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BISHOPS' COMMITTEE ON PRIESTLY FORMATION

MAY 1968

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P R E F A C E

The *Decree on Priestly Formation* states, "Since only general laws can be made where there exists a wide variety of nations and regions, a special program of priestly training is to be undertaken by each country or rite. It must be set up by the episcopal conferences, revised from time to time and approved by the Apostolic See. In this way will the universal laws be adapted to the particular circumstances of the times and localities so that the priestly training will always be in tune with the pastoral needs of those regions in which the ministry is to be exercised." (*Optatam totius*, n. 1)

Accordingly in 1966 the Bishops of the United States established a Bishops' Committee on Priestly Formation to formulate this special program of priestly training for our country. The Committee has submitted three Reports to the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, containing some specific guidelines chiefly concerning the High School and College Seminaries. After the National Conference of Catholic Bishops approved these Reports, the guidelines were sent to the Apostolic See for review and ultimate approval. However, pending the expected approval from the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops has sanctioned the immediate release of these Reports as "Interim Guidelines for Seminary Renewal."

It should be emphasized that extensive consultation with people engaged in seminary work, of both the diocesan and religious clergy, preceded the formulation of the guidelines. We wish to thank these persons for their generous help. Perhaps the reason why seminary people will find little that is startling here is the very fact that those actively engaged in the seminary experience helped so profoundly in the formulation of the reports. As a result the Reports reflect the practice and experience of the country's better seminaries.

Obviously it was impossible to consult everyone. But the release of these Reports as Interim Guidelines now gives us an opportunity to consult with a larger audience of seminary administrators, faculty members and other interested parties. Since they are interim guidelines, they can still be modified before the definitive approval is obtained from Rome. Even after the program of priestly formation is definitively approved by Rome, things will not be locked in a fixed system, for, according to the words of the *Decree on Priestly Formation*, the program definitively approved must still be revised from time to time. For these reasons we invite the comments of persons skilled in seminary work, in education and in the priestly ministry, to help us in this important work of renewing the Church in our times.

Most Reverend Loras T. Lane, D.D., J.C.D.

SECTION ONE

REPORT OF APRIL 1967

Article One: General Recommendations

The U. S. Bishops' Committee on Priestly Formation is of the opinion that only a few recommendations regarding a program of training on the college and theological level should be made to the National Conference of Catholic Bishops at this time. The Committee wishes to point out that it would not be advisable to proceed otherwise in view of the great number and variety of seminaries in the United States, the relatively brief period of time since the establishment of the Committee, the need for more research, and for more consultation and discussion with those engaged in or related to seminary work on those particular levels.

On the high school level, however, seminary problems were judged to be less complex and not as extensive as those on the college and theology level. Therefore, it was felt that a more detailed program for seminaries in the high school area could be submitted at this time, especially since they have been subjected to criticism in recent times.

A number of rather general recommendations are given that apply to all levels of seminary education, and just a few that apply especially to the college and theology levels. The recommendations are as follows:

- 1) That wherever there are seminaries which because of size, unsatisfactory facilities, inadequate faculty, financing or other reasons are unable to maintain a suitable program, an amalgamation of facilities be encouraged.
- 2) That the seminary structure correspond more closely to that usually found in the American system of education, particularly the "4-4-4" structure, (i.e., four years each on the high school, college and theology level.)
- 3) That seminaries on the high school and college level, which have not as yet been accredited by a recognized educational agency, should promptly take steps toward securing such accreditation.
- 4) That all seminaries are to conduct a self-study in the light of the provisions contained in the *Decree on Priestly Formation*,

and in accordance with norms established by the Committee on Priestly Formation.

- 5) That provision be made for a system of communication between the student body and the administrative and teaching faculty by which the students may appropriately present their views regarding various phases of the seminary program for the consideration of the faculty.
- 6) That encouragement be given to the establishment of Seminary Advisory Boards, apart from seminary personnel, consisting of qualified members of the clergy and laity.
- 7) That a Bachelor of Arts Degree or its equivalent be an entrance requirement to the theological seminary.
- 8) That in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 14 of the *Decree on Priestly Formation*, ecclesiastical studies should begin with an introductory course of suitable duration in which "the mystery of salvation should be so proposed that the students perceive the meaning, order, and pastoral end of their studies. At the same time they should be helped to establish and penetrate their personal lives with faith and be strengthened in embracing their vocation with a personal dedication and a joyful heart."

