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A. INTRODUCTION

1. "For every priest his spiritual formation is the core which unifies and gives life to his *being* a priest and his *acting as* a priest" (*Pastores Dabo Vobis*, #45; PPF #106). "Since spiritual formation is the core that unifies the life of a priest, it stands at the heart of the seminary life and is the center around which all other aspects are integrated." (PPF #115)
2. "Spiritual formation ...should be conducted in such a way that the students may learn to live in intimate and unceasing union with God the Father through his Son Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit. Those who are to take on the likeness of Christ the priest by sacred ordination should form the habit of drawing close to him as friends in every detail of their lives. They should live his Paschal Mystery in such a way that they will know how to initiate into it the people committed to their charge. They should be taught to seek Christ in faithful meditation on the Word of God and in active participation in the sacred mysteries of the Church, especially the Eucharist and the Divine Office, to seek him in the Bishop by whom they are sent and in the people to whom they are sent, especially the poor, little children, the weak, sinners and unbelievers. With the confidence of sons they should love and reverence the most Blessed Virgin Mary, who was given as a mother to the disciple by Jesus Christ as he was dying on the cross" (*Optatam Totius*, On Priestly Formation, #8; PPF #107).
3. "The final goal of spiritual formation in the seminary is to establish attitudes, habits and practices in the spiritual life that will continue after ordination. Spiritual formation in the seminary is meant to set the foundation for a lifetime of priestly ministry and spirituality" (PPF #110, *Ongoing Spiritual Formation*).

B. PERSONAL DIMENSIONS OF SPIRITUAL FORMATION

1. "The spirituality cultivated in the seminary is specifically priestly," embracing prayer, simplicity of life, obedience, pastoral service and celibate chastity (PPF #109).
2. Every seminarian must have a spiritual director with whom he should meet at least once every three weeks. The spiritual director is to be freely chosen by the seminarian, subject to the approval of the seminarian's local Ordinary and the seminary Rector. The matter of the relationship includes the manifestation of the internal forum of conscience, with confidentiality understood, for the moral and spiritual perfection of the student (Cf. Canon 239, #2; PPF #110, *Spiritual Direction*).
3. The task of the spiritual director is to guide the seminarian "in arriving at the interiorization and integration needed for growth in sanctity, virtue, and readiness for Holy Orders" (PPF #110, *Spiritual Direction*). "Seminarians should confide their personal history, personal relationships, prayer experiences, the cultivation of virtues, their temptations, and other significant topics to their spiritual director" (PPF #128).
4. "The habit of daily prayer and meditation enables seminarians to acquire a personalized sense of how God's salvation has taken hold of their lives and how they might respond to that great grace. This prayer happens in the context of silence and solitude in which they learn to be attuned to God's movements in their lives. It grows and develops into a contemplative attitude that learns to find God in all things. It matures in such a way that it allows for a balanced and unifying rhythm of life in action and contemplation, work and prayer, while providing the future priest with the strength, meaning, and focus he will need in his life" (PPF #110, *Personal meditation*; #121, *Solitude*).
5. To aid such prayer, an "essential element of spiritual formation is the prayerful and meditated reading of the Word of God (*lectio divina*)" (*Pastores Dabo Vobis*, #47). "To take on more fully the mind of Christ and to be steadily transformed by the Word of God, the seminarian ought to develop the habit of daily reflection on the Sacred Scriptures, and daily meditation on the lectionary readings and/or other reflective reading of the Scriptures" (PPF #110, *Bible*; #123).
6. The personal prayer life of the seminarian should also embrace adequate preparation before Mass and thanksgiving after Mass, daily examination of conscience, mental prayer, as well as daily Eucharist, Liturgy of the Hours, frequent confession, Eucharistic devotion, and Marian piety.
7. Regular spiritual reading, including the lives of the saints, should be a part of the seminarian's spiritual formation.
8. The seminarian's spiritual formation should also include the cultivation of an authentic priestly life in imitation of Jesus Christ. This life includes celibacy, obedience, simplicity of life, as well as the cardinal virtues (Justice, Temperance, Prudence, Fortitude) and theological virtues (Faith, Hope, Charity).

Regular and frequent reception of the Sacrament of Penance ought to be part of each seminarian's life. While seminarians are free to approach their own spiritual director, the Director of Spiritual Formation, or any of the adjunct spiritual directors or confessors for the Sacrament of Penance, ordinarily the seminarian makes it a practice to confess regularly to his own spiritual director. Seminarians may not confess to other faculty priests whose

responsibilities are in the external forum (e.g., the Rector, Vice Rector, Dean of Students, and other priests as indicated by the Director of Spiritual Formation) (PPF #110, *Sacrament of Penance*; #120).

