

THE FOUR PILLARS OF PRIESTLY FORMATION

HUMAN

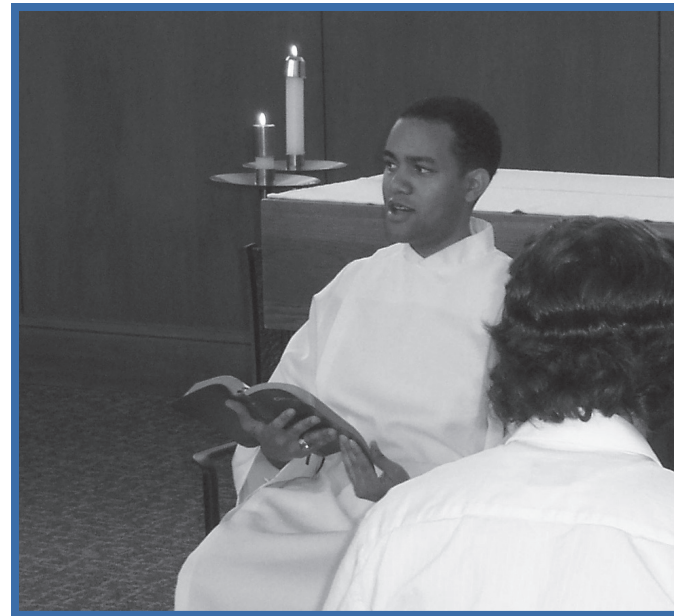
“Formation, as the Church understands it, is not equivalent to a secular sense of schooling, or even less, job training. Formation is first and foremost cooperation with the grace of God. All priestly formation takes place within the context of the Church as the Body of Christ and in relationship to the mission of the Church” (Program for Priestly Formation [PPF], pages 68-69, fifth edition, abridged).

“The basic principle of human formation is [that] the human personality of the priest is to be a bridge and not an obstacle for others in their meeting with Jesus Christ the Redeemer of the human race” (PPF, 75).



“The seminarian is a man who is free to live according to God’s design, with solid moral character. He is a man who is prudent and able to communicate with the world around him. He is a man of communion, one who is capable of making a gift of himself and of receiving the gift of others. He respects himself and others in a mature fashion and is a man who can live as a public person in service of the Gospel and representing the Church” (PPF, 76).

SPIRITUAL



“The basic principle of spiritual formation is...to live in intimate and unceasing union with God the Father through his Son, Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit. This is the foundational call to discipleship and conversion of heart. Those who aspire to be sent on mission, as the apostles were, must first acquire the listening and learning heart of disciples” (PPF, 107).

“For a man to grow in spiritual life, he must make the Holy Eucharist the essential moment of the day. The Sacrament of Penance is also essential, for it is the school of compassion that teaches penitents how to live out God’s compassionate mercy in the world. The seminarian must also be taught to love and embrace the Liturgy of the Hours as a lifelong ministry of prayer on behalf of the whole Church and to use silent reflection as a way of personalizing a deep sense of God’s salvation. Spiritual direction and retreats assist the student with interiority and self-reflection. Other essential components of spiritual formation assist the man with whole-heartedly embracing the gift of celibacy, obedience, and simplicity of life” (PPF, 110).

INTELLECTUAL

“The basic principle of intellectual formation for priesthood candidates is...[F]or the salvation of their brothers and sisters, they should seek an ever deeper knowledge of the divine mysteries” (PPF, 137).



In the seminary program, intellectual formation culminates in a deepened understanding of the mysteries of faith that is pastorally geared toward priestly ministry, especially preaching. From liberal arts and philosophy to advanced theological studies, the candidate is expected to apply these disciplines in light of his priestly mission and ministry. The college and theology levels of formation prepare the man for this reality.

THE SEMINARIAN IS A MAN OF
COMMUNION, ONE WHO IS CAPABLE
OF MAKING A GIFT OF HIMSELF AND OF
RECEIVING THE GIFT OF OTHERS.

PASTORAL

“The basic principle of pastoral formation is [that] the whole training of the students should have as its object to make them true shepherds of souls after the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, teacher, priest, and shepherd. To be a true shepherd of souls, means standing with and for Christ in the community, the Christ who teaches and sanctifies and guides or leads the community. The grace to be a shepherd comes with ordination...” (PPF, 238).

In the formation program, the seminarian is introduced to several essential elements which are required for effective priestly ministry. These include preaching the Word of God, learning to appreciate the sacraments as part of his future public ministry for the salvation of souls, embracing a genuine missionary spirit, learning skills for effective public ministry, and applying practical experiences of others. He will also be exposed to diverse cultural experiences, including various social contexts and structures that can breed injustice. Among these experiences is a deep concern for the poor.

