

A Guide to Growth and Assessment in Formation

Introduction

This guide is intended to acquaint a seminarian with the stages of the formation process, the resources available to him to assist him in his growth, and the annual evaluation process which assesses him. (cf. PPF 70-71)

A Guide to Growth

Expectations at Different Stages of Formation

The formation of priests means following a singular 'journey of discipleship', which begins at Baptism, is perfected through the other sacraments of Christian Initiation, comes to be appreciated as the center of one's life at the beginning of Seminary formation, and continues through the whole of life.... Formation – both initial and ongoing – must be seen through a unifying lens, which takes account of the four dimensions of formation proposed by Pastores Dabo Vobis. Together, these dimensions give shape and structure to the identity of the seminarian and the priest, and make him capable of that 'gift of self to the Church', which is the essence of pastoral charity. The entire journey of formation must never be reduced to a single aspect to the detriment of others, but it must always be an integrated journey of the disciple called to priesthood. (Ratio Fundamentalis, 3)

Formation for priestly life and ministry occurs in stages. Every stage, College and Pre-Theology, First and Second Theology, and Third and Fourth Theology, has its own goals that every seminarian is expected to achieve. The achievement of goals at every stage forms the basis of progress and growth in the next stage.

STAGE ONE: College and Pre-Theology (this section is awaiting further elaboration c/o Luis)

By the end of College or Pre-Theology, Assumption expects each seminarian:

Human and Social Maturity

- 1) To have successfully integrated himself into the seminary community,
 - a. Being able to adjust to a new situation;
 - b. Being able to interact and relate to others comfortably, avoiding isolation.
 - c. Being able to communicate effectively;
 - d. Being able to establish friendships.

- 2) To have establish an honest, docile, and trusting relationship with the formators and especially his formation adviser,
 - a. Being able to disclose appropriately pertinent information about family background, significant life experience, relational history, academic performance, and work accomplishments.
 - b. Being able to self-report concerning possible infractions of the Rule of Life.

- 3) To have demonstrated an appropriate capacity for introspection and self-assessment,
 - a. Demonstrating growth in self-knowledge and personal integration
 - b. Identifying with his adviser needed virtue and skill development.
 - c. Identifying past hurts and traumas and being able to move towards healing;
 - d. Exhibiting the capacity to accept and incorporate criticism.

- 4) To have practiced the human and moral virtues, particularly the virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude, temperance, respect for every person, truthfulness to his word, compassion, and charity.
 - a. Being attentive to finding out the truth before making a judgment;
 - b. Contributing to the good of individuals and the community;
 - c. Accomplishing tasks and duties with perseverance and diligence.
 - d. Being able to maintain healthy boundaries with others in conversation or in expressing affection;
 - e. Avoiding jealousy, suspicion, and passive aggression;
 - f. Guarding one's speech so as to avoid spreading misinformation and ruining the reputation of others by calumny and detraction.

- 5) To have demonstrated the necessary openness, flexibility, and adaptability to undergo priestly formation,
 - a. Being able to set goals and working toward them;
 - b. Being able to make use of the different resources for formation;
 - c. Taking responsibility for his own formation.

Spiritual Life

- 1) To have prepared the strong foundation upon which to build a personal prayer life and spirituality
 - a. Studying the history, types and classics of Christian spirituality;
 - b. Practicing different forms and methods of prayer, especially prayerful meditation on the Scriptures (lectio divina);
 - c. Giving evidence of basic habits of personal prayer and piety.
- 2) To have established an open, honest, and trusting relationship with his Spiritual Director;
 - a. Being able to acknowledge the need for conversion;
 - b. Being able to confide and discuss personal history, relationships, prayer experience and other significant topics;
 - c. Being able to receive and adhere spiritual counsel.
- 3) To have discerned signs of faith in his personal life history and present experience;
 - a. Being able to give evidence of a capacity for personal reflection and vocational discernment;
 - b. Being able to see signs that indicate a priestly vocation or another mission in the church.
- 4) To have appropriated the practice of common celebrations of the Liturgy of the Hours and the private celebration of Night Prayer on a regular basis.

Academic Development

- 1) To have developed the habits of the life of the intellect,
 - a. Possessing intellectual curiosity and interest in learning;
 - b. Having the tools to critically evaluate sources;
 - c. Articulating his ideas in a logical and cohesive manner;
 - d. Able to engage in discussions in a calm and rational manner.

- 2) To have demonstrated sufficient preparation for theological studies,
 - a. Having a working foundational knowledge of philosophy and the humanities;
 - b. Possessing sufficient understanding of Catholic doctrine, devotions and culture;
- 3) To have acquired, developed, and/or remediated the reading, study, writing and information technology skills appropriate for graduate studies;
- 4) To have completed successfully the academic pre-requisites for theological studies,

Priestly Identity and Pastoral Ministry

- 1) To have lived a chaste celibate lifestyle;
 - a. Building a network of support inside and outside the seminary;
 - b. Acknowledging his need for intimacy and friendship;
 - c. Coming to terms with himself as a sexual being.
- 2) To have discerned the evidence of the faith-motivation behind the decision to come to the seminary and persevere in seminary formation;
 - a. Developing a ministerial spirit by showing concern for the integral well-being of individuals and the community;
 - b. Developing greater empathy and compassion by showing care and concern for others.
 - c. Developing social awareness by working with the poor, alienated and disadvantaged.
- 3) To have volunteered service and leadership in the seminary community, thereby practicing pastoral generosity;
 - a. Showing personal initiative, responsibility, accountability, investment, and stewardship for the seminary community;
 - b. Fulfilling all expected work and community involvement, thereby demonstrating pastoral zeal;
- 4) To have demonstrated confidence and effectiveness in public settings,
 - a. Able to give oral presentations with clarity and cohesiveness;
 - b. Able to conduct himself with dignity and propriety.

STAGE TWO: First and Second Theology

By the end of Second Theology, Assumption Seminary expects each seminarian:

Human and Social Maturity (cf. Ratio, 93-100, PPF 280a)

- 1) To have demonstrated thorough understanding of the external forum,
 - a. Trusting the formation process and his formation adviser;
 - b. Meeting with his adviser regularly;
 - c. Being able to identify and articulate feelings and disclose self appropriately to his adviser.
 - d. Bringing topics, examples, and incidents to talk about in his advisement sessions;
 - e. Being open to compliments, suggestions, corrections, and guidance.
- 2) To have demonstrated a developed self-discipline,
 - a. Taking initiative for his own formation and committing himself to his goals.
 - b. Having a sense of responsibility to take seriously work, study, recreation, and social life;
 - c. Tempering the need for instant gratification and the need to possess material goods to impress or keep up with others.

