

PRINCIPLES OF THE NEW PPF

The Program of Priestly Formation, Sixth Edition *pre-Confirmatio*



A FORMATIVE COMMUNITY

Scripture Reflection: Matthew 16:13-20

Seminaries are to be a continuation in the Church of the apostolic community gathered around Jesus (*Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 60).

This basic organizing principle means the seminary is first and foremost a learning community of the disciples of Jesus, that is, “a community of formation, wherever it is found” (*Ratio*, no. 188). At the same time, the seminary is a community of charity and friendship, where fraternal bonds are anchored in genuine relationships to the Lord and his Body, the Church. Finally, the seminary is a worshiping and praying community that finds its source and summit in the celebration of the Eucharist.

Because the seminary is first a “community of formation,” the tone of the new PPF has **shifted from institutional and academic language, to one that expresses relationships and the stages of formation**. For example, the terms, *college seminary*, *pre-theology* and *theologate*, are replaced by references to the stages-- *Propaedeutic*, *Discipleship*, *Configuration*, and *Vocational Synthesis*. The related terms *college seminarian/collegiate*, *pre-theologian* and *theologian* and their derivations are replaced as well by references to the stages, e.g., *Propaedeutic Stage Seminarian*.

In addition, titles which identify formational roles have been modified to allow for a distinction between academic and practical organizational positions and structures and the communal reality they serve.

- The title **Director** is replaced with the title **Coordinator**, e.g., Coordinator of Spiritual Formation. (N.B. The term spiritual director is used for all priests engaged in spiritual direction.)

KEY WORDS

Language has Shifted

Priest Formator

Community of Formators

Formative Community

- The term **Administrator** only refers to the financial administrator and other administrative personnel. The rector and vice rectors are not referred to as administrators.
- Terms like **personnel, institution and constituencies** are avoided in favor of terms that reflect the communal nature of the seminary and the Church.
- **Faculty** is narrowed in its usage and no longer refers to the priest formators and spiritual directors, but only to the professors who teach academic courses.
- The term **Professor** refers to those who teach courses, both clergy and laity.
- The term **Formator** is limited to priests on the formation team.
- Every seminarian has a formator in the external forum and the internal forum. The priests serving in the seminary are collectively known as the **Community of Formators**.
- The term **Seminary Community** refers specifically to the community of seminarians, priest formators, professors, specialists, and other seminary staff.
- The term **Formative Community** refers broadly to the larger community within the Church that is involved in varied ways in the discernment and initial formation of men preparing for the priesthood.
- The term **Specialist** refers to members of the formative community who are engaged in a specialized field (e.g., psychologist, counselor, librarian, business manager, etc.).

Though the sixth edition does not focus much on the institutional aspect of the seminary, the need for seminaries to be able to express their functions in a way that allows them to interact with other entities and the society at large should be considered. This must always be done by giving primacy to the communal and formative aspects of the seminary before the institutional. For example, a formator could have multiple titles, such as Coordinator of Intellectual Formation, Academic Dean, and Professor of Philosophy, which reflect the reality of both the formational and professional academic requirements.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. How can these formational changes be reflected throughout the seminary in ways more than language and titles?
2. What documents will need to be updated given this shift in formational language?

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is required in the PPF (versus recommended)?

Care has been taken in the *Program of Priestly Formation* to limit the use of prescriptive and exhortative language to two terms. The use of the word “*must*” is a designation that an action is required. Authorization from the competent authority

is required for an exception from following the required course of action. The use of the word “*should*” designates that an action is highly recommended, such that a nonarbitrary reason is necessary for the decision not to pursue this course of action.