



**Programme for Priestly Formation
Australia**

RATIO NATIONALIS INSTITUTIONIS SACERDOTALIS

Australian Catholic Bishops Conference

**January 2007
Revised November 2014
This version December 2015**

Decretum



CONGREGATIO PRO CLERICIS

Prot. No. 20154289

D E C R E E

The Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference, concerned to provide for the increasing needs of the formation of candidates for the priesthood, and in consideration of the present cultural and social circumstances, has completed the preparation of its *Ratio nationalis institutionis sacerdotalis*, entitled the *Programme for Priestly Formation – Australia*. Also, for the same reasons, the said Conference, having examined the magisterial sources, has drawn together elements of helpful and sound doctrine and pedagogy, to enrich the spiritual, human, intellectual and pastoral formation of future priests with new and inspiring elements, appropriate to the particular needs of this present time. This *Ratio* is permeated with sound doctrine and an authentic missionary spirit, while fostering and promoting all that is necessary for the new evangelisation in the modern world.

Equally praiseworthy is the concern of the said Episcopal Conference for a faithful and profound philosophical and theological preparation for its students, appropriate for the promotion of the sacred sciences in these present times, which is presented in the *Schema for Academic Formation*. The clear general and particular principles, concerning the individual disciplines, will enable the personal spiritual life of priests and the universal pastoral mission in modern society to be built on a firm foundation.

With these matters, therefore, having been considered and evaluated, this Congregation for the Clergy willingly approves the present *Programme of Priestly Formation – Australia* and also the *Schema for Academic Formation*, for such time as may be deemed necessary or useful by either the Episcopal Conference or this Congregation, and orders that those matters to which it pertains are to be faithfully observed; fulfilling that which is to be fulfilled according to law; anything to the contrary notwithstanding.

Given at Rome, from the Palace of the Congregations, this 28 day of December in the year of Our Lord 2015.

Beniamino Cardinal Stella
Prefect

✠ Joël Mercier
Titular Archbishop of Rota
Secretary

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Preface

As the Catholic Church in Australia enters the third Christian millennium there are encouraging signs of new growth in priestly vocations. In response to this situation and the requirements to provide suitable priestly formation that meets the needs of our city and rural dioceses, the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference offer this document entitled *Programme for Priestly Formation in Australia*.

1. The Priest in His Time

God always calls his priests from specific human and ecclesial contexts, which inevitably influence them; and to these same contexts the priest is sent for the service of Christ's Gospel. [Accordingly] the life and ministry of the priest must ... adapt to every era and circumstance of life.¹

The context for the priestly formation in Australia resembles in large measure that of the so-called "Western World," characterised as it is by strong ambivalences. Among these could be mentioned: a greater awareness of the dignity of the human person while at the same time a marked breakdown of family life and an increase in attacks on human life, especially towards the unborn, the sick and the dying. There appears a greater openness to religious values, though often coupled with outbursts of religious intolerance; a more open search for truth and meaning in an objective standard of values is more evident, though often accompanied and weakened by rationalism and by an individualism fuelled by modern consumerism. A renewed thirst for God and for an active relationship with Him has reappeared, side by side with a practical and existential atheism in which the individual feels he can simply do without God.²

However, the Australian context also possesses some unique features. While religion has never had the prominence in public life that it has previously held in many other countries, neither does a separation of Church and State reign to the extent that it does elsewhere. A sense of fairness, openness and justice, which can be said to characterise the Australian people, makes possible a more fruitful participation of the Church in public life. In addition, the sense of Australia being a 'young' country with only a brief history of European settlement and possessing a vibrant mix of immigrant cultures preserves Australians from any sense of boredom and sterility at a cultural level. In fact among some of these diverse cultural groups the life of the Church continues to show significant health, and they provide a substantial portion of candidates to the seminaries. Within the Catholic Church in Australia, a decline in the number of diocesan priests is now beginning to be offset by an increase in the number of candidates entering seminaries. These candidates require a programme of formation that will adequately prepare them for ministry in a society whose broad characteristics have been outlined above. They will undertake this ministry in the context of the scandal of child abuse by clergy and inadequate response to it by some Church leaders in the past, which gives rise to expectations for careful screening and selection of seminarians, rigorous training, integrity, transparency and demonstrable accountability. Furthermore, given some challenges encountered in the current ecclesial situation such as subjectivism in matters of faith and a lack of due knowledge of the faith, a form of catechesis having little practical effect, the widespread influence of the mass media, an incorrect understanding of pluralism and finally a diffidence almost bordering on rejection towards the

¹ John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Formation of Priests in the Circumstances of the Present Day, *Pastores dabo vobis* (25 March 1992), n. 5; *AAS* 84 (1992): 657–864.

² *Pastores dabo vobis*, n. 6.

magisterium,³ require a programme sufficiently robust and specific to prepare the next generation of priests to engage effectively in the life of the Church in Australia.

2. The Responsibility of the Bishops for Formation

No missionary activity can be realistically undertaken without the enthusiastic support of priests, who are the first and most valued collaborators of the Order of Bishops.⁴

The bishops view the formation of priests for service in the church as one of the primary concerns of the Episcopal ministry,⁵ with each bishop “primarily responsible for priestly formation” in his diocese,⁶ and understand the exercise of this responsibility to reflect the triple *munera* of the bishop. The bishops also recognise the trust that is placed in priests by the faithful, and the responsibility they have as bishops to ensure that those who are ordained and given appointments in their diocese are worthy of this trust.

As an exercise of the *munus docendi*, to be the true and authentic teachers of the church’s faith, priests given the faculty to preach and teach by their bishop must be formed to know and accept the authentic teachings of the Catholic Church. Furthermore, sound priestly formation not only prepares the priest to make the *Oath of Fidelity* and *Profession of Faith* but to joyfully live and witness to that which is sworn and professed.

Priestly formation is an exercise of the *munus sanctificandi*. The bishops, “who are the high priests, the principal dispensers of the mysteries of God and the moderators, promoters and guardians of the entire liturgical life in the Churches to their care,”⁷ fully appreciate the great care needed to prepare future priests to preside over the liturgical assembly and to be spiritual leaders.⁸ They recognise that in order to sanctify others, candidates preparing for priesthood must be open to sanctity themselves; they “*must be taught to pray*,” introduced to the spiritual classics and learn to cultivate a spirit of internal silence.⁹ Those who will share in the *munus sanctificandi*¹⁰ as diocesan priests must be schooled in the various forms of liturgical prayer: the Mass, the Sacraments, the Liturgy of the Hours and various devotional prayers, especially Eucharistic and Marian. In this crucial dimension of formation, the function of the seminary chapel and the daily celebration of the Mass therein is essential.¹¹

³ *Pastores dabo vobis*, n. 7.

⁴ Circular Letter from Congregation for the Clergy addressed to the Bishops of the World, introducing *The Priest and the Third Christian Millennium*, 19 March 1999.

⁵ John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Pastores gregis* (16 Oct 2003), n. 48; *AAS* 96 (2004): 825–924.

⁶ Congregation for Bishops, Directory for the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops, *Apostolorum successores* (Città del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2004), n. 88.

⁷ Code of Canon Law (*CIC*), can. 835 §1.

⁸ Congregation for Catholic Education, *Instruction on Liturgical Formation in Seminaries* (3 June 1979), n. 20.

⁹ Congregation for Catholic Education, *Circular Letter Concerning Some of the More Urgent Aspects of Spiritual Formation in Seminaries* (6 January 1980), II, 1.

¹⁰ *CIC*, can. 835 §2.

¹¹ *CIC*, can. 246.

Finally, priestly formation is a significant part of the bishop's *munus regendi*. The bishops are committed to selecting the best and most qualified priests to hold the key positions of rector and spiritual director in the seminaries under their jurisdiction.¹² Furthermore, they are committed to providing the necessary personnel, facilities and resources for each seminary to fulfil its mission of preparing candidates for the ministerial priesthood.¹³

3. The Programme for Priestly Formation in Australia

Accordingly, the bishops present this *Programme for Priestly Formation in Australia (PPFA)*. The *Programme* details the overall principles, guidelines and practices necessary for the sound formation of candidates preparing for the priesthood¹⁴ in Australian seminaries. Furthermore, each diocesan bishop or province of bishops (in the case of regional seminaries) undertakes to observe and apply these in regard to their local culture and tradition.¹⁵

In the preparation of this document the bishops receive Pope John Paul II's 1992 Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores dabo vobis* as a "blueprint" for priestly formation. Mindful that *Pastores dabo vobis* was written following the deliberations of the eighth General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on the "Formation of Priests in the Circumstances of the Present Day," the *Programme* also incorporates multiple sources of recent Church teaching on priestly formation, especially those of the Second Vatican Council,¹⁶ the Code of Canon Law¹⁷ and the 1985 Congregation of Catholic Education Statement *Basic Norms for Priestly Formation*.¹⁸

Understood as an integrated whole, PPFA and its pillars of formation, namely Human, Spiritual, Intellectual and Pastoral, with an additional pillar of Missionary Formation,¹⁹ represents the basis of

¹² *Apostolorum successores*, n. 89.

¹³ *CIC*, can. 263.

¹⁴ *CIC*, can. 242 §1.

¹⁵ *CIC*, can. 242 §2. Cf. John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic exhortation on Jesus Christ and the Peoples of Oceania: *Walking his Way, Telling his Truth, Living his Life, Ecclesia in Oceania* (22 November 2001), n. 48; *AAS* 94 (2001): 361–444.

¹⁶ Vatican Council II, Decree on Priestly Formation, *Optatam totius* (28 October 1965), n. 1; *AAS* 58 (1966): 713–727. In addition the following documents from the Council applicable to the formation of priests include *Lumen gentium*, *Christus dominus* and *Presbyterorum ordinis*. The Holy See has provided additional documents related to the formation of priests on a range of topics, including the teaching of philosophy (1972, 2011), theology (1976), canon law (1975), liturgical formation (1979), social communications (1986), pastoral care of migrants (1986), Oriental Churches (1987), social doctrine (1988), Mariology (1988), patristics (1989), formation in religious institutes (1990), marriage (1995), ecumenism (1998), and the interrelation of philosophy and theology (1998). The Congregation for Catholic Education has provided documents on celibacy (1974), *Sapientia Christiana* (1979), spiritual formation (1980). The revision of the *Code of Canon Law* (1983) and the production of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1994) also provide significant guidance to formation of seminarians. The Apostolic Letter, *Novo millennio ineunte* (2001) and the post-synodal exhortation, *Ecclesia in Oceania* (2001), also are important resource documents. Finally the Congregation for the Clergy has contributed significant documents on priestly life, especially *Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests* (1994) and *The Priest and the Third Christian Millennium* (1999).