- 3) To have demonstrated healthy living habits,
 - a. Taking care of his physical and mental health;
 - b. Eating properly, sleeping enough, exercising, and attending to his health needs;
 - c. Being able to manage addictive tendencies (drinking, smoking, drugs, pornography).
- 4) To have demonstrated a deeper personal growth and sufficient resolution of human and growth issues,
 - a. Having an accurate self-knowledge and capable of honest self-assessment;
 - b. Being able to recognize how others perceive him;
 - c. Having healthy self-acceptance, self-esteem, self-confidence, self-control and self-reliance;
 - d. Being able to cope with and coach himself through problems, challenges, difficulties and failures.
 - e. Resolving past hurts and traumas.
- 5) To have demonstrated the basic characteristics of adult psychosexual maturity,
 - a. Having faced honestly his sexual orientation and explored the ramifications of what it means to live as a sexual being,
 - i. Being free to talk about his sexuality with the appropriate audience;
 - ii. Possessing the skills to manage his sexual needs;
 - b. Developing and maintaining a supportive network of inclusive relationships;
 - c. Maintaining appropriate physical, verbal, and emotional boundaries in his personal and pastoral relationships.
 - d. Being able to make appropriate decisions and commitments involving personal relationships.
- 6) To have demonstrated understanding that the need to be loved is fulfilled by members of the community of faith reflecting the love and mercy of God.
 - a. Viewing the affective dimensions of life in this context;
 - b. Finding mutual support in healthy friendships and family relationships;
 - c. Having friendships of reciprocal support, encouragement and fraternal correction;
 - d. Committed to live as an active participant in a community grounded in prayer, worship, and service.
- 7) To have demonstrated being a self-initiating, responsible, and dependable member of the community,
 - a. Being adjusted in the community, engaging and cooperating in community life and service.
 - b. Understanding and making use of the proper channels for his voice to be heard;
 - c. Relating to the diverse membership of the community with sensitivity to multiculturalism;
 - d. Being aware of how his social manners, mindfulness, orderliness, cleanliness and personal hygiene affect others;
 - e. Being able to listen to diverse points of view without becoming argumentative;
 - f. Developing a sense of fraternity with his fellow seminarians as a way to prepare for clerical life.
- 8) To have demonstrated leadership in seminary life, activities, and projects,
 - a. Accomplishing assigned tasks properly and promptly;
 - b. Presenting himself for a position in the Student Government and its Committees;
 - c. Volunteering to help with community activities;
 - d. Being able to support and challenge others.

Progress in Spiritual Life (cf. Ratio101- 115, PPF 280b)

- 1) To have demonstrated a thorough understanding of the internal forum,
 - a. Trusting in his spiritual director and confessor;
 - b. Meeting with him regularly;
 - c. Engaging in personal reflection and vocational discernment;
 - d. Acknowledging moments of grace and sin, victories and struggles, darkness and light;
- 2) To have demonstrated a developed prayerful and reflective life,
 - a. Becoming aware of the action of God in his life, leading to self-awareness as a disciple;
 - b. Being able to act out of faith-motivations rather than external expectations or pressure;
 - c. Growing in the appreciation and practice of the Liturgy of the Hours, incorporating Lauds and Vespers in his personal schedule;
 - d. Integrating the fruits of retreats and recollections into his personal spiritual growth.
- 3) To have demonstrated a developed sense of encounter with God in the Scriptures, especially the Gospels, where Christ exemplifies God's ways in human form,
 - a. Devoting regular time for Scripture, particularly Gospel, reading;
 - b. Having a method of drawing meaning and inspiration from Scripture.
 - c. To demonstrate a developed sense of encounter with God in the Sacraments, especially the Eucharist;
 - d. Participating fully, actively, and consciously in liturgical celebrations;
 - e. Serving as lector or acolyte with preparation and reverence.
- 4) To have avoided a rigid dualism,
 - a. Appreciating that grace exists in and builds on nature;
 - b. Recognizing the presence and action of God in the world;
 - c. Recognizing the necessary process of growth in himself and others.

Theological Development (cf. Ratio 16-118, PPF 280c)

- 2) To have developed the habits of the life of the intellect,
 - a. Possessing intellectual curiosity;
 - b. Having the tools to critically evaluate sources;
 - c. Articulating his incipient theological understanding in a logical and cohesive manner.
 - d. Engaging in theological discussions outside of the classroom.
- 1) To have demonstrated the willingness to expand his theological thinking,
 - a. Aware that theological language is always tentative;
 - b. Humble in presenting his views;
 - c. Willing to listen to other positions, being sensitive to theological and cultural diversity and with an ecumenical outlook;
 - d. Remaining faithful to revealed truth in Sacred Scripture, Tradition, and the Magisterium.
 - e. To have demonstrated the ability to integrate theology with pastoral experience,
 - f. Being aware that abstract truths have practical consequences;
 - g. Attentive to the voice of God in concrete pastoral experiences.

- 2) To have demonstrated docility, diligence, and seriousness in school,
 - a. Doing assigned readings and class projects;
 - b. Participating actively in class;
 - c. Exhibiting preparedness and being articulate in oral presentations.
 - d. Completing written assignments and other projects in a timely manner.
- 3) To have demonstrated a critical use of the various media and communication technologies,
 - a. Being able to examine the credibility of authors, sources, and assumptions;
 - b. Being able to teach others to do the same.
- 4) To have devoted time and effort to learn and use a second language, both written and oral, that is useful in pastoral ministry

Priestly Identity and Pastoral Character (cf. Ratio 119-124, PPF 280d)

