

PRINCIPLES OF THE NEW PPF

The Program of Priestly Formation, Sixth Edition



BECOMING SHEPHERD AND SERVANT

Scripture Reflection: John 10:1-18

The **Configuration Stage** demands from the seminarian a great commitment as he models his life on the self-donation of Jesus Christ, Shepherd, and Servant, and prepares more immediately for Holy Orders. This stage challenges seminarians to acquire a proper priestly spirituality as self-offering for the pastoral care of the sheep. Conferral of the ministries of lector and acolyte is appropriate during this stage, marking the progressive deepening of this self-configuration to Christ both liturgically and in catechesis, evangelization, and active service to the poor.

Formation for priestly spirituality involves a heartfelt dedication to his ecclesiastical entity and evidence of observable benchmarks.

Human Formation Benchmarks

- **Interiority:** demonstrate interior freedom, self-possession, self-motivation, direction, and the capacity for self-donation; selfless leadership and the relational qualities of solidarity, compassion, empathy, and attentive listening.
- **Self-mastery:** cares for and has vigilance over his body with balanced habits of exercise and rest; developed strategies for handling psychological issues in his life; well-established habits regarding the proper use of technology; and a capacity to manage appropriate boundaries.

Spiritual Formation Benchmarks

- **Internalized Spiritual Life:** fidelity to the Liturgy of the Hours, daily Mass, and personal prayer, even when he is away from the seminary or house of formation.

KEY WORDS

Configuration Stage

Self-Mastery

Vocational Permanence

Pastoral Leadership

- **Vocational Permanence:** ability to communicate and share his joyful desire for lifelong priestly life and ministry, as well as a desire to live the sacramental life of a priest.

Intellectual Formation Benchmarks

- **Academic Integration:** demonstrate the ability to integrate academic development with the spiritual and pastoral dimensions (e.g., his understanding of Christian anthropology influences his approaches to personal prayer and pastoral ministry).
- **Fidelity to the Magisterium:** demonstrated in his proclamation and explanation of the Catholic faith and in his ministerial actions.

Pastoral Formation Benchmarks

- **Pastoral Leadership:** demonstrate that he is articulate, good at listening, and capable of public speaking. He can take on the role of a public person in the Church. His intensive study of theology is integrated with his pastoral skills making him an effective homilist and teacher.
- **Docility to Authority:** offering his life in service to the Church involves understanding and following the will of Christ in the person of his diocesan bishop or the competent authority of his institute of consecrated life or society of apostolic life.

The end of the Configuration Stage should demonstrate that the seminarian entered profoundly into the contemplation of the person of Jesus Christ, making his relationship with Christ more intimate and personal and, at the same time, leading to an awareness and an assumption of priestly identity. Both the seminarian and community of formators are then free to make a recommendation to the diocesan bishop or ecclesiastic superior on his readiness for ordination to the diaconate.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. What learning outcome evidence best demonstrates a seminarian's integration of the intellectual, spiritual, and pastoral dimensions?
2. How does the focus on liturgy and the celebration of the Mystery of Christ integrate into the intellectual formation of seminary life?

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How often should the seminary community be together?

It is important for formators to help seminarians find a balance between seminary community and the essential learning which occurs in apostolic and pastoral assignments. Time in intentional seminary community can reveal affective maturity, and the ability to exercise

leadership among peers. Seminary community also offers older seminarians the opportunity to be positive examples for younger seminarians through their willingness to volunteer for additional responsibilities, and their avoidance of gossip and cynicism.