¹⁷ *CIC*, can. 242 §1.

¹⁸ Congregation for Catholic Education, *Ratio fundamentalis institutionis sacerdotalis* (1985); published in NCCB, *Norms for Priestly Formation* (Washington: USCC, 1994), 15–60. This was an update of the 1970 *Basic Norms* issued as *Ratio fundamentalis institutionis sacerdotalis*, *AAS* 62 (1970): 321–384.

¹⁹ *Apostolorum successores*, n. 90 (e).

priestly formation and seminary life for this country and assists those preparing for priesthood to configure their lives to the person of “Jesus Christ the Head, Shepherd and Spouse of the Church.”²⁰

The major seminary is the normative locale for priestly formation in Australia.²¹ It is the place where candidates for the priesthood (seminarians) gather together in community to hear the word of God in prayer and through formal studies. At the heart of seminary life is the daily celebration of the Mass. All involved in priestly formation are encouraged to heed the words of Pope John Paul: “It is fitting that seminarians take part every day in the Eucharistic celebration, in such a way that afterward they will take up as a rule of their priestly life this daily celebration.”²² During the years of seminary formation within this praying community, which celebrates the Liturgy of the Hours and which fosters personal meditative prayer, devotion to Mary and adoration of the Lord in the Eucharist, the call of Christ proclaimed in the Scriptures should penetrate the heart of each seminarian so that the discernment of a priestly vocation is truly a “Gospel discernment ... based on trust in the love of Jesus Christ who always and tirelessly cares for his Church.”²³

While Australian seminaries in the main are located in state capital cities,²⁴ they receive candidates drawn from both urban and rural dioceses and programmes of formation need to account for these various contexts of ministerial service. This situation provides a challenge for those engaged in the formation of future priests who will serve in geographically large rural dioceses where distance and relative isolation are but two of the pressing issues.²⁵ A further challenge emerges from the multi-cultural character of Australian society. The Australian Catholic population includes significant groups of migrants²⁶ and the bishops are pleased that priests and seminarians increasingly reflect the multi-cultural character of the broader Church population, with seminarians being drawn from the local migrant community and also from overseas. Furthermore, a number of Australian seminaries and dioceses sponsor the formation of candidates who will return to priestly ministry in other countries. In recognition of these challenges the bishops affirm that formation in Australian seminaries “should be imbued with a true spirit of Catholicity which transcends diocesan and national boundaries and barriers imposed by differences of rite.”²⁷

Finally, the *Programme* will be complemented and completed at the diocesan and regional level with *Programmes of Studies*, which form the basis of the *Rule of Life* compiled for each seminary.²⁸ Given that a substantial portion of the intellectual formation of seminarians in Australia often occurs within “theological consortia,” theological colleges or universities outside the seminary, this *Programme* addresses the relationship that is to exist between such institutions and the seminary, as well as the relevant academic programmes undertaken.

²⁰ *Pastores dabo vobis*, n. 25.

²¹ *CIC* can. 235; *Pastores dabo vobis*, n. 60.

²² *Pastores dabo vobis*, n. 48.

²³ *Pastores dabo vobis*, n. 10.

²⁴ Vianney College in the regional city of Wagga Wagga is the exception.

²⁵ The bishops also note the existence of two Redemptoris Mater diocesan seminaries in Australia (Perth and Sydney) at the present time.

²⁶ *Ecclesia in Oceania*, n. 6; cf. Congregation for Catholic Education, Letter to Archbishop F. P. Carroll, President of the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference (4 June 2003), n. 4. “Australian society in general, and the Australian seminaries in particular, are becoming more Asian in composition.”

²⁷ *Ratio Fundamental* (1985), XVI, 96.

²⁸ *CIC*, can. 242–243; *Apostolorum successores*, n. 90.

4. Promotion of vocations

[The Church] must propose clearly and courageously to each new generation the vocational call, help people to discern the authenticity of their call from God and to respond to it generously, and give particular care to the formation of candidates for the priesthood.²⁹

Owning the words of Pope John Paul II, the bishops acknowledge Australian Catholic young men as “a precious spiritual resource” and recognise that “among them are undoubtedly those who are called to the priesthood.”³⁰ Therefore the promotion of vocations to the priesthood is an “urgent responsibility,” one requiring a sustained commitment to prayer and the provision of adequate resources. In fact, formation for priestly ministry logically flows from the promotion and discernment of an initial vocation: “Formation can be understood as ‘service to the grace of vocation’.”³¹

5. Procedures for Admission

... a right intention, a sufficient degree of human maturity, a sufficiently broad knowledge of the doctrine of the faith, some introduction into the methods of prayer and behaviour in conformity with Christian tradition.³²

The current experience in dioceses reflects that applicants come from a considerable diversity of faith and human backgrounds, which reflect a variety of cultural origins, life experiences, age levels, and progress in spiritual formation and human development. Therefore the assessment as to the readiness of a particular applicant to enter the seminary requires serious consideration and some form of pre-seminary accompaniment. In a number of dioceses, this is undertaken through a formal process of formation and discernment that includes reflection weekends or longer periods of residency with other applicants and appropriate personnel.

In determining the basic criteria which assist the bishop in assessing the applicant’s suitability for formation, and particularly his capacity to embrace and live out chaste celibacy, the bishops affirm those outlined in *Pastores dabo vobis* and also in the recent *Instruction concerning the criteria for the discernment of vocations with regard to persons with homosexual tendencies in view of their admission to the seminary and to Holy Orders*.³³ Together these documents provide a clear set of criteria for the discernment of an applicant’s capacity to meet the requirements of the Church.

Further assistance in determining the sound character of the applicant is obtained from material prepared by the vocations director such as a biography of the applicant, documents showing his academic history, as well as the director’s own assessment and that of other persons, especially the applicant’s parish priest. The bishop also seeks an assessment by competent practitioners of the applicant’s physical and psychological health.³⁴ If it is established that an applicant needs further professional or therapeutic assistance, this is undertaken prior to admission to the seminary.

²⁹ *Pastores dabo vobis*, n. 2.

³⁰ *Ecclesia in Oceania*, n. 48.

³¹ Synod of Bishops, *Lineamenta: The Formation of Priests in Circumstances of the Present Day* (Washington: USCC 1989).

³² *Pastores dabo vobis*, n. 63.

³³ Congregation for Catholic Education, *Instruction concerning the criteria for the discernment of vocations with regard to persons with homosexual tendencies in view of their admission to the seminary and to Holy Orders* (4 Nov 2005).

³⁴ Cf. *CIC*, cann. 241 §1, 1051; *Ratio fundamentalis institutionis sacerdotalis* (1985), n. 39.

In particular, bishops have a “serious duty” to investigate carefully applicants who have been previously enrolled in other seminaries,³⁵ institutes of consecrated life, societies of apostolic life and residential programmes for associations and ecclesial movements. In a process of full disclosure, the applicant should provide an account of his formation history and, as required by canon law, the previous institute of formation is approached for all relevant information concerning the applicant and the reasons for his leaving.³⁶

6. Propaedeutic Period³⁷

As most young men entering Australian seminaries no longer come from minor seminaries, a propaedeutic (or preparation) period for aspirants “to discern the authenticity of their call from God and to respond to it generously”³⁸ prior to the commencement of formal seminary study is highly desirable and has been adopted in some form by most seminaries. Integral to this preparation is an introduction to community life and spiritual formation, the acquisition of the fundamentals of the faith and the gaining of a better knowledge of self.

This process of discernment recognises that aspirants have differing visions of the Church, different understandings of Catholic tradition and different experiences of prayer and spirituality; they come from varying ethnic cultures; have widely differing educational experiences and possess different levels of human maturity. The process of assisting these aspirants in their discernment through these and other issues is undertaken by seminary staff as the highest priority, and in particular by the priest responsible for the propaedeutic period and by their spiritual director.

The propaedeutic period begins a life-long process of formation and is recognised as a unique opportunity for aspirants to pattern their lives after the example of Christ, head, shepherd, and spouse of the Church.³⁹

During the propaedeutic period, a certain testing takes place in the human formation of aspirants, who are assisted in developing a commitment to ongoing critical self-reflection and growth. By the end of the propaedeutic period, aspirants should have demonstrated a capacity and willingness to identify and engage honestly and constructively with issues about their own character and personal development, especially issues relating to sexuality and their family of origin. If particular issues about an aspirant’s progress in human formation arise during this period, formal assistance may be sought from qualified psychological experts. A healthy spirit of obedience is nurtured through a life of routine, good order and productivity. Because the distinctive nature of the diocesan priesthood is authentically rooted in the dimensions of the Christian community, the daily experience of community life is essential.⁴⁰ Consequently, as well as formal classes, the aspirant’s timetable includes periods of silence, recreation together and group social events: “It is important that the priest should mould his

³⁵ *Ratio fundamentalis institutionis sacerdotalis* (1985), n. 39.

³⁶ *CIC*, can. 241 §3; cf. Congregation for Catholic Education, *Instruction on Admitting Candidates coming from Other Seminaries or Religious Communities* (8 March 1996).

³⁷ Cf. Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Propaedeutic Period* (10 May 1998).

³⁸ *Pastores dabo vobis*, n. 62.

³⁹ *Pastores dabo vobis*, n. 23.