- 1) To have demonstrated the ability to reflect upon the ways he will live and serve in the person of Christ,
 - a. Being able to discern his gifts and devotes time to enhance them;
 - b. Being able to accept challenge on his pastoral growing edges;
- 2) To have developed a growing openness to authority and its collaborative exercise,
 - a. Trusting that the Church community, acting collaboratively, most competently discerns the right pastoral approach and action;
 - b. Contributing actively to pastoral discernment;
 - c. Acting generously on collegial decisions.
- 3) To have demonstrated a developing understanding of celibacy as a gift,
 - a. Having a healthy image of his sexuality and aware of the challenges of the celibate lifestyle
 - b. Being able to discuss matters of sexuality, celibacy, and priestly lifestyle with the appropriate formators and peers;
 - c. Growing in the understanding that celibacy is a way of loving connected with a healthy lifestyle, prayer, friendship, and respect for healthy boundaries.
- 4) To have demonstrated a capacity for simplicity of life as witness to the primacy of the Kingdom and stewardship of earthly goods,
 - a. Being aware that as a seminarian he represents the Seminary, the Church and ultimately the Kingdom of God.
 - b. Being aware that his self-presentation, including hygiene, grooming, manner of clothing, and social conduct, partly determine how he and his message are received.
 - c. Being aware that proper stewardship of his personal resources, those of his diocese and the Seminary is part of his ascetical life necessary for spiritual growth, especially social justice and charity.
- 5) To have demonstrated an openness to and acceptance of diversity in the Church,
 - a. Caring for everyone regardless of social and economic standing;
 - b. Showing preferential option for the sick, suffering, the poor and marginalized.
 - c. Showing respect for those who hold different theological and pastoral views.

- 6) To have developed the beginnings of pastoral leadership,
 - a. Leading by example through commitment to duties of daily life as a seminarian and a student;
 - b. Participating actively as leader or member of student committees at Assumption and OST; Carrying out pastoral assignment collaboratively and appreciating the different charisms and vocations in the Church;
 - c. Being able to lead and guide others in prayer;
 - d. Taking time and making effort to improve his speech, diction, and the ability to project his voice to a large audience.

- 7) To have demonstrated understanding and faithful performance of the duties of ministry already received,
 - a. Being able to articulate its underlying theology;
 - b. Being able to follow the liturgical norms that govern its performance.

STAGE THREE: Third and Fourth Theology

By the end of Fourth Theology, Assumption Seminary expects each seminarian:

Human and Social Maturity (cf. Ratio, 93-100, PPF 280a)

- 1) To have demonstrated the possession of a sound personal identity, healthy self-awareness, human maturity, and the consistent exercise of prudential judgment,
 - a. Having resolved major therapeutic needs and manage personal conflicts;
 - b. Having the ability to make a life-long commitment;
 - c. Having developed the integrity to make his personal behavior congruent with his identity is a public person;
 - d. Having developed the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity;
 - e. Having developed the cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude;
 - f. Having the skills to operate in diverse cultural and social settings.

- 2) To have demonstrated a deepening sense of generativity in his personal and pastoral relationships,
 - a. Having an experiential knowledge that his personal presence to and with others is life-giving;
 - b. Being able to sustain and nurture others with his presence and service;
 - c. Having a sense of fulfillment in giving himself in the service of others;

- 3) To have demonstrated a sufficient development of time and stress management skills and evidence of a balanced work ethic,
 - a. Being able to live peacefully with problem, pain, menace, or threats;
 - b. Being able to rejoice in goodness of life and its many gifts;
 - c. Being able to respond to the various calls of duty without undue stress.

- 4) To have demonstrated professional preparedness to function within a Christian community with people of varying ages, cultures, and life situations,
 - a. Having acquired human understanding and empathy;
 - b. Having appropriated the values of Christ, the Son of God, who came to serve and not to be served;
 - c. Having divested himself of the sense of entitlement and privilege.

- 5) To have demonstrated readiness to commit himself to life-long celibacy,
 - a. Having peaceably accepted his sexual orientation and need that is the foundation of a serene commitment to a life-long celibacy.
 - b. Having understood and lived celibacy as a way of loving that is connected with a healthy lifestyle, prayer, friendship, and respect for healthy boundaries.
 - c. Having an attitude of compassion towards other people's sexual identity and behavior;
 - d. Being able to set boundaries for others and guide them in their need for intimacy.

Progress in Spiritual Life (cf. Ratio101- 115, PPF 280b)

- 1) To have a flexible, well-developed, and enduring personal prayer life anchored in the celebration of the Eucharist and the integral Liturgy of the Hours,
 - a. Approaching the sacrament of reconciliation regularly to express one's dependence on God's grace and mercy;
 - b. Incorporating into one's life ascetic practices that deepen awareness of the sacrificial nature of our ministry;
 - c. Being able to live contemplatively in the midst of pastoral activity.
- 2) To have lived a simple lifestyle of self-sacrifice,
 - a. Ready to administer his personal goods and those of the Church with prudence and honesty;
 - b. Aware that excessive attachment to goods and pleasures could diminish his pastoral zeal and effectiveness.
- 3) To have rendered generous service as the primary expression of discipleship,
 - a. Willing to offer the gift of his presence;
 - b. Willing to wrestle with Scripture using the tools of sound exegesis for preaching, teaching, and counseling;
 - c. Having a good theological understanding of the Sacraments;
 - d. Having familiarity with the liturgical norms for a dignified and reverential celebration of the Sacraments.
 - e. Being able to assist and direct the growth of others in their personal prayer and spiritual life.
- 4) To have practiced obedience owed to pastoral authorities that serve the unity of the serve, especially one's bishop,
 - a. Understanding the theological and spiritual value of obedience;
 - b. Submitting himself to his immediate superiors.
- 5) To have demonstrated familiarity with devotions to Mary and the saints,
 - a. Learning from these men and women how to practice Christian virtue often in difficult circumstances;
 - b. Able to direct the faithful in their devotion to the saints for a more fruitful life of Christian justice and charity.

