



**CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE
OF ENGLAND AND WALES**



Your Ministers, Your Preachers, Your Priests

**A CHARTER FOR PRIESTLY FORMATION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES**

Contents

	Page
Decree from the Congregation for the Clergy	2
Introduction from Cardinal Nichols	3
Foreword	4
Abbreviated Titles of Documents Quoted in the Charter	6
Section 1: Introduction	7
Section 2: The Promotion of Priestly Vocations and Selection of Candidates for the Priesthood	17
Norms for the Selection of Candidates for the Priesthood	23
Section 3: The Propaedeutic Seminary	27
The Content of the Propaedeutic Year	30
Section 4: Human Formation	
Principles	34
Norms	39
Section 5: Spiritual Formation	
Principles	44
Norms	52
Section 6: Intellectual Formation	
Principles	56
Norms	59
Section 7: Pastoral Formation	
Principles	64
Norms	69
Section 8: Living in Community	
Principles	71
Norms	75
Section 9: Evaluation during Formation	78
Norms for the Evaluation of Seminarians	78
Section 10: Formation after Ordination to the Priesthood	82
Conclusion	84



CONGREGATIO PRO CLERICIS

Prot. N. 20144400

DECRETUM

Conferentia Episcopalis Angliae et Cambriae ad augescentes sacerdotalis praeparationis exigentias respiciens, in animo habuit suam *Rationem institutionis sacerdotalis* (vulgo *A Charter for Priestly Formation for England and Wales*) perficere, praesentis temporis culturalibus et socialibus circumstantiis prae oculis habitis. Quem ad assequendum finem, eadem Conferentia ad rem Magisterii fontes perlustravit, verae utilitatis elementa sanae doctrinae et paedagogiae exinde colligens ad futurorum sacerdotum spiritalem, humanam, intellectualem et pastoraalem efformationem novis vitalibus impulsioibus ditandam, peculiari nostrae aetatis indoli consonis. Haec *Ratio* sana doctrina atque authentico apostolico et missionario spiritu penitus imbuta est, ad novam evangelizationem omni ope fovendam et promovendam hodie tam necessariam.

Merita laude pariter extollenda est istius Exc.mi Episcopatus sollicitudo de recta ac profunda philosophica et theologica alumnorum praeparatione, hodierno scientiae sacrae progressui accommodata, quae in "*Ratione studiorum*" claris principiis generalibus atque particularibus pro singulis disciplinis normis ita definita exhibetur, ut personali sacerdotum spiritali vitae atque universae missioni pastorali in hodierna societate tutum fundamentum praestare possit.

Quibus igitur rite consideratis ac perpensis, haec Congregatio pro Clericis, libenter praesentem "*Rationem institutionis sacerdotalis pro Anglia et Cambria* necnon *Rationem studiorum*", ad normam Can. 242 § 1 CIC **ad tempus** prout Conferentiae Episcopali vel huic Congregationi necessarium vel utile visum fuerit **approbat**, necnon ab iis ad quos pertinet fideliter observari iubet; servatis ceteris de iure servandis, contrariis quibuslibet minime obstantibus.

Datum Romae ex Aedibus Congregationum, d. V m. Februarii a. D. MMXV

Beniaminus Card. Stella
Praefectus

✠ Georgius Carolus Patrón Wong
*Archiepiscopus Episcopus emeritus Papantlensis
A Secretis pro Seminariis*

Introduction from Cardinal Nichols

I am delighted to write a short introduction to this document outlining the foundations behind the formation of men for the ministerial priesthood in England and Wales. Each year we are blessed by men who offer their lives in the service of Our Lord and the Church as they discern in the seminary context whether God has planted the seed of priestly vocation within their hearts. Our duty as a Church is to provide a sound environment where all of the facets of the priestly character can be shaped and honed. The process begins before and continues after seminary as we all journey on our road of Christian discipleship. In these precious years of formation, the seminary community provides support and challenge in the four principal areas of human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral formation to help the discernment as to whether the Lord's call is a true voice or not.

In his accompanying letter to the *Decree* granting Vatican *Recognitio* to the *Charter*, the Prefect for the Congregation for the Clergy wrote "From a detailed study, the *Charter* would appear to be an excellent document, particularly in its development of the principles of the Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores dabo vobis*, and its detailed approach to formation in the context of the specific cultural and religious situation in England and Wales" and "this Dicastery has no hesitation in granting its approval to the current draft, without any amendment."

We are blessed with our seminaries both home and abroad. They provide this fertile ground which is adapted to the specific cultural and religious situation of England and Wales. The dedicated seminary staff, and of those Universities where some students study as part of their formation, work with the students to ensure that all have the opportunity to grow in love of God through the various facets of formation. I am grateful to them in their commitment to this work.

St John Paul II spoke of the importance of developing a *culture of vocation*. The Church in England and Wales must continue to do this in our homes, schools, parishes and chaplaincies, wherever the Church may find herself, so that the still small voice of God that whispers in the ears of men may be heard through the diverse noises of our contemporary world. Then the people in our countries will have priests into the future: men formed in the image of Christ the Good Shepherd who will proclaim the joy of the Gospel to all.

✠ Vincent Cardinal Nichols

President

Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales

Foreword

As we move further into the first quarter of the 21st century, life in our countries inevitably changes and develops. It is from this changing world that our present and future candidates for priesthood will come. So it is timely, therefore, to present a second edition of “A Charter for Priestly Formation for England and Wales”. The first edition of this Charter was approved by the Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales at the Low Week meeting in 1990, and by decree of the Congregation for Catholic Education dated 8th January 1991.

There has been much growth and great insight has been gained over the last 25 years in the field of priestly training. Most importantly we have received the great gift of the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (25th March 1992), which gave new shape to the programme of priestly formation. Of course, we have recently celebrated the 25th Anniversary of the publication of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, itself a seminal document, available to all and which cannot fail to make its mark on programmes of formation. The Year of Faith (2012-2013) also commemorated fifty years since Vatican II. The documents promulgated by that Council have been foundational in all areas of life in the Church ever since. They directed and inspired the original *Ratio Fundamentalis* (1970), revised (1985) in the light of the Code of Canon Law published in 1983; similarly they are at the core of this second edition of the Charter for Priestly Formation for England and Wales. The Council Documents to which we make special reference are the Decree on Priestly Training, *Optatam Totius*, and the Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, *Presbyterorum Ordinis*.

Other documents which have inspired and assisted the work of this Charter for Priestly Formation are: The Congregation for Clergy, Instruction *The Priest, Pastor and Leader of the Parish Community* (4th August 2002); the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Theological Formation of Future Priests* (22nd February 1976); the document of The Pontifical Work for Ecclesiastical Vocations, *New Vocations for a New Europe (In Verbo tuo...)*, 6th January 1998); Bishops’ Conference Scotland, *Priests for Scotland, Norms For Priestly Formation in Scotland* (June 2005); The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Program of Priestly Formation, 5th Edition* (4th August 2006).

We hope that this document will be of interest to, appreciated and studied by those to whom it is addressed, namely: bishops, seminary staff, seminarians, and all others involved in priestly formation. Thanks must be given to all who generously took part in the preparation and compiling of this document. The rectors of all the seminaries of England and Wales have played a major role in this important work,

they include the following institutions: The Venerable English College, Rome; The Beda College, Rome; The English College, Valladolid, Spain; Allen Hall, Chelsea, London; St John's Seminary, Womersley, Guildford; St Mary's College, Oscott, Birmingham; St Cuthbert's College, Ushaw, Durham. The contributions of the Conference of On-going Formation Directors, the Conference of Diocesan Vocation Directors and the National Office for Vocation are also gratefully acknowledged. Finally a great debt of gratitude is owed to Mgr. Peter Fleetwood who acted as redactor/editor of this document.

As a Conference of Bishops, we offer our prayerful support to all those involved in this vital and graced work of priestly formation. We commend this endeavour to Our Blessed Lady, Mother of the Church and Mother of Priests.

✠ Terence Patrick Draine
Bishop with Responsibility for Ministerial Formation
Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales

Abbreviated Titles of Documents Quoted in the Charter

CCC - *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1993.

CIC - *Code of Canon Law*, 1983.

In verbo tuo - Pontifical Work for Ecclesiastical Vocations, *New Vocations for a New Europe (In Verbo Tuo)*, 6th January 1998.

GDC - Congregation for the Clergy, *General Directory for Catechesis*, 11th August 1997
58, 59

LG - Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen gentium*

OT - Second Vatican Council, Decree on the Training of Priests *Optatam totius*

PDV - St John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores dabo vobis*, 25th
March 1992.

PO - Second Vatican Council, Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests,
Presbyterorum ordinis

PPF - United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Program of Priestly Formation*, 5th
edition, 4th August 2006

PPL - Congregation for Clergy, Instruction *The Priest, Pastor and Leader of the Parish
Community*, 4th August 2002.

RM – St John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris missio*, 7th December 1990

SCar - Pope Benedict XVI, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum
caritatis*, 22nd February 2007.

SCon - Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum
concilium*

TFFP - Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Theological Formation of
Future Priests*, 22nd February 1976.

Biblical quotations are from the Revised Standard Version (Catholic Edition).

1. Introduction

Communion with Jesus and participation in His mission

1. “Even today the Lord is going up into the hills and calling those whom he desires. The seminary is these hills of Jesus”¹. A seminary is a place of discernment and formation, where everything is designed to help seminarians to see if they are indeed among those the Lord is calling. St John Paul II saw the seminary as “a continuation in the Church of the apostolic community gathered about Jesus, listening to his word, proceeding toward the Easter experience, awaiting the gift of the Spirit for the mission”².

2. What the Gospels tell us about the Lord calling his first disciples, and their response, is the key to understanding priestly formation: “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men”, He said, and “immediately they left their nets and followed him”³. He also wanted them to share his life, saying, “I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you”⁴.

3. Accordingly, priestly formation should encourage those who wish to share in the priesthood of Christ to “form the habit of drawing close to him as friends”⁵ and call them “to have a deep intimacy with God”⁶. The Gospel has to be the basis on which all the programmes and structures of priestly formation are built. It is in the Gospel that we encounter Christ and it is in Him that “those who believe come to see themselves in the light of faith which they profess; Christ is the mirror in which they find their own image fully realised”⁷.

4. The work of priestly formation is respected and valued throughout the Church, because it is at the heart of her response to the call to evangelise humanity: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations”⁸. This requires a deep sensitivity to the reality of the need for “a new evangelisation, new in its ardour, methods and expression”⁹. It is important in the context of priestly formation never to lose sight

¹ Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, *Ministers of Your Joy*, 1989, 81

² St John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores dabo vobis*, 25th March 1992 (PDV), 60

³ *Matthew* 4, 19

⁴ *John* 15, 15

⁵ Second Vatican Council, Decree on the Training of Priests *Optatam totius (OT)* 8, quoted in PDV 46

⁶ PDV 47

⁷ Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter *Lumen Fidei*, 29th June 2013, 22

⁸ *Matthew* 28, 19

⁹ St John Paul II, *Discourse to the XIX Assembly of CELAM* (Port au Prince, 9 March 1983), 3: AAS 75 (1983) 778.

of the essentially missionary nature of the Church's calling, which is also a call to "evangelise culture"¹⁰; this means that formation must help candidates to analyse the context in which evangelisation takes place.

The context of priestly formation: the world and the Church today

5. "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"¹¹. The contexts from which God calls his priests should shape particular formation programmes.

6. The *General Directory for Catechesis* underlines just how complex are the cultures we are called to evangelise. In today's world there are "three basic situations requiring particular and precise responses". Where Christ and his Gospel are not known, "missionary activity is concentrated preferably towards young people and adults" and "it is directed to non-Christians and invites them to conversion". Other communities with "adequate and solid ecclesial structures" are "fervent in their faith and in Christian living. They bear witness to the Gospel in their surroundings and give a sense of commitment to the Universal mission". In "many countries of established Christian tradition... entire groups of the baptised have lost a living sense of the faith, or... live a life far removed from Christ and his Gospel". Here, "the baptised of all ages... live in a religious context in which Christian points of reference are perceived purely exteriorly". These three situations often coexist in the same city or neighbourhood, and certainly within the same nation. The non-baptised mingle with the fervent, while those who have lost faith live together with those of great faith. In a single pastoral setting, therefore, all three forms of evangelisation are needed and each "influences, stimulates and assists the others"¹².

7. These three contexts for evangelisation are clearly present in England and Wales. Future priests need to anticipate the tensions which can and do arise, which have been summarised as follows: the tension between "the individualism of modern society and the communality of the Church"; between "the Church existing within the world and the Church apart from the world"; between "people wanting to receive something from the Church and not wanting to be committed to it"¹³.

8. These tensions reflect the diverse relationships between the Church and the dominant culture in our countries, but that diversity is magnified when one takes

¹⁰ St John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris missio*, 7th December 1990 (RM), 3

¹¹ PDV 5

¹² Congregation for the Clergy, *General Directory for Catechesis*, 11th August 1997 (GDC) 58, 59

¹³ Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, report of the Working Party on Sacramental Initiation: *On the Threshold* (2000), 15

into account, as any programme of formation must, the multi-religious, multi-racial and multi-cultural character of English and Welsh society. Just as significant is our nation's unique and distinguished ecumenical heritage, about which priests need to be informed and in which they must be steeped.

9. This rich context is happily reflected in the diversity of candidates offering themselves for priestly ministry. Those involved in the formation of priests should take into account the different ecclesial experiences the seminarians have had and the varied contexts from which they come. They can also draw upon candidates' knowledge of these areas to help their peers prepare for ministry within these very diverse contexts.

10. Reflection on the context out of which "the Lord is... calling those whom he desires"¹⁴ underlines just how counter-cultural a choice it can be to offer oneself for priestly formation today. For "the prospect of having a vocation to the priesthood is far from the actual everyday interests which young men have in life"¹⁵. Candidates for the priesthood in England and Wales should be encouraged to believe they "have done a good thing"¹⁶ in offering themselves; affirmed for their self-renunciation by the encouraging words the disciples heard when the Lord promised them "everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life"¹⁷. In this way they will become witnesses to their brothers and sisters that "being a Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction"¹⁸. In hearing Christ calling them, they will recognise that he is calling them to be "least of all and servant of all"¹⁹, in the manner in which he chose his first followers.

The Ministerial Priesthood

11. The call to make ourselves "least of all and servants of all" means that the heart of priestly formation must be formation for service: it is about forming men who will serve. At the beginning of his Petrine Ministry, Pope Francis stressed the call to service as the proper way to understand participation in ministerial office; "Let us never forget that authentic power is service....only those who serve with love are

¹⁴ Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, *op. cit.*, 81

¹⁵ *PDV* 8

¹⁶ Pope Benedict XVI, *Letter to Seminarians*, 18th October 2010, Introduction

¹⁷ *Matthew* 19, 29

¹⁸ Pope Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Deus Caritas Est*, 25th December 2005, 1

¹⁹ *Mark* 9, 35

able to protect”²⁰ Such service is the basis of the relationship between clergy and laity. The Congregation for Clergy expressed this in an Instruction which calls priests and those preparing for priesthood to see themselves primarily as servants: “the priest is the servant of Christ. Through Him, with Him, and in Him, the priest becomes the servant of mankind”. He is thus “ordained for the service of the community. Total commitment to Christ, effected and witnessed through celibacy, places the priest at the service of all”²¹. St John Paul II understood this primarily in terms of communion, asking for every seminarian to be formed as a “man of communion” with a clear capacity “to relate to others”²².

Trinitarian Foundations

12. Future priests should understand this communion “in terms of friendship”; they should “search for Jesus”²³. Pope Benedict XVI stressed this when he told seminarians, “Anyone who wishes to become a priest must be first and foremost a ‘man of God...’. It follows that the most important thing in our path towards priesthood and during the whole of our priestly lives is our personal relationship with God in Jesus Christ”²⁴. This communion is to be understood in a deeply Trinitarian way, as a call “to live in intimate and unceasing union with God the Father through his Son Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit, drawing close to (Christ) as friends in every detail of their lives” and seeking Christ “in faithful meditation on the Word of God”²⁵, leading to “a deep intimacy with God”²⁶.

13. *Pastores dabo vobis* delineates clearly the Trinitarian foundations of the ministerial priesthood when it says, “It is within the Church’s mystery, as a mystery of Trinitarian communion in missionary tension, that every Christian identity is revealed, and likewise the specific identity of the priest and his ministry. Indeed, the priest, by virtue of the consecration which he receives in the sacrament of orders, is sent forth by the Father through the mediatorship of Jesus Christ, to whom he is configured in a special way as head and shepherd of his people, in order to live and work by the power of the Holy Spirit in service of the Church and for the salvation of the world.... Consequently, the nature and mission of the ministerial priesthood cannot be defined except through this multiple and rich interconnection of relationships which arise from the Blessed Trinity and are

²⁰ Pope Francis, *Homily for the beginning of the Petrine Ministry*, 19th March 2013

²¹ Congregation for Clergy, *Instruction The Priest, Pastor and Leader of the Parish Community*, 4th August 2002 (PPL), 5

²² PDV 43

²³ PDV 46

²⁴ Pope Benedict XVI, *Letter to Seminarians*, 18th October 2010, 1

²⁵ PDV 45

²⁶ PDV 47

prolonged in the communion of the Church, as a sign and instrument of Christ, of communion with God and of the unity of all humanity”²⁷.

