs of self-possession and generosity.
- A good communicator: Someone who listens well, is articulate, and has the skills of effective communication and public speaking.
- A person of affective maturity: Someone whose life of feelings is in balance and integrated into thought and values; in other words, a man of feelings who is not driven by them but who freely lives his life enriched by them. This might be especially evident in his ability to live well with authority, in his ability to take direction from another, and in his ability to exercise authority well among his peers, as well as an ability to deal productively with conflict and stress.
- A man who demonstrates growth in respect for, care of, and vigilance over his body: A person who pays appropriate attention to his physical well-being (including weight, exercise, consumption of food and drink, and hygiene), so that he has the energy and strength to accomplish the tasks entrusted to him and the self-knowledge to face temptation and resist it effectively.
- A man who relates well with others, free of prejudice, and who is willing to work with people of diverse cultural backgrounds: A man capable of wholesome relations with women and men as relatives, friends, colleagues, staff members, and

teachers and as people encountered in areas of apostolic work.

- A good steward of material possessions: Someone who is able to live a simple style of life and to “refrain from all things that have a semblance of vanity”; someone who has the right attitude toward the goods of this world, since his portion and inheritance is the Lord; someone who is generous in making charitable contributions and sustaining the poor.
- A man who can take on the role of a public person: Someone both secure in himself and convinced of his responsibility, who is able to live not just as a private citizen but as a public person in service of the Gospel and representing the Church” (PPF 183).

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

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

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

83. “Seminary formation in sexuality and celibacy communicates to men in priestly formation and enables them to appropriate the following:

- Their call to priestly celibacy as a share in the chastity of Christ, Head and Shepherd, Servant and Spouse
- The physiological and psychological understanding of human sexuality
- The meaning of the virtue of chastity, which includes a formation in authentic principles of sexual maturity and chastity, including virginity, and which also includes “a proper knowledge of the duties and dignity of Christian marriage, which represents the love which exists between Christ and the Church”
- The requisite skills for living chastely: ascetical practice, prudent self-mastery, and paths of self-knowledge, such as a regular personal inventory and the examination of conscience
- The meaning of celibate chastity, especially the theological rationale that makes clear how it pertains to the logic of the ordained priesthood
- The means to live celibate chastity well, including genuine friendships; priestly fraternity; a mentoring relationship; spiritual direction; priestly asceticism, which honestly reckons with the sacrifices that celibacy entails; and especially the Sacrament of Penance
- The ability to form mature, chaste relationships with both “men and women of various ages and social conditions,” both in his personal life and in pastoral ministry
- The spiritual path that transforms the experience of loneliness into a holy solitude based on a “strong, lively and personal love for Jesus Christ”
- An attitude that discerns the culture in the light of the Gospel, seeing the positive and negative potentials of mass communications, various forms of entertainment, and technology, such as the internet
- The capacity—for seminarians who are married or are discerning marriage in those jurisdictions that permit the priestly ordination of married men—to “shine forth with the splendor of chastity” and “to offer an outstanding example to other Christian faithful” in conducting family life and in educating children” (PPF 187).

84. “In general, human formation happens in a threefold process of self-knowledge, self-possession, and self-gift—and all of this in faith. As this process unfolds, the human person becomes more perfectly conformed to the perfect humanity of Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh. The resources for fostering this process of human formation in a seminary context are many. They include the following:

- Instruction: The rector and other members of the seminary community offer the seminarians instruction in human formation through conferences, courses, and other educational means.
- Personal reflection: Seminarians are trained to live life reflectively and to

examine, with regularity, their behavior, their motivations, their inclinations, and in general their appropriation of life experience, especially suffering.

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

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

- Psychological counseling: On occasion, consultation with a psychologist or other licensed mental health professional can be a useful instrument of human formation. Some patterns of behavior, for example, which became set in the seminarian’s early family history, may impede his relational abilities. Understanding one’s psychological history and developing strategies to address elements of negative impact can be very helpful in human formation. This kind of counseling or consultation is distinguished from extensive psychotherapy, which may be needed to address deeply entrenched personal issues that impede full functioning of the person. The seminarian already completed psychological testing as part of the application process. At that time, if extensive and in-depth therapy was necessary, it took place outside of the seminary context prior to the decision concerning admission. It can also be the case that the necessity for such extensive therapy emerges after admission. In the latter case the seminarian is to withdraw from the program and pursue the therapy before being considered for readmission to the seminary and resuming his advancement to Holy Orders. Those who provide these psychological services may not be voting members of the formation team in discerning the admission, continuance, or ordination of a man. Normally, any in-depth assessment regarding the admission or continuance of a man in formation should be made by an outside mental health professional to avoid dual relationships. If the psychologist or other representative of the psychological sciences is a member of the seminary community, their roles are confined to training, teaching, and consulting for therapeutic issues that do not involve serious psychopathology. There should be a very clear agreement of understanding that limits the role and boundaries of such persons in seminary formation, under the purview of the rector. A psychologist might be offered for a seminarian who is asked to explore some issue in formation. Voluntary appointments initiated by seminarians with a psychologist must include a clear discussion of the limits of confidentiality and the need to integrate—implicitly or explicitly—the work of counseling with the priest formator and/or spiritual director” (PPF 188).

85. “It is both possible and necessary to integrate human formation with the other three dimensions of formation—the spiritual, the intellectual, and the pastoral. Human

formation is integrated with spiritual formation by the Incarnate Word and by the fact that grace builds on nature and perfects nature. Human formation is integrated with intellectual formation by the cultivation of the human functions of perception, analysis, and judgment. It also contributes to intellectual formation by enabling seminarians to pursue theology as a response to the questions of the human condition. Human formation is integrated with pastoral formation, which enables a priest to connect with and care for others with his human personality. Conversely, pastoral formation sharpens his human skills and empathic capacities.” (PPF 190)

The Spiritual Dimension

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

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

88. “To live in intimate and unceasing union with God the Father through his Son Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit is far more than a personal or individual relationship with the Lord; it is also a communion with the Church, which is his Body. The spirituality that belongs to those who are priests or preparing for priesthood is at one and the same time Trinitarian, Christological, pneumatological, and ecclesial. It is a spirituality of communion rooted in the mystery of the Triune God and lived out in practical ways in the mystery of ecclesial communion” (PPF 224).

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

Intellectual Dimension

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

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

92. “The basic principle of intellectual formation for seminarians is noted in *Pastores Dabo Vobis*: ‘For the salvation of their brothers and sisters they should seek an ever deeper knowledge of the divine mysteries.’ Disciples are learners. The first task of intellectual formation is to acquire a personal knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the fullness and completion of God’s Revelation and the one Teacher. This saving knowledge is not acquired only once but rather is continuously appropriated and deepened, so that it becomes more and more part of the disciple. Seminary intellectual formation assumes and prolongs the catechesis and mystagogia that is to be part of every Christian’s journey of faith. At the same time, this knowledge is not simply for personal possession but is destined to be shared in the community of faith; that is why it is “for the salvation of their brothers and sisters.” Intellectual formation has an apostolic and missionary purpose and finality” (PPF 263).