⁴⁰ *Pastores dabo vobis*, n. 61.

personality in such a way that it becomes a bridge and not an obstacle for others in their meeting with Jesus Christ.”⁴¹

Spiritual formation during this period is centred on acquiring a personal life of prayer⁴² which includes the daily celebration of the Eucharist,⁴³ as well as the recitation of the Liturgy of the Hours,⁴⁴ meditation on the Word of God as the Living Word,⁴⁵ Eucharistic Holy Hours, devotion to Mary,⁴⁶ regular spiritual direction,⁴⁷ days of recollection and an extended retreat. Provision should be made for regular examination of conscience and confession, particularly to help candidates address that which may be lacking in their basic moral formation and maturity. Classes dedicated to spiritual formation will focus on the Catholic spiritual tradition, spiritual formation and the life of prayer.⁴⁸ Although it is necessary to teach in a formal way a love for the Word of God, how to pray with structure and discipline, *Lectio Divina*, it is essential to create within each aspirant an authentic Christian spirit which is driven by love and desire to know and live such teaching.

The intellectual programme recognises that applicants to the seminary frequently have an underdeveloped religious formation and a limited appreciation of the basics of the Catholic Faith.⁴⁹ The seminary response to this situation accounts for both the group and the needs of the individual, which will in turn dictate the topics and levels of treatment received. Some topics presented at an introductory level might include: the liturgical life and practice of the Church;⁵⁰ conversion and the penitential disciplines; the theology and spirituality of the diocesan priesthood;⁵¹ the history of the diocese, human growth and development and the theology of celibacy;⁵² principles and behavioural standards expected of clergy as set out in *Integrity in Ministry*;⁵³ the interrelationship of philosophy and theology; music and practical liturgy; the Bible; the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*; the nature of the Church as a community of faith;⁵⁴ ministries in the Church; reading “the signs of the times” and relating them to Christian faith;⁵⁵ a basic introduction to the moral and social teaching of the

⁴¹ *Pastores dabo vobis*, n. 43.

⁴² *Pastores dabo vobis*, n. 47.

⁴³ *Pastores dabo vobis*, n. 47.

⁴⁴ *Pastores dabo vobis*, n. 72.

⁴⁵ *Pastores dabo vobis*, nn. 26, 47.

⁴⁶ *Pastores dabo vobis*, n. 82.

⁴⁷ *Pastores dabo vobis*, n. 40.

⁴⁸ The latter is frequently based upon Section IV of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Città del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1994).

⁴⁹ *General Directory for Catechesis*, n. 25: “many have been shaped by the climate of secularism and ethical relativism.”

⁵⁰ *Pastores dabo vobis*, n. 38.

⁵¹ *Pastores dabo vobis*, n. 23.

⁵² *Pastores dabo vobis*, n. 29.

⁵³ National Committee for Professional Standards, *Integrity in Ministry: A Document of Principles and Standards for Catholic Clergy and Religious in Australia* (2004; reprinted 2010).

⁵⁴ *Pastores dabo vobis*, n. 53.

⁵⁵ *General Directory for Catechesis*, n. 25.

Church;⁵⁶ Catholic culture in the arts; certain specific encyclicals and other Church documents. Other practical subjects such as speech craft are integrated into the propaedeutic programme.

Supervised pastoral formation is introduced in the propaedeutic period. Some regular pastoral work may be undertaken for the purpose of emphasising the importance of service for others, e.g., in parishes, in hospices for the dying, retirement hostels, welfare refuges, hospitals. These practical pastoral experiences, coupled with spiritual direction, companioning and pastoral reflection, assists the aspirant to understand better to his own pastoral sensitivities and skills.

Finally, the programme of the propaedeutic period and its contents is quite distinct from the years of priestly formation which follow in the seminary and will assist the aspirant to have an overall sense of progression. The end of the preparatory year should mark a transition point where both the student and the seminary staff make a mutual commitment to each other on the basis of the year's experience. Recognising the importance of decisions about this transition point, it is preceded by a formal assessment of the aspirant's suitability and readiness for further seminary formation. Such a mutual understanding forms an appropriate conclusion to this period as a significant time of personal vocational discernment for the candidate, from which he should emerge either ready to enter into the full seminary programme or to follow a vocational path outside the seminary.

7. Human Formation

... balanced people, strong and free, capable of bearing the weight of pastoral responsibilities. They need to be educated to love the truth, to be loyal, to respect every person, to have a sense of justice, to be true to their word, to be genuinely compassionate, to be men of integrity and, especially, to be balanced in judgement and behaviour.⁵⁷

The bishops acknowledge the overall significance of human formation, especially as envisaged in *Pastores dabo vobis*: "the whole work of priestly formation would be deprived of its necessary foundation if it lacked a suitable human formation."⁵⁸ The basis of such formation lies in the recognition that the human person comprises a network of interconnected facets, including physical, emotional, psychological, sexual, relational, intellectual and spiritual, all of which are informed by the action of grace. Human formation, inspired by the example of the character of Jesus Christ and accomplished "in Christ" by the power of the Holy Spirit, aims to develop in the seminarian a character that is "integrally human, Christian and priestly."⁵⁹

The seminary offers each seminarian a personalised and accompanied apprenticeship to the truth of himself, thus enhancing his effective freedom⁶⁰ and leading him to growth in self-knowledge, integrity and self-responsibility. Thus he may deepen the personal ground of his vocational values, and be alerted to the particular forms of inconsistency which are likely to compromise his vocational growth. Each seminarian needs to know and accept his own fundamental needs, personal and family history, limitations and fragility, thereby learning obedience through suffering,⁶¹ experiencing the

⁵⁶ *Pastores dabo vobis*, n. 55.

⁵⁷ *Pastores dabo vobis*, n. 55.

⁵⁸ *Pastores dabo vobis*, n. 55.

⁵⁹ Congregation for Catholic Education, *A Guide to Formation in Priestly Celibacy* (11 April 1974), n. 17.

⁶⁰ Jn 8:32.

⁶¹ Heb 5:8.

strength which comes from God's power accepted in weakness,⁶² and acquiring the compassionate heart of a true shepherd.⁶³

Human formation includes the promotion of the candidate's awareness of his being essentially relational (with God, others, and the cosmos), and of his habitual patterns of relating. It is only from this starting point of relationship that his journey of becoming "a man of communion" may realistically begin. Each seminarian is encouraged to understand and experience the "nuptial significance of the body,"⁶⁴ his own and that of his fellow men and women. This awareness informs his ongoing journey towards an affective, psychosexual and social maturity. It provides the basis for understanding the vocation to marriage, of his own complementary call to celibate priesthood, an integral appreciation of love in all its forms and for his own falling in love with the One who continually calls him.

As the virtue of chastity requires the "successful integration of sexuality within the person,"⁶⁵ future priests must grow in their awareness of their need for intimacy and in their capacity for appropriate celibate expressions of it in mature interpersonal relationships with peers and with a range of adult men and women. This accompanies them in their progress to non-possessive love and communion,⁶⁶ and their prudent observance of boundaries (together with alertness to the consequences of infractions in terms of natural justice, church practices⁶⁷ and civil law). Each seminary has a systematic and comprehensive programme on sexuality in general and celibacy in particular, progressing through the various stages of formation so as to assist students to develop a mature and integrated sexuality.⁶⁸ Seminary formation thus seeks to enhance the freedom and objectivity with which a seminarian appropriates moral and prudential principles of thought and conduct, and actively welcomes the human mediating forces which the Holy Spirit will employ in his life.⁶⁹ This provides the basis to enhance life-long perseverance and an ever growing vocational effectiveness in the ordained person.

To achieve these objectives the seminarian is provided with personal accompaniment on a regular basis, such as initial personal/vocational assessment, ongoing spiritual direction, "companioning" or vocational-growth dialogue. Adequate provision is made for occasional/special assistance in discernment, or personal psychological-vocational deepening as appropriate.⁷⁰ Further, the seminary provides opportunities and training for the seminarian in the formation of freely chosen habits and

⁶² 2 Cor 12:10.

⁶³ *Pastores dabo vobis*, n. 69; Jer 3:15.

⁶⁴ *Pastores dabo vobis*, n. 44.

⁶⁵ *Catechism of Catholic Church*, n. 2337.

⁶⁶ *Pastores dabo vobis*, n. 43.

⁶⁷ See: Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference and Catholic Religious Australia, *Towards Healing: Principles and Procedures in responding to Complaints of Abuse against Personnel of the Catholic Church in Australia*, rev. ed. (Bondi Junction, NSW: National Committee for Professional Standards, 2010); National Committee for Professional Standards, *Integrity in Ministry*; National Committee for Professional Standards, *Integrity in the Service of the Church: A Resource Document of Principles and Standards for Lay Workers in the Catholic Church in Australia* (2011); National Committee for Professional Standards, *Becoming Formed in Integrity* (2005).

⁶⁸ Congregation for Catholic Education, *A Guide to Formation in Priestly Celibacy*, nn. 18–23.

⁶⁹ *Pastores dabo vobis*, n. 69.

⁷⁰ *Pastores dabo vobis*, nn. 36, 40; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 2339; Congregation for Catholic Education, *Guidelines for the Use of Psychology in the Admission and Formation of Candidates for the Priesthood* (2008).

virtues expressive of vocational commitment;⁷¹ fostering of asceticism and apprenticeship in self-mastery in its many forms (including diet, personal timetabling, sleep, exercise, recreation, appropriate use of social media and the internet, etc.). Another important contribution to seminarians' human formation comes in the opportunities for self-responsibility during periods of vacation from the seminary, when they are outside the normal structure of the seminary program, and are involved in activities such as paid employment, mission placements, immersion experiences, travel, family gatherings, and pilgrimages. This is a time when they have an opportunity to integrate and sustain their spiritual life and to develop their independent capacity to live with affective maturity.⁷²

8. Spiritual Formation

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.⁷³

The essence of spiritual formation, one specifically leading towards the ministerial priesthood, is well expressed in the Council's decree *Optatam totius*, whose teaching is understood as paradigmatic for all involved in priestly formation. In the words of Pope John Paul II: "This text from the Council deserves our careful and loving meditation, out of which we will easily be able to outline some fundamental values and demands of the spiritual path trodden by the candidate for the priesthood."⁷⁴

Spiritual formation facilitates the process by which the candidate, created by the Father, redeemed by Christ and baptised, cooperates through the work of the Holy Spirit with God's initiative, in order to reach his destiny by becoming conformed to Christ. Priests and bishops, together with all who accept and follow Christ, are called to be other Christs: "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me" (Gal 2:20). This divine destiny is expressed in prayer, understood as knowing and loving the triune God, who knows and loves us.⁷⁵

In the process of spiritual formation seminarians are led to the genuine meaning of Christian prayer, understood as a living and personal meeting or "dialogue" with the Father through the only-begotten Son under the action of the Spirit.⁷⁶ In a very real way, spiritual formation is a "formation of the heart"⁷⁷ of the future priest, one which takes place within the seminary community and its liturgical

⁷¹ *Pastores dabo vobis*, n. 43.