Christological Foundations

14. The ministerial priesthood also has Christological foundations. “Priests are called to prolong the presence of Christ, the one high priest, embodying his way of life and making him visible in the midst of the flock entrusted to their care.... In the Church and on behalf of the Church, priests are a sacramental representation of Jesus Christ - the head and shepherd - authoritatively proclaiming his word, repeating his acts of forgiveness and his offer of salvation - particularly in baptism, penance and the Eucharist, showing his loving concern to the point of a total gift of self for the flock, which they gather into unity and lead to the Father through Christ and in the Spirit. In a word, priests exist and act in order to proclaim the Gospel to the world and to build up the Church in the name and person of Christ the head and shepherd”²⁸. Configured to Christ, head and shepherd of the Church, and closely united to the bishops as co-workers, priests are commissioned in a unique way to continue Christ’s mission as prophet, priest and king²⁹.

15. *Pastores dabo vobis* affirms the deeply counter-cultural nature of the priest’s configuration to Christ when it adds that, “In order to put into practice the ‘radical self-giving’ proper to the priest following the example of Christ the Good Shepherd... it is necessary to inculcate the meaning of the cross, which is at the heart of the paschal mystery. Through his identification with Christ crucified, as a slave, the world can rediscover the value of austerity, of suffering and also of martyrdom within the present culture, which is imbued with secularism, greed and hedonism”³⁰.

Ecclesiological Foundations

16. Finally, the ministerial priesthood also has ecclesiological foundations. “The priesthood, along with the Word of God and the sacramental signs which it serves, belongs to the constitutive elements of the Church. The ministry of the priest is entirely on behalf of the Church; it aims at promoting the exercise of the common priesthood of the entire people of God”³¹. The priest’s configuration to Christ through ordination brings about a specific relationship to Christ’s Body, the Church. His participation in Christ’s priesthood is called ‘ministerial’, for it is

²⁷ PDV 12

²⁸ PDV 15

²⁹ Cf. PDV 11

³⁰ PDV 48

³¹ PDV 16

service to the members of the Body. Within the Body, “he represents Christ the Head, Shepherd, and Spouse of the Church”³². *Pastores dabo vobis* expands the sense of the ministerial priesthood’s ecclesial foundation, saying that it “is ordered not only to the particular Church but also to the universal Church, in communion with the Bishop, with Peter and under Peter. Through the priesthood of the Bishop, the priesthood of the second order is incorporated in the apostolic structure of the Church (cf. 2 Cor 5, 20). In this way priests, like the Apostles, act as ambassadors of Christ. This is the basis of the missionary character of every priest”³³.

Presbyteral Communion

17. The Trinitarian, Christological and ecclesiological foundations give a sense of the nature, mission and ministry of priests. It is important, however, to add that these foundations become real and operative only in a presbyterate in communion with its bishop. “By its very nature, the ordained ministry can be carried out only to the extent that the priest is united to Christ through sacramental participation in the priestly order, and thus to the extent that he is in hierarchical communion with his own bishop. The ordained ministry has a radical ‘communitarian form’ and can only be carried out as a ‘collective work’”³⁴. This ‘communitarian form’ means that priests should develop and foster bonds of fraternity and co-operation with each other.

18. The ‘communitarian form’ of priestly ministry underlines the fact that formation must prepare for leadership of a community. Priests and seminarians alike can be tempted to see their years in seminary as a preparation in community for non-community priesthood. But clearly those in formation for priesthood are preparing to be pastors and leaders of communities, preparing for a ministry which is service of the community³⁵. Hence St John Paul II reminds us that Jesus is the shepherd who has come “not to be served but to serve”, who “in the Paschal action of the washing of the feet leaves to his disciples a model of service to one another”³⁶. As Pope Francis has urged, “be shepherds, with the ‘odour of the sheep’, make it real, as shepherds among your flock, fishers of men”³⁷. Priests should thus model their lives on the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for the flock.

³² *Ibid.*, *loc. cit.*

³³ *Ibid.*, *loc. cit.*

³⁴ *PDV* 17

³⁵ Cf. *PPL*, *loc. cit.*

³⁶ *PDV* 13

³⁷ Pope Francis, *Homily for Mass of Chrism*, 28th March 2013

Diocesan and Religious Priests

19. Priestly ministry can appear very different for diocesan and religious priests: in one case it is more geographically and parish-bound, in the other more wide-ranging and rooted in a religious family's particular charism. Still, religious and diocesan priests share a common ministerial priesthood, work together as priests in the same diocese in communion with the local bishop, and serve the same mission of the Church. A common sacramental bond unites them, although particular circumstances of ministry and life may differ. It is essential for all priests and those in priestly formation, diocesan and religious, to understand that they are engaged in the Church's ministry and subject to the same requirements for formation set out in this Charter.

20. Although the life of vowed religious priests encompasses everything that has been said about the life of priests generally, the experience and the exercise of the ministerial priesthood in religious life differs from that of the diocesan priesthood. The ways religious who are called to priesthood exercise that ministry are determined by the nature of religious life itself. The exercise of priesthood takes on a distinctive quality for a religious, depending on the rule of life and the charism of a particular institute or society. The deeper identification of religious with the charism of their founders today is due largely to their obedience to the directives of the Second Vatican Council. "The adaptation and renewal of the religious life includes both the constant return to the sources of all Christian life and to the original spirit of the institutes and their adaptation to the changed conditions of our time"³⁸.

21. Centuries of tradition bear witness to a complementary specificity of formation for religious life and formation of candidates for the priesthood. Formation for religious life must always take into account the charism, history and mission of the particular institute or society, while recognising the human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral requirements of all who are called to the ministerial priesthood. This Charter outlines the requirements shared by religious and diocesan candidates for priesthood, but recognises that there will be a different process of spiritual formation for those whose primary call is to be of service to the Church through religious life and for whom fidelity to the charism of their founder is the gift that is shared³⁹.

³⁸ Second Vatican Council, Decree on the Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life, *Perfectae caritatis*, 2

³⁹ See Sacred Congregation for Religious and for Secular Institutes and Sacred Congregation for Bishops, *Mutuae relationes (Mutual relations)* 14th May 1978; Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, *Directives on Formation in Religious Institutes*, 2nd February 1990

The Life of Priests

22. When the Second Vatican Council's Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests speaks of "the life of priests", it refers to the whole of their life, but especially the spiritual dimension at its centre. In the fragmented context which characterises life today, it is particularly important to hold fast to "the one thing necessary"⁴⁰. All the baptised have been claimed for new life in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, and priests are called with their brothers and sisters to live out their baptismal call as disciples of Jesus Christ, and to grow in holiness⁴¹. At the same time, priests have a specific calling to holiness by virtue of their new consecration in the sacrament of Holy Orders, a consecration that configures them to Christ, the head and shepherd⁴².

23. This configuration to Christ endows the priest with a mission and ministry which are specific to him and oblige him to be a "living instrument of Christ the eternal priest" and to act "in the name and in the person of Christ himself", called to witness with his entire life to the "radicalism of the Gospel"⁴³. The specific arena in which the life of priests unfolds is their exercise of ministry in fulfilment of their mission⁴⁴. Their life in the Spirit is a continuous transformation of heart centred on integrating or linking their identity as men configured to Christ, head and shepherd⁴⁵, with their ministry of word, sacrament and pastoral governance or leadership⁴⁶.

24. The ministry by which the priest brings Christ's redemptive gifts to his people transforms the priest's life, too. The celebrations of Baptism, Reconciliation and Eucharist lead the priest in a particular way to a holy encounter with God's all-transforming, merciful love. When a priest's identity, as one configured to Christ, culminates in his ministry on behalf of Christ - *amoris officium* (a work of love) - he finds the unity of his life in pastoral charity. "Priests, then, can achieve this coordination and unity of life by joining themselves with Christ to acknowledge the will of the Father. For them this means a complete gift of themselves to the flock committed to them. Hence, as they fulfil the role of the Good Shepherd, in the very exercise of their pastoral charity they will discover a bond of priestly perfection

⁴⁰ Cf. *Lk* 10,42

⁴¹ See Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen gentium* (LG), 39-42

⁴² *PDV* 20

⁴³ *Ibid.*, *loc. cit.*

⁴⁴ See *PDV* 24; *PO* 12; Synod of Bishops, *The Ministerial Priesthood and Justice in the World*, 1971, part 2, I, iii

⁴⁵ *PDV* 21-23

⁴⁶ *PDV* 24-26

which draws their life and activity to unity and co-ordination”⁴⁷.

25. Priestly life conformed to Jesus Christ, head and shepherd, necessarily shows forth the radicalism of the Gospel. In other words, priests are called to a way of life that gives evident and transparent witness to the power of the Gospel at work in them. The elements of such a lifestyle, named here and to be developed elsewhere in the Charter of Priestly Formation for England and Wales, include:

- a. a way of life permeated by the threefold charge given to priests at ordination to teach, sanctify and govern⁴⁸
- b. a life of steady prayer centred on the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, the Liturgy of the Hours and the liturgical cycles, and on personal and devotional prayer⁴⁹
- c. deep devotion to the person of Jesus Christ, Son of God, son of Mary, our Lord and Saviour⁵⁰
- d. a life of obedience that is apostolic, communal and pastoral⁵¹
- e. a life lived in communion with one’s bishop and the presbyterate, a communion that includes sacramental, apostolic and fraternal bonds⁵²
- f. for religious priests, a life in community with one’s fellow religious in accord with the institute’s rule of life
- g. a life of celibate chastity that serves both as “an incentive to charity, and... a peculiar source of spiritual fecundity in the world”⁵³ and, being freely accepted, shows that the priest is “consecrated in a new way to Christ”⁵⁴ and offers in himself a reflection of the virginal love of Christ for the Church⁵⁵
- h. a life of gratitude for the material blessings of God’s creation coupled with a simple and generous lifestyle that cares for and is in solidarity with the poor, works for universal justice, makes itself ready and available for those in need, administers the goods of the community with the utmost honesty, and offers a courageous prophetic witness in the world⁵⁶

⁴⁷ PO 14

⁴⁸ See PO 4-6, 13; PDV 26; Second Vatican Council, Decree on the Training of Priests OT 21

⁴⁹ See St John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* 31; PDV 33

⁵⁰ PDV 46

⁵¹ PDV 28

⁵² See *Rites of Ordination of a Bishop, of Priests, and of Deacons* 101; PO 7-8, 14; PDV 17

⁵³ See LG 42; PO 16; *Rites of Ordination of a Bishop, of Priests and of Deacons* 199

⁵⁴ *Rites of Ordination of a Bishop, of Priests and of Deacons* 177

⁵⁵ Cf. Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum concilium* (SCon) 26; PO 16

⁵⁶ PDV 30

- i. a life that embraces “the mind and heart of missionaries open to the needs of the Church and the world”⁵⁷
- j. a life that promotes the whole range of Christian vocations

26. This Charter, therefore, acts as a means to ensure that the insight and wisdom of St John Paul II in *Pastores dabo vobis* is made real in the Church in England and Wales. It does so by concentrating on those essential elements of formation - human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral - which *Pastores dabo vobis* identified as vital in forming men for the ministerial priesthood in the Catholic Church. Those in formation for the priesthood are a source of hope for our countries as we look forward to their future ministry as priests *in persona Christi capitis*. May we continue to assist them as fully as possible to become configured to Christ, head and shepherd.

⁵⁷ PDV 32, quoting RM 67 and 15-16

2. The Promotion of Priestly Vocations and Selection of Candidates for the Diocesan Priesthood

Promoting vocations

27. In recent years the Church has developed an understanding of the promotion and pastoral care of vocations. While emphasis was formerly placed on a model of 'recruitment', it is now recognised that vocations are not simply 'produced'; they must come from God. The priesthood "is not like other professions, we cannot simply recruit people by using the right kind of publicity or the correct type of strategy. The call which comes from the heart of God must always find its way into the heart of man. And yet, precisely so that it may reach into our hearts, our cooperation is needed"⁵⁸.

28. Today the starting point for vocations ministry is a recognition that the Church, the assembly of those called (*ecclesia*), is by nature vocational. In baptism, every member of the Church has been called to holiness, to follow Christ through a life of faith, hope and charity. The whole Church is responsible for helping the individual to grow in discipleship to the point where he or she will ask, "What does the Lord want me to do with my life?" In that way, the discernment of a particular vocation, whether it is to ordained ministry, religious life, marriage or dedicated single life, will arise through the ministry of the Church.

29. The Church, obeying Christ's command, never ceases to pray the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest⁵⁹. Our prayer for vocations has a twofold dimension. On the one hand, it recognises that vocations come from God and cannot be manufactured. On the other hand, prayer for vocations invites people to make space in their hearts to discern God's call. Therefore, at the same time as encouraging national and local movements of prayer, such as the increasingly popular practice of Eucharistic Adoration for vocations, the Church must ensure that at every level of her life and ministry there are opportunities for her members to grow in prayer. The Lord has a plan for each of us and calls each of us by name: "our task is to learn how to listen, to perceive his call, to be courageous and faithful in following him and, when all is said and done, to be found trustworthy servants who have used well the gifts he has given us"⁶⁰.

⁵⁸ Pope Benedict XVI, Address to Priests and Deacons in Bavaria, 14th September 2006. Cf. PDV 34; Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum caritatis*, 22nd February 2007 (SCar), 79; Pontifical Work for Ecclesiastical Vocations, *New Vocations for a New Europe (In Verbo tuo)*, 6th January 1998, 12 (c)

⁵⁹ Cf. *Matthew* 9,38

⁶⁰ Pope Benedict XVI, Homily at Vespers with Religious and Seminarians of Bavaria, 11th September 2006

Structures

30. The current challenges in our dioceses show how important it is to invest in the pastoral care of vocations, giving it a new impulse and co-ordination both nationally and in each diocese. In England and Wales two organisations are directly responsible for this:

- a. The *National Office for Vocation* (NOV) is a department of the Bishops' Conference with special responsibility for establishing a 'culture of vocation' in the Church in England and Wales. It produces materials for use on Vocations Sunday, liaises with the Catholic Communications Network, maintains a vocations website, compiles statistical information and keeps the national Database of Applicants established after the Nolan Report.
- b. The NOV works with the *Conference of Diocesan Directors of Vocations* (CDDV), which meets annually and provides an opportunity for vocations directors to exchange experiences, offer support and establish policy. The Conference submits recommendations to the Bishops' Conference for its approval. The CDDV also maintains close contacts with the seminaries used by the dioceses of England and Wales, and its chairman is regularly invited to attend the meetings of English-speaking seminary rectors.

31. The bishop is ultimately responsible for the pastoral care of vocations in his diocese. Above all it falls to him and his clergy to offer young people an inspiring and attractive vision of the ordained priesthood. The bishop appoints a vocations director to assist him in this task. Some bishops also nominate 'vocations promoters' or a diocesan vocations team to work with the vocations director to "develop pastoral initiatives aimed at promoting, especially among the young, an attitude of interior openness to a priestly calling"⁶¹.

32. Each diocese in England and Wales has a vocations director whose task it is to accompany the candidate not only through discernment and selection, but also through priestly formation up to ordination. As well as advising the bishop about the candidate, the vocations director is also usually charged with the responsibility of guiding the candidate through the selection process. He normally co-ordinates each stage of the process, ensuring that the candidate is fully aware of what is expected of him. He would also normally, during the formal selection process, feedback information to the candidate about how that candidate's application is progressing. The feedback also allows the candidate and director to agree a progression from one stage to another, recognising the freedom that both the candidate and the diocese have to delay, or halt the process at any stage.

⁶¹ SCar 78

33. Given that the whole Church is responsible for the pastoral care and promotion of vocations, the bishop and his vocations director rely on the collaboration of the whole people of God. Special recognition should, however, be given to the following groups:

- a. *Priests.* A priest's love for and fidelity to his vocation will be the best and most effective form of vocations promotion at a local level. "The bishop can rely above all on the cooperation of his presbyterate. All its priests are united to him and share his responsibility in seeking and fostering priestly vocations"⁶².
- b. *The seminary.* The seminary has a key role in the promotion and pastoral care of vocations. The witness and example of seminarians can be a source of great encouragement to others considering a priestly vocation, particularly where the seminary is able to welcome men for visits, retreats and vocational experiences. Seminarians should be encouraged to foster a sense of responsibility for prayer and action for the promotion of vocations to their dioceses.
- c. *Families.* The pastoral care of vocations is at the crossroads between the pastoral care of families and that of young people⁶³. In a way, the vocations of their children inevitably become the vocations of their parents, too: parents often find themselves involved in a journey that strengthens and renews their faith⁶⁴.
- d. *Diocesan youth ministries.* The Church's ministry to young people involves serving them in such a way that they may be able to discern God's plan for their life. Those responsible for youth ministry, including those who work in schools and chaplaincies, should not draw back from being mediators of the Lord's call. Every young man should be asked at some stage whether he has considered a priestly vocation. For some that question will be the seed sown that one day flourishes in a new priestly vocation.
- e. *Chaplaincies in universities and colleges.* These are privileged places of encounter between the Catholic Church and young, enquiring minds, where many people either return to the faith they once knew or discover it for the first time. While many people's connections to such chaplaincies are instrumental in their decision to commit themselves more deeply to the life of faith, it is clear that many vocations to priesthood and religious life are nourished and encouraged here.