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

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

95. “Intellectual formation is a part of the integral formation of the priest. Moreover, it serves his pastoral ministry and has an impact upon his human and spiritual formation, which draw rich nourishment from it.’ Intellectual formation applies not only to a

comprehensive understanding of the mysteries of the Catholic faith, but also to an ability to explain and even defend the reasoning that supports those truths. In this way, intellectual formation provides those who are being formed spiritually with a knowledge of the Lord and his ways, which they embrace in faith. Finally, intellectual formation through the study of theology enables priests to contemplate, share, and communicate the mysteries of faith with others. In this way, it has an essentially pastoral orientation” (PPF 267).

Pastoral Dimension

96. “All four dimensions of formation are interwoven and go forward concurrently. Still, in a certain sense, pastoral formation is the culmination of the entire formation process. “The whole formation imparted to candidates for the priesthood aims at preparing them to enter into communion with the charity of Christ the good shepherd’ therefore ‘priestly formation must be permeated by a pastoral spirit” (PPF 366).

97. “The goal of pastoral formation is to form shepherds of God’s People; this goal requires men who are not self-centered, aloof, judgmental, or self-imposing but instead are characterized by a “serene openness” and capable of listening and collaboration. True shepherds must have a desire to understand the hearts of others and engage in attentive accompaniment” (PPF 367).

98. “In virtue of the sacramental character of Holy Orders, a priest is able to stand and act in the community in the name and person of Jesus Christ, Head and Shepherd of the Church. The fruitfulness of this sacramental character requires the personal and pastoral formation of the priest, who appropriates “the mind of Christ” and effectively communicates the mysteries of faith through his human personality as a bridge, through his personal witness of faith rooted in his spiritual life, and through his knowledge of faith. These dimensions of formation converge in pastoral formation” (PPF 368).

99. “The basic principle of pastoral formation is enunciated in *Pastores Dabo Vobis*: ‘The whole training of the students should have as its object to make them true shepherds of souls after the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, teacher, priest, and shepherd.’ To be a true ‘shepherd of souls’ means to stand with and for Christ in the community, the Christ who teaches, sanctifies, and guides or leads the community. The grace to be a shepherd comes with ordination. That grace, however, calls for the priest’s personal commitment to develop the knowledge and skills to teach and preach well, to celebrate the sacraments both properly and prayerfully, and to respond to people’s needs as well as to take initiatives in the community that holy servant leadership requires. Developing this knowledge and these skills while still in the initial stages of formation enables him as a priest to assume the role of a shepherd, who learns to recognize God at work in the lives of his flock and who, ever present to them as a man of communion, directs the flock to Christ” (PPF 369).



THE PROPEDEUTIC STAGE OF FORMATION

Human Formation Benchmarks

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

Spiritual Formation Benchmarks

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

Intellectual Formation Benchmarks

102. “Gaining an initial understanding of Christian doctrine and anthropology as well as an initial familiarity of the Bible in its various parts are benchmarks that should be reached prior to embarking on philosophical studies in the discipleship stage. Benchmarks related to intellectual formation in preparation for the study of philosophy and theology include basic habits of study, signs of intellectual curiosity, and love of learning. Finally, if necessary, the propaedeutic stage can help to make up for anything

that is missing in a seminarian’s general education” (PPF 271).

Pastoral Formation Benchmarks

103. “Seminarians in the propaedeutic stage should develop ‘the dynamic of self-giving through experiences in the parish setting and charitable works.’ Hands-on experiences that include contact with the poor are appropriate at this stage. Benchmarks in the pastoral dimension include an awareness of the pastoral situation of the local community or ecclesiastical entity, as well as an awareness of the multicultural reality of the Church in the United States and the nature of the Universal Church. Priests serving in the United States, regardless of their cultural back- ground, often serve in a multicultural setting. Working toward cultural competency, including language competency, to meet pastoral needs in his diocese should be part of the formation a seminarian receives during the propaedeutic stage, so as to lay a solid foundation for continued formation in cultural competency in later stages.⁴⁵³ Pastoral charity is at the heart of the Church and the priesthood; so demonstrating a genuine concern for others, a spirit of generosity, and a developing habit of self-donation are also necessary benchmarks to be achieved prior to the seminarian’s acceptance into the discipleship stage” (PPF 373).



Overview of the NDS Propaedeutic Program

104. “The propaedeutic stage [of priestly formation] seeks to provide seminarians with the basic groundwork they need to engage in priestly formation.” (PPF, no. 119) To this end, The Program for Propaedeutic Formation at Notre Dame Seminary aims at providing new seminarians with an intentional period of discernment to enter into a “new way of life by developing a life of prayer, study, fraternity, and appropriate docility to formation.” (PPF, no. 120) New seminarians will be given the language to speak about and the context to understand and integrate the four dimensions of priestly formation, while focusing predominantly on growth in the spiritual and human dimensions.

105. Those in the propaedeutic stage will reside in the Benson House adjacent to the main Seminary Building. The Benson House will be furnished with a small chapel for personal prayer before the Eucharist as well as a space for the propaedeutic seminarians to gather and socialize. This setup will provide the seminarians in the propaedeutic stage along with the priest coordinator, a space separate from the larger house, so as to maintain a “community distinct from the Major Seminary.” (*Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 60) The daily Horarium will center on fostering a devotion to the Eucharist, a love for the Blessed Mother, meditation, spiritual reading, personal recreation and exercise, intellectual development, formation in the different dimensions, and silence. Devotion to the Liturgy of the Hours as the prayer of the Church will be fostered primarily through communal recitation of Morning and Evening Prayer. According to the principle of gradualism, communal recitation of the Office of Readings will be added following the first quarter to help develop in the new seminarians a mind in union with that of the Church as presented in the writings and homilies of the saints and Church fathers.

106. In addition to the daily Horarium, the new seminarians will be required to engage in several retreats throughout the course of the propaedeutic stage in order to develop a deeper sense of the presence of God in the lives of the individual men. (cf. PPF, no. 128) At the conclusion of the propaedeutic stage, the new seminarians will make an 8-day silent retreat in preparation for the significant responsibility of discernment and conversion of heart they will be undertaking in the discipleship stage of formation and throughout the course of their lives. With an eye to deepening the individual seminarian’s own self-awareness, those in the propaedeutic stage will be required to participate in a technology fast at the beginning of the program by relinquishing their personal technological devices and allowing their cell phones to be restricted from certain functionality by the coordinator. This fast will not last for the entirety of the stage but will allow for an initial break with the exterior world so that seminarians learn how to focus on their interior thoughts without escaping through some means of distraction. Technology will be reintroduced after this period incrementally along with the necessary formation on virtuous usage of technology and social media.

107. In order to maintain the integrity of the propaedeutic stage while also fostering the virtues necessary for continued intellectual formation, the program of studies will not adhere to the strict academic calendar of the seminary, nor will the courses offered be taken from the seminary curriculum. These courses will supplement the current seminary program by providing an introductory treatment of various areas of study. Throughout the course of the calendar year, while respecting the scheduled retreats, those in the propaedeutic stage will engage in approximately 6-week studies/seminars on various

topics pertaining to spiritual and human formation, such as “An Introduction to the Spiritual Wisdom of the Church Fathers,” “Understanding Oneself and the Principles of Affective Maturity,” “Principles of Effective Leadership,” “The Fundamentals and Methodology of Prayer,” “Interpersonal Relationships and True Friendship,” “The Dignity of the Laity and Becoming a Seminarian,” “Human Sexuality: True Masculinity and Femininity,” as well as others. Those wishing to deepen their knowledge of Spanish for pastoral ministry will also be given the opportunity to study the Spanish Language for credit.

