1. INTRODUCTION

The priest is called to be “a living image of Jesus Christ, head and shepherd of the Church” (PDV 43). He makes present the Lord’s saving acts, and strives to make them as fruitful as possible in the lives of God’s people. Fulfilling this mission requires total commitment. The pre-theologian already has some appreciation of these truths, for he embarks on a program of formation designed to help him and the Church discern whether he is called to the priesthood. A priestly vocation can be rightly discerned only in a man who commits himself fully to all aspects of this program and receives the proper training.

Because he is preparing to serve as a living image of the Lord, the pre-theologian should begin “to reflect in himself, as far as possible, the human perfection which shines forth in the incarnate Son of God” (PDV 43). This means that he must begin to cultivate the human qualities that not only contribute to his personal growth but will also be necessary for him to offer effective priestly service. These qualities include integrity, self-sacrificing love, and affective maturity. Since priests live a celibate life, a major focus for the pre-theologian’s reflection and discernment is whether the Lord is calling him to live the celibate vocation.

Only a man who cultivates an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ can properly respond to God’s call and be appropriately sent by the Church into the world. The daily celebration of the Eucharist is central to community life and must also be at the center of his life. The Liturgy of the Hours complements the Eucharistic celebration; personal prayer and meditation also flow from and point to the Eucharist.

The study of philosophy and its themes “constitutes a valid aid in order to deal correctly with the principal arguments of systematic and moral theology, of Sacred Scriptures, of Liturgy, and of Canon Law, etc.” (DLMP 77). For this reason, philosophy is the focus of intellectual formation for the pre-theologian, along with study of the Catechism and biblical and other languages.
The formation program also strives to help future priests develop pastoral charity, or a real receptiveness to all. Accordingly, Pastoral Field Education placements in pre-theology are in areas of social outreach, through which seminarians will be able to receive a priestly formation based upon the patience of God and love for the poor.

Formation means personal development according to what God has in view for a person. Pre-theologians can count on the assistance of the Holy Spirit and on guidance from the formation staff. Ultimately, however, pre-theologians must take responsibility from the outset for their own human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral formation. These aspects converge on a common goal: enabling candidates to reach an appropriate level of readiness to participate fruitfully and successfully in priestly formation at the theologate level.

2. EXPECTATIONS

a. Human Formation

i. Personal Development

Seminarians should strive to develop the qualities essential to a life of integral human growth. These qualities include integrity, balance in judgment and behavior, self-reflection, a proper sense of priorities, and a willingness to sacrifice. The capacity for self-sacrifice is a sign of an ability to live a life of service. Emotional maturity is vital for an effective priestly ministry, and thus it is important at this stage to address any weaknesses that stand in the way of full emotional maturity. Pre-theology is a time for seminarians to get to “know themselves” thoroughly in order to build on their strengths and talents and overcome limitations that would be an impediment to effective priestly ministry. This self-knowledge is acquired partly through self-reflection, but also in dialogue with one’s formation advisor, spiritual director, vocation director, and others who have been given responsibility for one’s formation.

1. Do I accept that my time is not my own, and do I decide how I will use it on the basis of discipline rather than emotion? Do I avoid wasting time?
2. Do I plan and live out a schedule that includes the proper mix of study, prayer, and exercise/recreation? Do I put my talents to good use?
3. Do I give priority to the fulfillment of my own desires/plans/needs, or am I motivated by a spirit of self-sacrifice to be of service to others?
4. What areas or issues in my life do I need to address in order to achieve greater personal and emotional maturity?
5. What are my personal strengths and weaknesses? What can I do to address the weaknesses and to develop my strengths?

ii. Social Development

Seminarians should attend to their own affective growth. To do so, they must nurture qualities of affability, generosity, kindness, hospitality, courtesy, civility, and magnanimity. They must strive to relate appropriately and naturally with everyone, i.e. peers in the seminary, faculty and staff, collegians and people outside the seminary. The capacity to develop mature friendships with peers and to relate in an emotionally mature way with everyone is an important indication of one’s ability to embrace the celibate life in a healthy, happy way.
1. Do I maintain proper boundaries and avoid inappropriate behavior with peers in the seminary, faculty and staff, collegians and people outside the seminary? Are my relationships with others compatible with my present state in life?
2. Do I have good, mature friendships with peers? With both men and women?
3. Do I interact well with other people? Do I need to work on the development of social skills that will facilitate interaction with others? Do I tend to be a loner?
4. Do I integrate familial relationships appropriately into the overarching commitment that I have undertaken as a seminarian? Are there any family relationships that are problematic and that I should address?
5. Do I strike a balance in my life between solitude and socializing? Are there signs in me of a “neediness” of others?