Article Two: A Report on Developing Vocations for the Priesthood on the Level of the Secondary School

"In minor seminaries erected to develop the seeds of vocations the students should be prepared by special religious formation, particularly through appropriate spiritual direction, to follow Christ the Redeemer with generosity of spirit and purity of heart. Under the fatherly direction of the superiors, and with the proper cooperation of the parents, their daily routine should be in accord with the age, the character and the stage of development of adolescents and fully adapted to the norms of a healthy psychology. Nor should the fitting opportunity be lacking for social and cultural contacts and for contact with one's own family. Moreover, whatever is decreed in the following paragraphs about major seminaries is also to be adapted to the minor seminary to the extent that it is in accord with its purpose and structure. Also, studies undertaken by the students should be so arranged

that they can easily continue them elsewhere should they choose a different state of life.

“With equal concern the seeds of vocations among adolescents and young men are also to be fostered in those special institutions which, in accord with the local circumstances, serve the purpose of a minor seminary as well as among those who are trained in other schools or by other educational means.” (*Optatam totius*, n. 3)

Report on Developing Vocations for the Priesthood on the High School Level

In the United States many and diverse means have been used to develop vocations on the high school level. Local traditions, background, special opportunities and needs determine in large part the precise way in which individual dioceses and religious orders assist the growth of vocations within this age group. Below are given some of the programs currently employed, followed by recommendations for seminary training on the high school level. Although these norms apply especially to the Seminary High School, and the Modified Seminary High School, the general principles therein are applicable to all the programs described above.

A. SOME PROGRAMS CURRENTLY EMPLOYED

1. *A seminary high school:*

a) Purpose and goal: This is an educational institution uniquely for adolescents who cherish at least a tentative desire for priestly service. The students are furnished an intensive spiritual, intellectual and apostolic experience in which they may mature and nurture their initial desire to serve the Church as priests. These students transfer to other high schools if they decide upon a different vocation in life.

b) Validity of this means of formation: Those who criticize this type of institution cite the high rate of transfers, charges of educational inferiority, lack of family relationship, and loss of peer group contact. Under scrutiny, however, some criticisms refer largely to institutions of the past while others lack solid supportive empirical evidence. A growing body of research supports the purposes and goals of preparatory education at this level. The Committee, after much study, believes

in the worth and validity of the high school seminary provided it offers a well-rounded program of high quality.

2. *A modified seminary high school:*

This is an educational institution primarily for adolescents who have at least a tentative desire for priestly service. It recognizes, however, that many of those who enter will change their vocational choice before the end of the high school course. But the institution encourages all students to continue their studies, despite the different vocational choice, so long as they maintain a suitable dedication to the Christian life, and observe school regulations. It sometimes happens that such students after reconsideration, re-affirm their choice to continue to the priesthood.

3. *A residence home of formation:*

In this arrangement the students live in a residence hall, receive spiritual guidance, counselling and supervision from seminary personnel. Their classes are taken at a neighboring Catholic high school.

4. *"Pre-Seminary" programs:*

In this system the students live at home, attend local high schools, either Catholic or public, and have assigned spiritual directors with whom they confer periodically. They gather for regular retreats and conferences.

5. *A school of Christian leadership and service:*

This is an educational institution for young men who aspire to various forms of Christian leadership and service. These students include those who wish to study for the priesthood.

The Bishops' Committee recognizes that a diversity of programs is clearly permitted in the third paragraph of the *Decree on Priestly Formation*.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SEMINARY TRAINING
ON THE HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL

(1) *In the area of administration:*

1. Approval or its equivalent on a state level shall be required as a minimal condition of operation. Accreditation on the regional level should be a goal of all such schools. In the event that such accreditation is judged

beyond the resources of the institution in terms of manpower or money, urgent thought should be given to amalgamation. It should be emphasized that the religious purpose of the high school is no substitute for academic quality.