C. COMMUNAL DIMENSIONS OF SPIRITUAL FORMATION

1. "Spiritual formation is first and foremost a participation in public worship of the Church that is itself a participation in the heavenly liturgy offered by Christ, our great high priest" (PPF #110, *Holy Eucharist*).
2. Seminarians are to participate in the daily celebration of the Eucharist. They are trained "to consider the eucharistic celebration as the essential moment of their day, in which they will take an active part and at which they will never be satisfied with a merely habitual attendance." They experience the Eucharist as "the high point of Christian prayer" and learn that its daily celebration should be at the center of their future priestly life (Cf. *Pastores Dabo Vobis* #48).
3. In virtue of their office, priests are to pray the Liturgy of the Hours for their own people and for the whole people of God. The Liturgy of the Hours is thus an important part of seminary spiritual formation. Seminarians participate in the daily communal celebration of Morning and Evening Prayer, and they also are expected to develop the habit of praying the other Hours of the Divine Office. Communal Night Prayer is encouraged for small groups and is prayed several nights of the week as an option in the seminary chapel. Seminarians are thus not only prepared to undertake the canonical obligation of praying the Liturgy of the Hours, but also learn to appreciate its importance as the Prayer of the Church (PPF #110, *Liturgy of the Hours*; #117, 119).
4. Seminarians learn the importance of the virtue of penance, "which finds its fullness in the Sacrament of Reconciliation." They are encouraged to make frequent use of the sacrament as a means of continuing conversion. Communal celebrations of the sacrament with individual confession and absolution are important moments in seminary life. Individual celebration of the sacrament is also available and encouraged. Seminarians thus learn to appreciate the beauty and joy of the Sacrament of Penance (Cf. *Pastores Dabo Vobis* #48 and PPF #110, *Sacrament of Penance*; #120).
5. A holy hour of Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament takes place every day in the seminary chapel so that the seminary community may adore the Eucharistic Mystery more profoundly. Seminarians learn that the Eucharistic presence derives from the Eucharistic sacrifice and has as its purpose both sacramental and spiritual communion. Visits to the Blessed Sacrament at other times during the day are also encouraged. Prayerful reflection in the presence of the Eucharistic Lord leads to a deeper sharing in the Paschal Mystery and to a more generous response to the gift of the Eucharist in one's life of faith, hope and charity (PPF #110, *Devotions*; #124).
6. Communal devotional prayer is provided periodically throughout the year. The rosary is prayed several nights each week in the seminary chapel. Stations of the Cross are celebrated during the season of Lent. Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary and the saints is encouraged as essential means of growth in the spiritual life (PPF #110, *Devotions*; #125).
7. An annual week-long retreat and regularly scheduled weekends of recollection and days of renewal are provided as essential components of the spiritual formation program. Attendance is mandatory. These are privileged times for prayer and quiet reflection with the goal of

intensifying one's spiritual growth. Outside directors offer conferences on pertinent areas of priestly life and spirituality (PPF #110, *Retreats and days of recollection*; #122).

8. The Director of Spiritual Formation offers bi-weekly spiritual conferences. Attendance is mandatory. These conferences treat various topics related to priestly life and spirituality (PPF # 122).

D. CELIBACY STATEMENT

1. Responsibilities of the Seminarian

Candidates for the priesthood must be able to discern a twofold call: a call to ordained ministry and a call to live the celibate life. While celibacy may belong to the “logic” of priestly life, since it allows the priest to conform his life radically to that of Christ whom he represents, celibacy is nevertheless a distinct charism. In the course of his formation the seminarian must discern that he is called by God to the celibate state and come to the conclusion that he has both the capacity for and desire to live celibate chastity his whole life. Each seminarian is expected to confront the question of celibacy in an honest, forthright way, and not merely take it for granted as a condition for becoming a priest.

Discerning the charism of celibacy and finding strength to live it happily and healthfully involve the following steps:

a. Understanding what the Church teaches celibacy to be

Students come to the seminary with more or less clear conceptions about celibacy. Only by reading and reflecting on Church documents which treat celibacy in depth, such as *Presbyterorum Ordinis* (Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests), Pope Paul VI's encyclical, *Sacerdotalis Caelibatus*, (On Priestly Celibacy), and Pope John Paul II's many writings, especially *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, will the seminarian be able to grasp adequately what is entailed in the celibate commitment. Over the course of their formation, students should be well informed about what they will be embracing at ordination. They should be able to recognize celibacy as a personal gift for more radical discipleship of Christ and for greater freedom to serve the Church, with a desire to give witness to the coming of the eschatological Kingdom.

b. Seeking advice and guidance about celibacy

Within the seminary each student has a formation advisor and a spiritual director whose responsibilities are to assist the student in discerning and nurturing a priestly vocation. Though they will approach the topic differently, they will each discuss with the student his readiness for the celibate life on a regular basis in the course of the formation process.

- **The formation advisor** carries out his duties in the external forum. Discussion of celibacy with advisees should focus on such issues as friend-ships, relationships with others, how the student handles loneliness and solitude, and personality or character traits which are counter-indicative for the celibate life. The formation advisor, as well as the spiritual director, will look for those natural virtues which are most consonant with a celibate life. The formation advisor is to bring any concerns which he has to the attention of the Rector and faculty. Since priest formation advisors are responsible for evaluating and recommending students for advancement and ordination, they may not hear the confessions of their own advisees.