⁶² PDV 41

⁶³ Cf. Pope Benedict XVI, Address to the Bishops of Slovakia, 15th June 2007

⁶⁴ Cf. Pope Benedict XVI, Address at the Roman Major Seminary, 1st February 2008

- f. *Movements, groups and associations.* Increasing numbers of young people today belong to movements or associations or participate in other activities for young adults. Such groups are welcome partners in the pastoral care and promotion of vocations, and the Church values the enrichment such groups offer to the life of priests. It is important, therefore, that vocations coming from such traditions are not asked to “break their links with the environment which has contributed to their decision to respond to their vocation, nor should they erase the characteristic traits of the spirituality which they have learned and lived there in all that they contain that is good, edifying and rich. For them too, this environment from which they came continues to be a source of help and support on the path of formation towards the priesthood”⁶⁵.

Pastoral care for vocations

34. In his account of the call of the disciples, Saint Mark says simply: “he went up into the hills, and called to him those whom he desired; and they came to him”⁶⁶. Every vocation begins in the intimacy of the heart with this call of Christ. Personal prayer enables a young man to hear this call and leads to a growing conviction that the Lord wishes him to serve in that way.

35. While there still are vocations from a traditional Catholic family background, many young men come today from experiences of life that are less traditional. “Young people today live in a secularised culture, totally oriented to material things. In daily life - in the means of communication, at work, in leisure time - they experience at most a culture in which God is absent. Yet, they are waiting for God”⁶⁷. For some the experience of the absence of God will evoke a yearning for his real presence, and this desire for God can awaken a sense of priestly calling. Such vocations are welcome gifts from the God “who chooses sinners from a sinful people, who makes of Amos, who was not a son of a prophet but only a gatherer of sycamores, a prophet, and calls Levi and goes to the house of Zacchaeus, and can raise up sons of Abraham even from the rocks (cf. *Mt 3,9*)”⁶⁸.

36. The pastoral care of all vocations is important but special care needs to be given to those who have recently come into the Church or who have undergone a conversion experience that has led them back to the practice of their faith. It is usually recommended that such candidates wait two years before beginning

⁶⁵ *PDV 68; cf. PDV 31*

⁶⁶ *Mark 3,13*

⁶⁷ Pope Benedict XVI, Address to the German Bishops, 18th November 2006

⁶⁸ *In Verbo tuo*, 13 (c)

seminary formation. This is partly to give them time to be sufficiently formed in the faith and to ensure the conversion of life they will need if they are to benefit from seminary formation. The vocations director's role during the period before a formal application is made to a diocese is particularly important. His task is not just to manage the application process, but to encourage candidates, allay their fears and share with them his joy and enthusiasm for the priesthood.

37. When considering whether the time is right to put a candidate forward for selection, the vocations director must remember that this is the next stage in a process of discernment and formation that, for many, will include a propaedeutic year as well as the years spent in seminary. He has an ecclesial ministry, that of making an initial assessment of whether someone shows signs of a vocation and helping these signs to grow. He should not abdicate his responsibility by putting every candidate forward for selection; nor should he overstep his role by filtering candidates according to personal or subjective preferences. When there are no signs of a true priestly vocation, he should explain this to the candidate gently and in person. Such candidates should be thanked for their generosity towards the Lord and helped to understand that there are other vocations in the Church to which they may be called.

38. Every candidate who shows signs of a priestly vocation should be encouraged to begin spiritual direction with a priest other than the vocations director. Spiritual directors should be chosen with care, and should be experienced priests who understand that there are usually three elements required in preparing a man for seminary formation:

- a. *Purification.* With great patience, and relying on God's grace, the spiritual director can help the candidate to turn away from sinful habits and from activities which, though legitimate in themselves, are incompatible with priestly ministry. This will help the candidate to develop the freedom he needs to respond positively and joyfully to God's call.
- b. *Turning towards priestly service.* Priestly ministry is a life of generous self-giving. Voluntary service (e.g. St. Vincent de Paul work, pilgrimages to Lourdes, contact with the poor and involvement in parish activities) can stimulate and sustain candidates in a style of life that is less self-interested and more open to those in need. "This way of life can help young people perceive, desire and accept a vocation to stable and total service of others, following the path of complete consecration to God as a priest"⁶⁹.
- c. *The development of a rule of life.* The spiritual director can help the candidate to develop an appropriate sacramental life and a life of prayer. In this way the

⁶⁹ PDV 9

candidate will learn the importance of allotting time to being with the Lord and finding in God the inner strength that will sustain him.

39. There are people from many ethnic and cultural backgrounds in most of our dioceses. Candidates from abroad need some experience of the society and Church in which they would like to serve as priests. Such 'inculturation' should last for at least two years, during which the candidate lives independently without assistance, financial or otherwise, from the Church.

40. Candidates who have already attended seminary in their home country will also need time to adapt properly to the particular circumstances of the Church in England and Wales. It may be useful for some of them to benefit from a time of 'ecclesiastical inculturation' even if they have already spent a number of years in a seminary; this may include the propaedeutic year at the Royal English College in Valladolid.

Norms for the Selection of Candidates for the Priesthood

41. Specific norms for England and Wales are given in the *Handbook for the Selection of Candidates for the Diocesan Priesthood*; the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales approved its most recent revision in 2008. What follows outlines its main principles.

42. The selection process is used by the local Church after an individual has made a formal approach to a diocese. The diocesan bishop has the right and responsibility to determine the exact format of the selection process to be adopted for candidates for the priesthood in his diocese; it is envisaged, however, that all dioceses will adhere to the principles set out in the *Handbook* and use the approved application and reference forms.

43. The selection process normally lasts up to a year but can take longer; it is not a judgment about an individual's suitability for ordination, but is rather a preliminary assessment of

- a. whether an individual may be hearing a call from God to priesthood;
- b. whether the individual is suitable to be accepted for priestly formation;
- c. an individual's ability to make a commitment to the demands of priestly life.

The requirements of Canon Law

44. The selection of candidates is governed by the Code of Canon Law (especially canons 241 and 242) and the relevant norms specified in other Church documents, including the Holy See's norms regarding applicants with homosexual tendencies⁷⁰. Irregularities should be explained during initial interviews with the vocations director so that the candidate understands them and has the opportunity to mention anything relevant. Canon 1043 obliges the faithful to reveal such irregularities before orders can be received. Canon 1047 allows bishops to dispense from irregularities that are not reserved to the Apostolic See.

45. The vocations director must establish that the applicant is subject to the Code of Canon Law of the Latin Rite. He must also determine that he is free from impediments to orders and from conditions that must be addressed before the

⁷⁰ Congregation for Catholic Education, *Instruction Concerning the Criteria for the Discernment of Vocations with regard to Persons with Homosexual Tendencies in view of their Admission to Seminary and to Holy Orders*, 4th November 2005

reception of orders⁷¹.

46. At this point the vocations director should also ascertain that the candidate is not allergic to wheat and that he is able to consume the Precious Blood, whether he is abusing alcohol or drugs, has a criminal record, or has ever been sexually abused as a minor.

The Application Process

47. When the vocations director and an individual agree that the time is right, the enquirer is invited to make a formal application to the diocese using the standard application form approved by the Bishops' Conference for use in England and Wales.

48. Along with background information about the enquirer, the form asks for a declaration of liabilities, and for names and addresses of four people who can act as referees: his parish priest, his employer, an academic referee and someone who can offer a character reference. If a candidate is not in employment (because, for example, he is still in full-time education), or if he cannot supply an academic reference (because he has been out of education for a long time), a second character reference should be obtained. If an applicant has previously been a member of a religious community or a seminarian for another diocese, appropriate references must be sought and received. This is a canonical requirement⁷² and those involved in the selection process should read such references with great care and attention. The vocations director must also provide a written reference.

49. The form is returned to the vocations director with a short autobiographical essay giving details of the individual's life to that point, his sense of vocation and something of his understanding of priesthood. A new copy of his certificate of baptism and a copy of his certificate of confirmation are also required. The individual is also asked to supply original academic certificates of which copies are made and retained by the vocations director.

50. The application form includes the applicant's written consent for the vocations director to submit his details to the Database of Applicants, recommended by the

⁷¹ Namely: that sufficient time has passed for a neophyte (cf. *Code of Canon Law [CIC]* c. 1042.3); that the applicant does not hold a position forbidden to clerics (cf. *CIC*, cc. 285-286, 289, 1042.2 and 1042.3); that he does not "labour under some form of insanity or psychological illness" (*CIC*, cc. 1041.1 and 1041.2); that he has not committed homicide, co-operated in an abortion (*CIC*, c. 1041.4), mutilated himself or another, attempted suicide (*CIC*, c. 1041.5) or simulated an act reserved to priests or bishops (*CIC*, c. 1041.6).

⁷² *CIC*, c. 242

Nolan Report and maintained by the National Office for Vocation. It is good practice for the vocations director to contact the National Office for this check soon after receiving the application form.

51. Having received the application form, the vocations director arranges for the next stage of the process to begin. This involves submitting the applicant's details to the National Office for Vocation, taking up references and arranging for a psychological assessment. As part of the Church's commitment to safeguarding the young and the vulnerable, a Disclosure and Barring Service Enhanced Certificate is required before a candidate begins seminary formation. The vocations director should either arrange this or refer the applicant to the relevant diocesan office.

Psychological and Medical Assessment

52. The Code of Canon Law states that diocesan bishops are to admit to seminary "only those who are judged capable of dedicating themselves to the sacred ministries in the light of their physical and psychological health"⁷³. Each candidate is therefore required to undergo a full medical examination by his own doctor and/or by a doctor appointed by the diocese.

53. Canon Law⁷⁴ obliges the diocesan bishop to take account of a candidate's psychological health when he is assessing his ability to dedicate himself permanently to the ordained ministry. The Congregation for Catholic Education's *Guidelines for the Use of Psychology in the Admission and Formation of Candidates for the Priesthood*⁷⁵ recommends the use of psychological assessment as an aid in vocational discernment and as an integral part of the selection of candidates for the priesthood, subject to safeguarding the freedom and privacy of the individual. The bishops of England and Wales have approved a code of practice for psychological assessments which states the terms of reference for them. It emphasises that the psychologist used should be a chartered clinical or counselling psychologist who is currently in practice and who is also familiar with the demands of priestly life and formation.

54. According to the policy adopted by the bishops of England and Wales, the psychological assessment is seen by the applicant, the bishop and the vocations director. If an applicant is accepted, a copy is sent to the rector of the seminary where he begins formation; other members of the formation team need the candidate's permission to see it.

⁷³ CIC, c.241.1

⁷⁴ Especially cc.1029 and 1041

⁷⁵ Congregation for Catholic Education, *Guidelines for the Use of Psychology in the Admission and Formation of Candidates for the Priesthood*, 28th June 2008

Selection Advisory Conference

55. This service is provided by some seminaries to help bishops in the selection of candidates. Candidates are interviewed by a panel whose members normally have access to the application documents (except psychological assessments). The panel makes a recommendation to a candidate's bishop. It is not a substitute for other parts of the selection process, but should be seen as one part of the whole process. The Nolan Report asked bishops not to overrule selection advisory conferences "where reservations are expressed about a candidate's suitability for ordination on the grounds of possible risks to children" (and, by extension, to vulnerable adults)⁷⁶.

The Bishop's Interview

56. The culmination of the selection process is a formal interview with the diocesan bishop. He will have received all the application documents and references, the recommendations of the selection advisory conference and the candidate's psychological assessment. The vocations director is normally responsible for arranging this interview and collating the reports and references the bishop will need. The bishop may invite others to assist him at this interview in an advisory capacity. In forming his decision, the bishop usually discusses the candidate with the vocations director, who then has the task of informing the candidate of the bishop's decision.

Contact with the Seminary

57. If a candidate is accepted for formation, the vocations director is responsible for liaising with the seminary he will attend. He forwards copies of the relevant application documents with signed confirmation that the application process has followed the nationally agreed norms. The vocations director should remain in close contact with both the seminary and the seminarian throughout the period of formation.

⁷⁶ Nolan Report 2001, Recommendation 35 (text available online through www.cathcom.org).

3. The Propaedeutic Seminary

58. Since the promulgation of *Pastores dabo vobis* in 1992, several countries have developed a propaedeutic year, something encouraged by the Congregation for Catholic Education as “a real spiritual apprenticeship” which “can bring surprising results”⁷⁷. In 1998, the Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales approved the current year-long programme in place at the Royal English College in Valladolid. *Pastores dabo vobis* provided a comprehensive examination of the challenges facing the priesthood in the third millennium. It also gave guidance on the nature and mission of priesthood and considered how the Church might provide the highest quality of priestly formation in the present age. The propaedeutic year at Valladolid enables young men from England and Wales to leave their homeland for a while and embark on seminary life in a community of prayer, academic study and human development and support. It also immerses them in a rich, historic climate where the Catholic faith permeates almost every aspect of life and is still a vital element of society.

59. Given the challenges facing contemporary British society, students’ backgrounds and their journeys of faith are not at all uniform in the way they may have been even in the recent past. They do not all come from supportive or particularly religious backgrounds. While some have a firm grounding in their faith, others have received their call recently through moments of deep conversion to the Catholic faith. The manner in which they first became aware of their vocation varies enormously, and today the social media, World Youth Days and the Papal visit to Britain in 2010 are some of the triggers allowing people to consider the possibility of a vocation to the priesthood seriously, often for the first time.

60. The Valladolid propaedeutic programme is designed to cater for a variety of needs. It aims to provide an experience of life in community. Candidates for the priesthood are offered human and spiritual development so that they may be solidly grounded in faith in Christ and freely embrace the call to celibacy. The foundation provided in the propaedeutic year should, therefore, become the solid platform that can be built upon in the next seminary, as the next phase of the formation process. The hope is that they will be assisted in their first steps towards becoming ministers ready to undertake the ‘new evangelisation’ considered in *Pastores dabo vobis* and explored in depth by the Synod of Bishops in October 2012, which requires new fervour, new methods and new ways of proclaiming the Gospel.

⁷⁷ Congregation for Catholic Education, *Circular Letter concerning some more urgent Aspects of Spiritual Formation in the Seminaries*, 6th January 1980, Conclusions

61. What is essentially a community experience entails a withdrawal from the world, which allows students to meet the Lord in a personal and intimate way: “apart from me you can do nothing”⁷⁸. The propaedeutic programme aims to promote closeness to the Lord by:

- a. introducing students to a personal life of prayer⁷⁹
- b. introducing them to the Word of God as the Living Word⁸⁰
- c. introducing them to the Liturgy and the Paschal Mystery⁸¹
- d. providing regular spiritual direction⁸²
- e. providing retreats and days of recollection

62. As they begin their journey of discernment many young people, for various reasons, find themselves lacking in confidence or knowledge about their faith. Therefore, as well as spiritual formation, students are offered an intellectual challenge in an introduction to theology and philosophy, based on the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

63. Pastoral work, particularly with the poor, is a central element in the life of diocesan priests. Opportunities are provided during the year for work in selected pastoral situations, with an intensive period of one month working in a parish, with the possibility of some work with poor and disadvantaged people.

64. A programme of human development, which is based on each student’s initial psychological assessment and involves personal and group work, underpins all this. “It is important that the priest should mould his human personality in such a way that it becomes a bridge and not an obstacle for others in their meeting with Jesus Christ”⁸³. Those aspiring to priesthood need time to assess themselves in their vocation and to mature in their decision, in order “to discern the authenticity of their call from God and to respond to it generously”⁸⁴. If a candidate brings with him deep-seated emotional problems, especially any related to a dysfunctional home background, these need to be addressed early on. Candidates may need encouragement and guidance in moving away from the values of secular culture, or from a self-centred view of the world to one based on the love of God and of neighbour. Some students may, for a variety of reasons, have a restricted

⁷⁸ *John* 15,5

⁷⁹ *PDV* 47

⁸⁰ *PDV* 26, 47

⁸¹ *PDV* 47

⁸² *PDV* 40

⁸³ *PDV* 43

⁸⁴ *PDV* 2

appreciation of the richness of the Catholic spiritual and liturgical tradition. There may be misunderstandings about the dialogue between the Church and other religions, or about the Church's uncompromising commitment to build a better world. The propaedeutic seminary should help such students to seek a healthier balance or, on occasion, even to revise their stance on certain issues.

65. The propaedeutic year is envisaged as one stage in the process of canonical formation for priesthood⁸⁵. It in no way reduces or replaces prior discernment by vocations directors and selection conferences. As this is the first year of seminary formation, vocations directors are expected to have monitored candidates for some time before they are formally assessed at a selection advisory conference, where these are offered, and the bishop invites them to undertake the propaedeutic year. The objection that this programme lengthens formation needs to be weighed against the probability that it will be a long-term saving, inasmuch as it helps those continuing seminary formation to be more sure of their vocation. The sad phenomenon of priests abandoning the priesthood soon after ordination may reflect a spirituality that has not genuinely embraced the Cross of Christ, or a lack of conversion at a deep human level. Tomorrow's priests face new challenges in their ministry and they have the right to expect from the Church whatever is available to help them live their priesthood in a healthy way. Many of those who offer themselves as candidates for priesthood expose themselves to real vulnerability in their decision to sacrifice and leave behind so much. By offering them a year of profound reflection, the Church is acknowledging this and hopes to ensure that embracing their vocation is a genuinely liberating experience, one that is free from undesirable forms of suppression or sublimation. Reflecting honestly on their humanity should enable students to become more sensitive 'discerners of humanity', and better equipped to face pastoral challenges without ignoring their own humanity. The first year of their formation is crucial.