Theological Development (cf. Ratio 16-118, PPF 280c)

- 1) To have understood the breadth and depth of the Catholic faith tradition in fidelity to the Word of God and the Magisterium,
 - a. Growing in familiarity and friendship with the Scriptures;
 - b. Being familiar with contemporary critical understanding and study of Scripture;
 - c. Being able to sustain and nourish his spiritual life with Scripture;
 - d. Being able to read Sacred Scripture according to accepted exegetical tools and draw meaning for himself and others;
 - e. Keeping up with contemporary directions and developments in theology,
 - f. Reading church documents, together with books and articles on Theology and Scripture;
 - g. Attending lectures, seminars, and workshops;
 - h. Engaging in theological and scriptural conversations with his peers.
- 2) To have demonstrated a balance approach toward theological diversity humbly accepting that any theological language is tentative,
 - a. Avoiding a very rigid interpretation of faith and morals;
 - b. Capable of theological dialogue;
 - c. Open to ecumenical dialogue and cooperation.
- 3) To have integrated the diverse theological disciplines with a commitment to continuing theological education and pastoral formation,
 - a. Being able to hold a theological vision based on sound Doctrine of God, Christology, and Ecclesiology;
 - b. Being able to articulate a theological vision that accounts for sin and evil;
 - c. Being able to hold and articulate a moral teaching based on the Gospels.
- 4) To have demonstrated the ability to communicate effectively the Catholic faith in fidelity to the Word of God and the Magisterium,
 - a. Having acquired the skills of teaching and preaching effectively;
 - b. Having developed the confidence for speaking in public;
 - c. Having developed sensitivity to the circumstances of his audience and current social and political issues.
- 5) To have demonstrated the ability to integrate theological understanding with pastoral practice,
 - a. Understanding Being interested in learning about culture so that he could assist in the inculturation of the faith;
 - b. Understanding Being able to express the theology and teaching of the Church in ways that ordinary people can comprehend and apply to their circumstances;
 - c. Demonstrating a realistic acknowledgment of evil balance with hope.
- 6) To have demonstrated the ability to reflect theologically on experience,
 - a. Having an interior life that includes reflection on his own personal experiences, his engagement with others, and his involvement with society;
 - b. Understanding Being able to assist those whom he serves to reflect on the ordinary as well as the momentous events of life.

Priestly Identity and Pastoral Character (cf. Ratio 119-124, PPF 280d)

- 1) To have demonstrated the capacity to operate pastorally from a mature understanding of the priesthood as a fruit of prayer, study and pastoral engagement,
 - a. Being informed and inspired by the teaching on the priesthood of Vatican II and subsequent documents;
 - b. Manifesting a priestly identity that includes respect for every person, a sense of justice, truthfulness to his word, prudence, prayerfulness and charity;
 - c. Renouncing a simply cultic understanding of the priesthood, seeing it rather as a ministry of service to the whole human person and society;
 - d. Taking advantage of pastoral opportunities and ways to advance his personal knowledge and skill, like lectures, seminars and workshops.

- 2) To have demonstrated readiness and resolve to make a lifelong commitment to chaste celibacy,
 - a. Having experienced chastity and celibacy to be compatible with his personal character and gifts as a sexual being;
 - b. Having establish and maintained a network of wholesome relationships and healthy friendships with appropriate boundaries.

- 3) To have demonstrated the ability to function as a public representative of the Church,
 - a. Being a person of respect, love, forgiveness, dialogue, peace and unity;
 - b. Being able to work creatively in professional, collaborative manner with men and women to achieve a common goal;
 - c. Possessing the leadership qualities of a follower of Jesus, embracing humility, finding greatness in service, willing to take risks, sharing responsibility and authority, and able to work with teams;
 - d. Divesting himself of the many forms of clerical entitlement and privilege;
 - e. Being able to relate to persons of varied ethnic and religious traditions without showing favoritism towards a particular group;
 - f. Being able to understand and address ecumenical and interreligious issues with theological knowledge and pastoral sensitivity;
 - g. To be able to cooperate with diverse groups in common prayer and action.

- 4) To have demonstrated the ability to lead divine worship with appropriate creativity, skill, presence, and sensitivity,
 - a. Having a sound theological understanding of the liturgy;
 - b. Being able to apply liturgical norms according to the needs of the community of faith;
 - c. Fostering devotion and spiritual life by his presidential style.

- 5) To have demonstrated the capacity to preach effectively God's Word with theological imagination, public presence, and liturgical sensibility,
 - a. Being able to interpret the life experiences of individuals and the community in his preaching and teaching, drawing from the teaching of Sacred Scripture and the Magisterium;
 - b. Being able to preach and teach audiences of varying needs and preparation;
 - c. Being able to preach and teach with sensitivity to social issues with prophetic courage.

- 6) To demonstrate the capacity for parish administration,
 - a. Having the capacity to work collaboratively with parish staff, the pastoral and finance councils;
 - b. Having learned the essentials of bookkeeping and keeping financial records.

Formation Resources

Convinced that sharing their priestly life is the most profound and effective teaching, the Priests of Saint Sulpice will live in a closely-knit community with the candidates for the ministry. This will open the way to true dialogue, which will enable everyone to feel responsible for the community. By this means, the concrete conditions of the exercise of ministry in the Church, under the double aspect of fraternal life and of participation in a common mission, will have been explored and actually experienced. It is within such a context that aptitudes for ministry will show themselves more clearly. (Constitutions of the Priests of Saint Sulpice, Art. 25)

I. The Seminary Community

Community life during the years of initial formation must make an impact on each individual, purifying his intentions and transforming the conduct of life as he gradually conforms himself to Christ. Formation comes about every day through interpersonal relationships, moments of exchange and discussion which result in the development of that 'fertile soil', in which a vocation matures. (Ratio Fundamentalis, 50)

... fraternity is fostered through spiritual growth, which requires a constant effort to overcome various forms of individualism. A fraternal relationship "cannot just be left to chance, to fortuitous circumstances", but is rather a conscious choice and an ongoing challenge. (Ratio Fundamentalis, 52)

The Seminary community's pattern of living, consisting of the celebration of the Eucharist and the Liturgy of the Hours, devotional prayer, private prayer, study, pastoral engagement, meals, leisure and recreation, and work, inculcates in a seminarian a structure of life and prudent management of time. It shapes character, teaching the virtues and values that underlie all the community activities and human interaction. The intentional participation of each member of the community provides a model for the others. Conversation and dialogue among members of the community reinforce understanding and mediate meaning, encouraging greater interest and zeal in fuller participation.

Community should provide the context in which those qualities for ministerial leadership can be nurtured and demonstrated. (PPF 262)

Assumption provides multiple opportunities for personal growth as well as for the development and demonstration of leadership. The Student Government (composed of the President, Class Representatives, and Committee Chairs) and its Committees (1. Physical Life, 2. Life, Peace and Justice, 3. Social Life, 4. Liturgy and Spirituality, and 5. Social Media) are excellent opportunities for seminarians to demonstrate leadership. The initiative and creativity of the leaders and members of the Student Government and its Committees enliven the life of the community.

