1. INTRODUCTION

The Third Theologian is in his final year of preparation for ordination as a Deacon. In the first semester, he will be admitted as a candidate for ordination, and in the second semester he will take the oath of fidelity and declaration of freedom. He should take these final steps before ordination only if he is fully convinced that he is ready and willing to petition for ordination. He will be able to advance in good conscience if he and those responsible for his formation are convinced that he possesses the human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral qualities that a priest should have.

The focus of this Third Year on the level of human formation is on consolidation of the individual good habits related to personal growth and communal spirit and service into an overall lifestyle appropriate to the ordained minister. This involves a spirit of universal charity, a desire to serve, generosity, simplicity and detachment, zeal for ministry, and a cooperative spirit. Because the ordained minister is a “man for others,” the Third Theologian must be able to relate socially with all the different kinds of people he will be called upon to serve. He must give evidence of mature friendships with his peers and good relationships within and outside the seminary community.

The focus of spiritual formation during this year is immediate preparation for a free and joyful embracing of the celibate state of life and the promise of faithful obedience to one’s Ordinary. This presumes that the seminarian, by this stage of his formation, has developed a self-motivated faithfulness to his personal prayer life, the spiritual exercises of the seminary, and the Liturgy of the Hours. At the same time, readiness for ordination requires that the seminarian has developed a spirit of humility and self-sacrifice that must ground the future fulfillment of the promise of obedience for the good of the Church and her mission.

The special focus of the intellectual formation of the prospective Deacon during this Third Year should be on the consolidation and integration of both the content of his theological education and the virtues related to sound study habits. The candidate for the M.A. (theology) or S.T.B. will manifest this integration by working diligently to fulfill the various requirements for his degree. However, all seminarians at this stage of their formation should manifest a self-commitment to intellectual growth as part of the life of the ordained minister, and not only as a preparation for ordination. Since he is about to enter the ordained ministry, the Third Theologian should make a conscious effort to see the connections between pastoral ministry and his theological studies. Theological reflection should be a regular practice of daily life and not just a formal exercise required by the formation program. Third Theologians should also focus in a particular way on their Homiletics course as immediate preparation for the ministry of preaching.
Finally, the focus of this year’s pastoral formation is developing a spirit of pastoral cooperation and prudence combined with an authentic zeal for pastoral service. This spirit of cooperation must be shown to extend not only to the immediate authority of the bishop and pastor, but also to all the faithful who are cooperating with these authorities in the service of the Church. It is especially here that the future Deacon and Priest must manifest an openness to direction from legitimate authority, a non-critical spirit, a commitment to building communion, and humility in the face of criticism that makes personal change possible. The prospective Deacon must give evidence in his field placement of a spirit of generosity, service and self-sacrifice.

2. EXPECTATIONS

a. Human Formation

The Third Year seminarian should have a firm and well-grounded conviction that he is capable and ready to accept candidacy and move forward to ordination to the Diaconate.

He should show that he has developed a more universal openness to friendship and service in the seminary and in the field placement assignments where he serves. People should be able to identify him as a “man for others.” Within the seminary community, he should manifest a spirit of service and interdependence.

By Third Year, the theologian should have developed a way of life appropriate to the ordained ministry, including a spirit of poverty and detachment, producing a simplicity in lifestyle that frees him for service in the Church.

He should give evidence that he has attained a level of personal maturity in his self-knowledge, self-acceptance, personal integrity, and friendliness that enables him to give a more selfless form of service to the People of God. The Third Theologian should be capable of mature relationships with his peers, with people in authority, and with those whom he serves. He should know how to respect proper boundaries in each of his personal and professional relationships.

The Third Theologian should manifest a readiness to accept direction, constructive criticism and correction from superiors with legitimate authority. He should reflect on the observations from the Second Year peer evaluations in considering what changes he needs to make in himself in order to be a more effective priest.

He should show proper concern for his health so that he will be a more effective minister. This includes observing a healthy diet, getting regular exercise and sufficient recreation. By the Third Year, a man should have any serious health concerns, such as overweight or smoking, under control.

1. Have I made an honest effort to examine and evaluate my personal strengths and weaknesses for the sake of self-correction and improvement?

2. Have I developed a personal integrity in all my dealings with others so as to be a person that others find trustworthy?

3. Do I make an effort to be friendly towards all, kind and considerate, so that people find me approachable?

4. Have I made an effort to expand my circle of friends in the seminary or parish, so as to avoid cliquishness or exclusivity?
5. Do people find me a joyful person, someone who inspires hope rather than doom?

6. Have I made an effort to be of service in the community? Do I try to get to know others? Am I open to people who are different from me, including people of other cultures? Do I maintain a proper balance between solitude and socializing?

7. Am I faithful to the seminary rule of life?

8. Have I made an honest effort to evaluate my lifestyle, spending, possessions, etc., to bring my way of living into accord with the simplicity of life that the Church calls for her priests to adopt?

9. Am I possessive of my time, or do I forego my personal convenience for the service of others who impinge on my time with their needs?

10. Do I show proper concern for my health? Do I observe a healthy diet and get regular exercise?

11. Are there questions about my readiness for ordination that have been raised by others that I still need to deal with? Have I taken seriously the observations made about me by my peers in the Second Year peer evaluations?