108. In order to offer an “opportunity to develop ‘the dynamic of self-giving through experiences in the parish setting and charitable works,’” (PPF, no. 121; cf. RF, no. 59) the propaedeutic stage will provide numerous, regular, and varied experiences of ministry in the parish setting. In addition, the new seminarians will be expected to go out to assigned parishes throughout the Archdiocese of New Orleans on occasion to get to know the people and to experience parish ministry. Those who live within driving distance of their home diocese will also be expected to visit their diocese with some regularity to get to know the presbyterate and the people of God. Moreover, opportunities for evangelization, work with the poor, and outreach to the marginalized will be provided through an intentional pastoral formation program.

109. The Priest Coordinator of the Propaedeutic Stage will provide intentional formation and a regular priestly presence. He will be the one to whom the new seminarians will turn for special permissions, exemptions, and day-to-day issues. Along with the formation provided by the coordinator, each new seminarian will be assigned a Spiritual Director with whom they will be required to meet every two weeks.

110. As Human Formation is centered on a heightened self-awareness and an ability to reflect on one’s psychosocial maturity and interpersonal relationships, the seminarians in the propaedeutic stage will meet regularly as a group with a Catholic counselor, not for individual counseling but for group processing and internalization. If a seminarians wishes to engage in further individual counseling, arrangements will be made with a Catholic counselor at the approval of the respective seminarian’s diocese.



Vision and Goals of the Technology Fast

Seminarians in the Propaedeutic Stage of Formation will be expected to begin the year with a technology fast. We are living in a world of technology overload and in many cases

actual relationships are being replaced by virtual relationships and social media interactions. Those entering formation for the priesthood are a product of this culture, and as such, need to be taught the virtuous use of technology and social media. The goal of the technology fast is to help the seminarian break any dependency he may have to technology while providing a space for true and actual relationships to flourish.

The technology fast will last for 5-weeks beginning after Labor Day and will require that the seminarian relinquish all tablets, laptops, video game consoles, and televisions until the end of the fast. The seminarian will be allowed to maintain his personal cell phone, however, if the cell phone is a smart phone, it will be restricted for use by the Coordinator of the Propaedeutic Stage for texting and phone calls only. All cell phones will be plugged in for charging at night in a common space.

During the 5-weeks of the technology fast, seminarians will be given the opportunity for a limited amount of time on Sundays to use their personal devices. Following the 5-weeks, their devices will be unrestricted unless they choose to continue with the fast for longer. Seminarians will be paired with a companion for accountability purposes for the remainder of the program. Throughout the course of the Propaedeutic Year, they will engage in regular discussion on the Virtuous Use of Technology in preparation for living an integrated life as a priest.



Seminarian Formation & Accompaniment

THE ART OF PRIESTLY FORMATION

Discernment and Formation

104. The priestly formation program for theologians presumes an already developed sense of discernment on the part of the seminarian. He has already completed a college or pre-theology formation program; therefore, he enters the school of theology with a

purpose and outlook towards ordained ministry.

105. The priestly formation program for pre-theologians presumes a level of pre-discernment on the part of the seminarian. The seminarian is to have considered, before his entrance into the seminary, basic elements regarding his standing or status in the Church, what it means to practice faith, how to form a good prayer life, and possesses some grasp of basic Church teachings. The application and interview process will surely establish how much discernment has taken place before the seminarian begins his formation.

106. The faculty of the seminary also presumes that the seminarian takes full and personal accountability for the work of discernment and formation. The instruments the seminary provides are available to assist the seminarian in confirming his vocation in the Church. Therefore the responsibility to meet the standards of the priestly formation program rests with each seminarian.

107. In the wisdom of the Church, the formation of candidates takes place in the context of community. Moreover, the discernment process is rooted in the work of formation. Thus a seminary is not a retreat house or a house of meditation. Priestly formation, by its design, is a process and activity of work, responsibility, and engagement. In fact, the seminary is a Christian community structured and organized on the principle that each member contributes to building of the Kingdom of God within that community.

108. The relationship a seminarian has to the Church is through the seminary community. His past involvement in parish life or in other ecclesial communities has supported and brought the seminarian to a new relationship with Christ and the Church. Indeed, while priestly formation requires the seminarian to maintain his bonds and ties with his home parish, his status within the Church is as a seminarian.

109. “To live in the seminary, which is a school of the Gospel, means to follow Christ as the Apostles did. You are led by Christ into the service of God the Father and of all people, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Thus you become more like Christ the Good Shepherd in order better to serve the Church and the world as a priest” (PDV 42).

110. Like any faith community, the seminary is organic and dynamic. Each seminarian is to fully participate in the life of the community fulfilling responsibilities and completing assignments which impact on how the seminary functions. The faculty provides the leadership, instruction, and supervision for the seminary but each seminarian contributes to building up the community by the fact of his membership in that community.

111. “The history of every priestly vocation, as indeed of every Christian vocation, is the history of an inexpressible dialogue between God and human beings, between love of God who calls and the freedom of individuals who respond lovingly to him” (PDV 36).

112. The mediation of one’s discernment of a priestly vocation occurs through, with, and in the Church. The individual discernment of a candidate for seminary formation is brought to the Church for confirmation, affirmation, and very importantly, for formation.

113. Thus, discernment of a priestly vocation involves a dialogue with the Church. The diocesan bishop has ultimate responsibility in discerning with the seminarian if God is calling that individual to ministry as a priest. The diocesan bishop has entrusted the work

of discernment and formation to the seminary where the seeds of this vocation can grow and blossom. It is critically important, therefore, that each seminarian understands the importance of entering into the formation program with honesty and trust. He must use all the instruments the Church places at his disposal for ongoing discernment and formation.

114. Notre Dame Seminary exists to assist the seminarian in determining if God is calling him to the diocesan priesthood. This discernment, as it has been stated herein, occurs within a formation process. Discernment and formation go hand-in-hand, for such complementarity achieves a well-balanced and practical approach. This approach meets the standards of the Church and the People of God who expect competent and well-qualified priests. The seminarian quickly learns the reality of what it means to be a servant of the Lord.

115. A seminarian approaching seminary formation with trust and honesty will result in a successful discernment process. The priestly formation program seeks to avoid at every stage in the discernment process a “submarine formation” approach by which a student submerges into patterns or behaviors which externally meet the standards of priestly formation but only to emerge after ordination with ideologies, behavioral attitudes, or with agendas inconsistent with the expectations of ordained ministry. The seminarian is expected to be genuine, authentic and transparent in his approach to priestly formation and with those charged in the administration of the program.

116. Two primary components of the priestly formation program are formation advising and spiritual direction. The dialogical nature of discernment and formation requires the mediation of the Church in determining the overall progress of one’s discernment and in addressing the particular elements that affect one’s formation. The incarnational paradigm of Christ truly present in and with the Church is indeed mirrored in the life of a seminary that school of the Gospel in which the Lord forms his men to be priests.