iii. Community Life

Seminarians should contribute to the community life of the seminary. This means not only being well disposed and friendly toward everyone, but reaching out to others as appropriate, and being willing to use their gifts for the benefit of all. Above all, seminarians should not live as if they are just isolated individuals thrown together, but as members of a community who are responsible to and dependent on each other.

1. Have I made an effort to get to know everyone in the house, especially those in my own class and my diocesan brothers?
2. Am I respectful of different personalities and friendly toward everyone?
3. Do I readily interact with community members from other cultures?
4. Do I participate willingly in group activities?
5. Do I take the initiative to serve the community? Do I have a house job? Do I recognize that I have responsibility to others in promoting the common good in the community?

iv. Health

Seminarians should care for their own physical well-being. They should do so not only because of the obvious value of health itself, but because a healthy lifestyle will enable them to serve people better and will have positive spiritual repercussions.

1. Do I maintain a proper diet?
2. Do I follow an appropriate regimen of physical exercise by exercising on a regular basis without spending excessive time doing so?
3. If I smoke, have I committed myself to a plan to stop?
4. Does moderation always govern my use of alcohol?
5. Am I aware of any personal issues that should be addressed so that I might become a healthier person?
6. Do I get appropriate recreation and relaxation?

b. Spiritual and Liturgical Formation

i. Liturgy and Communal Spirituality

Seminarians should devote themselves to the liturgical life of the seminary and to other forms of communal prayer. They should come to see the Eucharistic Liturgy as the source and summit of Christian life and let it be the wellspring of their formation.
1. Am I forming a habit of daily liturgical prayer centered on the celebration of the Mass?
2. Do I contribute to the Liturgy by enthusiastically participating as a member of the assembly and willingly accepting specialized roles when appropriate?
3. Am I becoming comfortable with communal prayer in the Liturgy of the Hours?
4. Do I participate in all required conferences, days of recollection, and retreats with an attitude of openness and a desire to grow spiritually?
5. Do I try to contribute to the liturgy, for example, by singing in the choir or playing an instrument or acting as a cantor?

ii. Personal Spirituality

Seminarians should strive to grow continuously and progressively in their personal relationship with Christ and in their commitment to the Church and to their vocation. With the guidance of their spiritual director, they should come to a deeper understanding of prayer and the different types of prayer, and then they should begin to develop a daily program of prayer and a personal spirituality suited to their own temperament.

1. Am I developing the practice of personal prayer, including lectio divina, intimate conversation with the Lord, Eucharistic and Marian devotions, and spiritual reading?
2. Do I go to spiritual direction at least once every three weeks, and learn to profit from it through open conversations with my director?
3. Do I appreciate “the beauty and joy of the sacrament of penance” (PDV 48)? Do I avail myself of this sacrament frequently?
4. Do I maintain personal prayer and liturgical practices during vacation times when there is no supportive community structure?

iii. Celibacy

Pre-theology is a crucial time for seminarians to explore with their spiritual director whether God has given them the charism of celibacy. They must honestly discern their calling in light of their behavior, their capacity for mature relationships with others, and their personal strengths and weaknesses. Above all, if they conclude that God is giving them the capacity to live the celibate life, they must develop a strong spiritual life to support their commitment, and they must be completely honest with their spiritual director concerning their struggles to live the celibate life faithfully.

