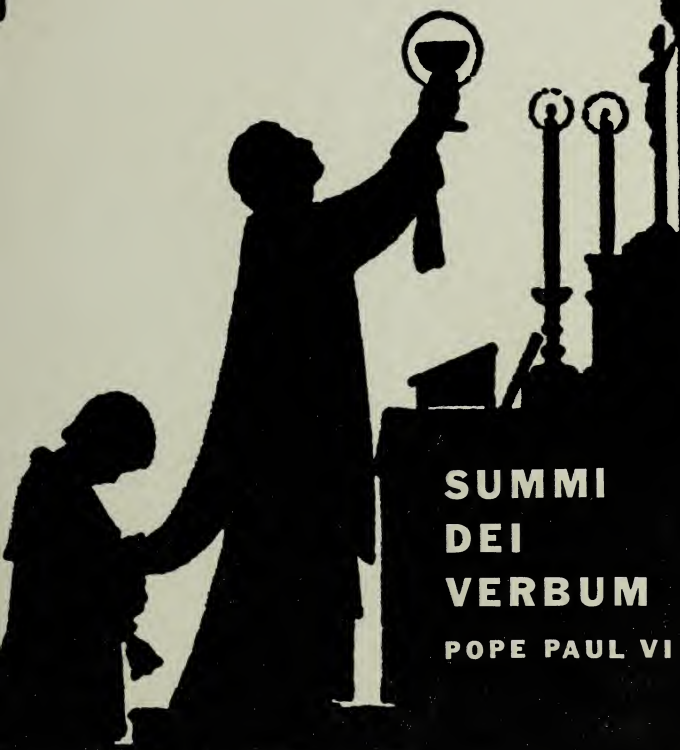


Paul VI, Pope, 1897-1978
Summi dei Verbum
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**SUMMI
DEI
VERBUM
POPE PAUL VI**

ON SEMINARIES AND VOCATIONS

SUMMI DEI VERBUM—APOSTOLIC LETTER
November 4, 1963

ADDRESS ON SEMINARIES AND VOCATIONS
November 4, 1963

Translation provided by NCWC News Service



SUMMI DEI VERBUM

**Apostolic Letter of His Holiness, Pope Paul VI
to Patriarchs, Primates, Archbishops, and Bishops
of the Catholic World on the Occasion of the
Fourth Centenary of the Establishment of Semin-
aries by the Council of Trent**

November 4, 1963

Venerable Brethren, Greetings and Our Apostolic Blessing:

Jesus Christ, divine model of the seminarian and priest

Just as the Word of God, the true Light, that “enlightens every man who comes into the world,”¹ wished to become man for our salvation and to dwell amongst us in order to show us His glory, “glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth”² so also He deigned to live a hidden life for 30 years in the humble house of Nazareth in order to prepare worthily for His apostolic mission in prayer and toil, and to give us the example of every virtue. Indeed, under the loving care of His putative father Joseph and of His most holy mother Mary, the child “advanced in wisdom and age and grace before God and men.”³

Now if the imitation of the Incarnate Word is obligatory for all Christians, it is particularly binding on those whom He calls to become His representatives before men, no less by sanctity of life than by the preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments.

Historical precedents of the institution of seminaries

Conscious of this sacred duty of the ministers of Jesus Christ to shine before men as teachers of virtue, first by example and then by word, so that they really become “the

salt of the earth, . . . the light of the world”⁴ from the first centuries the Church has shown particular care for the instruction and education of youth destined for the priesthood.

For this we have the authoritative witness of St. Leo the Great, who writes: “Rightly the venerable counsels of saintly Fathers in the choice of priests looked upon as suitable for sacred administrations only those who had proved themselves over a long period by carrying out the duties of the lesser orders, so that each man’s past conduct might stand as his testimonial.”⁵

A succession of general and regional councils fixed the uninterrupted traditions, making ever more precise the laws and practices which would become in the future holy norms for the entire Church. Suffice it to quote in this regard the clear directions of the III and IV Lateran Councils,⁶

Reasons for the institution of seminaries

But, unfortunately, because of the worldly mentality that spread more and more even into ecclesiastical circles, and of the pagan spirit that was being reborn in the schools where the young were educated, these norms laid down by the Church for the preparation of future priests appeared inadequate. For this reason, in the 15th and 16th centuries, the necessity was more and more appreciated both for a general reform of morals in the Church, and for preserving the young levites from the dangers that threatened them, by providing for them an appropriate formation in suitable places under the guidance of wise teachers and superiors.

Institution of seminaries by the Council of Trent

To meet this urgent and fundamental need of the Church, Cardinals Domenico Capranica and Stefano Nardini, in the 15th century, undertook to found in Rome the colleges which bore their names. So too, in the following century, did St. Ignatius of Loyola, when he founded in Rome the two celebrated colleges, the Roman and the German—one for teachers, and one for pupils.

At the same time, Cardinal Reginald Pole, Archbishop of Canterbury, having urged the Bishops of Cambrai and of Tournay to imitate St. Ignatius’ example, prepared for England his famous decree on seminaries—a decree which,

approved by the synod of London in 1556 and published on the 10th of February of that year, served as a model for the law which emanated a few years later from the Council of Trent for the Universal Church, in Chapter 18 of the decree "*De Reformatione*," approved on the 15th of July, 1563.⁷

This year, therefore, is the fourth centenary of an event of great importance for the life of the Catholic Church. Its recurrence is all the more worthy to be duly remembered in that it coincides with the celebration of the Second Vatican Council, in which the Church, while it has at heart the promotion by far-seeing decrees of the renewal of the Christian people, will likewise not fail to devote particular attention to a sphere of supreme and vital interest for the entire Mystical Body of Christ, the sphere of the young who devote themselves in the seminaries to preparation for the priesthood.