2. Seminaries should be located so that the students can have reasonable contact with their families and can share in educational, cultural and social advantages beyond those of their own school.
3. Admission standards should require reasonable academic ability, keeping in mind the subsequent demands required on the college level. Particular emphasis should be given to the character of the prospective student. In evaluating his character special attention should be paid to his family background, psychological health, potential for leadership and for generous service to the Church.
4. In staffing the seminary high school, the priest has a very special role on the faculty. Nevertheless, religious sisters, religious brothers, lay men and women on the faculty can likewise contribute significantly to the program.
5. In choosing priests for the seminary the appropriate authority should consider, among other factors, the following: the willingness of the priest to engage in this form of apostolate; and his genuine stability with regard to temperament, psychological health and maturity. As a rule, he also should have some years of appropriate parochial or pastoral ministry. If not inconsistent with their obligations in the seminary, the professors should maintain a continuing experience of pastoral work.
6. A suitable method of communication should be established within the seminary by which the students may make appropriate suggestions to the seminary authorities. This has been shown to be helpful in the good functioning of the school and to provide the students with many opportunities to exercise responsibility and initiative.
7. School authorities should endeavor to maintain a close association with the parents of the students. The organ-

ization of parents' groups could be helpful to this purpose.

8. Advisory boards, involving both clergy and laity, are strongly recommended. These boards can be useful in promoting a more widespread interest and appreciation on the part of the Christian community regarding the seminary program.

(2) *In the area of spiritual direction, guidance, community life and discipline:*

9. The total faculty, especially all the priest faculty members, should be involved in formulating policies regarding spiritual direction, guidance, community life and discipline.
10. Special emphasis should be placed on the quality and content of spiritual direction. The spiritual program must be one designed for the needs of an adolescent, and not as though prematurely designed for a priest. As a baptized Christian, the seminarian is called to grow in the supernatural life of Christ's virtues and gifts. However, the natural virtues and those human values on which grace must build should be given due attention.
11. Spiritual directors should have adequate preparation, particularly in such disciplines as contemporary theology, and counselling. They should also be persons with whom the students can experience suitable rapport. Where a large group of students so warrants, the use of multiple spiritual directors is desirable. If there are many spiritual directors involved, there should, however, be due coordination in the spiritual program, so that each student may have the advice and help of a qualified priest.
12. The work of spiritual direction should be viewed as one wherein the director relates spiritual values to the total development of the adolescent boy.
13. Since the Mass is the center of Christian spiritual formation, daily attendance is expected of all. Every effort should be made to make this a completely meaningful experience for the adolescent. Music and liturgy should, as far as permissible, be adapted to the particular needs

of this group.

14. The utmost attention must be given to fostering and maintaining a real and vital relationship with the family. Suitable periods at home with the family are especially encouraged.
15. Works of Christian service and apostolic experience suited to the student's maturity and development should be an integral part of the program of priestly training.
16. Participation in area events of a civic and cultural nature and also interscholastic competition on an academic and athletic basis are recommended.
17. The seminarian, as a Christian adolescent with the aid of spiritual direction and guidance at school and at home, will seek to grow in commitment to his life's vocation through a normal maturation process. The school, through positive formation rather than through confining restrictions, will seek to enhance the student's personal development.
18. When a boy aspires to Christian leadership as a celibate priest, he is responding to a call to grow in love for others without becoming exclusive in association. Social involvements which prematurely narrow one's interests conflict with this call. The students' parents, parish priests and seminary counsellors should guide the students in making selections of activities and companions which will help them toward the goal of personal development.

(3) *In the area of curriculum:*

19. In general the goal of the high school curriculum should be that of a college preparatory program with a wide base in the humanities. The orientation of the past, with its heavy emphasis on language, should be realigned to conform with today's needs.
20. The Conciliar *Decree on Priestly Formation* (Par. 13) requires students:
 - “ . . . to achieve a knowledge of Latin which will enable them to understand and to make use of the sources of so many sciences and of the documents

of the Church. The study of the liturgical language proper to each rite should be considered necessary . . .”

A course of at least two years duration and suited to the ultimate achievement of these goals shall be offered in all seminary high schools.

21. Local seminary administrators are urged to consult with parochial and public school officials of the area so that the seminary courses, as far as possible, may be integrated with the educational programs of the vicinity. Some sharing of facilities and staff between seminary and local high schools may also be advisable.
22. In planning the curriculum, the seminary high school should take into account local or state requirements and the recommendations of state or regional accrediting agencies.