⁷² *Pastores dabo vobis*, n. 44.

⁷³ *Pastores dabo vobis*, n. 45.

⁷⁴ *Pastores dabo vobis*, n. 46.

⁷⁵ *Optatam totius*, n. 8.

⁷⁶ *Pastores dabo vobis*, n. 48.

⁷⁷ Pope Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter, *Deus caritas est* (25 December 2005), n. 31 (a).

life, in dialogue with a spiritual director and confessors, in the intimacy of personal prayer, and through pastoral service within the seminary and in pastoral placements. Thus, it is essential that seminarians be taught and learn to pray in community and individually. In this requirement, nothing is more important and decisive than a deeper and more complete participation in the official prayer of the Church.

In seminaries and houses of religious, clerics shall be given a liturgical formation in their spiritual life. For this they will need proper direction, so that they may be able to understand the sacred rites and take part in them wholeheartedly; and they will also need personally to celebrate the sacred mysteries, as well as popular devotions which are imbued with the spirit of the liturgy. In addition they must learn how to observe the liturgical laws, so that life in seminaries and houses of religious may be thoroughly influenced by the spirit of the liturgy.⁷⁸

To pray the liturgy rather than to perform the liturgy should become habitual for the seminarian; for it is in the liturgical celebration that he is opened in community to hear and contemplate the Word of God. In the words of Pope John Paul II:

An essential element of spiritual formation is the prayerful and meditated reading of the word of God (*lectio divina*), a humble and loving listening of him who speaks. It is in fact by the light and with the strength of the word of God that one's own vocation can be discovered and understood, loved and followed, and one's own mission carried out. So true is this that the person's entire existence finds its unifying and radical meaning in being the terminus of God's word which calls man and the beginning of man's word which answers God.⁷⁹

In the process of spiritual formation seminarians are introduced to the practice of *lectio divina* and spiritual reading: *lectio divina* using the Sacred Scriptures, and spiritual reading of the documents of the Second Vatican Council, Patristic writings and the works of approved spiritual masters. Such reading is particularly effective in the context of prayer wherein the Word of God becomes the well to which they readily return in order to receive the "living water which springs up to eternal life" for them and those to whom they will minister (cf. Jn 4). The Word of God is also the light into the hidden place of the soul, it is the double edged sword (cf. Heb 4:12), and the seed of conversion.

Central to the life of the seminary and its liturgical celebrations is daily celebration of the Eucharist: "The high point of Christian prayer is the Eucharist, which in its turn is to be seen as the 'summit and source' of the sacraments and the Liturgy of the Hours."⁸⁰ Pope John Paul II continues:

It is fitting that seminarians take part every day in the Eucharistic celebration, in such a way that afterward they will take up as a rule of their priestly life this daily celebration. They should, moreover, be 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.⁸¹

Furthermore, in accord with the teaching of the Second Vatican Council,⁸² bishops will regularly preside over the celebration of the Eucharist in the seminary and seminary communities will join their bishops in cathedral churches for the celebration of the Eucharist. It is envisaged that seminarians

⁷⁸ Vatican Council II, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum concilium* (4 December 1963), n. 17: *AAS* 56 (1964): 97–138.

⁷⁹ *Pastores dabo vobis*, n. 47.

⁸⁰ *Pastores dabo vobis*, n. 48.

⁸¹ *Pastores dabo vobis*, n. 48.

⁸² *Sacrosanctum concilium*, n. 41.

will, if practicable, attend and actively participate in the celebrations of Holy Week in the cathedral of their diocese.

As the Liturgy of the Hours constitute a source of piety and nourishment for personal prayer,⁸³ the hours of Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer and Night Prayer are normally celebrated in common each day in the seminary. As well as other forms of communal prayer within the seminary, particular stress is given to Eucharistic adoration: “for the presence of Christ, who is adored by the faithful in the Sacrament, derives from the sacrifice and is directed towards sacramental and spiritual Communion.”⁸⁴

During public adoration there should be prayers, songs, and readings to direct the attention of the faithful to the worship of Christ the Lord. To encourage a prayerful spirit, there should be readings from Scripture with a homily or brief exhortations to develop a better understanding of the Eucharistic mystery. It is also desirable for the people to respond to the word of God by singing and to spend some periods of time in religious silence.⁸⁵

Of special significance in the seminarian’s spiritual life should be a devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Of the many forms of devotion to the Mother of God, the rosary has a pre-eminent place.⁸⁶ Other devotional practices approved by the Church are to be recommended as means of enriching the spiritual life of seminarians.

The communal spiritual formation in the seminary is mirrored and deepened in the individual spiritual formation, especially through the seminarian’s choice of a personal spiritual director, who is always a priest, someone “to whom he can trustfully make known his conscience,”⁸⁷ who will assist and guide each seminarian to direct his life according to and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. A spiritual director assigned in the early years of seminary formation will enable the seminarian to make an informed choice from among those spiritual directors appointed as fit for the task by the bishop. One member of the formation team is designated as the spiritual director for the seminary.⁸⁸ He oversees and contributes to the programme of spiritual formation in the seminary by holding conferences, organising days of recollection and retreats, teaching methods of prayer including meditation and contemplative prayer, and other spiritual exercises.

In the midst of His daily labours Christ used to readily seek solitude, in order to pray to His Father without distraction; following His example and counsel (cf. Mt 6:6; 14:13; Mk 6:30, 46) students should try to develop “a life hidden with Christ in God (cf. Col 3:3) from which arises irrepressibly the love of one’s neighbour, directed towards the salvation of the world and the building up of the Church.” (Vatican Council II, Decree on the Renewal of Religious Life, *Perfectae caritatis* [1965], n. 6.) They ought, therefore, to be concerned about the

⁸³ *Sacrosanctum concilium*, n. 90.

⁸⁴ Congregation for the Sacraments and Divine Worship, Instruction Concerning Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery, *Inaestimabile donum* (17 April 1980), n. 20.

⁸⁵ Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship, Instruction on Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist outside Mass, *Eucharistiae sacramentum* (21 June 1973), n. 95. See also *Ecclesia de Eucharistica*, n. 23.

⁸⁶ John Paul II, Apostolic Letter on the Most Holy Rosary, *Rosarium Virginis Mariae* (16 October 2002), n. 43.

⁸⁷ *CIC*, can. 246 §4.

⁸⁸ *CIC*, can. 239 §2.

keeping of external silence, without which there is no interior silence of soul, and which is needed for thought and for the work and the repose alike of the whole community.⁸⁹

The bishops recognise that exterior and interior silence in the seminary is necessary for the development of a spirit of prayer and recollection, and direct each seminary to designate times and places (such as the chapel, library, sleeping quarters) of silence.

As conversion – *metanoia* – a turning away from sin and a turning towards God is the basis and pattern of Christian life and experienced in the Sacrament of Penance, seminarians should be encouraged to receive this regularly, ordinarily through the first rite of reconciliation, as canon 246 §4 points out: “The students are to become accustomed to approach the sacrament of penance frequently.” As well as the seminary’s ordinary confessors, seminaries arrange for other confessors to come regularly to the seminary, and respect the freedom of seminarians to approach any confessor.⁹⁰ In regularly celebrating the Sacrament of Penance, both at the seminary and on occasions they arrange personally, seminarians’ own spiritual life will grow, they will personally integrate and appropriate moral principles in their conscience, they will develop an appreciation of the value of the Sacrament of Penance⁹¹ and be readily available to their future parishioners as confessors.⁹² Furthermore, such future assistance as confessors will be reliant on an appreciation of the nature of conscience, understood as an intellectual judgment about the rightness or wrongness of behaviour, explained in the light of God’s commandments. To strengthen and develop their conscience, seminarians are encouraged to adopt a daily examination of conscience, perhaps in the context of Compline. As future priests, seminarians should know the difference between moral guilt (sin) and psychological guilt (guilt feelings or emotional guilt).

The seminary community forms future priests “in priestly obedience, in a simple way of life and in the spirit of self-denial, [so] that they are accustomed to giving up willingly even those things which are permitted but are not expedient, and to conform themselves to Christ crucified.”⁹³ Of particular importance in the preparation of those who will serve as priests is their commitment to celibacy, understood as a special gift from God, freely embraced for the Kingdom of God, in imitation of and friendship with Christ. Christ is the image of the Father, and the deacon, priest and bishop who make present the person of Christ in their service of others are called to be fathers. Fatherhood demands manliness, responsibility, respect and care for women and children, devotion, loyalty, reverence for sexuality, honesty, courage, good judgment, and the willingness to work in order to nourish and protect. A father protects from evil by clearly teaching the truth. Celibacy makes it easier to love all people, particularly the poor and distressed.

Obedience must be understood not as mere submission and compliance, but as seeking to discern the will of God and humbly accept it in freedom and self-responsibility, in imitation of Christ, “who became obedient unto death, even death on a cross” (Phil 2:8). Recognising that “priestly ministry, since it is the ministry of the Church itself, can only function in the hierarchical union of the whole body,” Australian seminarians will be assisted to “receive and execute whatever orders the Holy Father, their own bishop or other superiors give or recommend,”⁹⁴ to adhere faithfully to the

⁸⁹ *Ratio fundamentalis institutionis sacerdotalis* (1985), n. 57.

⁹⁰ *CIC*, can. 240 §1

⁹¹ Vatican Council II, Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, *Presbyterorum ordinis* (7 December 1965), n. 18; *AAS* 58 (1966): 991–1024.