⁸⁵ *CIC* cc. 235.1, 250, 1032.1

The Content of the Propaedeutic Year

66. The propaedeutic programme, like the whole programme for the formation of priests, is based on the four pillars described in *Pastores dabo vobis*: human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral formation, in the setting of a formation community.

Human Formation

67. In *Pastores dabo vobis*, St John Paul II writes of the priest as someone who reflects the human perfection of Jesus, and asks those preparing to be priests to cultivate a series of human qualities in order to be “balanced people, strong and free”⁸⁶. They are to develop “the capacity to relate to others”⁸⁷ through “affective maturity” based on “an awareness that love has a central role in human life”. Human maturity and, in particular, affective maturity require “a clear and strong training in freedom”⁸⁸. The propaedeutic year aims to help students to grow in self-knowledge and self-acceptance (knowing their strengths and weaknesses) and towards affective maturity (understanding and dealing with feelings and emotions).

68. Human development is a key component of the propaedeutic year, which is seen as “the basis of all priestly formation”⁸⁹. Before arriving at the seminary in Valladolid, students complete a psychological assessment at Saint Luke’s Institute in Manchester. The College has a formal working relationship with the Institute, whose director visits the seminary to meet the students several times during the year. Using the psychological report contained in a student’s Candidate Assessment Report, he works with him to establish specific personal ‘targets’, helping the student to identify areas for personal growth. This work is backed up by a formal course in human development, which looks at the “series of human qualities” future priests need to cultivate, “not only out of proper and due growth and realisation of self, but also with a view to ministry”⁹⁰. The combination of personal work and a formal course provides each student with a programme of formation adapted to his particular talents and human development needs.

69. During the year the human development course considers self-awareness, personal faith journeys, transitions and how people handle situations demanding multiple changes. Given the importance of good communication for effective ministry, the course also looks in depth at verbal and non-verbal communication as

⁸⁶ PDV 43

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, *loc. cit.*

⁸⁸ PDV 44

⁸⁹ PDV 43

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, *loc. cit.*

well as the art of listening. Skills such as leadership and delegation, assertiveness, conflict management and self-esteem are also considered, as are the ability to care for oneself physically, spiritually and emotionally and recognising healthy boundaries priests need to respect if they are to serve God's people well. The course also examines ways of understanding the gift of celibacy and living this gift joyfully in situations where many find it hard to understand. The course consists of lectures, group discussions, written exercises, spoken presentations and other practical exercises.

70. The human formation offered as part of the propaedeutic year seeks to provide the 'bedrock' on which the other elements of priestly formation will build, keeping in mind the Lord's injunction to build one's house on "the rock"⁹¹.

Spiritual Formation

71. Christian spirituality is about the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives. The discovery of our spirituality begins with our baptism and continues as a journey of faith through life. We learn to pray by being in the presence of people at prayer, and being influenced by people who have been touched and formed by their prayerful contact with the Lord.

72. Young men entering seminaries today have, more often than not, been brought up in homes where prayer and the things of the Spirit are not central. Many of the problems our seminarians face lie with a faulty spirituality or with little sense of the spiritual in their lives.

As well as formal teaching about prayer, it is important to create an atmosphere of the Spirit. Students learn best by the example of those responsible for their formation. A formation community that is spiritually at ease with itself is the best foundation for future priests who can share their spiritual experiences and prayer with their fellow priests and the people they serve. In the propaedeutic year in particular, an individual is invited to put on the mind and heart of Christ, following the promptings of the Spirit. He needs to hear ever more clearly Christ's call to follow Him. Given that he has heard the Gospel's summons to conversion of life, he also needs to acquire and develop those human and supernatural gifts that are indispensable for the priesthood. Personal and communal prayer are the key to making progress on the path towards knowing the Lord better and understanding His will for us.

73. With this in mind, the propaedeutic programme offers:

- a. a basic introduction to prayer

⁹¹ *Matthew 7, 24*

- b. an understanding of the various methods of praying: vocal, mental and silent prayer; meditation; adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, Marian devotions and other traditional and more modern forms of devotion
- c. an introduction to liturgical prayer: the Mass, the Liturgy of the Hours and the sacrament of reconciliation
- d. a knowledge of the lives of the saints
- e. spiritual direction to assist individuals in discernment and growth in grace
- f. days of recollection and an annual retreat
- g. *Lectio Divina*

Intellectual Formation

74. Serious lack of academic ability is something that ought really to be addressed before a candidate embarks on his seminary formation. Some of today's prospective students for the priesthood are not very familiar with the basics of the Catholic faith. Intellectual formation in the propaedeutic year is based entirely on the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. There are seminars, discussions and individual tutoring sessions with guided reading for private study and reflection⁹². The intellectual component of the propaedeutic year aims to give students a broader vision and deeper appreciation of the Church's teaching, and to understand what a vocational encounter with Christ means in the context of the Church they feel called to serve. It also aims to encourage them to be more open to God, revealed in and through Christ, our Lord, and to grow in knowledge of what Christ teaches and be conformed more closely to the mind of Christ, in spirit and in truth.

Pastoral formation

75. Pastoral work is not a dominant element of the propaedeutic year; it will become increasingly important as students advance on to the next stage of seminary formation. As explained above, a few opportunities for pastoral experience are provided to add a practical dimension to the other, more theoretical, side of the programme. There is also a month-long placement in January, when students are sent to parishes in England and Wales, some of which involve them in particular projects. This is often a defining moment in a student's life, one which

⁹² Topics to be studied include methodology, creation, faith, revelation, truth, Christology, Mariology, the Church, Eucharist and the other sacraments, the call to holiness, the Decalogue and the Virtues, other religions and the dignity of the human person. There are also short introductory courses given by resident or visiting staff during the year on Sacred Scripture, philosophy, psychology, theology, spirituality, church history, Canon Law, Latin and safeguarding.

can cement his resolve to continue the journey begun in response to the call to serve as a priest.

4. Human Formation

Principles

76. Since the promulgation of *Pastores dabo vobis*, human formation has found a place alongside spiritual, intellectual and pastoral formation as one of the four pillars that are the foundation and guide for formation for the priesthood. At the beginning of His ministry, Jesus visited the synagogue and was invited to read from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. While he read the words He explained that the prophecy was being fulfilled in Him, “the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him”⁹³. Likewise, ‘the eyes of all’ are fixed on the human person of a priest as he speaks and acts in Christ’s name. In imitating the example of Christ, a priest needs to learn to be “a bridge and not an obstacle for others in their meeting with Jesus Christ the Redeemer of humanity”⁹⁴. Throughout the years of formation in the seminary, the candidate for priesthood strives, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and with the help of those responsible for his formation, to speak and act in the person of Christ (*in persona Christi*) so that, in seeing him, the People of God will in time see the person of Christ Himself. The candidate’s desire to be holy and to have the heart of a shepherd demands a level of human maturity; what is being sought is always an integrated human and spiritual vocation. The focus of human formation in the seminary is the person of Jesus Christ. He, the Word made flesh, embodies in His humanity the standard to which all priests should aspire.

Human qualities

77. For Saint Thomas Aquinas “grace does not destroy nature, but perfects and forms it”⁹⁵. The human foundations of a candidate’s personality, sexuality and ways of relating need to be strong enough to allow divine grace to mould his vocation and life in the image of Christ. With this in mind, the following human characteristics may reasonably be expected of a candidate for priesthood:

- a. Open to formation: in accordance with the programme approved by the Bishops’ Conference, consonant with the recommendations of *Pastores dabo vobis* and other ecclesial texts concerning the formation of priests. He must approach his years of formation with humility and docility to God’s will. Humility will allow him to be guided by those entrusted with his formation and docility will enable him to accept constructive criticism as a positive contribution to his progress through the seminary. He should not pursue his

⁹³ Luke 4:20

⁹⁴ PDV 43

⁹⁵ Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* Ia, q.1, art. 8, ad 2 (*gratia non tollit naturam sed perficit eam et format*).

own agenda, but be willing to work with those in charge of his formation.

- b. A free person: free to be who God wants him to be, and willing to stand out from a culture that exalts individual autonomy and the constant expansion of options.
- c. A man of strong moral character: open to conversion and endowed with the human virtues of prudence, fortitude, temperance, justice, humility, constancy, sincerity, patience, good manners and truthfulness.
- d. A man of communion: someone who can enter into genuine dialogue and friendship, who can understand and know other people, generously open and available to others, who can make a gift of himself and receive the gift of others. Some candidates have a natural ability to relate while others find it a struggle; both types of people have things to learn about communion in their time in seminary. Those who relate well and confidently need to learn to be alone and deal positively with the solitude that is part of a priest's life, while those who struggle to relate need encouragement to grow through these difficulties so that they can become leaders of communities.
- e. A man of integrity or congruence. If there is a dichotomy between what a seminarian believes about himself and the way he outwardly lives his life, this can create a problematic and uncomfortable situation. If the person others observe accurately reflects who he is and what he really believes, it is fairly certain that he is well-grounded and secure in his motivations and ideals.
- f. A good communicator: the seminarian should be able to listen well. Some people think they are good listeners, but a skilfully constructed human formation programme can help a seminarian to see not only how he sees himself but how others perceive him. He should be someone with whom people feel at ease and whom they can approach with confidence. He will also need to develop skills in public speaking.
- g. A man of prudence and discernment: he needs to be able to distinguish between true and false values, "an essential requirement for establishing a constructive dialogue with the world of today"⁹⁶.
- h. A man who can relate well with others: he must act, speak and think without prejudice and be willing to work with people of all ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds, in all the circumstances of his ministry. He should also be at ease with both men and women and able to relate appropriately with children.
- i. A man of affective maturity: someone whose feelings and emotions are

⁹⁶ St John Paul II, Post-Synodal Exhortation *Ecclesia in America*, 22nd January 1999, 40

balanced, in touch with his feelings, enriched but not ruled by them, able to relate well not only with peers and friends but also with those in authority. He needs to be able to take direction from another but also to exercise authority, and to deal productively with conflict and stress.

- j. A person who respects and cares for his bodily well-being: the seminarian must pay appropriate attention to his need for food, rest and exercise. This is not only for his own good, but also a way of ensuring he has the energy and strength to carry out his duties effectively and in a way that does not compromise his health.
- k. A good steward of material possessions: he should live a simple life style and “avoid whatever has a semblance of vanity”⁹⁷. He needs not to shun material things, but at the same time to maintain a certain distance from them (his true “portion and cup”⁹⁸ is God and the things of God) and to be generous to the poor and those who need his help.
- l. Able to take on the public role of a priest: the seminarian must grow in awareness that he can no longer live his faith as a private person, and gradually become comfortable with the fact that, as a priest, he is a public servant of the Gospel and a representative of the Church.
- m. A man who, especially if he is coming from another country or culture, is willing to understand the culture of the community in which he is seeking to serve and how to work within it.

Celibacy

78. Every Christian is asked to live chastely, which is challenging for anyone trying to live a genuinely Christian life in the permissive mind-set of contemporary culture. When a man commits himself to voluntary celibacy as an ordained minister of the Catholic Church, many will look on, uncomprehending. But he, too, has grown up in the same culture, which means those involved with his formation need to offer him sound and clear guidance, as well as helping him grow to affective maturity: “seminarians should have good knowledge of the Second Vatican Council, of the encyclical *Sacerdotalis cœlibatus* and the *Instruction for Formation in Priestly Celibacy*”⁹⁹.

79. The education for chastity that must be a part of human formation for candidates for the priesthood should present it as a “virtue that develops a person’s authentic maturity” and makes him “capable of respecting and fostering the

⁹⁷ CIC, c.282

⁹⁸ Psalm 16,5-6

⁹⁹ PDV 50

‘nuptial meaning’ of the body”¹⁰⁰. It is important to see affective maturity for those committed to celibate chastity as a special form of self-giving, not the mutual and exclusive self-giving of a married couple but a love that is extended to all people for the sake of the Gospel. It is equally important to recognise that young men offering themselves for priesthood need special skills to live this 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”¹⁰¹.

80. Good formation in celibate living will prepare seminarians for a life of witness; “As men who are ‘in’ the world yet not ‘of’ the world (cf. *Jn* 17,15f.), priests are called in Europe’s present cultural and spiritual situation to be a sign of contradiction and of hope.... In this context *priestly celibacy* also stands out as the sign of hope put totally in the Lord.... A commitment to the service of the Gospel of hope also demands that the Church makes every effort to propose celibacy in its full biblical, theological and spiritual richness”¹⁰².

The programme for Human Formation

81. Once a student comes to know himself more clearly, he is challenged to accept himself, with all his strengths and weaknesses, and the next great challenge is to offer his life as a gift, confidently, humbly and with faith in the power of God’s Spirit working in and through him. Many resources are normally available to assist a seminarian in this process:

- a. Guidance and instruction: above all from the seminary rector and his staff
- b. Personal reflection, with guidance on how to make the most of it
- c. Community life, with all its demands and rewards
- d. Formation tutor or advisor¹⁰³
- e. Spiritual director

Psychological counselling: this is useful especially when behaviour patterns can be traced back to periods of difficulty earlier in life; a student can be helped to develop strategies to help him function better as a person. The need for

¹⁰⁰ St John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* 37, quoted in *PDV* 44

¹⁰¹ *PDV* 44

¹⁰² St John Paul II, Post-Synodal Exhortation *Ecclesia in Europa*, 28th June 2003, 35; cf. *OT* 8

¹⁰³ Different terms may be used; it is important to recognise that that they are restricted to work in the external forum.

extensive therapy suggests that an individual should interrupt seminary formation, at least temporarily.

Norms

82. Each seminary must have a programme of human formation corresponding to the stages of growth to be expected of the candidates being formed there. A seminarian must aim to be a man of communion, with the ability to engage in pastoral leadership, modelling himself on Jesus, the Good Shepherd. The programme must focus on the ordained priesthood as a humanly and spiritually fulfilling vocation, to help candidates remain strong in their convictions and desire to serve Christ and his people, in the face of the many criticisms, misunderstandings and negative portrayals of organised religion and priesthood in English and Welsh society today.

Developing Human Qualities

83. The seminary's human formation programme must start from the assumption that candidates are capable of:

- a. moving beyond preoccupation with themselves to an openness to transcendent values and a concern for the welfare of others
- b. being honest with themselves and with others
- c. trusting the Church, in particular the seminary staff responsible for their formation

84. The human formation programme should help seminarians to foster the qualities of:

- a. freedom
- b. openness
- c. honesty
- d. flexibility
- e. joy
- f. inner peace
- g. generosity
- h. justice
- i. personal maturity
- j. the ability to relate well to other people
- k. common sense
- l. readiness and capacity for ministry

m. moral sensitivity and strength

85. Seminarians with the following problems are unlikely to progress in human formation for priesthood:

- a. extreme inflexibility
- b. narcissism
- c. anti-social behaviour
- d. a lack of sexual integration
- e. deep and unresolved anger (sometimes shown in attitudes to authority)
- f. excessive attachment to or dependence on material goods
- g. compulsive behaviour or addictions

Formation for Obedience

86. Priests should “be attached to their bishop with sincere charity and obedience”¹⁰⁴. Priestly obedience cannot, however, simply begin with ordination, so the seminary’s formation programme must help seminarians to realise that humble and willing co-operation in community life in the seminary is also training in priestly obedience. The community in which they live, like any other human community, needs structures of organisation and authority if it is to achieve its aims and objectives. The contribution of all its members is the ‘glue’ that keeps the community together and the formation programme ought to lead them to an appreciation of the spiritual dimension of authority and obedience in the Catholic Church, where respectful submission to the Word of God and the Church’s Magisterium are clearly of paramount importance¹⁰⁵. As their formation progresses, seminarians should be given more opportunities to exercise responsibility and freedom, and be helped to see that part of their freedom is being accountable to the community and to those in authority there. This will be an excellent preparation for the occasions when they will have to co-operate with their bishop or superior, particularly when they are given a new assignment¹⁰⁶.

Formation for Celibacy

87. The seminary needs to have a well co-ordinated programme to help students to understand not only the physiological and psychological aspects of human

¹⁰⁴ PO 7

¹⁰⁵ Cf. CIC, cc.748.1 and 750-754

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Second Vatican Council, Decree Concerning the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church *Christus Dominus* 28

sexuality but also especially the nature and purpose of celibacy. Positive instruction, prayerful discernment, dialogue and encouragement all have a place in helping students to embrace celibacy wholeheartedly. Since genuine sexuality is related to mature love, helping seminarians to find their way on the path of psychosexual, social and spiritual development will form them as chaste, celibate men who will love the people they are sent to serve in a mature and selfless way. What is expected of seminarians regarding behaviour and attitudes should be made clear, regarding both their present life and their future life as priests. The genuine, responsible love required of a priest is built on affective maturity manifested in prudence and vigilance over body and spirit, compassion and care for others, the ability to express and acknowledge feelings and emotions and the capacity to treat relationships between men and women with respect.

88. Moreover, a life of celibate chastity requires knowledge of one's own sexuality and sexual desires together with the ability to accept and value one's sexuality as God's gift to be used to serve God. There should also be a permanent commitment to growth and to the healthy integration of sexuality into one's life and ministry.