ADDENDUM

SOME SPECIAL OBSERVATIONS REGARDING THE SEMINARY HIGH SCHOOL

With regard to the seminary high school there are those who say:

- 1) Specialized training on this level can have a tendency to produce vocational doubt and soul-searching that may lead to a premature or ill-considered decision to discontinue priestly studies;
- 2) An unrealistic commitment is expected of the boys during a period of marked adolescent change and uncertainty;
- 3) There is danger of isolation from family and peers;
- 4) Some boys may seek enrollment as a sort of refuge from life's realities;
- 5) The cost of operation compared to the high rate of attrition is a hardship for many dioceses and religious communities.

In favor of the seminary high school the following points were offered by qualified consultants:

- 1) Grades 9-12 are an especially apt time for the students to acquire motives for service in the Church and to develop those personal, moral and mental habits which are needed by a good Christian leader, and especially by a priest. In the event of discontinuance, these qualities can well serve the Church through the lay alumni.
- 2) The seminary high school is an available means for the adolescent to test his tentative choice of the priesthood, particularly through association with dedicated priests and through an explanation of priestly work. The student is able to obtain a deeper knowledge of himself and a recognition of personal strengths or weaknesses with regard to the priesthood.
- 3) The seminary high school offers peer group reinforcement for development of a desire to serve the Church as a priest. The institution seeks this through the presentation of a common goal, and the preservation of an openness and readiness to achieve that goal.
- 4) The seminary high school can offer a needed antidote to many non-Christian influences observable in many schools and even in many homes professedly Christian. This argument is especially applicable in areas where Catholic influence is limited or almost non-existent in secondary education.
- 5) The seminary high school generally offers a particularly advantageous educational process. Among the advantages in this regard are smaller classes, religious guidance, association with priests and personal attention.
- 6) It is usually pointed out that only 15 - 18% of the ninth grade entrants persevere to the priesthood. It should be noted, however, that a similar attrition is indicated regarding many leading professions. Even though the number of students ordained is relatively small, the seminary high school is recognized by many as a stabilizing influence in the development of priestly vocations.

SECTION TWO

REPORT OF NOVEMBER 1967

COLLEGE LEVEL SEMINARY PROGRAM

The present report of the Committee is concerned chiefly with seminaries on the college level. (The April, 1967, report of the Committee had recommended a "4-4-4" seminary educational system for the United States.) The report now being given is a partial one, in that it covers only certain areas of the college program. Further and more complete reports on this level will be given later, after additional research and investigation have been made.

Article One: Types and a General Recommendation

1. Various Types of College Level Seminaries

College level seminary programs are provided in a variety of ways. Generally speaking, they may be divided into two types: viz. (a) as a separate institution providing for its entire program, and (b) as part of another educational institution in whose program it participates. In the latter group this participation is usually through association with a liberal arts college, either as an integral part of the institution or by a more limited sharing in its program.

There is a trend today away from the self-sufficient seminary college toward some type of association with a liberal arts institution, normally with a Catholic college. A few seminaries are sharing in the programs of state colleges and universities. This participation is generally limited to the academic.

Where the seminary is not an institution distinct and complete in itself, there is usually a separate residence for the seminarians which serves as a center principally for spiritual formation and community living.

The various experiments now being carried on as to different types of college seminaries do not seem to conflict with the norms for experimentation as outlined by the Sacred Congregation of Seminaries.

2. Accreditation

If it has not already done so, the college seminary should take steps without delay to be accredited by a recognized accrediting agency either independently or as part of an institution so accredited. In the event such accreditation is judged to be beyond the resources of the institution, urgent thought should be given to amalgamation.

Article Two: Special Recommendations for the College Seminary

A. SPIRITUAL FORMATION

1) *The Role of the Spiritual Director*

“The spiritual training should be closely connected with the doctrinal and pastoral, and, with the special help of the spiritual director, should be imparted in such a way that the students might learn to live in an intimate and unceasing union with the Father through His Son Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit.” (*Decree on Priestly Formation*, n. 8)

Under the Rector and with the cooperation of the seminary faculty, the Spiritual Director has the role of coordinating and implementing the formation of the Christian community of the seminary.

By his conferences given to the students, by his example, and especially by his individual direction he encourages this spiritual formation. Furthermore, it is his responsibility to provide the unity of direction necessary for priestly life through the integration of study, apostolic activity, and prayer.

In the fulfillment of his role he should strive to coordinate religious activities of the community. He should inculcate the ideals of dedication to the priestly ministry of service to the People of God. He should be available for the personal spiritual needs of students and be alert to all counseling resources inside and outside the seminary community. By these efforts, that morale which is the effect of true Christian charity is fostered and fortified.