Formation Advising

117. Notre Dame Seminary assists seminarians in their priestly formation principally by providing each seminarian with a formation advisor. The formation advisor is a faculty member assigned by the Rector-President to assist the seminarian in addressing issues which may arise from the seminarian’s perspective as well as issues presented by the seminary faculty personnel.

118. Every attempt will be made to assist the seminarian in formulating responsible approaches to these issues and charting productive advancement. By means of growth plans that are to be completed at the beginning of each academic semester, the seminarian, his Formation Advisor, and his Spiritual Director, will agree upon the issues and the approaches to accomplish the set goals. The formation advisor will also establish the means to assess the growth that has taken place and determine all that is still to be accomplished.

119. Throughout the year, the seminarian receives feedback on his pursuit of these goals from his formation advisor. The formation advisor serves to focus all of the diverse elements that contribute to the process of personal formation for the seminarian.

120. Because of the significance of this process and the importance of consistency, it is

expected that each seminarian meet with his formation advisor every two to three weeks. It is the responsibility of the seminarian to schedule these regular meetings with the formation advisor. The length of the meeting will depend upon the seminarian and the advisor, but a scheduled time for this meeting will provide both the seminarian and the advisor with an opportunity to address important issues.

121. The context of the relationship between the seminarian and the formation advisor must be one of mutual respect and trust. The formation advisor's role falls outside the internal forum, precisely in that forum where a priest is expected to lead his life and exercise his ministry. Because the priest is expected to be a public person, the seminarian's activity, reputation, and conduct are all part of the process of formation and therefore the arena in which he and his formation advisor must work. Information conveyed by the seminarian to the formation advisor will be shared with other faculty members or others associated with the formation program.

122. This implies there may be some information disclosed by the seminarian that would be to his benefit if it were shared with others who might assist in the process of growth. There may be other times when the faculty should be aware that a seminarian is dealing with a particular incident or issue in his life particularly if this affects his performance in other areas of academic or communal life.

123. The seminarian may request the assignment of a new formation advisor if there appears to be a conflict. Final discretion in the assignment of a formation advisor rests with the Vice Rector and Rector-President.

Counseling Services

124. As a resource to seminarians, the seminary employs a counselor. Counseling services enable the seminarian to address issues regarding human formation. Solid human formation is a prerequisite to effective spiritual and intellectual formation, and priestly ministry.

125. Seminarians are encouraged to consult a counselor if there are personal or family issues, matters related to inter-personal relationship skills, affective maturity, and sexual maturity.

126. The counselor also offers occasional workshops and conferences on appropriate formation topics.

127. The administration considers the counselor's conversations with seminarians as internal forum when seminarians have sought out the counselor on their own accord.

128. On occasion, the Rector-President may direct a seminarian to meet with the counselor or other counseling services concerning a specific issue. In these circumstances, the Rector-President has the right to inquire if the seminarian has met with the counselor and if he has adequately dealt with the issue at hand. The counselor will not discuss any issue in depth with the Rector-President or any other formation faculty member unless the seminarian has previously signed a release of confidential information.

129. It is the seminarian's responsibility to schedule the meeting with the counselor and to be faithful to the meetings. If he knows that he will be unable to keep an appointment or, for some reason, misses a meeting, the seminarian should contact the counselor as soon as possible to explain his absence and reschedule the meeting.

130. The counselor is a member of the priestly formation board and a member of the faculty council. Neither of these bodies discuss individual seminarians rather deal with the program of priestly formation.

Spiritual Direction

131. The Rector-President appoints a Coordinator of Spiritual Formation to coordinate the various efforts related to spiritual direction and spiritual formation.

132. The Coordinator of Spiritual Formation serves in the internal forum assisting with spiritual direction and celebrating the sacrament of penance.

133. The Coordinator of Spiritual Formation is responsible for offering recommendations to the Rector-President of priests who can serve as adjunct Spiritual Directors at the seminary.

The diocesan bishop of priest candidates will approve all Spiritual Directors with the recommendation of the Rector-President.

134. The Coordinator of Spiritual Formation meets with the Spiritual Directors periodically to review the standards of spiritual formation and to assure all appointments between seminarians and directors are maintained.

135. The Coordinator of Spiritual Formation will confirm the assignment of a Spiritual Director to each seminarian.

136. Each seminarian is expected to spend quality time with his Spiritual Director. A seminarian meets with his Spiritual Director twice a month for the first two months of a new direction; and thereafter once every three weeks, if possible, but never less than four times a semester. Seminarians are responsible for contacting their directors and arranging for spiritual direction meetings.

137. Within his first month at Notre Dame Seminary, a seminarian may meet with a number of the approved Spiritual Directors before he makes his final choice with the Coordinator of Spiritual Formation.

138. In the early fall, the seminarian and the Spiritual Director are to sign and complete the spiritual direction agreement form and submit it to the Coordinator of Spiritual Formation. The Spiritual Director files a form at the end of each semester regarding the faithfulness of each seminarians to spiritual direction.

139. The Spiritual Director and the seminarian relate to one another within what is termed the “internal forum.” This forum clearly demands absolute confidentiality. Thus, a seminarian’s individual Spiritual Director will never be asked for an evaluation, much less any information regarding what a seminarian may confide.

140. The content of spiritual direction is mutually agreed upon by the seminarian and Spiritual Director. It is assumed this content will be directed toward the spiritual and formational issues at the heart of a seminary program. The formation for regular meetings should include the seminarian’s own agenda that discusses matters related to spiritual development, spiritual reading, faithfulness to prayer, his personal journey, progress

with the four dimensions of formation, relationships with members of the community and personal friends, vocation discernment, priestly lifestyle, celibacy and obedience, and preparation for the annual evaluation.

141. The Spiritual Director may also serve as a confessor to the seminarian since this relationship is in the internal forum.

142. A seminarian may only have one Spiritual Director at a given time during his formation experience in the seminary. Outside relationships with other priests or people are obviously important support systems for a seminarian however those relationships must never jeopardize or be in conflict with the ideals of the priestly formation program

143. The Rector-President and Vice Rector of the seminary may never serve as a Spiritual Director or confessor to a seminarian. If such matters occurred with a seminarian prior to his entrance into the seminary program, the faculty member must recuse himself from both the application process and formation aspects regarding this seminarian.

144. Seminarians who wish to change Spiritual Directors must discuss this with his current Spiritual Director as well as with the Spiritual Director of the community. Any seminarian asking for a new director after second theology must grant permission for his outgoing director and incoming directors to speak. These conversations remain in the internal forum.

145. Likewise, a Spiritual Director may announce the need to terminate his relationship with the seminarian because of irreconcilable aspects of the arrangement however he may not disclose any information that is associated with the internal forum.

The Dynamism of Internal and External Fora

The Internal Forum

146. Concerning the internal forum, there is a distinction between matter spoken within the sacrament of penance and matter spoken between Spiritual Director and seminarian outside of the seal.

147. Matter spoken between priest and penitent is considered absolutely inviolable (C. 983.1). Priests are bound never to reveal such matter, directly or indirectly. In addition, priests are bound never to act upon the matter he hears within Confession (C. 984.2). Penalties up to excommunication can be imposed upon a priest who violates the seal of the confessional (C. 1388.1). Penitents are not bound by this seal and may speak with others about the advice they have received in Confession however they should do so only prudently and constructively.