89. Habits and skills to be valued and encouraged include:

- a. appropriate self-disclosure
- b. capacity for self-reflection
- c. ability to be at peace in solitude
- d. ascetical practices that help in mastering one's impulses and drives
- e. habitual modesty
- f. seeing every person in God's light, interceding for them, directing them to God
- g. caring for others
- h. ability to give and receive love
- i. ability to develop healthy peer friendships
- j. setting appropriate boundaries in relationships
- k. accepting self-discipline in the face of temptation

90. The seminary needs clear written guidelines on its expectations regarding the attitudes, behaviour and levels of psychosexual maturity that indicate a right mentality, proper motivation and a commitment to celibate chastity. The guidelines should also specify in equally clear terms what is not acceptable. If there is credible evidence that a candidate is sexually attracted to minors, he must immediately be dismissed from the seminary.

91. Formation for celibacy must allow candidates to understand, discuss and value the virtue of chastity as it is lived in celibate life, in virginity and in marriage, and to acquire the skills required for living chastely and living celibate chastity well. Among these the development of genuine friendships, priestly brotherhood and chaste relationships with people of all ages is to be encouraged and should equip seminarians to move beyond loneliness to “strong, lively, and personal love for Jesus Christ”¹⁰⁷. Seminarians should also be formed in those prudent practices associated with an authentic priestly lifestyle such as a regular pattern of prayer and spiritual direction, an appropriate priestly asceticism, the self-knowledge that comes from a genuine examination of conscience, frequent recourse to the Sacrament of Penance, and careful and prudent discernment regarding reading matter and the use of television, media and the internet.

Formation for Evangelical Poverty

92. One of the goals of human formation is to cultivate in seminarians a spirit of generosity, freeing them to be men for others and men who have grown beyond a spirit of entitlement. One of the counter-cultural elements in the life of a priest is a refusal to be enslaved by the insidious manipulation of desires and needs. The liturgy encourages us to have a balanced view of earthly goods and possessions. We are never to disparage them; nor should we allow them to distract us from our goal, life with the blessed in the presence of God. Being absorbed by an acquisitive culture can lead people to view each other as objects, to be discarded when they are no longer useful. On the other hand, people who are trained to tame the passion for acquisition and possession often appreciate and enjoy the created world more. The seminary should foster a simple life style where the key values are freedom and service.

Physical well-being

93. The seminary programme should include space for physical exercise and encouragement to take advantage of opportunities to relax, to remain or to become physically fit. Since some seminarians will not spontaneously seek out such opportunities, there really does need to be a healthy atmosphere throughout seminary life, which will also be reflected in the management of diet and the prudent use of alcohol. Seminarians are to be encouraged to develop the skills required to live an ordered, healthy domestic life, including cooking. Facilities for relaxing in common will also promote camaraderie and foster awareness of the presbyterate in a diocese - which will be a much-needed support when busy priests

¹⁰⁷ PDV 44

find time to meet. It is also wise to encourage seminarians not to abandon their hobbies, provided they do not take too much time or money, or in any way conflict with the ethos of the seminary.

5. Spiritual Formation

Principles

94. While all God's people are called to holiness of life¹⁰⁸, priests are configured to Christ the Head by the Sacrament of Holy Orders and, because of their consecration among God's priestly people, must "strive always for that growth in holiness by which they will become consistently better instruments in the service of the whole People of God, using for this purpose those means which the Church has approved"¹⁰⁹. Furthermore, "for every priest his spiritual formation is the core which unifies and gives life to his *being* a priest and his *acting* as a priest"¹¹⁰. Everything the priest does flows from who he is. In this way his spiritual formation completes a priest's human formation and, together with his intellectual formation, is the foundation on which his pastoral formation is based.

95. It is vitally important to establish and develop an ethos and structures in the seminary which foster each student's spiritual growth and allow him to be led by the Holy Spirit, the primary agent of his formation. This is to lead him into an ever deeper communion with, and conformity to, Jesus Christ, the high priest and Good Shepherd. The seminary's programme of spiritual formation allows each student "to live in intimate and unceasing union with God the Father through his Son Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit"¹¹¹ and to enter into deeper communion with the Church, the Body of Christ, whose servant and minister he is to become.

96. The seminary recognises, affirms and builds on the seminarian's earlier spiritual development, from the outpouring of grace through the sacraments of initiation to his recognition of the Holy Spirit calling him to conversion in Christ and now prompting him to explore and discern a vocation to priesthood. The seminary's programme of spiritual development aims to promote further growth in the life of the Spirit and foster habits of spiritual discernment on which an individual will draw for the rest of his life.

97. The seminarian needs to be accompanied on his spiritual journey by an experienced spiritual director who helps him to interpret his spiritual experience, to cultivate a more intimate relationship with Christ and to develop good habits of prayer. Such accompaniment enables him to integrate human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral formation. Crucially, the spiritual director also helps him to acquire

¹⁰⁸ LG 39-42

¹⁰⁹ PO 12

¹¹⁰ PDV 45

¹¹¹ OT 8

the sensitivity and skills to discern whether he really is called to priesthood.

98. At the same time, all seminary staff contribute to the seminarian's spiritual development by the example of their commitment to their own spiritual growth, faithfulness to the Church and to their own vocation, and by the general manner of their lives, creating an environment where seminarian and seminary staff may more effectively discern the movement of the Spirit in a student's life and his emerging call to priesthood.

Liturgical development

99. The liturgy is the source and summit of the Church's life, where Jesus Christ exercises his priesthood visibly and effectively and where we meet him as the high priest of our faith. Participation in the Church's public worship is the primary means by which the seminarian is spiritually formed. He "should be taught to seek Christ in faithful meditation on God's Word, in the active participation in the sacred mysteries of the Church, especially in the Eucharist and in the divine office"¹¹², whose daily celebration is at the heart of seminary life. The way the liturgy is celebrated significantly affects the spiritual environment which forms the seminarian. The symbolic rituals and rhythms of the liturgy mould him spiritually and give expression to his spiritual life in the midst of the community. The daily sacrifice of the Mass is "the Sacrament of love, the sign of unity and the bond of charity"¹¹³ by which the community is fed with Christ's body and blood and transformed by his loving self-sacrifice. It is here that the seminarian offers his life to God each day in union with Christ's redemptive offering of himself to the Father. The quality of music and sensitivity to signs and symbols in a seminary's liturgical life will help seminarians to appreciate and develop their own ability to contribute to worthy and beautiful celebrations of the Church's liturgy.

Prayer

100. Besides celebrating the Eucharist and the Liturgy of the Hours with the seminary community, a seminarian must develop his own life of prayer. Prayer opens us to God's presence and action in a relationship which is essential to the Christian's growth as a child of God and a disciple of Christ. Prayer establishes and sustains intimacy with Christ and it is through prayer that he comes to realise that the Trinity dwells in the hearts of believers¹¹⁴. A seminarian must allow himself to meet Christ personally and let the Holy Spirit transform every facet of his life, so that he thinks and chooses according to the heart of Jesus Christ and the mind of

¹¹² OT 8

¹¹³ Pope Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelica testificatio*, 29th June 1971, 48, quoting *SCon* 47

¹¹⁴ Cf. *John* 14,23

God the Father. For this to happen he must set aside time every day for personal prayer. He must come to know Jesus Christ thoroughly; to do this he needs to meet his Lord every day in the Scriptures. "An essential element of spiritual formation is the prayerful and meditated reading of the Word of God (*lectio divina*), a humble and loving listening of him who speaks"¹¹⁵.

101. To achieve a rhythm of regular private prayer, the student's spiritual director helps him establish a rule of life, which develops according to his stage of formation as a tool for deepening the student's intimate friendship with the Lord and discerning His will from day to day. It is a way of living the spiritual life both in the seminary and during his pastoral placements and holidays. The spiritual director can help the student to find methods of prayer that suit his temperament and personality. At the beginning of a student's period of formation, his spiritual director should introduce him to some of the spiritual classics, and help him establish a lifelong habit of spiritual reading.

102. Given the variety of their backgrounds, some seminarians will be at home with much of Catholic spiritual tradition, while traditional Catholic prayers and forms of piety will be new to others. Many students will find silence challenging, so the seminary's spiritual programme must help them cultivate ways of meeting Christ which will be their source of spiritual energy and inspiration during formation and for the rest of their lives.

103. The time in seminary also helps students to learn to pray with others, and lead small groups in prayer. Even if this is not a student's preferred style, it will be a useful preparation for praying with people as a priest, when pastoral practice must be guided in large part by their needs rather than one's own.

A Priestly Life-style

104. Although he is not yet a priest, it is important for the seminarian to develop the qualities of loving and self-sacrificing service that he will need as a priest, qualities that will draw others to Christ while promoting his own growth in holiness. Authentic spiritual growth bears fruit in true generosity, so that a priest can be genuinely a man for others. If he is to cultivate a priestly life-style directed towards serving those in every kind of need, the student must embrace the cross daily and die to himself; thus, the resurrection bears fruit in a life of charity.

Celibacy

105. Formation for celibacy may be fruitfully shared between the programmes for

¹¹⁵ PDV 47

human formation and spiritual formation, and those principles delineated in the previous chapter apply equally here. Those responsible for human and spiritual formation must be certain that students understand human sexuality well enough to grasp its Christian and truly human nature and its purpose in marriage and celibate life. It would be particularly appropriate to have some understanding of the theology of the body to understand sexuality in relation to the transforming effects of grace.

Obedience

106. While the human qualities required of the seminarian for training in priestly obedience have been described earlier, he must also learn that obedience is more than external compliance, it involves an authentic submission of the heart. "With special care they should be trained in priestly obedience, poverty and a spirit of self-denial, that they may accustom themselves to living in conformity with the crucified Christ and to give up willingly even those things which are lawful, but not expedient"¹¹⁶. In obedience a seminarian is ultimately submitting his will to the heart of the Father, so he needs to develop the listening ear demanded of a disciple¹¹⁷. In order for obedience to be authentic and not blind, the student must know how to converse with those in authority and be able to speak up for himself with due respect for the office his superiors hold. During his time in seminary he must also be given the opportunity to exercise responsibility and authority over others. He must learn to work with others in a team and to lead others and make prudent decisions on their behalf¹¹⁸.

Living a life of charity and self-sacrifice

107. The priest is above all a man of charity in imitation of Jesus Christ the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep, and he is called to educate others in Christ's new commandment of love¹¹⁹.

108. The disciple of Christ must learn to reject all that is contrary to the Gospel. The seminarian will need to learn to say 'no' to anything that leads to or encourages sinful attitudes and behaviour, so that even when he is alone and unobserved he can always choose what is good. However, if it is truly genuine a seminarian's spiritual life should bear fruit in love towards others. He must cultivate a real concern and respect for all others in the seminary community as well as those he

¹¹⁶ PDV 49

¹¹⁷ Cf. *Isaiah* 50,4

¹¹⁸ *Matthew* 8,9: "For I am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to one, 'Go', and he goes, and to another, 'Come', and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this', and he does it".

¹¹⁹ PDV 49 and *John* 15,12

encounters on pastoral placements and during holidays. The seminarian must understand that a life of charity and self-sacrifice is intrinsic to the Eucharistic spirituality which flows from the Mass and by which he lives for God and for others before all else¹²⁰.

Embracing priestly poverty and good stewardship

109. If he practises asceticism properly, the seminarian should rediscover the value of austerity and the evangelical call to poverty. He must look to the teaching of the Lord to His disciples in the Gospel: “Sell your possessions, and give alms; provide yourselves with purses that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also”¹²¹.

110. The student for the priesthood, especially if he has come from a wealthy background or has been in employment, needs to learn how to live within the means provided, without indulging in an extravagant lifestyle and without wastefulness. A man in formation for priesthood must develop a true and unostentatious ascetical spirit, with both its interior and exterior aspects. This liberality of spirit extends beyond his use of money and possessions to his personal time, which he may occasionally have to surrender as a priest. Stewardship is not limited to one’s own possessions and time, but involves taking care of the Church’s goods, which are for the use of all.

A life of justice

111. Seminarians must learn to seek Christ “in the people to whom they are sent, especially the poor, the children, the sick, the sinners and the unbelievers”¹²². The spiritual life of the seminary should offer opportunities for seminarians to express a preferential love for the poor¹²³. This must be integrated so that pastoral work and other initiatives the seminary undertakes to support the less advantaged are brought to liturgical and personal prayer, and united to the prayer of Jesus: “though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich”¹²⁴. This work should recognise existing bodies in the Church which have a particular apostolate to all those who can be counted as poor. It is important for the seminarian to understand this work as part of the Church’s evangelical mission to spread the Word of God to all peoples, rather than merely a

¹²⁰ Cf. Congregation for the Clergy, *Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests*, 31st January 1994, 67

¹²¹ *Luke* 12,33-34

¹²² *OT* 8

¹²³ Cf. *PDV* 49

¹²⁴ *2 Corinthians* 8,9

way of doing good works, with no relation to the life of faith. As Pope Benedict XVI indicated, “Only if we are aware of our calling, as individuals and as a community, to be part of God’s family as His sons and daughters, will we be able to generate a new vision and muster new energy in the service of a truly integral humanism”¹²⁵.

A man of unity and reconciliation

112. We read in *2 Corinthians*, “God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation”¹²⁶. The ministry of reconciliation is entrusted to all who live in Christ and must be lived and practised most visibly by the Church’s ministers. The Sacrament of Penance must have a privileged place in the life of the seminarian, but he must also learn how to be a man of unity and to avoid being the cause or supporting the cause of division and disunity; nor should he hide his opinion and simply live as a conformist, for neither of these is the way of humility. The seminarian should learn to express his opinions and preferences with discretion, charity and respect for other people’s opinions and points of view. He should learn how to give and receive fraternal correction humbly. The rector and his staff have the task of fostering and maintaining a spirit of unity and reconciliation within the community, with an eye to the well-being of all.

A man of ecumenism and dialogue

113. “At the Second Vatican Council, the Catholic Church committed herself *irrevocably* to following the path of the ecumenical venture, thus heeding the Spirit of the Lord, who teaches people to interpret carefully the ‘signs of the times’”¹²⁷; “ecumenism is an organic part of her life and work, and consequently must pervade all that she is and does”¹²⁸. Seminarians should be familiar with what *Unitatis redintegratio* calls ‘spiritual ecumenism’, which is expressed in “public and private prayer for the unity of Christians” and “should be regarded as the soul of the whole ecumenical movement”¹²⁹. It is fitting for such prayer to be offered with other Christians, as well as within the seminary community and privately.

114. It is essential for seminarians to know about the official ecumenical contacts the Church has, for example with *Churches Together in England*, *Churches Together in Wales* (CYTUN) and *Churches Together in Britain and Ireland*, and locally in deaneries

¹²⁵ Pope Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Caritas in veritate*, 29th June 2009, 78

¹²⁶ *2 Corinthians* 5,19

¹²⁷ St John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Ut unum sint*, 25th May 1995, 3

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 20

¹²⁹ Second Vatican Council, Decree on Ecumenism *Unitatis redintegratio* 8

and parishes. They should also be familiar with the aims and work of bodies like the *Association of Interchurch Families*; all these contacts will help them in ministry to see the opportunities and limitations of ecumenical co-operation.

115. Seminarians should also have a working knowledge of the differences between the Catholic Church and the other Christian communities - Orthodox, Anglican and Protestant - alongside which they will live and work. They should become familiar with the idea of 'receptive ecumenism', where a community understands that official agreements, far from contradicting its tradition, advance and enrich it. Each community has something to give to others. Priests and deacons have an essential role in ensuring that Catholic teaching is not compromised, but more positively that it is a gift that enables other Christians to share the riches of the faith.

116. It is increasingly important to know about the other religions that are part of the religious landscape in Britain. By the time they are ordained, seminarians need to be well-informed, particularly about religions that are well represented in the area in which they live and work, so that they will be able to correct misinformation, and grasp the possibilities and limits of dialogue. The 'dialogue of life' is normally a wiser path to follow than the complex territory of theological dialogue; co-operation in charitable or humanitarian projects will usually be not only useful and just, but also an opening to trust, friendship and greater understanding.

117. Seminarians should leave the seminary with a prayerful and positive attitude towards ecumenism and inter-religious dialogue, and a desire to encourage and promote local initiatives in their work as priests.

The interior life of the diocesan priest

118. The seminarian needs to integrate his life of prayer with his pastoral activity so that one flows into the other, to ensure that pastoral work does not degenerate into social work or functionalism and the priest does not shy away from the evangelical engagement to which he is called. "Any pastoral initiative, missionary programme, or effort at evangelisation that eschews the primacy of spirituality and divine worship is doomed to failure"¹³⁰. Those responsible for spiritual and pastoral formation can help the seminarian by working together to teach him how to do what can be called a 'double lectio'; in other words, he must learn to listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit speaking to him in his devotional life, in all its aspects, and through the people he meets in his pastoral duties and daily life. In his seminary years, he needs to learn the value of interceding for all those with whom he comes

¹³⁰ PPL 11

into contact, making their needs part of his own life. Even before ordination, he should try to see what it means to exercise the *tria munera* of prophet, priest, and king (teaching, sanctifying and governing), so that through his priesthood Christ may eventually exercise these gifts for the People of God. The seminarian should learn to integrate his spiritual and pastoral life wherever he engages in pastoral work. Reflection and prayer begun in this time of formation will show him how his pastoral ministry contributes to his own holiness as well as that of others.