These responsibilities must be fulfilled with due regard for the various levels of educational and personal development of the college students and for their diverse backgrounds of Christian formation. Thus their commitment to an authentic priestly vocation will be gradually discerned, strengthened and increased.

To satisfy adequately these responsibilities, the Spiritual Director must be free to dedicate his full time and energy to these objectives.

2) *Preparation of Spiritual Director*

The enlarged responsibilities of the Spiritual Director demand a special preparation for his office so that the spiritual formation of the student may be closely linked with the doctrinal and pastoral program of the seminary.

It is recommended that programs be set up to utilize existing educational resources and, if necessary, to offer additional opportunities for his professional advancement. It would be desirable that he receive advanced training in such disciplines as contemporary theology, scripture, and counseling. The Spiritual Director should be selected on the basis of solid piety and prudent judgment, with a background of general pastoral experience which has demonstrated his ability to relate well with people.

3) *Coordination in Spiritual Program*

Where the number of students so warrants, the appointment of several Spiritual Directors is recommended. Where there are many Spiritual Directors, there should be due coordination in the spiritual program. It is important that each student have the advice and help of a qualified priest.

The seminary community should contribute to the program of spiritual formation of the students. It is advisable that there be periodic consultations among the members of the faculty to implement this goal.

Where all in the seminary, both faculty and students, by their example give true witness of Christian community, individual spiritual growth is greatly fostered. The seminarian will thus learn the importance of personal commitment of service to the larger Christian community.

4) *Center of Spiritual Formation*

Since the Mass is the center of Christian spiritual formation, daily participation is expected of a student preparing for the priesthood. The responsibility for this participation should rest upon the student's conviction of this central role of the Mass in the development of the priestly life.

The community is the proper setting for liturgical activities. Meditation and other exercises of private prayer need not be done

in common. In this regard the principle of gradualism should be applied at the college level so that the scheduling of time and place be progressively diminished. Thus the maturing student would become more responsible for the personal prayer needed for his transformation in Christ.

5) *Development of Social Virtues*

One must be a good Christian man before he can become a good priest. Especially on the college level, therefore, he should develop those qualities and virtues which "are highly regarded among men and speak well of a minister of Christ. Such are sincerity of heart, a constant concern for justice, fidelity to one's word, courtesy of manner, restraint, and kindness in speech." (*Decree on Priestly Formation*, n. 11) The seminarian will be helped to grow in these social virtues if he is given real and substantial opportunities to exercise them.

B. INTELLECTUAL FORMATION

1) *Bachelor's Degree*

The college seminary program should terminate with a bachelor's degree. This degree, or its equivalent, should be a requirement for entrance to the theological school.

2) *Program of Studies*

The college level seminary should provide for attaining those objectives usually associated with a sound liberal arts program, as well as for implementing the norms as stated in the *Decree on Priestly Formation* and other Conciliar documents relating to the concept and role of the priest.

Since a number of programs presently are experimental in nature, it does not seem advisable at this time to prescribe a fixed curriculum except in terms of general objectives.

3) *Importance of Philosophy*

Although a broad and general education should emphasize the arts of thought and communication, and the principles that should govern personal and public affairs, the most important ingredient is the reflective, judgmental and philosophical aspect of liberal learning. The study of philosophy, therefore, is in its own right an essential part of a good liberal education.

Furthermore, the important place that philosophy should occupy among seminary courses should not be minimized. Granted that extensive revision and improvement of seminary philosophy programs is imperative, it is not true that contemporary theology, because of its historical, biblical and pastoral character, no longer requires that the student be educated in philosophy. Contemporary theologies, perhaps even more than the theologies of the past, are strongly influenced by philosophical trends, both for good and for ill.

To study theology without philosophical formation is to risk failing to recognize or critically evaluate the philosophical elements included in current theological thinking. This in turn may lead to a disastrous confusion between the Word of God and merely human wisdom.

Seminary faculties are urged to study the balanced progressive statements of the Council on this subject in the *Decree on Priestly Formation*, n. 15, and then to work to strengthen philosophical formation at the college level as well as at the theological level. The philosophy program will be strengthened by relating it closely to the problems of our times and to the other disciplines in the curriculum, particularly to theology.