148. Spiritual Directors make it known to the directee that they are available to celebrate the sacrament of penance without any semblance of the presumption or demand that this takes place. Matters spoken between the Spiritual Director and the seminarian (outside of confession) are ordinarily considered part of the internal forum and therefore confidential (PPF 95).

149. While the confessor/Spiritual Director is bound to confidentiality concerning matter in the internal forum, the penitent/directee is not bound beyond the dictates of

charity and justice.

The External Forum

150. In the external forum the seminarian is appropriately self-revelatory to his formators, especially his formation advisor. This is an expression of the accountability he owes to the Church for his progress toward the priesthood. The knowledge about the seminarian gained in the formation program is privileged and personal, given in trust, used in charity and reserved in justice. It is confidential but not in the sense of the seal of the sacrament of penance or never-to-be-used knowledge. This confidentiality in the external forum means that the information regarding the seminarian is shared only with those who have been given the responsibility by the Church to assist him in being formed as a priest and ultimately to make a recommendation regarding his readiness for Holy Orders.

151. The external forum refers to matter discussed between a seminarian and formation personnel (other than his Spiritual Director). It may also refer to the external observations of formation personnel concerning the seminarian's human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral development.

152. External forum matter that is discussed among formators is considered "confidential" in the sense that it is not disseminated beyond this group of personnel. The Spiritual Director, of course, exercises prudence in order to protect matter within the internal forum.

153. Information concerning the seminarian's progress in his human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral growth should be freely communicated with external forum formators.

154. It must also be clear that in the context of his formational relationships, both internal and external, the seminarian learns to become a man of the Church, who learns how to handle issues appropriately within the Church.

155. Serious issues that arise which impact the seminarian from outside the seminary should be taken to the Rector-President by the formation advisor for action.

Communication of Internal Forum Matter to the External Forum

156. As the sacramental seal remains inviolable, a priest may never reveal matters learned through Confession to anyone, even if this involves criminal conduct.

157. However, a Spiritual Director must communicate internal forum matters (outside of the seal) to appropriate formation personnel in the following cases involving real or potential harm to self or others regarding criminal misconduct concerning minors.

158. If a Spiritual Director learns (outside of the seal) that a directee has been involved with sexual misconduct with minors, he is obligated to report such conduct to law enforcement officials. Such conduct includes sexual activity with a minor and the accessing of child pornography.

159. In addition, if a Director discovers (outside of the seal) that a directee has been or

is currently being molested by a priest, deacon or Church employee/volunteer, he is obligated to report such conduct. The manner in which such a report is made must be in conformity with the laws of the State of Louisiana and the Decree Establishing Policies. Dealing with Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priests, Deacons or other Church Personnel unless protected by the Seal of Confession

160. A Spiritual Director must communicate internal forum matters (outside of the seal) to appropriate formation personnel in the following cases involving real or potential harm to self or others regarding attempted suicide and homicide:

161. If a Spiritual Director learns (outside of the seal) that a directee has attempted suicide or is planning to commit suicide, then he should inform formation personnel and seek appropriate medical assistance.

162. Similarly, if a director learns (outside of the seal) that a directee has committed homicide or is actively planning a homicide, then he should speak to formation personnel and inform law enforcement officials.

163. A Spiritual Director must communicate internal forum matters (outside of the seal) to appropriate formation personnel in the following cases involving real or potential harm to self or others regarding use of illegal drugs.

164. If a Spiritual Director learns (outside of the seal) that a directee is currently using illegal drugs or has become addicted to prescription drugs, then he should inform formation personnel and seek appropriate medical assistance. If civil laws have been violated, then formation personnel should inform law enforcement officials.

Communication between Spiritual Directors and Formation Committees

165. In order to assist with the human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral development of the seminarian, Spiritual Directors and formation personnel should be of one mind concerning the seminarian's goals and objectives for each year.

166. Spiritual Directors do not attend formation advisors meeting in order to avoid any appearance that internal forum is being violated. The Coordinator of Spiritual Formation attends the monthly priestly formation board since individual seminarians are not discussed at these meetings; only the programs of formation are discussed at these meetings.

Communication between Formation Advisors and Spiritual Directors

167. If a formation advisor has a concern about a seminarian, then he should discuss the matter during a formation meeting with the seminarian rather than informing the Spiritual Director in a separate meeting or conversation.

168. A formation advisor may inform a Spiritual Director about certain matters simply to provide information but never to solicit information from the Spiritual Director. When such communication is anticipated, the seminarian should be notified that the Spiritual Director will be informed.

169. When a formation advisor needs to speak with a Spiritual Director, such communication must be in the form of observable, factual information rather than

subjective analyses or therapeutic interventions. Formation personnel should not attempt to give Spiritual Directors advice concerning the spiritual life of their directees, whether in private or during a formation meeting. Formation personnel should never view Spiritual Directors as sources of information in the evaluative process.

Communication between Spiritual Directors and Formation Advisors

170. Under most circumstances, a Spiritual Director must not communicate his observations (internal or external forum matter) of a seminarian to other formation personnel, except the cases mentioned above.

171. The bond of trust between a Spiritual Director and seminarian would be seriously jeopardized if information (internal or external forum) habitually or even periodically flowed from Spiritual Director to formator.

172. There should never be a one-on-one discussion about a seminarian between his formators and his personal Spiritual Director. The Spiritual Director, however, is permitted to prudently make known a directee's habitual failure to attend spiritual direction meetings or spiritual conferences with other formation personnel. The Spiritual Director should inform the seminarian in advance that he will notify the formation advisor about failure to attend meetings.

173. The Spiritual Director may not comment at priestly formation meetings about information that might incidentally be raised about a seminarian, although individual seminarians should not be discussed at a priestly formation board meeting.

174. A Spiritual Director should not explain to formators the reasons for discontinuing the direction of a seminarian if such occasion occurs.

175. The Spiritual Director abstains from voting on the advancement of his directee to Holy Orders.

176. Spiritual Directors and other formators work together to assist each seminarian's human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral development. In the work of evaluation, the goal of all formation personnel should be to enable each seminarian's growth in holiness in preparation for Holy Orders. In this collaborative process, the bond of confidentiality between Spiritual Directors and seminarians is preserved even as the work of external forum formators is respected.

Weekly Formation Conferences

177. Once a week a member of the faculty will offer a conference to the seminarians that address the particular aspects of priestly formation and provides a clear vision of pastoral ministry according to the expectations of the Church with information and guidance helpful to discernment.

178. The conferences address the areas of diocesan priestly spirituality, priestly celibacy, priestly obedience, and prayer. At the beginning of each year the Rector-President announces to the community the general themes that will be addressed in these conferences.

179. The conferences generally convene once a week for a period of sixty minutes. Each seminarian is expected to take notes and read any materials distributed during the conference.

The conferences will use as primary sources the various governing documents on priestly formation but in particular the *Program of Priestly Formation* and *Pastores Dabo Vobis*.

FORMATION – EVALUATION

Formation Advising and Spiritual Direction

180. Formation advisors assist the seminarian in developing goals to be accomplished in the formation program that are beneficial to the overall discernment process.