⁹² *Presbyterorum ordinis*, n. 13.

⁹³ *Optatam totius*, n. 9.

⁹⁴ *Presbyterorum ordinis*, n. 15.

magisterium in matters of doctrine and morals⁹⁵ and to “stand by their bishops in sincere charity and obedience.”⁹⁶ They will come to see that the promise of obedience to their bishop is also a promise of fraternity to the presbyterium⁹⁷ and of willing service to the people of God to whom they are sent.⁹⁸ Indeed each bishop realises that the promise of obedience, freely given,⁹⁹ has implications for the ministry of the bishop who will nourish “a special relationship with his priests, treating them as friends and collaborators, encouraging them in their work, promoting a sense of fraternity in the presbyterate,”¹⁰⁰ organizing retreats and promoting opportunities for their on-going education. In Australia, the obedience asked of priests is received by bishops who understand that “the priest is the closest and most indispensable collaborator of the bishop.”¹⁰¹

Priestly ministry involves significant responsibility and leadership. The authority arising from this position must be exercised in the spirit of collaboration and service that Jesus enjoins on his disciples: “Whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Mk 10:43–45). Already as seminarians, students have opportunities to exercise authority, both in the seminary and in pastoral placements. This is an important opportunity to grow in and demonstrate their commitment to leadership and authority as Christian service.

In the period of spiritual formation, seminarians are to be introduced to “voluntary poverty by which they are more manifestly conformed to Christ and become eager in the sacred ministry.”¹⁰²

Seminaries in Australia will clearly prepare seminarians for a life of generosity and they will know that “[t]he priest, although not having assumed poverty as a public promise, must lead a simple life and avoid anything which could have an air of vanity, voluntarily embracing poverty to follow Christ more closely. In all aspects (living quarters, means of transportation, vacations, etc.), the priest must eliminate any kind of affectation and luxury.”¹⁰³

Since the supernatural does not destroy the natural but rather builds on it, the natural virtues are to be fostered: manliness, courtesy, natural dignity and the like. Seminarians learn to relate to all different kinds of people, young and old, in whatever circumstances. The social graces are not an affectation but contribute to self-discipline and spiritual growth.

Community life within the seminary expresses the reality that spiritual formation does not occur in isolation from others. A genuine concern for the growth and development of the other seminarians will minimise the likelihood of undesirable competitiveness and will be a preparation for the collegiality that should be a distinctive characteristic of the diocesan priesthood. The seminarians

⁹⁵ Congregation for Clergy, *Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests* (31 January 1994), n. 62.

⁹⁶ *Presbyterorum ordinis*, n. 7.

⁹⁷ *Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests*, n. 22.

⁹⁸ *Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests*, n. 61.

⁹⁹ *Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests*, n. 63.

¹⁰⁰ Interdicasterial Meeting with a Representative Group of the Australian Bishops' Conference, *Statement of Conclusions* (14 December 1998), *L'Osservatore Romano* English Edition (16 December 1998), n. 16.

¹⁰¹ *Statement of Conclusions*, n. 16.

¹⁰² *Presbyterorum ordinis*, n. 17.

¹⁰³ *Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests*, n. 67.

should be encouraged to get to know the priests of their diocese, and the priests themselves can make a significant contribution to the development of their seminarians by taking a positive interest in them and giving them support and encouragement.

Retreats, days of recollection and the development of appreciation for celibacy, all have their place in the preparation for diaconate and priesthood. Similarly, pastoral work which truly expresses the ministries that have been received will be of assistance in spiritual formation. Such formation will provide a sound basis for the future priest to be able to develop a pattern of life himself including regular prayer and a commitment to ongoing formation. It will assist him as he assists others in the spiritual life, especially through spiritual direction.

9. Intellectual Formation

... to be pastorally effective, intellectual formation is to be integrated with a spirituality marked by a personal experience of God. In this way a purely abstract approach to knowledge is overcome in favour of that intelligence of heart which knows how 'to look beyond,' and then is in a position to communicate the mystery of God to the people.¹⁰⁴

The *Programme for Priestly Formation in Australia* proceeds from an understanding that intellectual formation (and any consequent academic programme) proceeds in accordance with the instructions of the universal Church¹⁰⁵ applied to our local situation,¹⁰⁶ and from the spiritual life and serves the growth of the spiritual life: "A sacred minister's knowledge ought to be sacred in the sense of being derived from a sacred source and directed to a sacred purpose."¹⁰⁷ The intellectual formation undertaken in Australia seminaries includes a two-year programme of philosophy followed by a four-year programme of theology.¹⁰⁸ This programme of studies is to be suitably rigorous so that the seminarian's education is seen as equivalent to that received by other professionals training in Australian institutes of higher learning. Therefore, the intellectual formation undertaken must aim at academic excellence both in teaching and learning so that each seminarian is given the opportunity to achieve academic results to the best of his ability.

While the pillar of intellectual formation and its related academic programmes can be viewed in isolation, in reality it is integrally connected to and presupposes the other pillars of formation. As such, the programme of rigorous academic study undertaken by the seminarian not only contributes to his knowledge of the sacred sciences but also contributes significantly to his human formation. Academic programmes help the seminarian learn self-discipline, they assist him to plan for, and cope with, the unexpected demands that will be encountered as a priest.

Further, the intellectual formation undertaken by the seminarian can be seen as character-forming. As the seminarians enter into a programme of study which is largely determined by the universal Church and by their local superiors, their ability to cooperate with the programme and to engage it with a good spirit bodes well for future priestly obedience. When at times the programme of studies is particularly demanding, the resolute response of the seminarian will be a positive sign of his human maturity.

¹⁰⁴ *Pastores dabo vobis*, n. 51.

¹⁰⁵ *Ratio fundamentalis institutionis sacerdotalis* (1985).

¹⁰⁶ *Ecclesia in Oceania*, n. 48.

¹⁰⁷ *Presbyterorum ordinis*, n. 9.

¹⁰⁸ In accordance with the *Ratio fundamentalis*, seminaries in Australia may either separate the study of philosophy from theology or integrate them over a six-year period.

Furthermore, the demands placed on seminarians in their academic studies aim at ensuring that the future priest will have the intellectual capacity to grasp the significance of his sacramental and pastoral ministry. On the day of ordination the bishop asks “know what you are doing.”¹⁰⁹ This injunction carries a number of implications. The first of these is that the man who kneels to receive the sacrament of Orders has been educated in such a manner that he comes of his own free and deliberate choice.¹¹⁰ Secondly, the one who comes to be ordained must be schooled to “think with the Church” (*sentire cum ecclesia*),¹¹¹ as expressed in the *Oath of Fidelity* and the *Profession of Faith* he makes as prescribed in the *Code of Canon Law*.¹¹²

The intellectual formation also makes a positive contribution to their spiritual formation; in their academic programmes they are given the opportunity to read and be enriched by study of the Sacred Scriptures. Their study of the *sacra pagina* should evoke an intellectual curiosity and, at the same time, prompt a deep love for the Word of God whereby they are drawn into an ever closer relationship with the God who is revealed in the pages of the Bible: the Word of God is “strength for their faith, food for the soul, and a pure and lasting fount of spiritual life.”¹¹³

To be a good teacher and a wise shepherd, the future priest requires not only a sound spiritual life and the formation of his natural human qualities¹¹⁴ but also a solid intellectual formation. Whereas the programme of spiritual formation enables the seminarian to answer the question, “Do you love me?” (Jn 21:16), his intellectual formation will equip him to answer publicly the question, “But you, who do you say I am?” (Lk 9:20). Thus, whilst intellectual formation may have the pastoral ministry as the end to which it aims, academic studies have the immediate purpose of grounding the spiritual life.

The initiatives prompted by the Council of Trent and the particular emphasis its decrees gave to the intellectual formation of future priests served as a background to this *Programme*. The Council Fathers saw the intrinsic necessity for intellectual formation in preparation for preaching and foresaw a danger for preaching and teaching if a man’s spirituality was not undergirded by a solid academic formation: “To prevent impiety being spread under the guise of piety, the same holy council has decided that no one is to be admitted either in a public or private capacity to this office of giving instruction who has not previously been tested and approved by the local bishop concerning his life, character and knowledge.”¹¹⁵ When contemporary culture poses unprecedented demands on all of us, and in particular the young, priests must be able to engage the views of the culture and respond with the wisdom of the Church.

The Second Vatican Council was quite specific in stating that the requirements for intellectual formation would include: philosophy, biblical studies, patristics, fundamental, dogmatic and moral theology, canon law and the study of the liturgy.¹¹⁶ Philosophical studies were given particular

¹⁰⁹ Roman Pontifical, *Ordination of Priests*, n. 26.

¹¹⁰ *Statement of Conclusions*, n. 52.

¹¹¹ St Ignatius Loyola, *Spiritual Exercises*, 353–363.

¹¹² *CIC*, can. 833.

¹¹³ Vatican Council II, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei verbum* (18 November 1965), n. 21; *AAS* 58 (1966).

¹¹⁴ Congregation for Catholic Education, Letter to Archbishop F. P. Carroll, n. 4.

¹¹⁵ Council of Trent, Session 5, *Decree on Instruction and Preaching*, n. 7; in Norman T. Tanner, ed., *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1990), 2:669.

¹¹⁶ *Optatam totius*, nn. 15 and 16.

attention by the Council Fathers and their importance has been amplified in *Pastores dabo vobis*, wherein Pope John Paul II dealt with the significance of underpinning theological studies with a philosophical foundation that will allow the priest to communicate the truths of the Gospel in situations which may not always be favourable: “only a sound philosophy can help candidates for the priesthood to develop a reflective awareness of the fundamental relationship that exists between the human spirit and truth.”¹¹⁷ In the context of a seminarian’s intellectual formation, the study of philosophy is not an end in itself but it is always attuned to the greater goal which is the spread of the Gospel.¹¹⁸ Furthermore, the study of philosophy is aimed to equip the priest for pastoral service and mission, and to provide a foundation for his study of theological subjects.

