

PRINCIPLES OF THE NEW PPF

The Program of Priestly Formation, Sixth Edition



EVALUATION OF SEMINARIANS

Scripture Reflection: Matthew 7:1-5

The annual **evaluation of seminarians** is linked to their formation as well as to the Church's responsibility to discern vocations to priesthood as gifts from God. Since formation assumes that a seminarian will be growing both in God's grace and in his free, human response to that grace, it is important that there be a process to note the benchmarks of that growth.

The Church's responsibility to discern the authenticity of vocations also implies some process whereby the Church, usually working through the seminary, scrutinizes the seminarian's aptness and readiness to assume the responsibilities of ordained ministry. The annual evaluation of seminarians then affirms, strengthens, and fosters growth in formation while continuing the process of discernment. This process of evaluation must be **clearly described** in detail in the seminary handbook. The annual evaluation is primarily the responsibility of the rector and the community of formators in the external forum. It should also involve the input of the seminarians themselves, their peers, and various supervisors, professors, and other experts involved in formation.

As part of the evaluation procedure, each seminary should ensure that seminarians are apprised of their progress as early as possible in their formation, particularly if there are concerns; that the priest formator **regularly communicates** with the seminarians; that the seminarians have a procedure for responding to matters raised in the evaluation process; that confidentiality, as articulated by the seminary, is observed; and that all doubts are resolved in favor of the Church.

The process of evaluation should be conducted in an atmosphere of mutual trust and confidence. It should promote the continued growth

KEY WORDS

Seminarian Evaluation

Clearly Described

Regular Communication

Yearly Final Report

of the seminarian in the four dimensions of formation. Each seminarian should be evaluated based on his actual progress and maturation, not based on the mere passage of time.

Self-evaluations and peer evaluations can be valuable instruments in this process. Seminarians should prepare self-evaluations with an honest and candid examination of themselves in the areas of human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral formation. They should recognize strengths and weaknesses, positive qualities as well as areas of needed growth. Seminarians completing peer evaluations should be exhorted to do so with honesty, confidentiality, and in a spirit of charity.

The evaluative process culminates in a **yearly written report** from the rector to the diocesan bishop or major superior that provides a clear estimation of the seminarian's progress. The report should include the results of the vote of the community of formators in the external forum regarding the seminarian's advancement, supplying the number of affirmative and negative votes as well as the number of abstentions (with explanations).

The annual evaluation should include a well-founded judgment concerning the suitability of the seminarian for advancement to the next year or stage of formation. The evaluation report should be detailed, and the final copy should be signed by the seminarian. The qualities listed in Canon Law as requirements for promotion to Holy Orders should be considered at each stage of advancement: integral faith, right intention, requisite knowledge, good reputation, integral morals and proven virtues, and requisite physical and psychological health. The evaluation should provide a judgment of the seminarian's aptitude for priestly life and ministry as well as an estimation of his capacity to lead a chaste, celibate life. The seminarian's current stage in formation should be considered in assessing his readiness for advancement.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. How does the seminary community prepare seminarians for future pastoral life, including ministry, personal prayer, study, and self-care?
2. How do the rector and priest formators witness to the proper use of media, the internet, and entertainment in general?

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Who determines the suitability of a candidate for Holy Orders?

The final judgment about a seminarian's admission to candidacy (or perpetual profession, for members of institutes of consecrated life or societies of apostolic life), institution into the ministries of lector and acolyte, and ordination to the diaconate and priesthood belongs to the diocesan

bishop or major superior. Assisting in this task are the seminary rector, vocation director, priest formators, and the pastor of the parish where the deacon is assigned, who verifies that the candidate is suitable for priestly ministry, and ready to assume the teaching, sanctifying, and governing mission of Christ.