181. Formation advising is the usual forum to discuss struggles and identify progress regarding the seminarian's formation and discernment. The formation advisor will share with the seminarian both positive and negative perceptions shared by the faculty. The seminarian, in turn, is able to dialogue with the faculty through the formation advising forum.

182. Since formation advising is in the external forum, the formation advisor will share with other faculty members any and all concerns. Likewise, the formation advisor shares with the seminarian concerns the faculty may have regarding performance or issues related to formation.

183. Spiritual direction occurs within the internal forum as explained in the previous section however issues discussed in the internal forum ought to be eventually brought to the external forum as those issues relate to external forum formation.

184. The seminarian should approach his discernment and formation in a unified manner using the *fora* of formation advising and spiritual direction in a transparent way in which topics are being addressed concomitantly.

Formation Advisor Meetings

185. The Rector-President convenes and chairs all formation advisor meetings. The seminary schedule lists the formation advisor meetings which occur in preparation for evaluations.

186. The formators review all pertinent matters related to the external forum particularly those issues being discussed in formation advising. Other formators may share their perceptions of a seminarian's growth in order that the formation advisor may bring back to the seminarian affirmation and concerns.

187. Spiritual Directors do not participate in formation advisor meetings.

Formation Plan

188. The formation plan is distributed by the Rector-President at the beginning of each academic year. Please see the appendix for the template.

189. It serves as an essential structure that supports the dialogue between the seminarian and his formation advisor.

190. The plan provides the seminarian to identify personal goals and specific measurable objectives, directed toward growth in the four areas of priestly formation (human, spiritual, intellectual, pastoral). To each of these goals and accompanying objectives, the seminarian relates his specific strengths and gifts that he perceives he may use to achieve his goals and objectives.

How does the seminarian develop his Formation Plan?

191. Because the seminarian is ultimately responsible for his own formation, he should prayerfully consider his priorities. He works personally for his own formation in dialogue with others:

- Discerning with the Holy Spirit;
- Considering his relationship with the diocesan bishop/religious superior as well as with the director of vocations;
- Considering the relationships at the seminary with the Rector-President, Formation Advisor, Spiritual Director, Formation Faculty, peers, professors, staff;
- Considering the relationships with family, friends, pastor, other priests

192. Using the formation plan the seminarian sets realistic personal priorities and identifies the concrete means to achieve them. In this way the seminarian establishes a clear reference point for self-evaluation as he monitors his integral formation moving towards full human maturity and maturity of faith. With his formation advisor in the external forum and with his Spiritual Director in the internal forum, the seminarian revisits his formation plan throughout the year.

193. In drawing up his formation plan, the seminarian reviews his previous plan, as well as the end-of-year self-evaluation and formation advisor report. The seminarian takes into account comments from the formation faculty, along with assessments of his apostolic work assignment and summer pastoral placement.

194. In consultation with his Spiritual Director, the seminarian proposes appropriate goals and objectives for his level of formation to his formation advisor. The seminarian will consider his readiness to receive the ministries of lector and acolyte, be admitted to candidacy, and ordination to the diaconate and priesthood. His goals and objectives therefore ought to be practical, discernible, measureable and achievable.

195. The seminarian is not required to write up a document or write out the goals rather will develop his plan with his formation advisor and Spiritual Director in a way that is most helpful to the seminarian.

Self-Evaluation

196. Self-evaluations are valuable instruments for both the seminarian who reflects on his own growth and for the faculty who has the opportunity to hear from the seminarian

where he is at in the discernment process.

197. Seminarians are to approach such evaluations with a candid examination of their concrete behaviors, demonstrate their professional and academic competence, discuss strengths and weaknesses, and identify areas of needed growth in spiritual and moral practice. It is the responsibility of the seminarian to demonstrate positive qualities that recommend his continuance in the program.

198. The completion of the self-evaluation tool should involve both the Spiritual Director and Formation Advisor.

199. The Rector-President will provide each seminarian the instrument they are to use in completing the self-evaluation. After consultation with the Formation Advisor and Spiritual Director the self-evaluation is submitted to the Rector-President's Office for distribution to the vocation director.

Faculty Evaluation

200. "Each seminary must provide a procedure for the evaluation of the seminarians. As part of this procedure, each seminary should ensure that as many faculty as possible are engaged in this process; that the seminarians are apprised of their progress as early as possible in their formation, particularly if there are concerns; that the Formation Advisor/Mentor regularly communicates with the seminarian; that the seminarians have a procedure for responding to matters raised in the evaluation process; that confidentiality, as articulated by the seminary, is observed; and that all doubts are resolved in favor of the Church. The process of evaluation should be conducted in an atmosphere of mutual trust and confidence. It should promote the continued growth of the seminarian in the four dimensions of formation" (PPF 165) .

201. Because formation and growth are gradual processes, the continuing evaluation of seminarians is necessary. Seminarians profit most from a system of periodic evaluation in which they receive clear and accurate information about their behavior and attitudes so they can change and correct what is inappropriate and develop those areas of weakness.

202. The evaluation of seminarians is the primary responsibility of the faculty under the direction of the Rector-President. The Rector-President will explain before each evaluation period the process used by the faculty in determining how the evaluation process unfolds.

203. At Notre Dame Seminary, the seminarians participate in the periodic review at the conclusion of the academic year or shortly before Christmas. The periodic review includes both the self-evaluation of the seminarian and observations made by the faculty.

204. The evaluation process should be approached by both seminarians and faculty members in a spirit of mutual trust and confidence. Since information is regularly exchanged between the formation advisor and seminarian, the evaluation is an opportunity for the faculty to offer its unified support and share common concerns.

Evaluation Conference

205. The Rector-President will convene a meeting of the formation advisors to discuss the self-evaluations already submitted and then prepare a general review of each

seminarian. He will schedule appropriate times for the advisor-seminarian conference.

206. Prior to the conference the formation advisor will share with the seminarian the general thoughts of the faculty so that the seminarian can be prepared to offer insights regarding his formation and discernment.

207. During the advisor-seminarian conference each advisor shares their evaluation of the seminarian in the context of commendations, observations and recommendations. The seminarian is given opportunity to briefly respond to this evaluation or make any comments he feels necessary.

208. The formation advisor compiles a written summary of the faculty evaluation for each seminarian. These written summaries are shared with the seminarian by his formation advisor. The evaluation becomes part of the seminarian's personnel file.

209. Any seminarian can meet with the Vice Rector or Rector-President to receive clarification about any concerns the faculty may have with a seminarian's progress in the priestly formation program.

Formation Faculty Vote

210. The formation faculty conducts an annual voting session on each seminarian, and they are obliged to work toward a consensus judgment about the seminarians they are asked to evaluate.

211. The faculty vote assists the seminarian's bishop or religious superior, who must make the final judgment on a seminarian's readiness to advance to the next level of formation, receive the ministries of lector and acolyte, be admitted to candidacy, and eventually to be called to Holy Orders.

212. Since there is a process of growth or a "gradualism" as candidates mature, the votes of the faculty are based on where seminarians ought to be at their particular stage of formation. Seminarians who consistently meet the benchmarks of a particular stage of formation are to be promoted to the next level. Sometimes seminarians develop difficulties or actually regress in the formation process, and this will naturally be reflected in future faculty votes.