Theology, though, “will remain a ‘dead letter’ if is not personalised and interiorised.”¹¹⁹ This is particularly the case for the principles of right action set out in moral theology. The bishops agree that “theology can only rise to its full stature when practiced in a community of prayer” and that “an authentic life of prayer protects theology from the danger of being a mere memory lesson.”¹²⁰ However, theological learning in the context of priestly formation is also not an end in itself as it is directed towards, and integrated by pastoral service.¹²¹ In this context the bishops agree with the East African bishops when they clearly state that “a theology degree is not a qualification for ordination. The priest is ordained to be a spiritual leader of a Christian community. Theological knowledge does not necessarily impart leadership qualities.”¹²²

Throughout Australia, the majority of seminaries ‘outsource’ a significant, if not the major portion of the intellection formation undertaken to theological consortia. These academic institutions provide significant benefits for the bishops and to the seminaries on a number of levels. Whether universities, colleges or institutes, they offer an opportunity for the education of seminarians in a context that is characterised by interaction and collaboration with a wide range of students, including religious and lay people, where all involved appreciate the distinction between the common priesthood of all the baptised and the ministerial priesthood of the ordained. These institutions also offer an opportunity for training suitable priests, religious and lay people for the specific ministry of academic research and teaching at a tertiary level. Furthermore, such consortia allow the bishops to work cooperatively with religious provincials so that the faculty is selected from among those who are “genuinely expert, each in his [or her] own subject”¹²³ and who “possess the art of teaching.”¹²⁴

¹¹⁷ *Pastores dabo vobis*, n. 52.

¹¹⁸ See Jude P. Dougherty, “The Ordinary and Extraordinary in Priestly Formation,” *Seminarium* 40 (July–September 2000): 613. “A principle to be kept in mind by directors of priestly formation everywhere: When one does not possess a classical education, one is a prisoner of one’s time ... philosophical intelligence ... perceives the common, the time transcendent element that raises apprehension to the level of a universal.”

¹¹⁹ Statement of the Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in East Africa (1 Feb 1999), “Forming Priests as Evangelizers,” *Catholic International* 10 (May 1999): 247.

¹²⁰ Cardinal Avery Dulles, “From the Heart of Priestly Formation,” *Catholic International* 8 (January 1997): 40.

¹²¹ *Pastores dabo vobis*, n. 34.

¹²² Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in East Africa. “Forming Priests as Evangelizers.” 248.

¹²³ *Ratio fundamentalis institutionis sacerdotalis*, n. 34.

¹²⁴ *Ratio fundamentalis institutionis sacerdotalis*, n. 35.

Furthermore, those responsible for the teaching of theology to seminarians must adhere to the relevant instructions issued by the Holy See,¹²⁵ as outlined in *Sapientia Christiana*¹²⁶ and, where applicable, *Ex corde ecclesiae*.¹²⁷ Because they are involved in the intellectual formation of future priests, all those who teach in theological consortia, must be willing to make the *Profession of Faith* and take the *Oath of Fidelity* upon appointment. At all times, their teaching must demonstrate loyal assent to the magisterium of the Church and it is essential that lecturers in theological consortia be “particularly sensitive to transmitting a complete and sound doctrine” demonstrating that his or her theological knowledge “has become a spiritual patrimony for him [or her]”.¹²⁸ Lecturers “should be concerned for the training and whole priestly formation of each individual student, to ensure his real progress in learning and in the spiritual life.”¹²⁹ As the academic study of seminarians constitutes one of the four pillars of their formation, it is important that lecturers participate in some way in the broader common activity of the seminary formation team. A designated member of the seminary formation team has responsibility for ongoing liaison with those involved in the academic formation of seminarians.

A normative programme of studies¹³⁰ will be drawn up in each seminary and seminary rectors are responsible to ensure satisfactory achievement within the programme of studies is attained before a seminarian is presented for ordination.

Finally, whilst it is true that “between bishops and theologians there needs to be a cordial collaboration and a fruitful dialogue *in mutual respect and charity*,”¹³¹ it is responsibility of the bishops to ensure that sound doctrine is taught in the theological consortia.

10. Pastoral Formation

The whole formation imparted to candidates for the priesthood aims at preparing them to enter into communion with the charity of Christ the Good Shepherd. Hence, their formation in its different aspects must have a fundamentally pastoral character.¹³²

While it is recognised that all four pillars of formation are closely connected, pastoral formation offers the integrating element within the entire process of priestly formation, whereby the pillars of human, spiritual, and intellectual formation are linked in the context of practical ministry in the midst of the

¹²⁵ *Statement of Conclusions*, 58.

¹²⁶ John Paul II, Apostolic Constitution on Ecclesiastical Universities and Faculties, *Sapientia Christiana* (15 April 1979); *AAS* 71 (1979): 469–521.

¹²⁷ John Paul II, Apostolic Constitution on Catholic Universities, *Ex corde Ecclesiae* (15 August 1990); *AAS* 82 (1990): 1475–1509.

¹²⁸ Congregation for Catholic Education, *Directives Concerning the Preparation of Seminary Educators* (4 November 1993); (Boston: St. Paul Books & Media, 1994), n. 46.

¹²⁹ *Ratio fundamentalis institutionis sacerdotalis*, n. 37.

¹³⁰ An appendix listing a recommended programme of studies is attached to this *Programme for Priestly Formation in Australia*.

¹³¹ *Apostolorum successores*, n. 126.

¹³² *Pastores dabo vobis*, n. 57.

people of God: "The whole training of seminarians should have as its object to make them true shepherds of souls after the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, teacher, priest, and shepherd."¹³³

Throughout the entire programme of priestly formation, seminarians will be active participants in a coordinated pastoral programme (with goals and objectives clearly stated); one that provides practical experience, theological reflection and participative learning. Participating in a range of pastoral experiences outside the seminary, seminarians develop their understanding of a variety of forms of ministry and their skills in working collaboratively and inclusively with clergy, religious and laypeople, both men and women. They also have an opportunity to demonstrate their capacity to exercise authority and leadership as a form of Christian service that enables mutual respect and care, especially for the most vulnerable.

Pastoral placements attempt to give seminarians as broad a range of new and challenging areas of work as possible, with an emphasis on parish life. If possible the placement will take place in the diocese of the seminarian and pastoral experience is intended to cover a variety of areas over the years of seminary formation. Further, throughout their time at the seminary, all seminarians doing pastoral work will be engaged in theological reflection. The primary purpose of theological reflection in these groups is to assist seminarians to interpret various pastoral experiences or activities in light of Sacred Scriptures, Church teaching and Tradition, and to appropriate and integrate the human, spiritual and intellectual insights gained in their formation into their lives. They are encouraged to reflect upon their experiences from the perspective of faith and theology that will bring theological learning to elucidate pastoral practice. This habit of critical reflection helps to bring the richness of the Christian tradition into dialogue with contemporary experience. Pastoral formation helps to cultivate a life-long practice of reflection during priestly ministry.

A programme of awareness and education in principles and procedures for the safety and protection of children prepares for and accompanies the seminarian's pastoral experience. Each pastoral placement is preceded by education in relevant professional and behavioural standards, including (but not limited to) those set out in *Integrity in Ministry*. Reflection on pastoral placements includes opportunities for the seminarian to reflect on how these standards are being integrated into his personal approach to ministry. At the conclusion of each placement, there is a formal assessment of the skills demonstrated by the seminarian, which includes feedback from those involved in supervising the pastoral experience.

Over the course of their studies seminarians are required to engage in some pastoral work on a weekly basis and have some short term pastoral placements in a parish. A longer placement is organised by the bishop of the diocese to which the seminarian belongs, and the seminarian is supervised by the parish priest. Such a placement assists the seminarian in immersing himself more into the life of the diocese and experiencing over the years a range of parish situations.

Thanks to an initial and gradual experience of ministry, future priests will be able to be inserted into the living pastoral tradition of their particular church. They will learn to open the horizon of their mind and heart to the missionary dimension of the Church's life. They will get practice in some initial forms of cooperation with one another and with the priests alongside whom they will be sent to work. These priests have a considerably important role, in union with the seminary program, in showing the candidates how they should go about pastoral work.¹³⁴

The extended pastoral placement is designed for the seminarian to experience the life and ministry of priesthood as it is lived in the parish and diocese in which the he will be incardinated. This placement

¹³³ *Optatam totius*, n. 4; cf. *Pastores dabo vobis*, n. 5; Congregation for the Clergy, *The Priest and the Third Christian Millennium* (1999).

¹³⁴ *Pastores dabo vobis*, n. 58.

is designed to give a seminarian personal experience of priestly ministry and life as lived within parishes of his diocese. The placement is undertaken with the cooperation and support of the seminary staff, the diocesan bishop of the seminarian, parish mentor and the parishioners of the parish where the seminarian will live and work.¹³⁵ The extended pastoral placement is an action-reflection-integration mode of learning, which enables the seminarian to reflect upon experiences of priestly ministry and then integrate these into his pastoral practice. Towards the conclusion of the extended placement there is a formal review and assessment including the seminarian himself, seminary staff, the parish mentor and others involved with his pastoral experience.

The pastoral formation of seminarians should ensure that the seminarian develops a sense of the diocese and can find his place among the fraternity of priests.

11. Missionary Formation

Today, in particular, the pressing pastoral task of the new evangelisation calls for the involvement of the entire People of God, and requires a new fervour, new methods and a new expression for the announcing and witnessing of the Gospel. This task demands priests who are deeply and fully immersed in the mystery of Christ and capable of embodying a new style of pastoral life, marked by a profound communion with the pope, the bishops and other priests, and a fruitful cooperation with the lay faithful, always respecting and fostering the different roles, charisms and ministries present within the ecclesial community.¹³⁶

Given Pope John Paul II's call for the Church to direct its efforts towards a "new evangelisation," those preparing for priestly ministry not only need to acquire the necessary pastoral skills in the service of parish communities, but they also need to understand how to develop new and effective means of evangelisation. While recognising the foundational character of the four pillars, a fifth pillar is considered necessary, giving attention to the missionary focus required in pastoral ministry today.