Norms

Public and Private Prayer

119. “Priestly spirituality is intrinsically Eucharistic”¹³¹. The celebration of the Eucharist is at the centre of the seminary’s daily programme. Students should participate in the celebration of Mass daily, including free days, thus laying the foundations for a truly Eucharistic life as priests. Priests on the seminary staff should join in the community’s celebration of Mass as concelebrants when they are not required to celebrate elsewhere. The involvement of staff members in the Eucharistic liturgy will help model good liturgical practice for the seminarians, since the liturgy is both a celebration of the sacred mysteries and a school of formation. The seminary should foster an authentic participation in the liturgy according to the norms expressed in the Second Vatican Council and in various Instructions, with which students should become familiar during their formation¹³². Priests on the staff need to celebrate the liturgy according to the rubrics and directives in liturgical books, avoiding personal modifications while respecting the variety of forms allowed, constantly aware that the students in their care need sound example in liturgy as part of their formation. Sunday’s liturgy must be celebrated with due solemnity with the whole seminary community present, in a way that is worthy of the Lord’s day and makes it truly special and sacred. “The Sunday Eucharist expresses with greater emphasis its inherent ecclesial dimension.... Therefore the *dies Domini* is also the *dies Ecclesiae*”¹³³.

120. The liturgical life of the seminary includes the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours. Morning and Evening prayer are the hinges of the seminary community’s daily schedule. By the time a student petitions his bishop for ordination as a deacon, he must be in the habit of reciting the full Liturgy of the Hours every day, including free days.

121. Preparation for receiving ministries, and for ordination to diaconate and priesthood, should bring seminarians to a greater awareness of the history and structure of the liturgy, so that they can be faithful stewards of this precious heritage. This means that courses in the liturgy cannot be presented as a purely intellectual exercise, but their technical content should be presented in a way that helps students to appreciate the spiritual richness of liturgical words and actions.

¹³¹ *SCar* 80

¹³² *SCon* 14-20; Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, Instruction *Redemptionis Sacramentum* 25th March 2004, 36-42; *SCar* 52; *The General Instruction on the Roman Missal* 2004 (third typical edition); *The General Instruction on the Roman Lectionary*; *The General Instruction on the Liturgy of the Hours*.

¹³³ St John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Dies Domini*, 31st May 1998 34-35

To help students perform their later liturgical duties fruitfully and reverently, the seminary must offer expert help with use of the human voice in speaking and singing in public, and practical guidance on serving Mass, composing intercessions, distributing Holy Communion in church and in people's homes, and conducting eucharistic worship outside Mass. Preparation for ordination to the priesthood is primarily spiritual, but must be shaped by the Church's liturgical norms, and guided by the instruction from the rite of ordination: "understand what you do, imitate what you celebrate, conform your life to the mystery of the Lord's cross"¹³⁴.

122. As he develops a friendship with Jesus Christ through prayer, the seminarian will also become more aware of his own sinfulness and his need for the Father's mercy. He should make wise and reverent use of the Sacrament of Penance, which he should celebrate regularly and frequently. The seminary should also arrange communal celebrations of the sacrament, especially in Advent and Lent. The seminary should provide opportunities for external confessors to visit the seminary regularly. Seminarians are always free to approach any confessor of their choice¹³⁵. The rector and formation staff are never to hear the confessions of seminarians they formally assess.

123. Regular days of recollection and retreats are to be provided for the seminarians. There must be an annual retreat of at least five days¹³⁶. Retreats are also made in preparation for receiving the Sacrament of Holy Orders¹³⁷. These occasions help each student find space for silence and solitude in which to deepen his encounter with Jesus Christ and to allow the Lord to form him in mind and heart. There should be daily provision for quiet prayer and silence, and an oratory where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved. Some students will need guidance on how to benefit from silence and solitude, how to enter into the presence of Almighty God, who speaks to them in "a still small voice", as he did to Elijah¹³⁸.

124. The spirituality programme should open up for the seminarians the many and varied ways men and women have prayed through the ages. There should be guidance and instruction in methods of meditation, contemplation, *lectio divina* and the daily *examen*. This should help to enrich the prayer life of a student who will soon be expected to hand on what he has experienced of all this, which is part of the priest's mission as "teacher of prayer"¹³⁹.

¹³⁴ Roman Pontifical, *Ordination of a Priest*, 162

¹³⁵ *CIC*, cc.240.1, 246.4

¹³⁶ *CIC*, c.246.5

¹³⁷ *CIC*, c.1039

¹³⁸ Cf. *1 Kings* 19,11ff.

¹³⁹ *PDV* 47

125. Catholic devotions should be encouraged, including traditional ones like the Rosary and the Way of the Cross, especially in the seasons when they have traditionally been practised. The seminary should foster devotion to Our Lady as part of the community's and each student's spiritual identity. Above all, the seminary must encourage devotion to the Blessed Sacrament by providing a worthy place of sacramental reservation, scheduling extended periods of Eucharistic adoration and helping seminarians to cultivate the habit of making personal visits to the Blessed Sacrament. The seminary as a communion of faith should express and deepen its sense of being part of the People of God by making pilgrimages to places of special devotion, both in England and Wales and further afield.

Spiritual direction

126. While the rector is ultimately responsible for the spiritual life of the seminary, the house spiritual director oversees the implementation of the programme of spiritual formation. He ensures that each seminarian receives individual guidance from his spiritual director and that the spiritual ethos of the seminary is sustained: by a high standard of liturgical worship in the celebration of the Eucharist and the Liturgy of the Hours, by the provision of retreats, days of recollection and spiritual conferences, and by spiritual preparation for the reception of ministries and orders.

127. A seminarian should meet his spiritual director at least once a month. During his time of formation, he may choose from the spiritual directors approved for the seminary¹⁴⁰, and it would be good practice to help ordinands approaching the end of their time in seminary to find a spiritual director for their early days in priesthood, to allow a smooth transition and to maintain direction and depth in each new priest's spiritual life. The arrangements for religious students should be known to the seminary rector.

128. The resident spiritual director works with the rector in overseeing the spiritual life of the seminary and its spiritual programme. All those appointed as spiritual directors should either have had specific training or be priests of recognised wisdom and maturity.

129. Meetings between spiritual directors and seminarians should be frequent enough and long enough to allow the spiritual director to assist the student in continuing vocational discernment, preparation for ministries and Holy Orders, and formation for celibacy.

¹⁴⁰ CIC, c.239.2

130. The bond of trust governing the relationship between a seminarian and his spiritual director demands confidentiality, so a spiritual director is not allowed to disclose anything revealed to him by a seminarian that belongs to the internal forum. For that reason, spiritual directors may not contribute to discussions about those they are directing, nor may they take part in any vote or assessment for ministries and Holy Orders¹⁴¹. Confidentiality should always be preserved except when it would contravene the norms for the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults and where it appears a seminarian may harm himself or others. It should also be understood that the seminarian, too, should observe discretion if he speaks to others about anything disclosed in spiritual direction. In the case of sacramental confession the seal is absolute.

131. The rector may never ask a spiritual director about the content of any conversation he has had with a seminarian he is directing, but he may ask him to confirm whether a particular seminarian sees him on a regular basis. A spiritual director should notify the rector if he intends to discontinue spiritual direction with any seminarian or if a seminarian discontinues direction with him.

¹⁴¹ *CIC*, c.240.2

6. Intellectual Formation

Principles

132. Like human and spiritual formation, intellectual formation arises out of the very nature of the ordained ministry. The man called to be a priest applies all his intelligence to enter more deeply into the mysteries of the Faith. He seeks to acquire a wisdom that comes from knowing God and adhering to Him. This was clearly stated by St John Paul II: “If we expect every Christian to be prepared to make a defence of the faith and to account for the hope that is in us (cf. 1 Pt. 3:15), then all the more should candidates for the priesthood and priests have diligent care of the quality of their intellectual formation in their education and pastoral activity. For the salvation of their brothers and sisters they should seek an ever deeper knowledge of the divine mysteries.... The commitment to study, which takes up no small part of the time of those preparing for the priesthood, is not in fact an external and secondary dimension of their human, Christian, spiritual and vocational growth. In reality, through study, especially the study of theology, the future priest assents to the Word of God, grows in his spiritual life and prepares himself to fulfil his pastoral ministry”¹⁴².

133. Intellectual Formation in the seminary makes the future priest more effective in the way he preaches and teaches the Faith and in the way he is a good shepherd in pastoral ministry. It equips him to answer the call of the Church to proclaim ‘a new evangelisation’. It challenges him to be faithful to the truths whose special guardian and keeper he will be in the diversity of our times; “The theological disciplines, in the light of faith and under the guidance of the magisterium of the Church, should be so taught that the students will correctly draw out Catholic doctrine from divine revelation, profoundly penetrate it, make it the food of their own spiritual lives, and be enabled to proclaim, explain, and protect it in their priestly ministry”¹⁴³.

134. The goal of intellectual formation is the conversion of mind and heart, which is the sure foundation for a lifetime of teaching and preaching. As Pope Benedict XVI indicated, “the point is not simply to learn evidently useful things, but to understand and appreciate the internal structure of the faith as a whole, so that it can become a response to people’s questions, which on the surface change from one generation to another yet ultimately remain the same”¹⁴⁴. Intellectual formation takes up a large part of seminary time and it is integral to spiritual and Christian

¹⁴² PDV 51

¹⁴³ OT 16

¹⁴⁴ Pope Benedict XVI, *Letter to Seminarians*, 18th October 2010, 5

growth, and never merely external to human, pastoral and vocational development.

135. The candidate for Orders should strive to acquire the following skills and qualities by the time he is ordained:

- a. General intellectual competence and study skills: the ability to read critically, take notes, summarise, write short and long pieces, prepare talks and presentations, research; time-management; IT skills; intellectual hunger; energy and hard work and commitment required for study.
- b. Presentation and communication skills: the ability to speak well, present ideas clearly and simply, explain complex issues, listen to others sympathetically, critically and attentively, work in groups, synthesise and summarise, speak to people of different ages and backgrounds.
- c. Wisdom and learning: an understanding of contemporary culture, philosophy, science, society, the arts, contemporary issues, ecumenical reality, non-Christian religions, secularity.
- d. Humility and intellectual openness: the desire to learn, the ability to recognise his own mistakes and ignorance, to live with tension and uncertainty (e.g. tension between personal opinion and need for humility and obedience), to listen to and dialogue with those who disagree.
- e. Love of the Church: love of Scripture, Tradition and Magisterium; commitment to embracing, representing and presenting the faith of the Church rather than one's own opinions.
- f. Knowledge of the Catholic faith: a thorough knowledge of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the Scriptures and the Church's teaching; the ability to explain them and to bring them alive.
- g. Knowledge of specific philosophical and theological disciplines as outlined in the curriculum required for ordination (see Norms below).
- h. Knowledge of the moral teaching of the Church, especially concerning new and contemporary issues.
- i. A personal synthesis of his studies and of the Catholic faith, and the ability to present a personal vision that is consonant with the Catholic faith; an integration of liturgical, sacramental, spiritual and intellectual life in personal faith.
- j. Generosity of heart: a desire to share wisdom and knowledge with others; a love for others which desires to see them grow in the knowledge and love of Christ and His Church.
- k. Pastoral wisdom: the ability to understand pastoral issues in the light of theology, faith and Scripture; the ability to connect faith with pastoral needs

sensitively so that there is a unity of compassion, integrity and faithfulness; the ability to be clear and firm without being arrogant or overbearing.

- l. A commitment to sound catechesis, to effective and life-giving preaching, to courageous and creative evangelisation; an appreciation of the importance of the intellectual formation of others in pastoral work.
- m. A self-motivated commitment to continuing intellectual formation after ordination, and the recognition of the need for support and stimulation in this continuing formation.

Norms

Prior to Studies in Philosophy and Theology

136. Candidates apply to dioceses and religious congregations with varied backgrounds of religious experiences and varied levels of catechetical and faith formation. Dioceses, congregations and seminaries need to exercise careful discernment to ensure that each candidate has the necessary foundations to begin formal seminary formation, and is ready to undertake the programme of studies which the Church requires.

137. Dioceses and religious congregations should make use of propaedeutic opportunities, both in the local situations and in the programmes offered by different seminaries.

138. Candidates should have reached a level of education which enables them to take on the equivalent of a British university education before embarking on formal studies for priestly formation. If English is not a candidate's first language, he needs to demonstrate proficiency in spoken and written English at the level required for him to embark on a British university education.

139. Dioceses, religious congregations and seminaries should have in place courses which facilitate candidates reaching this level in their basic study skills and in their use of English, before they embark on the study of philosophy and theology.

140. Older candidates approach the seminary with considerable life experience, but they may have lost contact with formal patterns of study. Their age may seem to suggest that they be moved through the seminary programme quickly, or that they be given a programme with reduced expectations. The latter trend, however, is to be resisted.

Philosophy and the first years of Study

141. "The study of philosophy is fundamental and indispensable to the structure of theological studies and to the formation of candidates for the priesthood. It is not by chance that the curriculum of theological studies is preceded by a time of special study of philosophy"¹⁴⁵.

- a. In priestly formation, at least two full years should be dedicated to the philosophical disciplines¹⁴⁶.

¹⁴⁵ St John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Fides et Ratio* 62

¹⁴⁶ See *CIC*, c. 250

- b. A seminary's programme of philosophical studies should be balanced, comprehensive, integrated, and coherent.
- c. It must include substantial studies in the history of philosophy treating ancient, medieval, modern and contemporary philosophy.
- d. The philosophy programme must also include the study of logic, epistemology, metaphysics, natural theology, anthropology and ethics.
- e. Besides philosophical studies in the first two years, the programme should strive to provide seminarians with an understanding of the historical and cultural context of their faith; this may include some study of Scripture, liturgy and ecclesiology which will encourage the seminarians to embrace their vocation at a deeper level.
- f. Those who come to the seminary without a solid liberal arts education should be offered a curriculum that supplies for lacunae in this area. The Catholic intellectual tradition (e.g., literature and the arts) should be a part of such a curriculum.
- g. Education in public communications is appropriate for the course of studies in the early years of formation.
- h. Latin and Greek are important for laying some of the foundations necessary for the study of theology.

Theology

142. Seminaries should offer a course which will focus on the fundamental beliefs and practices of the Catholic faith. In particular, they should concentrate on those elements of the faith that may have been overlooked or neglected in the students' earlier religious education and that stand as a presupposition for all forms of theological study.

143. Theology courses should study the themes contained in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, including Catholic doctrine, liturgy and sacraments, Catholic morality, Christian prayer and Sacred Scripture. All seminarians should be acquainted with the contents of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* as a source for a thorough exposition of Catholic doctrine.

144. Ultimately, intellectual formation in the seminary programme centres on theology as a search for "an ever deeper knowledge of the divine mysteries"¹⁴⁷. This kind of theological study, which far exceeds a purely technical approach to religious phenomena, is truly to be *fides quaerens intellectum*, faith seeking

¹⁴⁷ PDV, 51

understanding. This is not the same as the approach of religious studies or the history of religions. As Pope Francis indicates, “Theology is more than simply an effort of human reason to analyse and understand, along the lines of the experimental sciences. God cannot be reduced to an object. Right faith orients reason to open itself to the light which comes from God, so that reason, guided by love of the truth, can come to a deeper knowledge of God”¹⁴⁸. The seminary study of theology begins in faith and ends in faith, as should all true theological inquiry and study.

- a. At least four full years should be dedicated to theological studies.
- b. The academic curriculum as a whole should have a discernible and coherent unity.
- c. The curriculum must reflect the specialised nature of priestly formation and help seminarians to develop a clear understanding of the ministerial priesthood.
- d. The core should include fundamental theology, the basis of the rational procedure of all theology and, thus, the introduction to the study of theology¹⁴⁹.
- e. The various theological disciplines should recognise Sacred Scripture as the foundation, the point of departure and the soul of all theology¹⁵⁰.
- f. In Scripture, the core should include the study of the Pentateuch, the historical, prophetic and wisdom literature (especially the Psalms) of the Old Testament, the Synoptic Gospels and *Acts*, Pauline and Johannine literature, and the Catholic epistles.
- g. Patristic studies are a key element of theological studies. Theology should draw from the works of the Fathers of the Church that have lasting value within the living tradition of the Church.
- h. In dogmatic theology, the core must include theology of God, one and three, Christology, creation, the fall and the nature of sin, redemption, grace and the human person, ecclesiology, sacraments, eschatology and Mariology¹⁵¹.
- i. A separate course on Holy Orders, with a thorough study of the nature and mission of the ministerial priesthood including a history and theology of celibacy, is required.

¹⁴⁸ Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter *Lumen Fidei*, 29th June 2013, 36.

