

**Checklist for Applicants for Priestly Formation
Who Were Previously Enrolled in a Formation Program
with Another Diocese, Institute of Consecrated Life, or Society of Apostolic Life**

This checklist is intended to help diocesan bishops and major superiors apply the Norms Concerning Applications for Priestly Formation from Those Previously Enrolled in a Formation Program¹ and does not replace them.

The diocesan ordinary/religious superior or his delegate **must**² contact the following to request a letter of evaluation (in written form) including the cause for dismissal or departure:³

- The **rector**⁴ of all seminaries attended. These letters should include the dates in seminary along with a recommendation about or an acknowledgment of dismissal from formation.
- The **major superiors**⁵ of all institutes of consecrated life or societies of apostolic life to which an applicant was accepted into formation. These letters should request a recommendation—qualified or not, including the dates in formation—or an acknowledgment of dismissal or departure from formation.
- The **vocation director or director of seminarians**⁶ of any diocese, institute of consecrated life, or society of apostolic life in which the candidate was accepted and/or enrolled in a priestly formation program.

Verbal, confidential interviews are also recommended to take place with those identified above, and brief notes from these interviews⁷ should be included in the application file.⁸ This interview could help to ensure that terms are used consistently, especially when the applicant is an international student, as cultures and use of language can vary.⁹

¹ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), *Norms Concerning Applications for Priestly Formation from Those Previously Enrolled in a Formation Program*, addendum A in USCCB, *Program of Priestly Formation in the United States of America*, 5th ed. (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2006); also available at www.usccb.org/resources/Norms%20Concerning%20Reapplication%20for%20Priestly%20Formation.pdf. Hereafter cited as *Norms* by norm number. As stated in the *Program of Priestly Formation in the United States of America*, 6th ed., no. 80, the *Norms* are binding for all seminaries or ecclesial entities in the United States.

² *Norms* 5.

³ USCCB, *Program of Priestly Formation*, 6th ed. (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2022), no. 80; hereafter cited as PPF6. See also *Norms* 1, 4, 5, and 8 Commentary and c. 241 §3 in the *Code of Canon Law: Latin-English Edition: New English Translation (Codex Iuris Canonici)*, 4th ed. (Washington, DC: Canon Law Society of America, 2023); hereafter cited as CIC.

⁴ CIC cc. 238 §2, 239, 261. See also *Norms* 5.

⁵ CIC, cc. 134 §1, 620.

⁶ *Norms* 5.

⁷ *Norms* 5. See also PPF6, no. 66, and *Norms* 1.

⁸ *Norms* 5.

⁹ See also USCCB Committees on Clergy, Consecrated Life, and Vocations; Cultural Diversity in the Church; the Protection of Children and Young People; Canonical Affairs and Church Governance, *Guidelines for Receiving Pastoral Ministers in the United States*, 3rd ed. (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2014), G-2.

The candidate's application file **must**¹⁰ include the following, at a minimum:¹¹

- The candidate's written declaration indicating any diocesan formation program, seminary, institute of consecrated life, or society of apostolic life to which he has initiated or completed an application, including the date and name of each diocese, seminary, institute of consecrated life, or society of apostolic life and reasons for not completing the process, for being rejected, or for not affiliating with the diocese, institute of consecrated life, or society of apostolic life.¹²
- The candidate's written declaration indicating his acceptance by any formation program in any diocese, seminary, institute of consecrated life, or society of apostolic life, including the date and name of each diocese, seminary, institute of consecrated life, or society of apostolic life and his reasons for not enrolling or entering.¹³
- The candidate's written declaration indicating the dates and names of any diocese, seminary, institute of consecrated life, or society of apostolic life in which the candidate was ever enrolled, including stage(s) of formation before departure, date of departure, and whether the departure was the result of a dismissal or withdrawal, including reasons for leaving formation.¹⁴
- If accepted, a letter from the accepting diocesan bishop or major superior addressed to the seminary, religious formation program, institute of consecrated life, or society of apostolic life where the applicant is being sent, summarizing the application and consultation process that has taken place and giving the accepting bishop's or major superior's prudential judgment that the applicant is fit for seminary studies. A copy of this letter is to be sent to the diocesan bishop of any diocese with which the applicant was formerly affiliated or to the major superior of any institute of consecrated life or society of apostolic life to which he belonged.¹⁵

The candidate's files should include the following:

- All academic transcripts.
- Any documents related to the Rite of Admission to Candidacy for Holy Orders, ministries received, or any religious profession, whether temporary or perpetual.
- A signed release form giving the appropriate personnel of any previous diocese, seminary, institute of consecrated life, or society of apostolic life permission¹⁶ to speak to and release relevant files to the

¹⁰ Norms 4.

¹¹ PPF6, no. 56.

¹² Congregation for the Clergy, *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis (The Gift of the Priestly Vocation)*, December 8, 2016, no. 198; hereafter cited as *Ratio Fundamentalis*. See also Norms 3 and 4a.

¹³ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 198.

¹⁴ *Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 198.

¹⁵ Norms 6.

¹⁶ Consent occurs when there "prior, explicit, free, and informed consent given by the applicant prior to" any exchange of information. USCCB Committee on Clergy, Consecrated Life, and Vocations, *Guidelines for the Use of Psychology in Seminary Admissions* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2015), 9.

diocesan bishop, religious superior, vocation director, diocesan director of seminarians, institute of consecrated life, or society of apostolic life to which the candidate is currently applying.¹⁷

The timing of the reapplication should be discerned very carefully.¹⁸

The following release statement may be helpfully included in a seminary's or diocese's initial application paperwork or in a letter at the time of dismissal, departure, or denial of application:

I understand and agree that the Rector of the Seminary, Diocesan Bishop, or the bishop's authorized delegate may disclose relevant confidential information about me to the ordinary of any (arch)diocese I later request to be affiliated with, the rector of any seminary I later apply to, or the major superior of an institute of consecrated life or society of apostolic life in which I apply to enroll if I am dismissed from or voluntarily discontinue my participation in the program for priestly formation at this seminary. Likewise, I understand and agree that the Rector, Diocesan Bishop, or bishop's authorized delegate may disclose relevant confidential information about me to the ordinary of any (arch)diocese with which I subsequently seek affiliation, the rector of any seminary to which I later apply, or the major superior of an institute of consecrated life or society of apostolic life in which I seek enrollment if I either am rejected, am dismissed, or voluntarily discontinue my participation in the program of priestly formation in this seminary, institute of consecrated life, or society of apostolic life. Additionally, I agree that the recipient of any later application may summarize that application when requesting a letter or information from this seminary, diocese, institute of consecrated life, or society of apostolic life.¹⁹

¹⁷ *Norms* 4. For more information regarding releases see PPF6, no. 76.

¹⁸ “If an applicant has been dismissed from a program of priestly formation or from an institute of consecrated life or society of apostolic life, no subsequent application will be considered in the two years following such dismissal. If the departure was other than a dismissal, sufficient time should be allotted to evaluate carefully his application and background.” *Norms* 2.

¹⁹ *Norms* 1 and 5.