Taking into consideration the differences of gifts and interests of the students, the faculty should strive to inspire them with "a love for seeking, honoring, and defending the truth vigorously, along with an honest recognition of the limitations of human understanding." (*ibid.*) "Basing themselves on a philosophic heritage, which is perennially valid, students should also be conversant with contemporary philosophical investigations, especially those exercising special influence in their own country, and with recent scientific progress." (*ibid.*)

4) *Methods of Instruction*

The college seminary should employ a diversity of accepted instructional methods in addition to the lecture system, along with the encouragement of independent study and personal initiative.

C. COMMUNITY LIFE AND DISCIPLINE

Community

Priestly formation generally takes place in community. Community is understood here as an organic network of personal re-

relationships based on physical and emotional presence. In the seminary the students come to an awareness of the ideals and challenges of the priesthood through personal contact with their bishop, through daily association with the priests of the faculty, and in great part through constant and sometimes abrasive relationships with other seminarians.

The head of the community is the bishop, who should "with a constant and loving solicitude, encourage those who labor in the seminary and prove himself a true father in Christ to the students themselves." (*Decree on Priestly Formation*, n. 5) In his name the priests assigned to the seminary serve as makers of the community. They help to create a climate in which young men can recognize as their model Christ, who was Teacher, Priest and Shepherd. "Among themselves and with their students they should constitute the kind of family which answers the Lord's prayer 'that they be one,' and which intensifies in each student the joy of his calling." (*Decree on Priestly Formation*, n. 5)

Discipline

Some regulations are necessary for day-to-day living; others contribute to the achievement of the general seminary objectives. In establishing such directives it is a role of authority to listen to all the voices within the community through properly established channels, to appraise the facts, and then to articulate policies and standards. Hence, all members of the community are expected to express themselves clearly, to share their insights and feelings, and to cooperate in the implementation of the regulations. Such a process insures that the rules speak with the double force of authority and fact. Therefore, the rule of the seminary should be simple in structure and sufficiently general to allow for personal initiative and responsibility in accordance with the level of development of the seminarian.

In the past the formation of the student was often rigidly controlled by rules which sometimes stifled initiative and a sense of responsibility. The Council pointed the way to a more positive approach, at once more flexible and more personal. An atmosphere of freedom in a context of well defined personal responsibility is an important medium of formation. A demanding academic program, a systematic and supervised apostolic program for pastoral training, a well-ordered liturgical program, closer

personal contact with members of the faculty, and the demands of a life in common with other students make it possible to dispense in great part with detailed regulations. In larger seminaries the inauguration of teams or groups with a priest deeply involved in the life and work of each group can add a further positive factor to personal formation. (*Decree on Priestly Formation*, n. 7 and n. 11)

D. PASTORAL FORMATION

“Every program of instruction, whether spiritual, intellectual or disciplinary, should be joined with practical implementation and directed toward the pastoral goal.” (*Decree on Priestly Formation*, n. 4)

Works of Christian service and apostolic experience suited to the students' maturity and development on the college level should be an integral part of priestly training.

Students should be guided and evaluated in their work by men experienced in pastoral matters, and they should be encouraged to pursue their assignments on their own initiative as well as in concert with others. (cf. *Decree on Priestly Formation*, nn. 19-21) Proper supervision is essential lest these experiences become a source of mere activism or even of discouragement in the apostolate.

SECTION THREE

REPORT OF APRIL 1968

Article One: On-going Projects

This is a day of rapid change in the entire area of education. The lecture method, so common in the past, has given way somewhat to seminars and other teaching methods that involve active student participation. Student groups have a voice in the formation of the curriculum, and even share in some of the administrative tasks.

An awareness of such rapid change in the field of education has prompted the Bishops' Committee on Priestly Formation to enter into broad consultation with seminary personnel in the formulation of its reports. It was thought unwise simply to write a *Ratio Institutionis Sacerdotalis* without consulting people actively engaged in seminary work. While this procedure will increase the amount of time required for drawing up the complete Program for Priestly Formation, hopefully it will contribute greater meaning and significance to the ultimate document.

It is anticipated that the November 1968 Report of the Bishops' Committee on Priestly Formation will add considerably to the report already presented on the seminary college level (November, 1967) and will also contain an initial treatment of the seminary on the theology level. Consultations and studies are presently being conducted toward the formulation of this report. The College Curriculum Advisory Committee has submitted its first draft to the bishops on the Committee, and expects to complete its work by late July. Another Advisory Committee of about fifteen theologians is preparing a statement of principles for the renewal of the theological curriculum. Other committees are working in the areas of Spiritual Formation, Community Life and Discipline, and Pastoral Formation. CARA of Washington, D.C. has been conducting a year's study for the Bishops' Committee on Priestly Formation which will consider, among other matters, the influence of the seminary on the perseverance of the candidates for the priesthood.