¹⁴⁹ Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Theological Formation of Future Priests (TFFP)*, 22nd February 1976, 107-113

¹⁵⁰ Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei verbum* 24; CCC 113; TFFP 79

¹⁵¹ Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Virgin Mary in Intellectual and Spiritual Formation*, 25th March 1988

- j. A sound study of the content and methods of catechesis not only prepares the seminarian for his task as a minister of the Word, but also provides the possibility of a synthetic moment in the curriculum when an integrated unity can be brought to his years of theological study ¹⁵².
- k. In moral theology, the core must include fundamental moral theology, medical ethics, bioethics, sexual morality, and Catholic social teaching.
- l. In Canon Law, the core should include a general introduction to Canon Law and the canon law of individual sacraments, including the sacrament of matrimony.
- m. Studies in spirituality and spiritual direction are to be included.
- n. In liturgy, the core should include studies in the theological, historical, spiritual, pastoral, and juridical aspects of liturgy¹⁵³.
- o. Homiletics should occupy a significant place in the core curriculum and be integrated into the entire study of theology.
- p. The core should include an introductory course in ecumenism that treats the Catholic Church's commitment to the principles of ecumenism, the fundamental role of ecumenical dialogue, and current ecumenical issues.
- q. Issues concerning inter-religious dialogue should be studied. Particularly important is an awareness of the world religions and their relationship to Christianity. This is especially true of Judaism, Islam and certain Asian religions.
- r. Studies in pastoral theology are required and should include treatment of the principles and criteria for pastoral action and provide for theological reflection where seminarians are involved in pastoral placements¹⁵⁴.
- s. Although various theological schools exist within the Catholic tradition, Church teaching makes it clear that Saint Thomas Aquinas should be recognised as the model and guide for study and research in theology¹⁵⁵.
- t. The normative function of the Magisterium must be presented as Christ's gift to his Church: the vital, integral and authoritative voice in the theological enterprise.
- u. Theological formation in seminaries must clearly respect traditional doctrinal formulations of the faith while recognising contemporary modes of theological expression and explanation.

¹⁵² OT 19

¹⁵³ Congregation for Catholic Education, *Instruction on Liturgical Formation in Seminaries*, 3rd June 1979

¹⁵⁴ PDV 57; TTFP 102-106

¹⁵⁵ OT 16

- v. Studies should include an introduction to the principles, methods, and skills of catechesis and teaching. Pastoral placements may include opportunities for teaching.
- w. Seminaries ought to have degree programmes certified by appropriate accrediting institutions. Students should not be excused from pursuing such degrees except for serious reasons.
- x. A seminarian is normally expected to obtain a British university degree in theology and/or the Bachelor of Sacred Theology (STB) degree before ordination.
- y. Diocesan bishops and seminary staffs should do their best to identify those seminarians who could be sent for further study after sufficient pastoral experience.

7. Pastoral Formation

Principles

145. Human, spiritual and intellectual formation flow into and are completed by pastoral formation. “The entire training of the students should be oriented to the formation of true shepherds of souls after the model of our Lord Jesus Christ, teacher, priest and shepherd”¹⁵⁶.

146. The priest’s pastoral ministry is founded on the mystery of Jesus’ death and resurrection; it takes its character from the action of the Good Shepherd, who lays down his life for his sheep and who comes so that they may have life in abundance¹⁵⁷. This act of personal self-giving is expressed fully in the Eucharist, where the priest stands in the midst of the community to offer the unique sacrifice of Christ and re-affirm the pattern of his own ministry of serving rather than being served.

147. A priority in pastoral formation is to establish and deepen the understanding of this intimate link between the celebration of the Eucharist and the daily ministry of the priest.

148. This priestly ministry takes its practical form from being united through Holy Orders with the bishop’s ministry of teaching, sanctifying and governing.

149. The aim of pastoral formation is, therefore, to train priests to carry out this threefold ministry effectively with a Eucharistic spirit of self-giving. This implies the development of specific, appropriate pastoral knowledge, qualities and skills in tune with the nature of his ministry and the needs of the faithful in the context of contemporary culture.

150. Human, spiritual and intellectual formation provide the basis. Pastoral formation should concentrate on the integration of these three elements in the candidate’s personality and in his pastoral experiences. Human development, appropriate spirituality and philosophical and theological knowledge will come together in the practice and development of pastoral qualities and skills.

151. The three areas of ministry (teaching, sanctifying and governing) flow into and complement one another.

¹⁵⁶ OT 4

¹⁵⁷ Cf. *John* 10, 10

The ministry of teaching

152. Pastoral formation should ensure that seminarians become dedicated and effective proclaimers of the Word of God to a whole range of people of differing ages and backgrounds and in a variety of circumstances. A priest should be trained to draw inspiration from his own knowledge and love of God's Word and, being aware of and sensitive to his hearers' experiences of life, be able to link faith and life.

153. He should also be aware of the need to build and support a network of proclamation through trained teachers and catechists and how best to support them in the fields of general catechesis, preparation for sacraments and subsequent support, and adult education in faith.

154. One who is to be ordained to this ministry of teaching needs to develop the following qualities or attitudes: attentiveness and appreciation as a listener to the word; humility in all things; awareness of and sensitivity to other people's experiences; conviction about the gift of God's Word. Certain key skills are essential for an effective teacher of the Word, namely: communicating in different circumstances and using various media; the ability to interpret experience; the ability to support and facilitate others in their role as teachers.

The ministry of sanctifying

155. Pastoral formation should enable future priests to make available and attractive the ways to holiness and the spiritual riches offered by the Catholic Church to all the baptised and to all who seek to come closer to God. This will require seminarians to recognise and appreciate good practice in the way the sacraments are celebrated, to be aware of the nourishment and graces the sacraments provide for God's people and to know how to respond to the pastoral opportunities surrounding each celebration.

156. Priests also need training in the individual guidance of people seeking spiritual or material help; the aim is not for them to become professional counsellors, but to help them acquire and use practical wisdom and due prudence in meeting individuals.

157. One who is to be ordained to this ministry of sanctification needs to develop the following qualities: prayerfulness; Christ-like witness; a forgiving and compassionate nature. Certain key skills are essential for an effective minister of holiness: engaging individuals; sensitivity to ritual; leading others in prayer.

The ministry of governing

158. Pastoral formation should enable seminarians to develop the qualities and skills they need to be the best possible shepherds of God's people. As they look forward to responsibility for a parish community, they should aim to be balanced and transformational spiritual leaders who govern wisely, enabling lay ministries to develop in the community and supporting a Christian apostolate in society.

159. One who is to be ordained to this ministry of leadership needs to develop the following qualities or attitudes: pastoral charity; generosity of spirit; fairness; consistency; honesty; openness; decisiveness. Certain key skills are essential for an effective spiritual leader of God's people: decision-making; collaboration with others; management of conflict and change; setting priorities; time management; awareness of financial and legal obligations in parish administration; delegation.

Characteristics required

160. The pastoral formation of priests should focus attention on certain characteristics which underlie the ministries of teaching, sanctifying and governing:

- a. Mission. All priests should have the heart of a missionary¹⁵⁸. The Church is truest to her identity when she is a missionary Church, because the very nature of the Church is missionary¹⁵⁹. Seminarians should be given an opportunity to become acquainted with the work of the Pontifical Mission Societies, religious missionary congregations, the home missions and the missionary tradition in the Church's history. Exposure to the Church's missionary work during his years of formation can be beneficial to a seminarian in discerning his vocation and in his future ministry.
- b. Community. Pastoral formation must initiate seminarians in offering a community care, guidance and leadership. The pastor is to be a man of communion and shepherd of a flock. Where the exaggerated individualism of contemporary western culture stresses one-to-one contact, future priests must recognise that pastoral ministry is directed primarily to a community and then to individuals within that community.
- c. Work with children. Students preparing for priesthood must receive thorough training in building and maintaining wholesome and appropriate relationships with children and vulnerable adults, based on care and respect for their God-given dignity. There should be an awareness of the responsibilities involved in school governance.

¹⁵⁸ RM 67

¹⁵⁹ Second Vatican Council, Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity *Ad gentes* 2

- d. The local presbyterate. Pastoral formation has to be profoundly ecclesial. One of its main aims is to help seminarians become familiar with the local Church they will serve, especially the priests with whom they will serve as co-workers of their bishop. They need to absorb information about the local Church and presbyterate but, what is more important, to get to know some of their future colleagues, to be more 'at home' with them and the place where they will serve. Seminarians need to see that their future assignments are not determined by their preferences and choices, but are part of a wider context, the needs of the local Church.
- e. A preferential option for the poor. If they are to minister *in persona Christi*, seminarians must model themselves on Jesus, the Good Shepherd, which means they must spend time with those who are privileged in God's eyes: the poor, those on the margins of society, the sick and the suffering. Meeting them and getting to know them will help seminarians to develop a preferential option for the poor. It is good for them to be aware of circumstances and structures in our society that can breed injustice, as well as ways of promoting more just contexts and structures.
- f. Cultural diversity. Pastoral formation should help students to welcome and appreciate the cultural diversity within the Church, not only in the universal Church but also at home¹⁶⁰. England and Wales are home to people from all cultures, many of which are also represented in the Catholic community. Seminarians need exposure to the many cultures and nationalities that belong to the Catholic Church here. Some national groups are well-established, but future priests need to be aware of how they can offer a sensitive welcome to those who have arrived more recently, particularly migrants and refugees, and help them to adapt to their new surroundings without losing their identity¹⁶¹.

161. The pastoral formation programme must give attention to the fact that seminarians need to ground a life of service in personal prayer. They need supervision in developing the habit of prayer in the context of pastoral activity and in learning to establish a rhythm of life that includes an appropriate balance between prayer, service, study, exercise and leisure.

162. A seminary cannot prepare candidates for every kind of specialised ministry exercised by priests. When priests are assigned to specific ministries, they should be offered appropriate training. At the same time, there is much for all priests to learn about pastoral ministry even after ordination, which means that the work of

¹⁶⁰ See PDV 59

¹⁶¹ See Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, Instruction on the Love of Christ towards Migrants *Erga migrantes*, 3rd May 2004, 81

pastoral formation needs to be part of programmes regularly offered to all priests.

Norms

163. “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. Hence, their formation in its different aspects must have a fundamentally pastoral character”¹⁶².

The pastoral programme

164. Each seminary is expected to offer a systematic programme of pastoral formation in line with the principles outlined above.

- a. The pastoral formation programme should be an integral part of the seminary curriculum and be accredited as such with a secure status on the timetable.
- b. The objectives of the pastoral programme should be clearly specified in each seminary and the evaluation of seminarians should conform closely to it. The programme should include a description of professional ethics for pastoral ministry and a thorough grounding in the current norms of the Bishops’ Conference for safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.
- c. Pastoral formation should be an element of all propaedeutic programmes. This will be the first time some seminarians have been involved in pastoral activity. They need to be directed by qualified supervisors who help them to grasp the value and nature of pastoral activity, to develop basic skills and to reflect theologically.

Pastoral staff

165. In respect of those who work in the area of pastoral formation the following needs to be taken into account.

- a. The director of pastoral formation should be a priest with sufficient parish experience and qualified in theology. He should have a love for priestly ministry in the Church.
- b. The director of pastoral formation should be sensitive to what the students need in terms of pastoral formation and be able to co-ordinate the professional expertise that will respond to these needs.
- c. It is important that religious and lay men and women be involved in the pastoral formation programme, according to their specific expertise, to help the seminarians to see the value of the fruitful collaboration of all the

¹⁶² PDV 57

baptised.

- d. The pastoral director (and his staff) should be involved in professional organisations linked to the area of pastoral formation in seminaries.

Pastoral placements

166. Seminarians should be offered the possibility of experiencing a variety of pastoral tasks and assignments, bearing in mind:

- a. The main emphasis should be on parish ministry, which will allow them to put into practice and develop the qualities and skills outlined above. This normally means a weekly local pastoral placement during term time and a month-long placement. A long placement in a parish should be an integral part of a seminarian's formation. The seminary organises this in co-operation with the dioceses or religious congregations it serves.
- b. The pastoral formation programme should provide seminarians with experience of poor or less privileged areas or situations. It is also valuable for them to take part in ecumenical and inter-religious activities and events.
- c. The pastoral formation programme should also include placements where students will experience the rich cultural, racial and ethnic diversity within the Catholic Church in England and Wales.
- d. The programme should provide opportunities to engage in those activities which promote the new evangelisation.

Pastoral supervision

167. The programme of pastoral placements should be supervised in general by the seminary pastoral director, while specific placements are under the supervision of those he judges to be competent.

- a. Supervisors of pastoral placements should be selected for their dedication to the Church and their respect for the priesthood. They should have, or be taught, the skills of pastoral supervision and evaluation.
- b. The process of choosing pastoral placements, and the assignment of supervisors, should involve the diocesan vocations personnel and the seminary pastoral director. They should work together to choose an appropriate placement and to consider carefully the needs of individual seminarians and the supervisory skills of the supervisors, as well as the time supervisors have at their disposal.
- c. Supervision, evaluation and theological reflection are essential elements of an effective pastoral programme. Seminarians need to learn to interpret their

pastoral experience in the light of Scripture, Church teaching, personal faith and good pastoral practice. This is an important foundation for such reflection in their future ministerial life.

- d. If those chosen as supervisors of parish placements are priests, they should be good models of this balance in their life and ministry.

Evaluation

168. Evaluation of pastoral work is an important aspect of the discernment of each seminarian's vocation:

- a. A proper evaluation of how seminarians have fared in their pastoral placements will involve not only placement supervisors, but also people involved in other ways in the pastoral situation, including some of the people to whom the seminarians have ministered.
- b. The way seminarians are evaluated regarding pastoral placements should help them grow in their understanding of their own accountability in such things.
- c. The evaluation of seminarians should reflect how they have performed in pastoral formation programmes. They are to be encouraged to understand how their apostolic activity relates to their personal, spiritual and intellectual formation and their gradual discernment of a priestly vocation.

8. Living in Community

Principles

169. *Pastores dabo vobis* illustrates how priestly formation finds its beginnings in the formation given to the disciples by the Lord himself. “In fact, the Gospels present a prolonged and intimate sharing of life with Jesus as a necessary premise for the apostolic ministry”. Seminary formation, therefore, must be a way of “re-living the experience of formation which our Lord provided for the Twelve”. Community life in a seminary is not a convenience or an optional extra, but is at the heart of the seminary’s identity. “In its deepest identity the seminary is called to be, in its own way, a continuation in the Church of the apostolic community gathered about Jesus”. This identity “constitutes the normative ideal which stimulates the seminary in the many diverse forms and varied aspects which it assumes historically”¹⁶³.

170. Entering such a community of formation necessarily involves a separation from one’s previous life, including home, responsibilities, personal status and familiar emotional support. This detachment allows candidates to be free to participate fully in the life of the formation community. That was what the Lord required when He called his disciples. “Such an experience demands of the Twelve the practice of detachment in a particularly clear and specific fashion, a detachment that in some way is demanded of all the disciples, a detachment from their roots, from their usual work, from their nearest and dearest (cf. *Mk* 1:16-20; 10:28; *Lk* 9:23, 57-62; 14:25-27)”. The Gospel of Mark stresses the “deep link that unites the apostles to Christ and to one another. Before being sent out to preach and to heal, they are called ‘to be with him’ (*Mk* 3:14)”¹⁶⁴. There is a real sense in which a candidate needs to leave all behind, to experience “a prolonged and intimate sharing of life with Jesus”¹⁶⁵.

171. The community life of a seminary is not an end in itself. “The seminary is a community journeying towards priestly ministry”. It is important to recognise that “one does not become a priest on one’s own. The community of disciples is essential, the fellowship of those who desire to serve the greater Church”¹⁶⁶. The aim of the seminary formation community is to enable each future priest to be a “man of communion” wherever he is called to serve. “Precisely because within the Church’s life the priest is a man of communion, in his relations with all people he

¹⁶³ *PDV* 60

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, *loc. cit.*

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, *loc. cit.*

¹⁶⁶ Pope Benedict XVI, *Letter to Seminarists*, 18th October 2010, 1

must be a man of mission and dialogue”¹⁶⁷. Indeed, “the nature and mission of the 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, as a sign and instrument of Christ, of communion with God and of the unity of all humanity”¹⁶⁸.

172. Community life in seminary formation, therefore, enables the process of maturing men of communion because it necessarily requires the co-operation of each individual. Community life is not easy; it requires a great deal of selflessness and self-awareness, looking towards others rather than towards self-comfort and convenience. Seminary community requires from each individual much more than mutual tolerance; it demands openness to the difference of others, willingness among students to learn from each other and to enrich each other, “so that each of you will be able to contribute his own gifts to the whole, even as all serve the same Church, the same Lord. This school of tolerance, indeed, of mutual acceptance and mutual understanding in the unity of Christ’s Body, is an important part of your years in the seminary”¹⁶⁹. Such a community calls forth from each individual the practice of the virtues: prudence, justice, fortitude, temperance, faith, hope and charity.

173. The seminary community is moulded by daily celebration of the Eucharist and the Liturgy of the Hours, communal meals, lectures and private study, pastoral ministry and recreational activities. The aim of such activities in the seminary is that, “as its life and the life of each of its members progresses, there shine forth the Spirit of Christ and love for the Church... As an ecclesial community, be it diocesan or inter-diocesan, or even religious, the seminary should nourish the meaning of communion between the candidates and their bishop and presbyterate, in such a way that they share in their hopes and anxieties and learn to extend this openness to the needs of the universal Church”¹⁷⁰. When a seminarian chooses to love the seminary community in which he lives, this builds up within him the virtue of charity. This is essential in order for him, in the future, to be able to love the particular reality of the church in which he is placed, whether it be in a parish, institution or other pastoral setting.

