

PRINCIPLES OF THE NEW PPF

The Program of Priestly Formation, Sixth Edition



READINESS FOR PRIESTLY MINISTRY

Scripture Reflection: 1 Timothy 4:12-16

The **Vocational Synthesis Stage** is the period of formation between diaconal and priestly ordinations, intended primarily as a gradual realization of the cleric's responsibility for the care of souls while he resides full-time in a pastoral setting. The goal of this stage is to provide an essential transition before assuming the full responsibilities of priestly life and ministry.

The benchmarks of this stage reflect an incorporating of the entirety of the formation the man has received from the moment of Baptism through his reception of Holy Orders. He is now preparing to live his priestly identity in friendship with Jesus as an ordained *alter Christus* for the people he is called to serve.

Human Formation Benchmarks

- **Generative Friendships:** maintains wholesome friendships with priests from a diversity of generations, ethnicities, and viewpoints and is willing to participate in presbyteral gatherings; committed to receiving mentoring; appropriate transparency in his relationships with his supervisor and staff; accountability to others regarding his responsibilities and schedule.
- **A Bridge to Christ:** he is not an obstacle to pastoral ministry, such that he can relate to and accompany the many diverse peoples living in various states of life and different cultures.

Spiritual Formation Benchmarks

- **Ongoing Theological Reflection:** maintains regular habits of spiritual direction, daily Mass, personal prayer, and theological reflection which integrates his internal spiritual and prayer life with his pastoral experiences.

KEY WORDS

Vocational Synthesis Stage

A Bridge to Christ

An Obedient Heart

Liturgical Competency

- **Obedient Heart:** a healthy ministerial relationship with his pastor and appropriate and regular communication with his bishop, vicar general, and other diocesan officials or religious superiors.

Intellectual Formation Benchmarks

- **Liturgical Competency:** demonstrates competency in pastoral theology and its application in preaching, sacramental and pastoral ministry, and liturgical praxis.
- **Ongoing Formation:** recognizes and articulates areas for personal ongoing intellectual growth and demonstrate a commitment to that growth through workshops, personal study, and conferences.

Pastoral Formation Benchmarks

- **Missionary Discipleship:** demonstrates "a capacity for critical observation" so that he "can discern true and false values" (*Ecclesia in America, no. 40*); open to the various unique and beautiful ways the Holy Spirit is working to bring about a new evangelization in our time.
- **Evangelical Preaching:** demonstrates the ability to craft and successfully deliver homilies; plan and execute pastoral projects; accompany engaged couples and newly married couples; assist those seeking a declaration of matrimonial nullity; and work in an ecumenical and interreligious context in the United States.

The benchmarks of this stage, which leads to the transitional deacon's public expression of his free, conscious, and definitive intention for the priesthood, must also lead to a suitable time for his spiritual preparation to priestly ordination and show his positive disposition for ongoing formation with his future brother priests after ordination.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. For consistency of accompaniment is there a value in having a transitional deacon remain in the same pastoral assignment during his Vocational Synthesis Stage and the first years of his priesthood?
2. With the complexity of pastoral situations today, who is responsible for the mentoring and accompaniment of priests in their first years of ordained ministry?

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How does discernment change during the Vocational Synthesis Stage?

Discernment is twofold, both personal and pastoral. Having first experienced how God led him interiorly to the diaconate, a man now learns to discern the many obligations of his office by growing in union with Christ's pastoral charity. The pastoral discernment

which occurs during the Vocational Synthesis Stage produces a unity of interior life and external activity that can only be achieved by following the example of Jesus, whose will was always to do the work of the Father (*John 14:31*).