As pointed out above, a special group of seminary educators is working on detailed guidelines regarding the college seminary

curriculum. When this task is completed and reviewed by the Bishops' Committee, it will be submitted to the National Conference for approval. It should be noted that the report will seek to set objectives rather than to legislate specific course offerings. Indicative of the tenor of the study is the following excerpt regarding the study of languages and other modes of communications touching priestly formation. It should be noted that the excerpt is *tentative* in form. It reflects, however, current Committee thinking.

Therefore, in any seminary curriculum all languages, ancient and modern, should be taught in accordance with the most advanced technique of language instruction. Furthermore, the results should be evaluated not in terms of time spent, number of courses taken, etc., but in terms of actual ability to use the language. Hence, we do not wish to lay down "requirements" in terms of courses, but to prescribe performance objectives. . . .

All students entering Catholic schools of theology should be able to use Latin sufficiently to make use of theological, ecclesiastical and liturgical sources in that language (*Optatam totius*, 13). The actual ability to use Latin in this way should be demonstrated by suitable examinations. In order that students may be able to pass such examinations, we require that all secondary schools preparing candidates for the priesthood and all college seminaries should provide a well-balanced program of Latin studies, taught by the best modern methods of language instruction. Furthermore, in order to open the way to continued theological growth, students should be counseled to learn to use the Biblical languages, and French and German. Opportunities to study Spanish and other languages useful for the ministry should also be provided.

Article Two: The Release of Guidelines to Seminaries

In the Council *Decree on Priestly Formation*, the obligation of devising a national program for seminary studies was assigned to each Episcopal Conference.

This National Conference of Catholic Bishops has already reviewed guidelines for high school and college level seminary programs. Prepared by the Bishops' Committee on Priestly Formation

and approved unanimously by the NCCB, these guidelines have been sent to the Holy See for definitive approval.

It is anticipated that approval of the Holy See will not be forthcoming for a considerable time.

Yet there is at this time a pressing need for the NCCB to show leadership in seminary education. For this reason the Bishops' Committee on Priestly Formation unanimously requests that the NCCB authorize the release of these guidelines, already approved by the NCCB, to seminary rectors and faculties as helpful and prudent interim norms, to be followed until such time as definitive guidelines are returned from the Holy See.

*Article Three: Procedure Concerning Notable Changes in
Seminary Programs*

Cardinal Garrone, the Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, has requested that "bishops, before initiating any unusual seminary programs, consult the Bishops' Committee on Priestly Formation." (Letter of Archbishop Luigi Raimondi, Apostolic Delegate, to Most Reverend John F. Dearden, President of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, February 5, 1968). The Committee on Priestly Formation volunteers its consultative services to any bishop, provincial or rector interested in a substantive departure from the traditional norms or interim guidelines for seminary education.

SECTION FOUR

GUIDELINES FOR EXPERIMENTATION

In a letter dated October 12, 1966, addressed to the Presidents of the various Episcopal Conferences and signed by Cardinal Pizzardo and (then, Archbishop; now, Cardinal) Garrone, the Prefect and the pro-Prefect of the Sacred Congregation, the Sacred Congregation of Seminaries and Universities stated:

The Congregation is very frequently asked whether it is allowed immediately to introduce by way of experiment some changes in the presently existing norms (concerning the *Ratio Institutionis Sacerdotalis*). The Sacred Congregation judges that such changes can be made only if the following conditions are exactly observed:

- a) The experiments should strictly correspond to the mind and the prescriptions of the decree *Optatam Totius*.
- b) The changes are to take place only within the framework of entire Episcopal Conference, or at least never without its knowledge or agreement. For, by virtue of the Decree cited above, the task of preparing the schema of the new *Ratio Institutionis Sacerdotalis* belongs not to individual Bishops but to the Episcopal Conferences.
- c) The changes should be of such a nature that they do not prevent a return to the original condition of things, if the definitive *Ratio Institutionis Sacerdotalis* demands this.

The above report is respectfully presented to the National Conference of Catholic Bishops by the Committee on Priestly Formation.

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