174. The following excerpts from the letters of Saint John of Avila reveal the radical call to charity that seminary life inevitably demands: [*Letter 2*] “Your principal care should be to live in charity with your brethren. Bear patiently with their faults. Let

¹⁶⁷ PDV 18

¹⁶⁸ PDV 12

¹⁶⁹ Pope Benedict XVI, *Letter to Seminarians*, 18th October 2010, 7

¹⁷⁰ PDV 60

not differences of character in the various members of the community disturb your mind, for until you have well stood the test of living in the company of your brethren you must not consider that you have made much spiritual progress. Let your watchword be 'I am come not to judge but to be judged.'" [Letter 19] "He will be long-suffering with you in return for a little patience shown towards others. It is in that act of the will that charity consists".[Letter 20] "... so fraternal charity is an act of the will by which we wish well to others, rejoice in their true good and feel sorry for their faults. This is a great grace our Lord bestows upon those he chooses"¹⁷¹.

175. So the community life of the seminary, in its particular situation, with its traditions and rules, is the sacred way for each member of the community to draw closer to Christ. This is the case not only for the seminarians, but also for the rector, for the formation staff and indeed any other staff members involved. Community life can be lived only in and through Christ. "No Christian community is more or less than this. Whether it be a brief, single encounter or the daily fellowship of years, Christian community is only this. We belong to one another only through and in Jesus Christ"¹⁷². In the history of the Church there are many long-established rules of life to help each individual to draw closer to Christ. Those of Saint Augustine, Saint Gregory and Saint Benedict are examples among many which may provide inspiration in drawing up a rule of life for a seminary.

¹⁷¹ *Finding Confidence in Times of Trial: The Letters of Saint John of Avila*, translated and selected by Benedictines of Stanbrook Abbey, Burns & Oates (London) 1904.

¹⁷² Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, London (SCM Press) 1954, p. 10

Norms

176. Seminarians are to live full-time in the seminary¹⁷³ and are expected to participate fully in the seminary programme and to contribute generously in all aspects of life. It is important that they relinquish or entrust to others any responsibilities they had before entering seminary, so that nothing inhibits their full participation in the life of the seminary.

177. A formation community needs an agreed way of life to which all are called to adhere. Although it is far from being the main purpose of seminary life, such a requirement provides the minimum basis on which all can grow and mature in their vocation. With a secure community foundation each seminarian can grow humanly, spiritually and intellectually and can develop his pastoral skills. Life after seminary may well not be lived in community, but the experience, self-knowledge and skills that will be learnt in their time in seminary will form them in the virtues that are essential for future ministry. Within this context, time spent away from the seminary community, during holidays, is just as important as time spent in seminary, both for discernment of vocation and in preparation for priesthood. The style of life a student adopts when away from the seminary should be congruent with the rule of life considered appropriate whilst within it, and forms a significant part of the formation process.

178. Each seminary should have a Rule of Life based on this Charter, in which the expectations of the formation programme in the seminary are clearly stated¹⁷⁴. The Rule of Life provides the basis for a common way of life¹⁷⁵. Students must commit themselves to expectations stemming from shared values and to regular activities in which all are expected to take part. Failure to do so would result in a breakdown of goodwill and mutual trust and damage morale. The Rule of Life needs to be clear about such expectations whilst avoiding excessive detail that would stifle individual initiative and talent. It should include:

- a. explicit guidelines which encourage a right balance of freedom and responsibility with accountability, and a balance between activity and solitude;
- b. clear guidance on how to foster a chaste celibate life and the asceticism demanded by a Christian life and priestly state, encouraging fasting, almsgiving and simplicity of life;

¹⁷³ Apart, that is, from religious students and married former Anglican clergy undertaking part-time courses.

¹⁷⁴ *CIC*, c.260

¹⁷⁵ *CIC*, c.243

- c. explicit norms regarding the use of internet and other forms of electronic communication;
- d. encouragement of a sense of accountability for the stewardship of material goods and personal health;
- e. guidance for a healthy understanding of a mature sense of obedience and appropriate respect for those in authority;
- f. clear and detailed expectations and procedures involved in the evaluation of students. This needs to be backed up annually with explanations given to the seminary community in conferences by the rector or one of the formation staff

179. To help seminarians to keep their focus on the right interpretation of their life in common, to continue their discernment of vocation and engage in the formation process, it is useful for the rector to address the seminary community on a regular basis.

180. Seminarians need to be “concerned about the keeping of external silence, without which there is no interior silence of soul and which is needed for thought and for the work and the repose alike of the whole community”¹⁷⁶. In our present culture it is necessary to give explicit directions on how times of silence are to be observed. This includes refraining from using any forms of electronic communication which disrupt silence as much as any physical noise.

181. The seminary needs to foster an atmosphere where seminarians, rector and formation staff, teaching staff and domestic staff are all aware of their respective roles and their contribution to the life of the community. Such clarity will enable mutual trust and respect. Seminarians are to be encouraged to develop mature and collaborative relationships with all with whom they interact in their time of formation. This includes priests and lay men and women who may be in authority over them and those who may be providing services for them. It also includes visitors and guests, members of families and friends, as well as people they meet on pastoral placements and during their holidays.

182. The seminary should foster simplicity of life and a spirit of detachment where each member of the community looks for ways to be of service to others. In holiday periods, as well as taking holidays, seminarians are to be encouraged to take part in parish activities and voluntary work over and above assigned pastoral placements.

¹⁷⁶ Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, *Basic Norms for Priestly Formation*, 19th March 1985, 57

183. Seminarians should be encouraged to celebrate the different ethnic and cultural backgrounds present within the community. The mutual enrichment this provides will stimulate pastoral awareness of opportunities that lie before them in future ministry.

9. Evaluation during Formation

184. What has been said so far concerns the human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral maturity of men who have offered to serve as priests in the Catholic Church. The programme of formation in a seminary is designed to build upon a candidate's earlier life and help him plumb the depths of his own spirit, while growing closer to God and developing a clearer picture of what God may one day ask of him as a priest. The ecclesial context of seminary formation is that it is to assess a seminarian's capacity to be a man of communion and a servant of God's people, so the rector and his staff are acutely aware of their duty to each seminarian's bishop¹⁷⁷, with the faithful of his diocese and the Church as a whole. The rector must keep the bishop and vocations director up to date on the progress a candidate is making. Equally, the seminarians themselves need clear indicators of how they are progressing. To do justice to the requirements of the Church and the seminarians, there needs to be a clear process of evaluation by which the Church, through the seminary, scrutinises and assesses a candidate's suitability and readiness to take on the responsibilities of ordained ministry. This is an essential tool in the process of discernment and an invaluable aid to growth in formation.

Norms for the Evaluation of Seminarians

185. It is essential for seminarians to be informed at set intervals about their progress, particularly if there are any concerns; whoever is assigned as tutor or adviser should communicate with students at regular intervals and seminarians should have an established way of responding. Confidentiality must be respected, and it should also be clear that doubts will be resolved in favour of the Church. The process should promote the continued growth of each seminarian in the four main areas of formation. It will succeed only if there is an atmosphere of mutual trust and confidence in the seminary community.

186. All aspects of priestly formation within the external forum are subject to assessment; this includes participation in the seminary's spiritual and liturgical programme, community life and the academic and pastoral dimensions of priestly formation. It can also be helpful if seminarians are asked to assess their own strengths and weaknesses; this is best done with guidance, so that seminarians are helped to develop a balanced approach. If it seems appropriate, seminarians can be

¹⁷⁷ There is a duty, too, to keep religious superiors informed of the progress of those religious students who maybe studying in the seminary, especially when these men are living in the seminary for any period. This does not detract from the competent authority and responsibility of religious superiors in the discernment of their students' vocation and in making decisions about ministries and Holy Orders for their students.

asked to evaluate their peers; again, guidance in doing this with honesty and charity can make it a worthwhile exercise. Supervisors of pastoral placements can contribute valuable insights, especially when they are able to comment on human, spiritual and intellectual as well as pastoral elements of formation.

187. The rector of the seminary sends a yearly report to each seminarian's bishop or, where appropriate, to the religious ordinary, providing a clear judgment of the seminarian's progress in the areas of human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral formation. It should include the result of any staff vote and an explanation, where appropriate, of positive and negative voices. It should be a detailed report, and give a definite indication of a seminarian's suitability to proceed to the next year of formation.

188. The qualities required in canon law for promotion to Holy Orders should be considered in the report: integral faith, right intention, requisite knowledge, good reputation, integral morals, proven virtues and the requisite physical and psychological health. It should provide an assessment of the seminarian's suitability for priestly life and a judgment about his capacity to lead a chaste, celibate life.

189. The annual report will often coincide with the scrutiny required for the conferral of ministries; this will give a good indication of a seminarian's progress towards and suitability for ordination¹⁷⁸.

190. The final judgment about a seminarian's admission to candidacy, institution into the ministries of lector and acolyte and ordination to the diaconate and priesthood is for the bishop or religious ordinary, who needs positive evidence of a candidate's suitability for Holy Orders¹⁷⁹. If such evidence is lacking, the seminary must not recommend a student for advancement, and he is to leave the seminary. It is important for the seminary to inform him promptly and in a constructive way. He should be allowed to present his own assessment of his situation and others may speak for him. If there is doubt about a seminarian's suitability, he can be given the opportunity to spend a specified time away from the seminary. He should be given specific goals and there should be arrangements for supervision, to allow all involved with his formation to know if he has grown enough to be asked to return to the seminary. If doubts remain at the end of this time, the student should not continue in formation.

¹⁷⁸ See Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, Circular Letter on *Scrutinies Regarding the Suitability of Candidates for Orders*, 10th November 1997

¹⁷⁹ *CIC*, c.1052.1

191. The procedures and documentation required for receiving ministries and before ordination to diaconate and priesthood are to be completed. Seminarians should have exercised the ministries of lector and acolyte for a suitable period before ordination to the diaconate, with at least six months between the conferral of the ministry of acolyte and ordination to the diaconate¹⁸⁰. Before ordination to the diaconate, the candidate must make a canonical retreat¹⁸¹, take the oath of fidelity¹⁸² and make the profession of faith¹⁸³. He must be at least 23 years old¹⁸⁴, have completed at least five years of philosophical and theological studies¹⁸⁵ and have received candidacy¹⁸⁶. He must be able to explain the theology and expectations of the diaconate¹⁸⁷ and petition his ordinary for ordination, declaring his free intention and permanent commitment¹⁸⁸. The rector must inform the ordinary that the candidate has met all these requirements¹⁸⁹, and verify that he accepts the teachings of the Church, prays the complete Liturgy of the Hours, attends Mass daily, receives the Sacrament of Penance regularly and is committed to a life of celibacy.

192. Judging a candidate for the priesthood to be suitable for ordination to the diaconate implies a positive judgment about his suitability for priestly ministry. If there are doubts about his suitability for the priesthood, he must not be ordained a deacon. This makes the judgment about readiness for ordination to the diaconate decisive. A change of judgment in the next scrutiny can come about “only in the light of new and grave precedents”¹⁹⁰.

193. There is to be an interval of at least six months between ordination to the diaconate and ordination to the priesthood, and a man is to be at least 25 years old¹⁹¹, have completed six years of philosophical and theological studies¹⁹², be able to explain the theology and expectations of the priesthood¹⁹³, and petition his

¹⁸⁰ *CIC*, c.1035.1 and 2

¹⁸¹ *CIC*, c.1039

¹⁸² See *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 81 (1989), 104-106

¹⁸³ *CIC*, c.833.6

¹⁸⁴ *CIC*, c.1031.1

¹⁸⁵ *CIC*, c.1032.1

¹⁸⁶ *CIC*, c.1034.1 (This does not apply to vowed members of clerical institutes).

¹⁸⁷ *CIC*, c.1028

¹⁸⁸ *CIC*, cc.1034.1 and c.1036. It is appropriate that the Oath of Freedom is made publicly in a liturgical setting – see Circular Letter on *Scrutinies...*, Enclosure IV,I.c. (See note 176)

¹⁸⁹ *CIC*, c.1051.1

¹⁹⁰ See *CIC*, c.1030 and Circular Letter on *Scrutinies...*, 11 (See note 176)

¹⁹¹ *CIC*, c.1031.1

¹⁹² *CIC*, c.250

¹⁹³ *CIC*, c.1028

ordinary for ordination, declaring his free intention and permanent commitment¹⁹⁴. It is recommended that the candidate make the oath of fidelity¹⁹⁵ again before ordination to the priesthood and he must make a canonical retreat¹⁹⁶. The rector must verify that the candidate is ready to assume Christ's triple mission of teaching, sanctifying and governing.

¹⁹⁴ *CIC*, c.1036 As at diaconate the Oath of Freedom can be made publicly in a liturgical setting (See note 186)

¹⁹⁵ Circular Letter on *Scrutinies...*, Enclosure IV (See note 176)

¹⁹⁶ *CIC*, c.1039

10. Formation after Ordination to the Priesthood

194. Like other sacraments, ordination requires post-sacramental catechesis or *mystagogia*, and this entails a commitment to ongoing formation in the priest's life. To accept the need for the ongoing formation of priests is to recognise that the call to priesthood comes from God not once, but repeatedly, in the life of a priest. "The fact is that God continues to call and send forth, revealing his saving plan in the historical development of the priest's life and the life of the Church and society. It is in this perspective that the meaning of ongoing formation emerges. Permanent formation is necessary in order to discern and follow this constant call or will of God"¹⁹⁷. Ongoing formation is not simply about programmes offered or the acquisition of information about sectors of priestly and pastoral life, but also about continuing to grow and mature emotionally, spiritually and intellectually, and taking care of one's physical health. "The process and the journey of the ongoing formation of priests is both necessary and lifelong. Its purpose is not only the spiritual growth of the priest himself but also the continued effectiveness of his ministry"¹⁹⁸.

195. The broad cultural context of priestly life in England and Wales underlines the need for priests to be helped and to help themselves to stay fresh and healthy: physically, mentally and spiritually in order to commit themselves generously to the work of the New Evangelisation. Differing experiences of priesthood stress the need for ongoing formation in ways that will help priests to continue to be effective heralds of the Gospel and leaders of Catholic communities. Whatever is offered in a diocese or by a religious congregation needs to take account of the different situations and requirements of different priests, and particular attention should be given to priests at key stages in their ministry: the first years after ordination; new appointments; becoming a parish priest; priests in middle age; priests as they become old; priests in retirement; priests who are sick. It is also important to offer specific formation to priests asked to exercise specialised ministries: chaplaincy to schools, universities, hospitals, prisons, military personnel and so on. It is essential for priests to have opportunities to become acquainted with contemporary moral issues - especially in the field of bioethics - and ecumenical and inter-religious questions. It will be appropriate for priests to have courses on Scripture and theology, as well as practical sessions on preaching, celebrating liturgy, sacramental catechesis and management and interpersonal skills.

196. Many dioceses have varied programmes for priests, as well as days of recollection, annual retreats, conferences, support groups and opportunities to

¹⁹⁷ PDV 70

¹⁹⁸ PPF 368

meet socially, all of which contribute to their human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral development. In some cases there is an established pattern of sabbatical periods and programmes of spiritual renewal. These initiatives contribute to and enhance the experience of being part of a presbyterate, united around its bishop. The existence of a planned pattern of ongoing formation “can do much to foster expectations in the local Church for its priests, to affirm priests themselves and assure them of the valued place they have in the diocese, and to foster a sense of mutual sharing in the life of the Church”¹⁹⁹.

197. While a bishop is expected to ensure the priests of his diocese have opportunities for formation throughout their lives, priests are responsible for their own ongoing formation. Taking responsibility for this is one of the ways in which a priest responds to the call at his ordination to be a conscientious fellow worker with his bishop in caring for the Lord’s flock. For the whole project of ongoing formation to work effectively, the seeds must be sown in the seminary, well before ordination: “encouragement needs to be given to future priests to look forward to it, seeing its necessity, its advantages and the spirit in which it should be undertaken”²⁰⁰. The man who sees that he has a lifelong need to be formed is clearly allowing God to answer the bishop’s prayer by being open to God’s grace at work in him. At every ordination, the bishop underlines this by concluding his questioning of the ordinand with a prayer: “May God, who has begun the good work in you, bring it to fulfilment”²⁰¹.

¹⁹⁹ The Bishops’ Conference of Scotland, *Norms for Priestly Formation*, June 2005, p. 76

²⁰⁰ PDV 71

²⁰¹ *Roman Pontifical*, Ordination of a Priest

11. Conclusion

We are very aware that times and seasons change. However, Saint Teresa of Avila reminds us in her Bookmark-Prayer that it is only God who does not change and, indeed, it is he alone who can totally fulfil us (*Dios no se muda; solo Dios basta*). Many are concerned about the number of candidates coming forward to offer themselves for the priesthood and the needs of our Church. It is important to hold on to the Lord's promise that he will be with us until the end of the age (Matthew 28.20). We are still held close to the Lord, held in his providential hands. And so, although we may be concerned we will never lose hope nor trust in his loving care for us and his Church.

We commend the work of priestly formation to the Lord asking his abundant blessings on all who are involved in this great task and may we make our own the reflection of Blessed John Henry Newman.

Such are your Ministers, your Preachers, your Priests, O my brethren; not Angels, not Saints, not sinless, but those who would have lived and died in sin except for God's grace, and who, though through God's mercy they be in training for the fellowship of Saints hereafter, yet at present are in the midst of infirmity and temptation, and have no hope, except from the unmerited grace of God, of persevering unto the end.

Blessed John Henry Newman,
Discourses to Mixed Congregations, Discourse 3, page 46



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