The English Choir and the Spanish Choir are an excellent expression for musical talents used in the service of the community.

Multi-Cultural Day, a celebration of the diversity of the community, happens because of good leadership, organizational skills, and volunteer effort.

Seminarians are encouraged to surface ideas for projects that benefit the community. Groups that gather around common hobbies and recreational activities are supported.

Assumption also has a Knights of Columbus Local Council whose leadership and membership cooperate actively in community projects.

Sulpician tradition sees the seminary community as being analogous to a parish. If that is so, the seminary community, like the parish, must be an “existential space” where fraternal bonds are created, where each member feels responsible for the other with missionary zeal, leading one another to conversion with dynamism and creativity. The witness of the community’s interpersonal relationships, marked by faith and charity, gives credibility to the Gospel proclaimed among them every day.

... the Parish community is the human context wherein the evangelizing work of the Church is carried out, where Sacraments are celebrated and where charity is exercised, all with missionary zeal, which, apart from being an intrinsic part of pastoral action, is a litmus test of its authenticity. (Congregation for the Clergy, The Pastoral Conversion of the Parish Community, 19)

II. Personal Accompaniment

Priestly formation is a journey of transformation that renews the heart and mind of the person, so that he can “discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect,” (cf. Rom 12:2)... Working humbly and ceaselessly on oneself – something that goes beyond mere introspection - ...the priest opens himself honestly to the truth of life and to the real demands of ministry. He learns to listen to the conscience that judges his movements and the interior urges that motivate his action. (PDV 43)

In the process of formation, it is necessary that the seminarian should know himself and let himself be known, relating to the formators with sincerity and transparency, personal accompaniment, which has docibilitas to the Holy Spirit as its goal, is indispensable in formation. (PDV 45)

Seminarians need to be accompanied in a personal way in the various stages of their journey by those entrusted with the work of formation, each according to his proper role and competence. The purpose of personal accompaniment is to carry out vocational discernment and to form the missionary disciple. (Ratio Fundamentalis, 44)

In this journey of transformation, every seminarian is accompanied in both the external and internal forums, by an Adviser and a Spiritual Director, respectively.

1) Advisement

Every seminarian is assigned an Adviser who is his formator in the external forum. The Adviser’s role is to observe, guide, encourage, and challenge a seminarian’s progress in formation. He meets with the seminarian every third week.

At the beginning of each academic year, he assists the seminarian in setting for himself **Goals and Objectives** based on the **Seminary Expectations at Different Stages of Formation** above. During the Fall Semester, he provides an oral assessment of the seminarian to the Formation Council. At the end of

the year, he writes the draft of the *Annual Statement of Evaluation*.

In this manner, every seminarian is held accountable for his appropriation and integration of those values, virtues and qualities which characterize priestly identity and ministry proper to his stage of formation.

2) Spiritual Direction

Spiritual direction is a privileged means for the integral growth of the person. The Spiritual Director is to be chosen with complete freedom by the seminarians from among the priests duly designated by the Bishop. This freedom will only be authentic when the seminarian opens himself up with sincerity, trust and docility. Meetings with the Spiritual Director must not be merely occasional, but scheduled and regular. Indeed, the quality of spiritual accompaniment is important for the very effectiveness of the whole process of formation. (Ratio Fundamentalalis, 107)

The ministry of spiritual direction holds first place in the Sulpician tradition. Every seminarian is free to choose his Spiritual Director from a list provided by the Seminary (duly approved by the Archbishop). He is encouraged to work with the original Spiritual Director initially chosen during his time at the seminary. Spiritual direction meetings occur every third week. Seminarians are encouraged to make use of their spiritual directors as well for at least a monthly celebration of the Sacrament of Penance.

The spiritual direction relationship is marked by absolute confidentiality. Thus, a seminarian's spiritual director, past or present, never participates in the evaluation of the seminarian or in the formulation of any recommendation to the bishop regarding him. They do not communicate to others about the seminarian's progress in the interior life.

For serious reasons, a seminarian may change spiritual directors. In such cases, the seminarian consults with Director of Spiritual Life. If a seminarian does change to another director, he notifies his previous director before he begins to meet regularly with his new director.

A spiritual director may withdraw in extraordinary circumstances as a seminarian's spiritual director, after appropriate and serious personal deliberation. He does so in writing to the Director of Spiritual Life without indicating any reason or inference for his withdrawal. The spiritual director informs the seminarian in person of his decision.

Since it is the responsibility of the entire Formation Council to see to it that every seminarian receive appropriate spiritual direction, they have the right to know, through the seminarian's Adviser, if the seminarian makes use of spiritual direction and how frequently.

III. Liturgy and Prayer

The seminary is a formational community responding to a call to continuing conversion of mind and heart. Its life must center on the paschal mystery. This mystery shapes the nature and rhythm of seminary community. Consequently, the seminary community must be a community of prayer. "The high point of Christian prayer is the Eucharist, which in turn is to be seen as the summit and source of the sacraments and the Liturgy of the Hours," (PDV 48). The Eucharist, the Liturgy of the Hours, the sacrament of penance and other prayer opportunities form the seminary community into a concrete instance of the Church at prayer. As such it becomes the proper setting for conversion and priestly formation. (PPF 268)

1) The Eucharist

In view of their necessary conformation to Christ, “candidates for ordination must, above all, be formed in a truly living faith in the Eucharist, in view of what they shall live after priestly ordination. Participation in daily celebration of the Eucharist, which naturally flows into Eucharistic adoration, should permeate the life of the seminarian in such a way that a constant union with the Lord may mature. (Ratio Fundamentalis, 104)

Participation in the Eucharist allows each seminarian to be taken up in Jesus’ offering of himself to God and for all peoples. It inspires an active faith that makes us see the obedient service of Jesus as God’s redeeming mercy and love. That active faith is then translated into charity, that virtue by which we honor in word and deed the God who offers us salvation in Jesus in our fellow redeemed. It allows us to assume a continual prayerful posture: to see beyond the ordinary, often difficult, even at times hurtful, events of every day and encounter with God (Adoration, Contemplation). It gives us the courage to pray for the grace to more readily receive our task to make this redemption real through our acts of kindness, understanding, forgiveness (Petition, Intercession).