213. The possible votes for advancement in formation, or promotion to Holy Orders are: "yes," "yes, with reservation," "no" or "abstain." When voting on candidates for diaconate and priesthood, one must vote either yes or no. Reasons for the no vote must be clear, objective, and substantive.

214. A "yes" vote means that a seminarian has fulfilled the basic expectations of his level of formation, and is ready to advance to the next stage of formation. There may well be areas where improvement is needed, but they do not pertain to a fundamental quality needed for ordination. In their written observations about a seminarian, such areas for growth are to be pointed out by the formation faculty.

215. There is also the option for the faculty to record a formal reservation with their "yes" votes. A formal reservation is an acknowledgment by one or more faculty members that there is a serious deficiency in the seminarian's formation that could call into question suitability for ordination. It is an affirmative vote in the sense that the faculty believes that

a candidate has the basic qualities to advance to the next level of formation. However, the seminarian needs to address and overcome the stated deficiencies to receive a positive vote for advancement in the future.

216. Because the distinction between an area for improvement for growth and a reservation is not always clear, faculty are to raise their concerns in the discussion with seminarians and then in writing describe the nature of their reservation(s).

217. Faculty members cannot register a “yes with reservation” vote for seminarians being presented as candidates for ordination to the diaconate or priesthood. The vote must be a “yes” or a “no.”

218. A “no” vote means that at this time a seminarian should not advance to the next level of formation because there are serious deficiencies in one or more areas of formation, and it is doubtful that these problems can be remedied within the seminary formation context. Keeping in mind the levels of formation, a “no” vote signifies that a seminarian has not achieved the most basic expectations and should not advance.

219. If there is a majority negative vote by the faculty, the Rector-President reports this to the Director of Vocations. The Bishop and Director of Vocations may want to discuss with the Rector-President and faculty any further course of action, such as the recommendation of a pastoral year, counseling, or leaving the seminary all together. Faculty must state in writing the reasons for their negative vote.

220. “Abstain” means that a faculty member has a serious reason for not voting affirmatively or negatively; such as, a lack of knowledge of the seminarian, or the fact that he has been the seminarian’s Spiritual Director. This vote would be rare since all formators are to know the seminarians and it is the responsibility of the formator to know the seminarian or at least rely on the information/judgement of the seminarian’s formation advisor.

221. The vote is to be recorded and documented in the seminarian’s formation report by the formation advisor writing the evaluation report.

Formation Advisor’s Report

222. According to the timetable established by the Rector-President, each formation advisor composes a written end-of-year evaluation of each of his advisees. The advisor’s evaluation is prepared using the template provided by the Rector-President (see appendix).

223. In drawing up this evaluation, the advisor takes into account:

- individual formation meetings with the advisee
- formation plan
- peer evaluations (informal)
- reports from the Coordinators of Formation (pastoral, human, intellectual)
- self-evaluation by the seminarian

- formation reviews by other formators
- feedback from professors and staff
- faculty interviews (when applicable)

224. The advisor incorporates into the conclusion of the evaluation the formation faculty vote and a summary of the comments of the faculty. Once the final draft of the evaluation is completed, the Formation Advisor meets with the advisee to discuss the contents of the evaluation. The seminarian signs the evaluation signifying that he has in fact read the evaluation, not that he necessarily agrees with it.

225. The Formation Advisor provides three original and signed copies of the advisee's evaluation to the Rector-President's office. One set of originals is kept on file in the Rector-President's office, the other two are sent to the seminarian's Bishop /religious superior and vocation director.

226. The advisor makes photocopies for his own file and for distribution to the Rector-President and the advisee in an envelope.

Formational Probation

227. In addition to the academic probation that is outlined earlier in this resource, the formation faculty reserves the right to declare a seminarian on formational probation.

725. Such probation arises when the conduct of a seminarian causes sufficient concern to the faculty that a declaration of this seriousness is warranted. This states that while the department or activity is not of itself sufficient to warrant dismissal from the priestly formation program, its continuance may result in such dismissal.

228. In all cases of formational probation, the seminarian will be given the specific reasons for this action and the specific changes that are required. The Vocation Director will also be notified.

229. Normally, seminarians are given one semester to correct the condition out of which formational probation has arisen. If after the course of one semester the condition has not been corrected, the seminarian is liable for dismissal from the priestly formation program.

Withdrawal from the Program

230. A seminarian who decides to withdraw from the priestly formation program is expected to have thoroughly discussed this decision with his Spiritual Director, Formation Advisor, and the Rector-President.

231. When a final decision has been reached, the seminarian is expected to state this fact in writing and offer appropriate reasons for the decision. This written notice of withdrawal is to be given personally to the Rector-President and will be placed in the seminarian's personnel file.

232. The process of discernment may also include a mutual decision between the seminarian and faculty concluding the seminarian is not called to the diocesan priesthood or at least is not prepared to continue in the formation program. The seminarian will still

be asked to state in writing his decision to withdraw from the program.

233. The Rector-President will discuss with the seminarian the best way to communicate this decision to the rest of the seminary community. In such cases, the Rector-President has the final decision regarding the process of communication and how best the seminarian can collect his personal belongings so as not to disrupt the community.

Dismissal from the Program

234. The faculty may determine after thorough discussion the dismissal of a seminarian from the priestly formation program.

235. The decision for dismissal will be conveyed to the seminarian by the Rector-President with at least one additional faculty member present. At that meeting the seminarian will be given the specific reasons why this action is taking place.

236. The seminarian will also be given a written statement of the decision, a copy of which will also be placed in the seminarian's personnel file.

237. The Vocation Director will be notified immediately when a seminarian is being terminated from the program.

Advancement in the Program

238. At the conclusion of each academic year, in the self-evaluation process, the seminarian will be asked to describe his discernment and indicate to the faculty his willingness to continue in the formation program. The formation advisor will already have prepared the seminarian to respond accordingly.

239. The formation faculty will offer a vote recommending if the seminarian should advance to the next year of formation. The vote is to be recorded. The vote is a recommendation since the Rector-President makes the final determination.

240. If the faculty determines the seminarian should be dismissed, the above procedures will be followed. Otherwise, the formation advisor will confirm the faculty's decision to advance the seminarian to the next stage of the formation program when reviewing the report of the evaluation with the seminarian.

Seminarian Appeals Process

241. If the seminarian disagrees with a matter of fact or judgment within the written evaluation or any other aspect of the evaluation process he will first seek resolution with his Formation Advisor.

242. If a resolution is not possible between the formation advisor and the seminarian, the seminarian may then appeal to the Rector-President. The Rector-President will handle all appeals of this nature and who makes the final decision on the matter.

243. The final evaluation of the formation advisor will then be revised to incorporate the fact and description of the appeal, and the Rector-President's decision.

Records and Files

244. All application materials related to the priestly formation program at Notre Dame

Seminary is the property of the seminary.

245. If a seminarian is dismissed from the program the Rector-President has discretion in determining what materials, if any, can be returned to the seminarian. No information, however, can be released to any party outside the seminary without the consent of the Rector-President.

246. All psychological documents and transcripts of seminarians cannot be released without the permission of the seminarian or former seminarian and the Rector-President.

247. All official personnel files are maintained in the Office of the Rector-President. Only the Rector-President along with support staff, have access to personnel files. The Registrar's office maintains the academic files of all seminarians.