Many of the values that can be found in Australian culture resonate with those put forward in the gospel. Thus, part of the mission of the Church in Australia is to strengthen and promote the Australian tradition of fostering the dignity of all, providing opportunities and justice for all, and being open to each person regardless of their background or social standing. However, other aspects of Australian culture are much less welcoming to the gospel. Australia suffers from the ravages of secularism, and Pope John Paul II's words are apposite for the experience of the Church here: "In countries with ancient Christian roots, and occasionally in the younger Churches as well, entire groups of the baptized have lost a living sense of the faith or even no longer consider themselves members of the Church and live a life far removed from Christ and his Gospel. In this case what is needed is a 'new evangelisation' or a 're-evangelisation'."¹³⁷ The role of the priest in this task of a "new evangelisation" is further specified in *The Priest and the Third Christian Millennium*:

Priests exercise an absolutely indispensable evangelizing role. New Evangelisation needs urgently to find a form for the exercise of the priestly ministry really consonant with contemporary conditions so as to render it effective and capable of adequately responding to the circumstances in which it is exercised ... Many of our contemporaries it must not be forgotten arrive at their ideas of Christ and the Church above all through their contact with her sacred ministers. Hence the need for their authentic witness to the gospel becomes all the more pressing since it is a living and transparent image of Christ the priest ... The call to new

¹³⁵ CIC, can. 258.

¹³⁶ *Pastores dabo vobis*, n. 18.

¹³⁷ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter on the Permanent Validity of the Church's Missionary Mandate, *Redemptoris missio* (7 December 1990), n. 14.

evangelisation is primarily a call to conversion and when the Word of God has taught the intellect of man and moved his will to reject sin, evangelizing activity attains its goal in fruitful participation in the sacraments especially in the celebration of the Eucharist. Paul VI taught that the role of evangelisation is precisely to educate people in the faith in such a way as to lead each individual Christian to live the sacraments of faith and not to receive them passively or reluctantly.

Evangelization consists of proclamation witness dialogue and service. It is based on three inseparable elements: preaching the Word, sacramental ministry and leading the faithful. From a pastoral perspective the primary action of evangelisation is logically considered to be preaching. From the perspective of intentionality however the primary element of evangelisation must be the celebration of the sacraments, especially of Penance and the Blessed Eucharist. The integrity of the pastoral ministry of priests in the service of new evangelisation is to be found however in a harmonious fusion of both these functions.¹³⁸

Seminary formation will include teaching on the nature of evangelisation, offering particular assistance whereby the seminarians understand the pastoral challenge of the new evangelisation. Pastoral formation should include some engagement in works of evangelisation. Seminarians should be carefully prepared for this work of evangelisation in the particular context of contemporary Australian culture and society. In his post-synodal apostolic exhortation, *Ecclesia in Oceania*, Pope John Paul II describes this country as deeply shaped by thousands of years of indigenous culture, its subsequent colonisation by European people, and ongoing immigration since that time, with the result that “Australia is now a largely urban, modern and secularized nation, in which successive immigrations from Europe and Asia have contributed to make it a multicultural society.”¹³⁹

One of the challenges in contemporary Australia is the need for reconciliation with indigenous people, and this is therefore one of the ongoing priorities for the mission of the Church in this country. Seminarians need to be sensitive to these challenges and committed to working as future priests to engaging constructively with indigenous people, as a critical part of the work of evangelisation in Australia. As Pope John Paul II pointed out when he met with Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders in Alice Springs, “the Church herself in Australia will not be fully the Church that Jesus wants her to be until you have made your contribution to her life and until that contribution has been joyfully received by others.”¹⁴⁰

Pope Paul VI described Australians as “an original people, the result of the meeting of people of very different nations, languages and civilisations”¹⁴¹ Australian seminarians will be called upon to work in this multicultural environment, where one of the challenges is how to preach the gospel to such an original people. Future priests need to be familiar with ministering in such a way as to respect a wide variety of diverse cultural backgrounds and experiences.¹⁴² Alongside these multicultural considerations, the seminarian needs a firm understanding of the place and rights of Oriental Churches and should be prepared for ecumenical contact and inter religious dialogue.

¹³⁸ Congregation for the Clergy, *The Priest in the Third Christian Millennium*, nn. 14, 17, 18.

¹³⁹ *Ecclesia in Oceania*, n. 6.

¹⁴⁰ John Paul II, Address to Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, Blatherskite Park, Alice Springs (29 November 1986), n. 13; *AAS* 79 (1987): 973–979.

¹⁴¹ Paul VI, Homily at Randwick Racecourse for the 200th Anniversary of Cook’s Arrival in Australia, Sydney (1 December 1970), n. 1; *AAS* 63 (1971): 62.

¹⁴² Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, Instruction on the Love of Christ towards Migrants, *Erga migrantes caritas Christi* (2004), n. 71

Another particular challenge for evangelisation in Australia is the trend toward increasingly large urban centres, where it can be difficult for people to identify with a local community, alongside a declining rural population, where small communities struggle to provide basic services because of their dwindling numbers and remoteness. Seminarians need to understand these demographic trends, and be well prepared to contribute to the mission of the Church in the range of contexts in which they will minister as priests.

12. Continuing Formation

By the very fact that ongoing formation is a continuation of the formation received in the seminary, its aim cannot be the inculcation of a purely ‘professional’ approach, which could be acquired by learning a few new pastoral techniques. Instead its aim must be that of promoting a general and integral process of constant growth, deepening each of the aspects of formation human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral – as well as ensuring their active and harmonious integration, based on pastoral charity and in reference to it.¹⁴³

The bishops recognise the importance of ongoing formation for their priests and the vital role played by the seminary in this process: “The formation of future priests, both diocesan and religious, and lifelong assiduous care for their personal sanctification in the ministry and for the constant updating of their pastoral commitment is considered by the Church one of the most demanding and important tasks for the future of the evangelisation of humanity.”¹⁴⁴ *Pastores dabō vobis* in quoting 2 Tim 1:6 – “I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you” – emphasises that priests need the “gift of God” given at their ordination to be nurtured in a process of ongoing formation, one aimed at nurturing the inner pastoral spirit of the priest.

As ongoing formation is a permanent feature of priestly life, seminarians should understand this feature and the young priest should receive materials to assist him enter into the life of the diocese.¹⁴⁵

13. Assessment of Progress of Seminarians

The continuing assessment of the progress of seminarians reflects the Church’s responsibility to discern vocations as a gift from God and as expressed in the life of the individual seminarian. Each seminary has its procedures for assessment of seminarians. Each seminarian is accompanied by a priest or a formation member of staff. Seminarians are accountable for all aspects of their life in formation. The seminary staff meet regularly to assess the progress of each seminarian and address particular needs that may emerge. Their task is undertaken in close collaboration with a range of other people who are involved with the seminarians’ formation, and so they consult regularly with those responsible for the seminarians’ academic and pastoral formation. However, a seminarian’s spiritual director and confessors are not consulted on decisions about admitting him to orders or dismissing him from the seminary.¹⁴⁶ Each year the rector provides a written report to the seminarian’s bishop providing a clear estimation of his progress.

¹⁴³ *Pastores dabō vobis*, n. 71.

¹⁴⁴ Congregation for the Clergy, *The Priest in the Third Christian Millennium*, n. 2.

¹⁴⁵ *Pastores dabō vobis*, n. 76.

¹⁴⁶ *CIC*, can. 240 §2.

As outlined in the circular letter of the Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments¹⁴⁷ scrutiny is required at moments of liturgical advancement towards priestly ministry. The bishops note the requirements of the Sacred Congregation for documentation and for each diocese to establish a stable group of experienced priests as a Commission for Orders and Ministries. This commission considers all relevant information about a candidate and makes a recommendation to the bishop about the candidate's request to be ordained or admitted to the liturgical ministry. The detail of the Commission's vote is recorded in the candidate's personal file.¹⁴⁸

The gradual progress of the seminarian towards diaconate and priesthood is recognised in the admission to and the exercise of the ministries of lector and acolyte. These ministries should be taken seriously and treated with appropriate esteem. This includes proper preparation by instruction and training as well as spiritual preparation. Those preparing to be lectors should be examined in their knowledge of the introduction to the lectionary. Those preparing to be acolytes should be examined in their knowledge of the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* and the duties of extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion. It is desirable that the duties associated with these ministries should be exercised, as far as possible, after the ministries have been received, without prejudice to such duties being carried out by others in the absence of lectors and acolytes.

The norms of the Church as outlined in the Circular Letter are to be observed regarding admission to candidacy.¹⁴⁹

The call to orders is a canonical act which pertains to the personal authority¹⁵⁰ of the bishop, but the Australian bishops acknowledge the importance of opinion being sought from individuals and councils, and a wide range of those who have been involved with various aspects of the seminarian's formation. The judgement of the bishop concerning the seminarian's suitability to receive the diaconate as a transitional step to ordination to the priesthood includes a preliminary judgement concerning his suitability for the priesthood. It is improper to admit a candidate to diaconate if questions remain about his suitability for the priesthood. However, if serious concerns become apparent during the diaconate period, the rector and bishop must proceed prudently.

For ordination to the priesthood a deacon should have served as deacon for a period of not less than six months.¹⁵¹ He is to be at least 25 years old,¹⁵² having completed six years of philosophy and theology.¹⁵³ He is to petition his bishop to be ordained expressing his free intention and permanent commitment. The seminary is to certify that all requirements for ordination have been met.¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁷ Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments, *Circular Letter on Scrutinies regarding the Suitability of Candidates for Orders* (10 November 1997).

¹⁴⁸ Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments, *Circular Letter on Scrutinies regarding the Suitability of Candidates for Orders*, enclosure III.

¹⁴⁹ Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments, *Circular Letter on Scrutinies regarding the Suitability of Candidates for Orders*, enclosures II and III.

¹⁵⁰ Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments, *Circular Letter on Scrutinies regarding the Suitability of Candidates for Orders*, n. 3.

¹⁵¹ *CIC*, can. 1031 §1.

¹⁵² *CIC*, can. 1031 §1.

¹⁵³ *CIC*, can. 1032.

¹⁵⁴ *CIC*, can. 1050.

Prior to a seminarian's ordination to the priesthood, the seminary also provides formal advice to the seminarian's bishop about matters that should be considered in decisions about the new priest's first appointment.