1. Am I growing in appreciation of what the Church means by celibacy and why it is appropriately linked to the priesthood?
2. Am I honestly examining my personal strengths and weaknesses and my behavior in order to discern whether God is calling me to a celibate life? Am I meeting regularly with my spiritual director, and am I honest with him about my struggles?
3. Do I demonstrate affective maturity in my relationships with others, and do I know how to act appropriately with different groups of people, e.g. peers, collegians, faculty and staff, people in field education placements, teen-agers, children, etc.?
4. Do I avoid inappropriate behaviors and patterns of relaxation and recreation (see Student Handbook, p. 506, “Relations of the Seminarian with his Neighbor”)?
5. Recognizing its inappropriateness, do I avoid sexual language and vulgarity?
6. Do I discern and avoid inappropriate films, videos, and Internet programs?
iv. **Obedience**

Seminarians should strive to form themselves by actively cooperating with the formation that the Church and superiors offer and that communal life requires. A sign of obedience at this stage of development is docility toward those responsible for one’s formation and, above all, a recognition that one needs formation. Observance of community directives and faithfulness to the daily schedule are also signs of an obedient spirit.

1. Am I becoming familiar with the seminary schedule and house directives, and am I faithful to them?
2. Am I docile to those in authority? Do I have a collaborative spirit?
3. Do I recognize my need for formation, and am I open to listening to those who are responsible for my formation?

v. **Simplicity of Life**

While all Christians should cultivate simplicity of life, those preparing to commit themselves to positions of pastoral leadership have special reasons to live simply. They should not allow themselves to be distracted from their pastoral responsibilities by the burdens that excessive possessions inevitably impose. They also should give credible witness to the kingdom of God by manifesting a detachment from earthly goods.

1. Am I learning to distinguish wants from genuine needs, and striving to satisfy the latter rather than the former?
2. Have I begun to discern and carry out appropriate practices of penance and almsgiving?
3. Am I adjusting my life style in the seminary so that it is appropriate for one who will be a priest?
4. Is my appearance neat and well groomed and at the same time modest and simple?

c. **Intellectual Formation**

The foundation for the graduate study of theology is laid by the serious and sustained study of philosophy, a comprehensive and adequate catechesis in the doctrine of the Catholic Church, and the study of classical languages. Seminarians at this level should possess or acquire foundational skills in college and graduate level reading, writing, note taking, and time management. Computer proficiency in word processing should be acquired. Seminarians should understand their own strengths and weaknesses as an adult learner and cultivate the disciplines and attitudes necessary to sustain them in rigorous study. They should not judge themselves in comparison with their peers, but should strive to set and achieve personal goals. They should accustom themselves to be accountable to their dioceses and formation advisors. First Pre-theologians should consider entering the Master of Philosophical Studies degree program and make elective choices accordingly. Second Pre-theologian M.A.P.S. candidates should be working with a Philosophy Department mentor on preparing for the comprehensive examinations, and to begin thinking about a topic for the qualifying paper to be completed by the end of First Theology.

1. Am I acquiring a firm grasp of philosophy so that I can see how reason supports and is supported by faith, and understand the underlying dynamics of contemporary society?
2. Am I acquiring an adult understanding of the faith through a thorough study of the Catechism of the Catholic Church?

3. Am I appropriating the language skills specified by my program? (That is, am I developing the skills in English necessary for graduate work and/or acquiring a reading knowledge of Latin and Greek and/or other languages?)

4. Am I open and honest about my academic work with my formation advisor?

5. Do I make use of the library, of information technology, the Writing Center, Learning Services, study groups, etc.? Do I speak with my professors when I have problems?

6. Have I reviewed the M.A.P.S. program? Will I enroll? (see appendix to the “Academic Norms” for full description). If enrolled, have I started working with a mentor in the Philosophy department towards the completion of the M.A.P.S. degree requirements?

d. Pastoral Formation

Pastoral formation is designed to prepare seminarians to be shepherds imbued with the charity of Christ and filled with his missionary spirit. It also enables seminarians to attain the pastoral competence and skills they will need to serve God’s people. This aspect of formation begins by introducing seminarians to the practical pastoral life of the Church through formative, supervised experiences in ministry. The focus at this stage of formation is “social outreach” to the poor and needy. Seminarians should aim at developing a real love for the “least of the brothers and sisters,” a love that should always be at the heart of their ministry in the future.

1. How am I developing my identity as a servant of the people of God?

2. What do I hope to get out of my pastoral experiences for my priestly formation?

3. Is my concern for social justice, peace, and respect for life deepening, and do I regard them as integral to priestly service?

4. Do I strive to recognize Christ in the “least of his brothers and sisters” and do I live with a true preferential option for the poor?

5. Do I recognize that ministry involves collaboration with others? Do I enjoy doing things by myself, or do I look forward to working as a member of a team?