Access to Files

248. For those applying for acceptance to Notre Dame Seminary, access to one's file may be obtained by appointment with the Rector-President.

249. For those currently enrolled as a seminarian access to one's file may be obtained by appointment with the Rector-President.

250. For those who have discontinued as seminarians at Notre Dame Seminary, access to one's file may be obtained by appointment with the Rector-President

251. In all cases, a seminarian or former seminarian may not remove anything from their file or photocopy any of the materials. The seminarian or former seminarian has the right to attach to any document contained in one's file any explanation or clarification deemed necessary or desirable. Excluded from review are documents (particularly recommendations submitted) given by the faculty with the specific understanding they remain confidential.

Protection of Information Policy

252. Notre Dame Seminary has the responsibility for supervising access to and/or release of official data/information about seminarians. Certain items of information about individual seminarians are fundamental to the education process and must be recorded. This recorded information concerning seminarians must be used only for clearly defined purposes, must be safeguarded and controlled to avoid violations of personal privacy, and must be appropriately disposed of when justification for its collection and retention no longer exists.

253. In this regard, Notre Dame Seminary is committed to protecting to the maximum extent possible the right of privacy of all the individuals about whom it holds information, records, and files. Access to and release of such records is restricted to the seminarian concerned, to others with the seminarians' written consent, to officials within the school, to a court of competent jurisdiction, and otherwise pursuant to law.

254. Notre Dame Seminary supports the *Student Right to Know Act* and *Campus Security Act*, and amendments thereof.

Privacy of Information

255. Notre Dame Seminary complies fully with the provisions of the *Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)* of 1974 as amended. The act protects the confidentiality of academic files and establishes the right of seminarians to review their educational records. Confidential documents received as part of the admissions process as well as materials related to the seminarian's formation during attendance at Notre Dame Seminary are not available for review by the seminarian nor may they be released to a third party without the permission of the seminarian. All academic records and related documents remain the property of Notre Dame Seminary.

Directory Information

256. Notre Dame Seminary, in accordance with the *FERPA Act*, has designated the following information about seminarians as public (directory) information:

- Name
- Address (local and home)
- E-mail address
- Program of study, class level
- Enrollment status (e.g., acceptance, full-time, part-time, withdrawn)
- Major program of study
- Dates of attendance
- Degree(s) and awards received
- Previous educational agencies or institutions attended
- Diocese of sponsorship or religious community
- Deceased status
- Record hold(s)

257. Directory information may be disclosed by Notre Dame Seminary for any purpose at its discretion without the consent of the seminarian. The seminary restricts such disclosures to those with legitimate ecclesiastical, educational, or legal interest. Directory information is not released to outside parties for commercial use. A seminarian, however, has the right to refuse to permit the designation of any or all of the above information as directory information by filing a written notice to this effect with the Registrar's office at the time of registration.



Propaedeutic Stage Benchmarks

(Within the Dimensions / Pillars of Formation)

HUMAN DIMENSION | PPF #191

Implementation of Benchmarks at NDS:

- Visitation of families and parishioners
- Mentorship from men in the community (with various skill sets)
- Meal prep and cooking as a group
- House chores
- Manual Labor with the Facilities Department
- Maintaining a rule of life together
- Regular exercise schedule
- Growth as men for others (helping people in the community with various needs)
- Social interaction / conversation with other people of all ages/states in life
- Engagement in true and virtuous leisure/recreation
- Enjoyment of the arts (watch good movies together, share music together, appreciation for sacred art, and more)
- Engagement in the Human Formation Conferences and Group Processing

- Engagement in Formation Advising

SPIRITUAL DIMENSION | PPF #235

Implementation of Benchmarks at NDS:

- Praying the Liturgy of the Hours together daily
- Praying Mass together daily
- Praying a daily Holy Hour as a community
- Journeying through the CCC Section Four: Christian Prayer
- Journeying through other texts on the Spiritual Life and the Spiritual Tradition of the Church
- Engaging in Spiritual Direction
- Serving at Masses together around the diocese and in one's home diocese
- Formation and growth in chastity and an understanding of priestly celibacy

INTELLECTUAL DIMENSION | PPF #268-271

Implementation of Benchmarks at NDS:

- Reading and Studying the following texts:
 - *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* (in its entirety)
 - Sacred Scripture
 - *Introduction to the Spiritual Life*, Brant Pitre
 - *Christian Spirituality in the Catholic Tradition*, Jordan Aumann
 - *Rules of Discernment*, St Ignatius
 - *Program for Priestly Formation*, 6th ed., USCCB
 - *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, Pope St. John Paul II
 - *Priests for the Third Millennium*, Timothy Dolan
 - And other texts as directed

PASTORAL DIMENSION | PPF #373

Implementation of Benchmarks at NDS:

- Visiting those in need of pastoral care
 - High School visits
 - Bible studies and Prayer Groups with outside participants
 - Journeying with married couples in Domestic Church
 - Serving at Mass for schools and churches
-

COMMUNITY

- Weekly house community nights
- Weekly discussions with the Coordinator of the Propaedeutic Stage or other priests on faculty
- Formation classes together
- Enjoyment of the arts together
- Cooking and cleaning together
- Pastoral work together
- Visiting families together
- Hosting priests at the formation house

NOTABLE FRUITS/GRACES OF THIS YEAR

- Growth in not hiding from others / the community
- Death of the ego / humility
- Relationship building / Authentic brotherhood
- Honesty
- Vulnerability
- Maturity as Men
- Greater Self-Awareness & Affective Maturity
- Growth in Relationships with Laity
- Growth in adaptability and flexibility
- Growth in focus on the other



Staff & Resources

STAFF

FR KURT YOUNG
Coordinator of the Propaedeutic Stage

FR MICHAEL CHAMPAGNE, CJC
Spiritual Director
Professor, Spiritual Formation

DR THOMAS FONSECA, Ph.D., LPC-S, LMFT, NCSC, NCC
Counselor
Professor, Human Formation

DR BRANT PITRE, Ph.D. (*Spring Semester*)
Professor, Intellectual Formation



Major Dates

AUG	19	Move-in
	20	Solemn Vespers and Opening Banquet
	21-23	Orientation
	24-26	Forming Group Dynamics Trip (<i>Tickfaw State Park</i>)
	28	Propaedeutic Program Begins with Daily Horarium
SEPT	1-4	Labor Day Weekend (<i>Free Weekend</i>)
	5	Technology Fast Begins
	14-16	NDS 100 th Anniversary Celebrations
OCT	9-12	Initial Retreat: “Awakening to the Call”
	12-15	Fall Break
NOV	19-26	Thanksgiving Break
DEC	9-14	Retreat: “Fanning the Flames of Love”
	15-31	Christmas Break (<i>PARISH ASSIGNMENT</i>)
JAN	1-15	Christmas break (<i>PARISH ASSIGNMENT</i>) Continued
	16	Propaedeutic Program Begins for Spring Semester
FEB	10-13	Mardi Gras Break
MAR	23-31	Easter Holidays
APR	1	Easter Holiday
	2	Semester Resumes
MAY	2-8	Final Retreat: “Stoking the Burning Fire Within”
	9	Graduation
	10	Summer Break Begins (<i>SUMMER ASSIGNMENT</i>)