- **The spiritual director** helps the seminarian on a deeper, personal level to discern God's call to the celibate life. By sharing their struggles and concerns, and by revealing themselves in an honest way to their spiritual directors, students will gradually come to a more profound self-understanding which will allow them to make a decision for celibacy with the greatest possible freedom and maturity. At times the spiritual director may suggest psychological counseling, which should be taken as a positive desire to provide assistance in the attainment of greater personal integration.

c. Living a life which nurtures celibacy

Since celibacy is not a natural virtue but a gift from the Lord, it cannot be sustained without a life of prayer and regular participation in the sacramental life of the Church. Daily participation in the Eucharist and regular confession are vital supports in fidelity to a chaste, celibate life. Devotion to the Virgin Mary as the model of faithfulness to both her Son and the chaste life should enjoy a significant place in the seminarian's spiritual life. Seminarians should also look to the lives of the saints for inspiration and strength in their own struggles.

Celibacy cannot be lived in a healthy way in isolation. Candidates for priesthood should confront the loneliness all human beings have to face and show that they can deal with it in a creative way. Celibacy can only be lived in communion with others, and seminarians can do this in a number of ways: by forming satisfying friendships; experiencing the fraternity of fellow seminarians; establishing good relationships with the men and women encountered in their apostolates; forming bonds with the presbyterate of their home dioceses; and strengthening ties to their families. The stoic individualist or "lone ranger" does not make the ideal celibate. Rather the ideal celibate is one who is capable of forming genuine human relationships and working in collaboration with others.

Celibacy does not stand in isolation from the other two evangelical counsels -- poverty and obedience. If celibacy means availability for others, so do poverty or simplicity of life and obedience. A priest who is preoccupied with material things cannot be free for service to others; nor can a priest who does not listen to others -- whether they are his superiors, his peers, or his people -- honestly claim that he has put himself at the service of others. The self-emptying of oneself that is expressed in celibacy should be mirrored in a moderate lifestyle and a docile spirit.

2. Attitudes and Behaviors of the Seminarian

The central and unifying point for all attitudes and behaviors regarding the commitment to celibacy is the adoption of the heart and mind of Christ. This determines all the relationships of the celibate person: with God, with others, and with himself.

a. Relationship of the Seminarian with God

- 1) **Basic attitude:** profound attachment to Christ whereby the seminarian strives to adopt Christ's filial love for the Father and selfless love for others.
- 2) **Behaviors which flow from this attitude**
 - a) a vibrant, personal life of prayer
 - b) regular reception of the Sacrament of Penance and spiritual direction

- c) development of a spirit of contemplation and an appreciation of solitude for the life of prayer and pastoral charity
- d) practice of the virtues

3) Behaviors which are opposed to this attitude

- a) mechanical and minimal fulfillment of obligations to pray
- b) cultivation of a public persona in conformity with what is seen as expected while privately not living up to one's way of life.
- c) abandonment of prayer, sacramental life, spiritual direction
- d) seeking diversions and escape from the demands of seminary formation

b. Relationship of the Seminarian with his Neighbor

1) Basic attitude: in imitation of Christ, a selfless love for others that is the essence of pastoral charity.

2) Behaviors which flow from this attitude

- a) universal openness to others as brothers and sisters in Christ
- b) participation in the common life of the seminary
- c) recognition and development of the gift of friendship and ability to make and keep friends
 - i) formation of friendships with others -- both men and women -- which are warm, unselfish, and prudent
 - ii) formation of friendships with brother seminarians and diocesan brothers for the sake of priestly fraternity
- d) commitment to hard work in study and in pastoral assignments

3) Behaviors which are opposed to this attitude

- a) romantic love or relationships marked by sentimentality and un-realistic expectations
- b) going to bars and clubs which are not in keeping with chaste celibacy or with the priesthood
- c) flirting, dating or dating-like behavior
- d) words, conversations or actions designed to flaunt one's sexuality or to arouse sexual passion in oneself or in another, whether of the same or the opposite sex.
- e) telling or listening to inappropriate jokes or innuendo

c. Relationship of the Seminarian to Himself

1) Basic Attitude: To see Christ as Lord of one's own body, which is the temple of the Holy Spirit, and to have a sense of one's honor and dignity as a Christian and as a seminarian preparing to share in Christ's priesthood.

2) Behaviors which flow from this attitude

- a) modesty in speech, manners and dress; discipline of the senses with a view to purity of heart, mind and body
- b) learning how to value solitude and deal with loneliness
- c) constructive use of time in work and leisure; development of useful pursuits such as reading, writing, and various hobbies
- d) reasonable amounts of recreation and exercise, and the enjoyment of physical activities and sports

3) Behaviors which are opposed to this attitude

- a) a self-indulgent and luxurious lifestyle; expensive vacations and restaurants, etc.
- b) excessive and imprudent use of television and the Internet; habitual dependence upon them for recreation
- c) viewing of pornography – television, movies, Internet, computer games – which degrade one's human dignity and arouse sexual passion, resulting in unchaste thoughts, desires, and actions