According to Saint Paul, being a living victim, hostia vivens, does not mean that we merely have the outward appearance of death, but rather that we are alive interiorly, that one’s interior life be like that of the sacred host on the altar... in which there is divine life, a holy life, a spiritual life of union with God. (Jean-Jacques Olier, Divers écrits, 1,19)

2) Liturgy of the Hours

The Liturgy of the Hours cannot be lacking in the prayer life of a priest, and it is a true ‘school of prayer’ for seminarians too. Becoming gradually accustomed to the prayer of the Church through the Divine Office, they learn to taste its richness and beauty. (Ratio Fundamentalis, 105)

This prayer takes its unity from the heart of Christ Himself, for our Redeemer desired “that the life He had entered upon in His mortal body with supplications and with His sacrifice should continue without interruption through the ages in His Mystical Body, which is the Church”. Because of this, the prayer of the Church is at the same time “the very prayer that Christ Himself, together with His Body, addresses to the Father” ... Those who are in Holy Orders and are marked in a special way with the sign of Christ the Priest... should be moved to recite the Office not only in obedience to law, but should also feel themselves drawn to them because of the intrinsic excellence of the Hours and their pastoral and ascetical value. (Laudes Canticum)

When the seminarians pray the Hours, therefore, they must *recognize their own voices echoing in Christ, and His voice echoing in them*. They unite themselves with the entire Church in prayer with Christ its Head. They prepare themselves for the sacred duty of priests to pray with and for the Church. Praying it, they sanctify the day, making of their work and leisure an offering to God. Their personal prayer draws unfailing nourishment from it. Since Sacred Scripture is at the heart of the Liturgy of the Hours, praying it with devotion should lead the seminarian to love Sacred Scripture, to study it with passion, and, especially, to seek to understand the Psalms more deeply. The Psalms teach us to approach God boldly in

prayer, often expressing deepest sentiments of the human heart that are not easily acknowledged. They lead us, then, to truth about ourselves and those we minister to. They teach us to be honest before God and to be empathetic to our fellow redeemed.

3) The Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation

Regular and frequent celebration of the sacrament of Penance, for which one should prepare by a daily examination of conscience, becomes, for the seminarian, an occasion to recognize with humility his own frailties and sins and, above all, to understand and experience the joy of feeling loved and forgiven by the Lord. Moreover, "from it flows the sense of asceticism and interior discipline, a spirit of sacrifice and self-denial, the acceptance of hard work and of the cross". (Ratio Fundamentalis 106)

"I would like to make special mention of the sacrament of penance, of which priests are ministers, ought to be its beneficiaries, becoming themselves witnesses of God's mercy towards sinners.... The whole of his priestly existence suffers an inexorable decline if by negligence or for other reason he fails to receive the sacrament of penance at regular intervals and in a spirit of genuine faith and devotion," (PDV 26).

The Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation fosters continuous conversion of the heart, growth in the virtues, and conformity to the mind and heart of Christ.

In the Sulpician tradition, use of the Sacrament of Penance is intimately bound to Spiritual Direction. Seminarians are highly encouraged to make use of their spiritual director as their regular confessor in order to more integrally foster that graced freedom that is the heart of Sulpician spiritual direction, and which in turn facilitates honesty transparency, and growth in priestly virtue and holiness. (cf. Ratio Fundamentalis 107) Formators as confessors, in turn, model for future confessors best liturgical and spiritual practices regarding the sacrament

4) Retreats and Recollections

The annual retreat, a time of profound reflection in prolonged prayerful encounter with the Lord in an atmosphere of silence and recollection, must then be continued during the rest of the year in occasional periods of recollection and in daily prayer. In this way, the desire to dedicate his life generously to pastoral charity will gradually emerge and be strengthened in the heart of the seminarian, molded by the action of the Holy Spirit. (Ratio Fundamentalis 108)

Assumption has a Community Retreat at the beginning of each Semester. There is a Recollection two times each semester and an Evening of Recollection each semester. A day of Recollection is given to those who receive the ministries of Lector and Acolyte. Those who are preparing for Orders are assisted in arranging a suitable time and place, and a fruitful spiritual experience.

5) Lectio Divina/Sulpician Meditation

God has two treasures for which he made the Church a depository: first is his body and precious blood; the second is the Word or his Scripture, His divine testament, which is the deposit of his secrets and divine wishes. ... Because this sacred treasure of the Scripture has been given with confidence into the hands of the Church, which has then confided it to the priest so that it may be heard by and explained to

the people, it should be accorded the greatest respect and reverence it merits, as Saint Augustine remarks when he says that he wants us to give the same respect to the least syllable of Scripture that we give to the particles of the Blessed Sacrament, because they are like envelopes, curtains and sacraments which contain the Holy Spirit, being the ordinary instrument through which he acts in the Church. (Jean-Jacques Oliers, Le Traité des Saints Ordres, 125-126)

We must always remember that, “ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ”. Therefore, a relationship with the Word of God holds preeminent place in the process of spiritual growth. Before it is ever preached, the Word must be welcomed in the depths of the heart, “above all in the context of the ‘new evangelization’ to which the Church is called today”. The new evangelization is the continuous point of reference for the life of discipleship and spiritual configuration to Christ the Good Shepherd. Seminarians need to be introduced gradually to the knowledge of the Word of God, through the method known as Lectio Divina, profound daily meditation, practiced with fidelity and diligence, in which study and prayer come together in a reciprocal fruitfulness, will ensure an integral approach to both the Old and New Testaments. (Ratio Fundamentalis 103)

Apart from their scriptural studies, seminarians are encouraged to have a personal devotion to Sacred Scripture, especially the Gospels. Engaging the “story of Jesus” makes it possible to experience the presence of Christ so as to learn from him his vision, values, and virtues. They are to develop a method of “praying the Scripture”. One method, the Sulpician Meditation, is modeled to them once a week.

