

# PRINCIPLES OF THE NEW PPF

The Program of Priestly Formation, Sixth Edition



## PHILOSOPHY IS FOUNDATIONAL

*Scripture Reflection: Philippians 4:4-9*

The Discipleship Stage, and the **study of philosophy**, are mandatory for all seminarians. Men who come to the Discipleship Stage in possession of either a broad intellectual formation, or a narrow one, must engage in the full philosophical intellectual formation program. Any temptation to abbreviate or circumvent philosophical requirements for seminarians must be avoided.

“The study of philosophy is fundamental and indispensable to the structure of theological studies and to the formation of candidates for the priesthood [or seminarians]. It is not by chance that the curriculum of theological studies is preceded by a time of special study of philosophy” (*Fides et Ratio*, no. 62). In priestly formation, at least two full years must be dedicated to the philosophical disciplines, which corresponds to the two-year period of the Discipleship Stage and composes a major aspect of intellectual formation. The particular focus of intellectual formation, as well as the other dimensions of formation during this period, is to help the seminarian deepen his identity as a **disciple of Jesus Christ**.

There is an “intimate bond which ties theological work to the philosophical search for truth” (*Fides et Ratio*, no. 63). It is essential that seminarians develop an understanding of the relationship between faith and reason and of the relationship and interaction between philosophy and theology, especially the ways they mutually enrich one another. “A proper philosophical training is vital, not only because of the links between the great philosophical questions and the mysteries of salvation which are studied in theology under the guidance of the higher light of faith, but also vis-à-vis an extremely

## KEY WORDS

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Study of Philosophy

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Discipleship in Christ

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Nature of Truth

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Integrated Study

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widespread cultural situation which emphasizes subjectivism as a criterion and measure of truth: Only a sound philosophy can help candidates for the priesthood to develop a reflective awareness of the fundamental relationship that exists between the human spirit and truth, that truth which is revealed to us fully in Jesus Christ” (*Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 52).

The study of philosophy is not just part of intellectual formation but is also connected to human, spiritual, and pastoral formation. Issues about priestly identity and about the apostolic and missionary dimensions of priestly ministry, “are closely linked to the question about the **nature of truth**. Philosophy serves as a guarantee of that ‘certainty of truth’ which is the only firm basis for a total giving of oneself to Jesus and to the Church” (*Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 52).

The seminary philosophy program should be balanced, comprehensive, **integrated**, and coherent. It must include substantial studies in the history of philosophy, treating of ancient, medieval, modern, and contemporary philosophy. It must also include the study of logic, epistemology, philosophy of nature, metaphysics, natural theology, anthropology, and ethics. “Philosophical instruction must be grounded in the perennially valid philosophical heritage and take into account philosophical investigation over the course of time. It is to be taught in such a way that it perfects the human development of students, sharpens their minds, and makes them better able to pursue theological studies” (CIC, c. 251). There should be a significant treatment of the thoughts of St. Thomas Aquinas, along with its ancient sources and its later development. The fruitful relationship between philosophy and theology in the Christian tradition should be explored through studies in Thomistic thought as well as the thought of other great Christian theologians who were also great philosophers. These include certain Fathers of the Church, medieval Doctors, and recent Christian thinkers in the Western and Eastern traditions.

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. What are the long-range plans for development of philosophy professors who can properly include all dimensions of formation in their classrooms?
2. How does the seminary encourage philosophy professors to contribute to priestly formation and witness the Gospel in their own lives?

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### What is expected of professors who teach during the Discipleship Stage?

The nature of undergraduate study during the Discipleship Stage, and the breadth of expertise required for a liberal arts education, means that the dedicated presence of many laymen and laywomen will play an especially important role. By modeling a love for the Church as she is,

a wholehearted fidelity to her teaching, a loyalty to the pope and bishops, an appreciation of the priesthood, and a collaborative spirit in ministry, men and women in consecrated life and laymen and laywomen who teach subjects in the sacred sciences make an important contribution to priestly formation in all stages.