

PRINCIPLES OF THE NEW PPF

The Program of Priestly Formation, Sixth Edition *pre-Confirmatio*



THRESHOLDS FOR ADMISSION

Scripture Reflection: Matthew 10:26-31

Applicants to seminary formation represent considerable diversity, not only of personal gifts and levels of maturity but also of significant cultural differences. All those involved in the evaluation of applicants for priestly formation must appreciate cultural, generational, educational, and familial differences and be able to recognize which are gifts, which are liabilities, and which are simply indications of a need for further growth.

Diocesan bishops, major superiors, and those who share their responsibility for the admissions process, must have moral conviction about the **minimal thresholds** of those they admit into priestly formation. They must be assured those applicants have a requisite level of affective maturity and the capacity to live celibate chastity. They will determine the means necessary to arrive at such certitude, including, for example, their own interviews with applicants, the reliable testimony of those who have known the applicant, and psychological and physical assessments made by expert consultants.

In forming a prudent judgment about the suitability of an applicant for priestly formation, the principle of **gradualism** should be used. Applicants for admission should have attained, at least in some measure appropriate to their chronological age, qualities in those areas represented by the integrated dimensions of formation. In trying to determine what is sufficient growth or development in these areas, admission criteria must be **clear and specific**.

KEY WORDS

Admission Thresholds

Gradualism

Clear & Specific

Right Intention

- **Human:** a proven capacity to function competently in ordinary situations without a need for extensive therapeutic or remedial work to be fully functioning; a psychosexual maturity commensurate with chronological age; a genuine empathy that enables the applicant to connect well and personally with others; a demonstrated ability to initiate and sustain friendships; a capacity for growth or conversion; and a deep desire to be a man for others in the likeness of Christ.
- **Spiritual:** a person who prays regularly; is active in parish life; participates in the Sunday Eucharist and regularly in the Sacrament of Penance; and is drawn to explore and deepen his spiritual life and share it with others. In the case of an applicant for an institute of consecrated life or society of apostolic life, the man should demonstrate a firm acceptance and adherence to the rule of life of the institute or the constitution of the society, especially regarding its practices of liturgical, sacramental, and personal prayer.
- **Intellectual:** proven capacities for critical thinking, an ability to understand abstract and practical questions, and the capacity to understand and communicate effectively with others in both oral and written form.
- **Pastoral:** a fundamental sense of the Church’s mission and a generous willingness and enthusiasm to promote it; a sensitivity to the needs of others and a desire to respond to them; and a willingness to initiate action for the good of individuals and communities.

Finally, applicants should have the **right intention**. Their intention to pursue preparation for priestly ordination and ministry should correspond to the Church’s understanding. Given the probationary nature of the Propaedeutic Stage to provide a solid basis for the spiritual life and to nurture a greater self-awareness for personal growth—and given that men begin this stage from various backgrounds, levels of maturity, and life experiences—it will take time for these qualities to be observed and strengthened.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. What does it mean that the *whole* Church is responsible for promoting vocations?
2. In contrast to previous generations, what are the unique blessings and challenges of seminary applicants today?

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What should we look for in candidates regarding their psycho-sexual maturity?

Without denying the importance of evaluating minimal thresholds in all areas of an applicant’s development, strict vigilance is especially necessary in evaluating human thresholds pertaining to sexuality. “Sexuality affects all aspects of the human person in the unity of his body and soul. It especially

concerns affectivity, the capacity to love and to procreate, and in a more general way the aptitude for forming bonds of communion with others” (CCC, no. 2332). For the seminary applicant, thresholds pertaining to sexuality serve as the foundation for living a lifelong commitment to healthy, celibate chastity.