14. Seminary Faculty

The educational community of the seminary is built round the various people involved in formation: the rector, the spiritual father or spiritual director, the superiors and professors. These people should feel profoundly united to the bishop, whom they represent in their different roles and in various ways. They should also maintain among themselves a frank and genuine communion.¹⁵⁵

The overall governance of the seminary is the responsibility of the diocesan bishop, or group of bishops in the case of a regional seminary. The rector is chosen by the appropriate ecclesiastical authority and this authority approves the members of the seminary staff, which can include priests, deacons, religious and laypersons. The rector, always a priest, serves as pastor of the seminary community.¹⁵⁶ He sets the direction and tone of the seminary, and works closely, in brotherly charity, with the formation staff. The rector and the formation staff "receive a careful preparation in sound doctrine, suitable pastoral experience and special training in spirituality and teaching methods."¹⁵⁷ They also undertake periodic review and continuing formation.¹⁵⁸

The seminary formation staff includes a vice rector, always a priest, who assists the rector in areas determined by the rector, and stands in for the rector when he is absent from the seminary.

The spiritual director, always a priest, is responsible for overseeing and facilitating the individual spiritual direction of the seminarians and oversees the spiritual life and formation of the seminary.

A seminary should provide a director for the propaedeutic phase, human formation, pastoral formation, and a dean of studies. The seminary staff draws on the expertise of a range of priests, religious and laypeople in various aspects of human, academic, spiritual and pastoral formation, thereby also providing a model of collaboration for the seminarians.

Each seminary has a code of conduct for its staff and a clearly documented process for responding to complaints about them.

15. Conclusion

The bishops of Australia build their programme of priestly formation on the foundation of multiple documents issued by the Holy See in the period following the Second Vatican Council. In particular the bishops acknowledge with gratitude the keen attention given to priestly life and the formation of seminarians by Pope John Paul II, especially in his document, *Pastores dabo vobis*.

¹⁵⁵ *Pastores dabo vobis*, n. 66.

¹⁵⁶ *CIC*, can. 262.

¹⁵⁷ *Optatam totius*, n. 5; cf. Congregation for Catholic Education, *Directives concerning the Preparation of Seminary Educators* (4 November 1993), nn. 48–64.

¹⁵⁸ Cf. Congregation for Catholic Education, *Directives concerning the Preparation of Seminary Educators* (4 November 1993), nn. 65–71.

The bishops wish also to acknowledge the special service offered to the church by seminary staff and academic lecturers, who show daily dedication to the sound formation of future priests.

The bishops entrust the work of formation of priests to the maternal care of the Blessed Virgin Mary and pray that future generations of priests will have the heart of God¹⁵⁹ and be shepherds willing to lay down their lives for their sheep.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁹ Jer 3:15.

¹⁶⁰ Jn 10:15.

Appendix

A Schema for Academic Formation of Seminarians

Philosophy

The Church requires seminarians to spend two years in the study of philosophy. Ideally, this study will precede the seminarian's study of theology. Seminarians are encouraged to become familiar with the philosophical underpinning of the Catholic theological tradition. In particular the perennial philosophy and the writings of St Thomas Aquinas deserve special study.¹⁶¹ They are also encouraged to study the various alternative philosophies that operate within their cultures: this will provide a basis for dialogue and for evangelisation. In addition, they should study the history of philosophical speculation and its place within the broader human search for truth and meaning.

Repeated attention has been drawn to the fact that provision of philosophy in Australian seminaries is seriously lacking both in quantity and in topics covered. Some suggested content is sketched below.

Subject Units

- Introduction to Philosophy
- Metaphysics
- Moral Philosophy
- Philosophical Anthropology
- Philosophy of Natural Law
- Epistemology
- Medieval Philosophy
- Modern Philosophy
- Social and Political Philosophy

Languages

A key to study of the humanities is mastery of languages. Seminarians proficient in English should normally study languages and do so earlier in the programme rather than later. This means that languages mastered may be drawn upon in later study of Scripture, theology, history, liturgy and canon law. Every student proficient in English should take, at least, Latin I and II. Study of Greek and Hebrew is recommended and will be necessary for those seminarians wishing to study for an ecclesiastical rather than a civil degree.

Subject Units

- Ecclesiastical Latin I
- Ecclesiastical Latin II
- NT Greek I
- NT Greek II
- Hebrew I
- Hebrew II

¹⁶¹ *CIC*, can. 252 §3.

Church History

The Church exists in time and history. Historical study of the Church is essential for an understanding of the development of the Catholic tradition and a sense of the Church's presence in different ways at different times. Study of certain key periods of the Church's history – both remote and recent – will be particularly important for grasping the influence of the Church upon events, other faiths, and the world generally. Seminarians would normally be expected to take a minimum of two historical subjects, which would always include one modern and one pre-modern unit. Study of Australian Church history is highly recommended as a third unit.

Subject Units

- The Early Church
- Church in the Middle Ages
- Reformation and modern Church history
- History of the Church in Australia

Scripture

The Holy Scriptures and the Sacred Tradition, including the living magisterium, are our primary sources of theology. Thus Scripture must be taught not only as a critical study of texts but also as biblical theology. Our future priests will preach on biblical texts and will labour to enable the people of God to find in these texts ways of better understanding their life in Christ. Thus real knowledge and love of the Scriptures is essential for priestly ordination.

Seminarians will take a minimum of six units of Scripture, covering the cultural, historical and literary contexts of the literature of the Bible; principles and methods of critical exegesis and interpretation; both Testaments, all four Gospels, and the Epistles.

Subject Units

- Introduction to Sacred Scripture
- Exegesis of the OT: Pentateuch and Historical Books
- Exegesis of the OT: Prophetic Books
- Exegesis of the OT: Wisdom Books
- Exegesis of the NT: Synoptic Gospels and Acts of the Apostles
- Exegesis of the NT: Pauline Corpus
- Exegesis of the NT: Johannine Writings and Catholic Epistles

Systematic Theology

After careful study of philosophy, languages and Scripture, the seminarian is in a position to reflect upon the mysteries of the faith within the Church's unfolding theological tradition. This is the heart of the education of the future priest: the culmination towards which all of his studies have been moving. In order to cover the wide range of topics involved, seminarians should take at least twelve units of theology.

Subject Units

- Introduction to Theology
- Fundamental Theology
- Patrology
- Dogmatic Theology: Ecclesiology & Ecumenism
- Dogmatic Theology: Creation
- Dogmatic Theology: Christology & Soteriology
- Dogmatic Theology: The One and Triune God
- Dogmatic Theology: Eschatology
- Dogmatic Theology: Theological Anthropology (Grace)
- Dogmatic Theology: Mariology
- Sacramental Theology: Sacraments in general, Sacraments of Christian Initiation
- Sacramental Theology: Matrimony
- Sacramental Theology: Holy Orders
- Sacramental Theology: Penance and Anointing of the Sick

Moral Theology

Seminarians trained in moral philosophy must then approach moral theology. Moral theology introduces moral principles derived from Revelation and explains in detail the moral teaching of the Church so as to develop a personally appropriated commitment to relationships and actions that are founded on love, respect and justice. Seminarians will take at least four units of moral theology in which the following topics will be covered: Scripture, Tradition and morality; natural law; moral teaching and the magisterium; marriage and family; sexual morality; bio-ethics; social teaching.

Subject Units

- Fundamental Moral Theology
- Sexual Ethics
- Marriage & Family
- Bioethics
- Social Morals and Social Teaching of the Church

Pastoral Studies and Mission

Pastoral theology and pastoral counselling are academic studies as well as daily realities for the priest. Pastoral study aims to avoid the priest becoming involved in mindless activism: it provides tools to think through the purposes of pastoral activity and the goals of pastoral counselling. Pastoral studies should introduce pastoral theology, principles of pastoral care, models of pastoral work, and pastoral counselling. The call of Pope John Paul II to the New Evangelisation challenges seminarians to have a missionary orientation.

Pastoral studies includes close attention to: codes of conduct, principles and standards of behaviour, awareness and education in principles and procedures for the safety and protection of children, responsibilities in recognising and responding to children and other vulnerable people who are at risk

(including responsibilities set out in civil legislation), procedures for responding to complaints about inappropriate behaviour or abuse, and the various documents that deal with these matters formally.¹⁶²

Two units would normally be taken, one of which must be pastoral theology.

Subject Units

- Pastoral Theology
- Pastoral Psychology
- Pastoral Counselling
- New Evangelisation of Pope John Paul II

Spirituality

The development and growth of a personal spirituality will be greatly assisted by study of great Catholic spiritual writers and spiritual themes. An intellectual engagement with some of the major sources of Catholic spiritual tradition will help to guide seminarians towards a genuinely Catholic spirituality. It will also help to alert them to problems with some of the ‘new spiritualities’. Seminarians will study at least one unit.

Subject Units

- Introduction to Spirituality
- Spiritual Theology
- Great Spiritual Classics

Liturgy

Seminarians require a thorough grounding in the principles of liturgy and in the celebration of the sacraments and the major rites of the Church. The study of liturgy will include study of history of liturgy, liturgical principles, beauty, sacred music, sacraments and rites, preaching. Seminarians will normally study two units, one of which will always be principles of liturgy.

Subject Units

- Principles of Sacred Liturgy
- History of Sacred Liturgy
- Liturgical Music
- Homiletics

¹⁶² Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference and Catholic Religious Australia, *Towards Healing: Principles and Procedures in responding to Complaints of Abuse against Personnel of the Catholic Church in Australia*; National Committee for Professional Standards, *Integrity in Ministry*; National Committee for Professional Standards, *Integrity in the Service of the Church: A Resource Document of Principles and Standards for Lay Workers in the Catholic Church in Australia*; National Committee for Professional Standards, *Becoming Formed in Integrity*.

Canon Law

Seminarians are required to have a good grounding in Canon Law. This requires knowledge of the purpose, history and major principles of the Canon. Future priests need in particular to understand Canon Law as it applies to the administration of the sacraments. Hence, both units in Canon Law are required for every seminarian.

Subject Units

- Principles of Canon Law
- Canon Law and the Sacraments