12. Have I developed a genuine openness to direction and correction by co-workers or superiors, or am I defensive when confronted with criticism which is intended for my genuine growth?

b. Spiritual Formation

The Third Theologian should show that he has developed a spiritual maturity that is self-motivated in fulfilling faithfully all the spiritual exercises in the seminary and that is faithful to one's own personal prayer life.

The spirituality of the Third Theologian should be rooted in the Eucharist and in pastoral charity, and it should also have a strong Marian component.

The Third Theologian should now pray the whole Liturgy of the Hours out of conviction that this prayer, even when it becomes an obligation, is prayer that unites himself more closely to Christ in His prayer for the Church.

The Third Theologian should have a good understanding of what he is doing when he takes the oath of fidelity and declaration of freedom. He should discuss these with his spiritual director and/or advisor.

The Third Theologian is expected to make the canonical retreat as an essential part of his preparation for ordination.

By the Third Year, the theologian should have developed such personal and spiritual maturity that he has a deep confidence and ready willingness to make the life-long commitment to the celibate state of life, not simply as a requirement for ordination, but as an integral part of his future priestly spirituality and union with Christ.

The Third Theologian should have developed the spiritual foundations for embracing the promise of obedience to his Ordinary and all legitimate superiors, including the requisite humility and self-denial for a life of obedient service.

1. Do I faithfully participate in all required spiritual exercises, except when I am legitimately excused?
2. Have I developed the habit of praying the Liturgy of the Hours in its entirety, even when I am away from the seminary?

3. Have I developed a prayer life that is appropriate for a diocesan priest and am I faithful in observing it each day?

4. Am I prepared, after prayer, reflection, and spiritual direction, to embrace the commitment to celibacy joyfully and freely? Am I aware of any interior or exterior obstacles to committing myself to this way of life?

5. How do I respond interiorly and exteriorly to authority in the Church, especially when I disagree with their theology or vision of things?

6. Do I appreciate the meaning of obedience in the life of a minister? Am I an obedient person, motivated by a collaborative spirit?

c. Intellectual Formation

The Third Theologian is expected to develop an intellectual maturity that manifests itself in a self-motivated commitment not only to master the required learning in the classroom, but beyond this obligation, to foster an ongoing intellectual growth in general, and specifically in theological and pastoral matters.

The Third Theologian should be conscious of seeing the connections between his theological studies, his pastoral experiences, and his spiritual life so that he can appreciate better how all areas of formation are related and so that he can develop his own unified vision of ministry.

In his Third Year of Theology, the theologian takes his first Homiletics course, which he should accept as an opportunity for learning how to communicate with others what he has learned in his Scripture and Theology studies.

In view of Diaconate ordination, the candidates should deepen their knowledge of the Order of Deacon by studying the theology and history of this Order.

M.A. (theology) and S.T.B. candidates should be well along in the completion of their degree requirements.

1. Have I developed a specific plan for the completion of the various requirements of the M.A. (theology) or S.T.B. degree? For the Hispanic Ministry Certificate?

2. Have I established a solid work ethic that enables me to accomplish effectively the learning objectives of my courses, including the timely completion of reading assignments and papers, or do I tend to procrastinate or do the minimum? Have I set aside blocks of time each day for study?

3. Do I make an effort to expand my intellectual interests and reading habits beyond the required course contents, especially during vacation times?

4. Do I take my preparation for the ministry of preaching and teaching seriously? Do I devote sufficient time and effort to it?

5. Am I learning foreign languages that will be useful for me in the pastoral ministry? Am I getting to know the cultures of the people I will be serving?
d. Pastoral Formation

The Third Theologian should manifest zeal, generosity, and a spirit of self-sacrifice in his pastoral field placements.

He should manifest an understanding of, and appreciation for, the complementarity of the various vocations within the Church for the internal mission of the Church and its mission to the world. He should show that he is a “team player” who is capable of taking direction and criticism from his supervisors.

The Third Theologian should give evidence of leadership ability and, in particular, he should show that he can take the lead while maintaining a collaborative spirit. He should take initiative and not always have to be asked to do things. He should give himself wholeheartedly to what he is asked to do, and he should manifest enthusiasm and a desire to learn. In his dealings with others, he should show that he has the heart of a shepherd.

The Third Theologian should also have an ecumenical spirit of openness to people of other Christian communities or other religions. He should be eager to cooperate with them where this is possible, and he should always manifest respect for them and their religious traditions.

1. Am I generous and forthcoming with my time and talents in my field assignments and am I open to forms of service that do not appeal to me? Do I see myself as a servant?
2. Am I a “team player” in my assignments and do I willingly take direction and correction from my superiors?
3. Am I zealous and enthusiastic? Do I take initiative or do I always have to receive orders about what to do?
4. Do I truly respect and esteem the dignity of the vocation of the baptized with its specific participation in the priesthood of Christ?
5. Do I try to see my preaching and teaching ministry as part of the “New Evangelization”?
6. Do I handle conflicts and disputes in my field education assignments in a mature and charitable way?
7. Am I open-minded toward people of other Christian communities or other religions, and do I collaborate with them on common projects, wherever possible?
8. Am I trying to become familiar with other cultures and languages so that I can better serve all the different peoples that make up the Church?