6) Days of Formation

The concept of integral formation is of the greatest importance, since it is the whole person, with all that he is and all that he possesses, who will be at the Lord’s service in the Christian community. The one called is an ‘integral subject’, namely someone who has been previously chosen to attain a sound interior life, without divisions or contradictions. It is necessary to adopt an integrated pedagogical model in order to reach this objective: a journey that allows the formative community to cooperate with the action of the Holy Spirit, ensuring a proper balance between the different dimensions of formation. (Ratio Fundamentalis, 92)

Friday is a Day of Formation at Assumption. It begins with Morning Prayer followed by a Formation Conference or Rector’s Conference, Small Group Reflection/Discussion, Eucharist, Community Lunch, and Work Order.

The Formation Conferences follow a curriculum that is carefully prepared by the Formation Council to address issues in all four dimensions of formation: human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral.

The Rector’s Conferences deal specifically with topics of priestly identity, spirituality, and mission.

Either Conference is followed by Small Group Reflection/Discussion, the purpose of which is to give each seminarian the opportunity to appropriate what he has heard, in conversation with his peers. This Group Reflection/Discussion is done in a spirit of prayer and active listening.

The highpoint of the day is the Eucharist, which is celebrated greater solemnity, signifying with greater relief what is true of every day at Assumption. The joy of communion in the Eucharist continues with Community Lunch, a celebration of common life and fraternity. Important news and information are shared at the meal.

Work Order highlights our common stewardship of our common home.

7) Pastoral Ministry

Since the priest-disciple comes from the Christian community, and will be sent back to it, to serve it and to guide it as a pastor, formation is clearly missionary in character. Its goal is participation in the one mission entrusted by Christ to His Church, that is evangelization, in all its forms. The fundamental idea is that Seminaries should form missionary disciples who are 'in love' with the Master, shepherds 'with the smell of the sheep', who live in their midst to bring the mercy of God to them. Hence every priest should always feel that he is a disciple on a journey, constantly needing an integrated formation, understood as a continuous configuration to Christ. (Ratio Fundamentalis, 3)

Since the Seminary is intended to prepare seminarians to be shepherds in the image of Christ, priestly formation must be permeated by a pastoral spirit. It will make them able to demonstrate that same compassion, generosity, love for all, especially for the poor, and zeal for the Kingdom that characterized the public ministry of the Son of God. This can be summed up as pastoral charity. (Ratio Fundamentalis, 119)

The greater part of the seminarians' pastoral formation happens under the direction and supervision of Oblate School of Theology (OST). OST's Theological Field Education (TFE) provides a variety of pastoral experiences for students from the second semester of their first year up to the completion of their third year. OST also directs and supervises students during their Pastoral Year or Internship Year. Apart from actual practice of ministry, students receive individual supervision in their placement and participate in theological reflection sessions with other students, supervisors, and a faculty member who serves as a theological consultant.

The Director of Pastoral Formation at Assumption directs and supervises pastoral formation of students in their first semester and after the completion of TFE.

Seminarians in their first semester participate in a tour of the social ministries in San Antonio's West side: Posada Guadalupe, Catholic Worker, St. Vinny's Bistro, SAMMinistries, and Our Lady of Guadalupe Shrine. During the course of this semester they go in groups of at least two to serve at different ministry sites four times for 3-4 hours. They are encouraged to share their experiences and reflections with their Advisers and the Pastoral Team. They participate in Theological Reflection sessions about their experiences.

Upon completion of TFE, students will have gained competence in effective and collaborative ministry, together with pastoral and theological sensibility. They are ready for service in a parish.

Seminarians learn through the practice of ministry and working with a pastor and/or supervisor and colleagues in ministry. Student are expected to be proactive in the choice a parish, doing research and engaging in conversations with the pastor before finalizing the assignment in conversation with the Coordinator of Pastoral Formation. The time spent in ministry would generally be 5-8 hours per week. Usually seminarians would commute to the site. The seminarian and his pastor/supervisor are expected to meet periodically. At the seminary, the seminarian reflects on his experiences with his adviser and participates in theological reflection.

The sharing and reflection that are essential parts of pastoral formation at OST and Assumption assist the seminarian to learn the art of pastoral discernment:

The call to be pastors of the People of God requires a formation that makes future priests experts in the art of pastoral discernment, that is to say, able to listen deeply to real situations and capable of good judgement in making choices and decisions. To make pastoral discernment effective, the evangelical style of listening must take central place. (Ratio Fundamentalis, 120)

8) Devotion to Mary and the Saints

Seminarians ought to cultivate an authentic and filial devotion to the Virgin Mary, both through her liturgical celebrations and through popular devotions, particularly the recitation of the Holy Rosary and of the Angelus... The importance of an authentic devotion to the saints should not be forgotten. (Ratio Fundamentalis, 112)

Assumption promotes devotion to Mary after whose assumption into heaven it is named. She is also especially venerated under the title *Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe*. She is presented as a model for priest because “*every aspect of priestly formation can be referred to Mary, the human being who has responded better than any other to God’s call. Mary became both the servant and the disciple of the Word to the point of conceiving, in her heart and in her flesh, the Word made man, so as to give him to mankind*”. (PDV 82)

The Sulpician founder understood Mary as a perfect model for priests not only because she heard the Word of God and kept it, but also because her entire life is marked by an ever-deepening union with the One whom God gave her the privilege to bear. Fr. Olier’s prayer, *O Jesus Living in Mary*, is an eloquent testament to this devotion.

Assumption also promotes devotion to the saints. Since its seminarians come from different parts of the world, Assumption encourages its seminarians to celebrate the saints especially venerated in their places of origin.

Assessment/Annual Evaluation

The annual evaluation of each seminarian is indispensable for Assumption Seminary to fulfill its mission of forming men for the diocesan priesthood in the Roman Catholic Church for ministry to the people of God. The council of Formators considers this evaluation to be an important service both to the individual seminarian and to his ordinary. It helps the seminarian discern with the Council of Formators his strengths and weaknesses, his attitudes and behaviors, and the personal characteristics which make him suitable for ministry. The seminarian also learns how he may need to change and grow in order to be of better service to the people of God. The evaluation is also a service to the seminarian’s bishop who receives recommendations from the Council of Formators for the suitability and readiness of the seminarian and whether or not he is ready for the next level of formation and/or for Holy Orders.

