

Formation toward the Priesthood: The Seminary of the Good Shepherd

Introduction:

- All staff members at the Seminary of the Good Shepherd play a significant role in the formation process.
- Staff members include: Rector, Vice-Rector, First Year Director, Spiritual Director, Dean of Studies and Director of Human Formation.

Selection of Candidates for the Priesthood:

- The Vocations Director meets with the candidate, whom he interviews and assesses.
- The Vocations Director then forwards his assessment, as well as other relevant information about him, to the psychologist.

Screening of Candidates for the Priesthood: Psychological Evaluation

- Informal Assessment of Facility in the English Language
- When a candidate, following interviews with relevant staff members, appears to be suitable for entrance but lacks the capacity to be tested in English: He may be instructed either to engage in English Language studies prior to the psychological evaluation or he may be allowed to begin the first year of formation with the understanding that he will need to complete the evaluation as soon as he is capable of doing so.

Process of Psychological Evaluation:

- Clinical Interview and Behavioural Observations (of both Verbal and Non-Verbal Behaviour, including Personal Hygiene, etc.)
- Mental Status Evaluation
- Evaluation of: Developmental, Social, Family, Educational, Work History, Religious History, Internet Use and Sexual History, Personal and Family Psychiatric History, Medical and Chemical History. (self-report; questions are asked in various formats)
- Objective Measures of Assessment (2-3 Personality Tests; Sexual History/Screening Inventories)
- Projective Measures of Assessment (in order to access more hidden, unconscious dimensions of personality, such as underlying attitudes, motivations, defences, unresolved issues)
- Intelligence Tests (if deemed necessary)
- Assessment of Written Recommendations (providing information regarding strengths and weaknesses)
- Summary of Results and Recommendations

Purpose or Goal of Psychological Evaluation:

- *Overall Assessment of Level of Psychological Functioning:* Rule out Psychiatric Illnesses or Personality Disorders; Assess Emotional Stability and/or Symptoms, Personality Traits, Needs or Drives, Strengths and Weaknesses, Evidence of Honesty and Integrity, Self-Awareness and Self-Direction
- *Assessment of Psychosocial Maturity:* (Personal Identity, Developmental and Current Functioning; Relational History/Capacity)
- *Assessment of Psychosexual Maturity:* Psychosexual Development and Sexual Identity; Affective Development and Capacity for Empathy or Compassion; Initial Assessment of the Capacity to Live Celibately
- *Assessment of Psychological Integration:* Level of Personal Maturity, Attitudes toward Authority Figures, Defences, Levels of Flexibility and Emotional Resilience, Frustration Tolerance and Coping Mechanisms and Skills, Capacity for Personal Insight. Levels of Motivation toward Growth; and Character Development, etc.
- Assessment of Cognitive Functioning
- Assessment of Possible Contraindications or Risk Factors

Acceptance to the Seminary of the Good Shepherd:

- The psychological assessment is considered together with other relevant information (references, personal interviews, academic work and study) by the Vocations Director and the Relevant Archbishop or Bishop to decide whether the candidate will be accepted into the Seminary.

Training of Candidates for the Priesthood: (Length: Seven or Eight Years)

- *Purpose of In-House Formation, conducted by all Staff Members:*
 - Teaching Principles (with Practical Application) Relevant to Pastoral Work and Essential for Integral Ministry and Child Protection; Discussion and Practical Application of Significant Documents, such as *Integrity in Ministry* and *Integrity in Service in the Church*; the Principles of the Social Teachings of the Church; Other Principles relevant to Ongoing, Life-Long Formation, such as: the Catechism of the Catholic Church, St. Thomas Aquinas' Teachings of the Passions of the Soul; The Dignity and Role of Women; The Priest as Brother, Spouse and Father; and the Importance of Maintaining Psychological, Social, Intellectual and Spiritual Habits and Practices, as well as Good Physical Health.
 - Examples from Human Formation Classes Include Such Topics as: Self-Awareness, Self-Knowledge and the Development of Affective Maturity; Psychological Health/Illness; Psychosexual Development and Maturity (including: Child Sexual Abuse in the Church, its History, Causes and Effects,

and the Effects on Priests and Seminarians today); the Causes and Effects of Pornography and Pornography Addiction; Appropriate/Inappropriate Interpersonal Boundaries; Masculinity and Femininity; Personal, Psychological and Priestly Identity; and Personality and Character Formation; The Importance of Developing Honest and Integral Friendships with Men and Women; Study of Habits and Virtues (such as: Continence, Chastity, Temperance, Fortitude, Justice and Prudence).

- *Additional Input with Discussion* (by Staff Members and Others):
 - Documents Including: *Integrity in Ministry*; *Integrity in Service in the Church* (see above); *Pastores Dabo Vobis (I Shall Give You Shepherds)*; and other relevant Pastoral Documents.
 - Modules given by the staff of the National Committee for Professional Standards
- *Regular Evaluation Meetings with the Rector and Vice-Rector*
- *Regular Staff Meetings* (with Discussions regarding Seminarians)
- *Regular Feedback Elicited by:*
 - Lecturers at The Catholic Institute of Sydney
 - Pastoral Work/Placement: Priests and other involved Parish Members; and qualified supervisors (i.e. in hospital or school placements)
- *Additional Feedback Elicited by:*
 - Seminarians: Peers/Self-Evaluation

The Ongoing Formation of Priests Following Ordination is under the auspices of the Archdiocese of Sydney.

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