... [S]eminarians must be reminded and, at the same time, it must not be kept from them, that “the desire alone to become a priest is not sufficient, and there does not exist a right to receive sacred ordination. It belongs to the Church [...] to discern the suitability of him who desires to enter the seminary, to accompany him during his years of formation, and to call him to holy orders if he is judged to possess the necessary qualities. (Ratio Fundamentalis, 201)

I. The Process

1) Setting Goals and Objectives

At the beginning of each academic year, the seminarian, in dialogue with his formation adviser, sets learning goals and objectives for himself. These are based on the **Expectations of Seminarians at Different Stages of Formation** found above.

Setting goals is vital for every seminarian. Goals determine the enduring qualities, virtues, attitudes, and skills he wants to achieve. They give him direction to his growth plan. Aspirational in nature, goals provide an overarching intentionality and motivation to his daily activities, effort, and striving.

To reach his goals effectively, the seminarian sets objectives for himself. Objectives are specific actions that he commits himself to within a specific time frame to attain the qualities, virtues, attitudes, and skills he desires. The actions that he performs consistently become habits that reflect his faith-convictions, moral principles, spiritual values, and his images of life with God and the Church. Objectives are precise actions and measurable steps that move him closer to his goals.

Setting goals and objectives is ultimately aimed at character formation. The seminarian wants to a good, honest, dependable, and well-mannered human being; he wants to be a Christian who is faithful to the Gospel; he wants to be a priest after the pattern of Jesus the Good Shepherd.

2) Advisement Meetings

The goals and objectives are appropriate topics of conversation between the seminarian and his formation adviser. The formation adviser serves as a mentor who introduces the seminarian to the world of values of a priest in the Catholic Church. He points out growing edges. He encourages actions in the right direction. He provides fraternal correction when necessary. He helps form a realistic vision of the seminarian's self, his defining relationships, and his vocational journey.

3) Fall Oral Evaluation

Sometime in the Fall Semester, an oral evaluation is done by the Formation Council. The seminarian's formation adviser presents to the Council a broad picture of the seminarian's current state. He mentions the seminarian's most notable goals and objectives, areas of significant achievement, and areas where growth is necessary. He listens to and notes the observations of other Council members and brings these to his conversations with the seminarian.

4) Self-Evaluation

Towards the end of the academic year, the seminarian submits a written self-evaluation to his formation adviser. The provides an honest assessment of his movement toward the achievement of his goals and objectives. A seminarian who is open to formation is attentive to what others think and say about him, primarily his peers and formators, his professors and academic adviser, and his collaborators and supervisor at his pastoral assignment.

5) Annual Statement of Evaluation

The formation adviser drafts the Annual Statement of Evaluation. He uses the following sources: the seminarian's self-evaluation, evaluations from the academic institution he attends, the evaluation at his pastoral assignment, his own observations and conversations with the seminarians, the observations of the members of the Formation Council.

The Statement is a summary of a seminarian's location in the formational journey. It presents a composite picture of his progress in the areas of human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral formation. It describes the qualities, virtues, attitudes, and skills he has attained evidenced by his actions and interactions in the different formational settings of the seminary, the educational institution he attends, and his pastoral assignment. It notes where further growth needs to be made.

The Annual Statement of Evaluation concludes with commendations for specific progress achieved, recommendations for specific actions needed for change or development, and a recommendation for promotion to the next level of formation. The draft is read by the seminarian to give him a chance to correct errors of fact.

6) Discussion of the Statement of Evaluation and Vote

A date is set by for the discussion of the Annual Statement of Evaluation by the Council of Formators. Prior to the discussion, members of the Council read both the seminarian's self-evaluation and the draft of the Annual Statement of Evaluation. On the day of the discussion, the Council could accept the draft *in toto* or introduce missing elements, correct errors, and eliminate unhelpful statements. Based on these, the adviser revises the drat and the final text is voted on by the Council at their following meeting.

The Statement of Evaluation is read by the seminarian and acknowledges having read it by affixing his signature. His signature does not signify his agreement with the Statement.

II. A Guide for Writing a Self-Evaluation

1) General Rules

- Be concrete – write about behaviors, use examples, avoid generalities and platitudes.
- Be real – discuss not only your strengths, but also areas in which you desire to grow.
- Be selective – write about areas of particular importance this year.
- Be neat – this report goes to your Bishop. It needs to be presentable and typed.
- Be concise – your self-evaluation should be about 3-4 pages long (double spaced).

2) Format

The self-evaluation follows the following format:

Name of the Seminarian:
Age:
Degree Program:
Level of Formation:
Field Ministry:
Ministries Received:
Student Government/Committee:

Bishop:
Vocation Director:
Formation Adviser:
Spiritual Director

Introduction

Human and Social Dimension

Spiritual Dimension

Intellectual Dimension

Pastoral Dimension

Vocational Discernment

Conclusion

3) Guide Questions for Completing the Self-Evaluation

Introduction. A description in broad strokes of your formational process in the school year that is about to end.

- How did you cooperate with the formation process?
- What were your most significant accomplishments?
- What were your major challenges?
- Have your helping relationships been helpful to you?
- Has life in community been helpful to you?
- If this is your first year in the seminary, how has the transition gone for you?

Human and Social, Spiritual, Intellectual and Pastoral Dimensions

Review how you have cooperated with the formation process toward the achievement of your goals and objectives.

- Did you meet regularly with your Formation Adviser, Spiritual Director, Academic Adviser, Pastoral Supervisor? How frequently?
- Did you find your meetings helpful?
- Describe your achievements:
 - Which of the goals you set for yourself have you attained?
 - How did you attain them?
 - What virtues, attitudes, values, or skills have you developed by attaining your goal?
- Describe your need for further growth:
 - Which of your goals did you not attain?
 - What obstacles presented themselves to you?
 - How do you intend to proceed from here?
- Describe how your achievements and/or failures affect your relationships:
 - With yourself?
 - With others?
 - With God?

Vocational Discernment. A reflection on how your achievements and/or failures affect your vocational journey.

- What is your understanding of the priestly ministry at this point?
 - What has been corrected, clarified, enhanced, or added?
 - Have your achievements and/or failures clarified your motivations for desiring to be a priest?
 - What has been corrected, clarified, enhanced, or added?
- Do you wish to continue your vocational journey?

Conclusion

- What are you most grateful for in the school year that is coming to an end?
- What are your greatest aspirations for the summer and the coming school year?