Importance of seminaries in the history of the Church and of society

It is not Our intention to retrace the course of the labors that preceded the approval of the canon about the institution of seminaries, nor to dwell on the regulations contained in it. It is unquestionably an index of its importance that it was unanimously approved by the Fathers in the 23rd session of that renowned council.

We feel rather that it is more in accordance with the purpose of a fruitful celebration of the fourth centenary of this decree to emphasize the spiritual benefits which it brought to the Church and to civil society, and then to call attention to some aspects of the ascetic, intellectual and pastoral formation of the young seminarian and priest which today require a deeper consideration.

That the institution of seminaries was destined to bring a great spiritual benefit to each diocese of holy Church was clearly foreseen by the Fathers of the Council of Trent themselves, since they voted unanimously for the relevant canon in the 23rd session. About this, Cardinal Sforza Pallavicino writes:

"Above all the institution of seminaries was approved, many being heard to say that if no other good were to

come from the present council, this alone would compensate for all the labors and all the inconveniences, as the one instrument which was looked upon as effective in restoring the lost discipline, it being quite certain that in any state we shall have the sort of citizen that we bring up.”⁸

Another, and even more significant, indication of the great confidence placed by the hierarchy in seminaries for the reform of the Church, and the flowering anew of the priestly life amongst the clergy, was shown by the intrepid zeal with which, shortly after the council was over, attempts were made, in the midst of all sorts of difficulties, to implement the suggestions of the wise decree. It was Pope Pius IV himself who led the way, opening his seminary on February 1, 1565. He had been preceded by his nephew, St. Charles Borromeo, in Milan in 1564; and, in a more modest form, by the Bishops of Rieti, Larino, Camerino and Montepulciano.

There followed the establishment of other seminaries by bishops who were concerned for the rebuilding of their dioceses, while a select group of men, zealous for the good of the Church, came to their aid. Among these we are pleased to recall, for France, Cardinal Pierre de Berulle, Adrien Bourdoise, St. Vincent de Paul with his priests of (the Congregation of) the Mission, St. John Eudes, and Olier with his company of St. Sulpice.

In Italy it was above all the merit of St. Gregory Barbarigo, at the end of the 17th century to have labored indefatigably for the reorganization of the seminaries of Bergamo and Padua according to the norms laid down by the Council of Trent, keeping in mind all the time the spiritual and cultural needs of his time. The example given by this most zealous pastor to the other Italian bishops is still alive in all its strength, for he knew how to combine fidelity to traditional methods with wise innovations, among which is to be remembered the study of Oriental languages, so as to provide a better knowledge of the Fathers and ecclesiastical writers of the Christian East, in view of a religious rapprochement between the Catholic Church and those separated from her.

Our predecessor John XXIII, of venerable memory, made special mention of this merit of the great Bishop

of Padua in the homily he gave on the occasion of Barbarigo's enumeration in the catalogue of saints.⁹

From the good seed sown by the Council of Trent in the fertile fields of the Church by the aforementioned decree, there came also the flowering of seminaries or colleges with special purposes, such as those of Propaganda Fide in Rome, of the Foreign Missions in Paris, and of the various national colleges in Rome, Spain, and Flanders. Thus the entire complex of providential cenacles of ecclesiastical formation in the Church today can well be compared to the tree of the Gospel parable which, born from a tiny seed, grew and spread to such immense proportions that it could shelter in its branches the innumerable birds of the sky.¹⁰

We must therefore be deeply grateful to the Lord that the institution of seminaries, decided upon by the Fathers of the Council of Trent, far from being weakened in succeeding centuries, though harassed in many countries by ideologies and practices opposed to the teaching and the salutary mission of the Church, continued to develop, so as to pass beyond European frontiers and to accompany the progress of Catholicism in the Americas and even in the missionary countries.

The Holy See for its part hastened to give to the seminaries directions that were more and more in accordance with the spiritual and cultural needs of the clergy, according to the circumstances of time and place. In this field, unquestionably one of the most delicate which the Holy Spirit, who inspires all wise conciliar decisions,¹¹ has entrusted primarily to the Supreme Pastor of the Church, it is Our duty to recall the outstanding merits of Our venerable predecessors, among whom stand out the names of Gregory XIII, Sixtus V, Clement VIII, Urban VIII, Innocent XI, Innocent XIII, Benedict XIII, Benedict XIV, Clement XIII, Pius VI, Gregory XVI, Pius IX, Leo XIII, St. Pius X, Benedict XV, Pius XI, Pius XII, and John XXIII.

No wonder therefore that seminaries, the object of solicitous care of the Apostolic See and of so many zealous pastors throughout the Catholic world, should prosper to the glory and the advantage not only of the Church, but of civil society. This is the glorious page in the history of seminaries which Our predecessor Pius IX recalled in the apos-

tolic letter *Cum Romani Pontifices* of June 28, 1853, by which he established the Pius Seminary. In that letter, he drew the attention of governments and of all those who love the true good of human society to "the way in which a right and accurate formation of clergy contributes to the safety and prosperity of religion and society, and to the defense of true and sound doctrine."¹²

Present importance of seminaries

This same blessed link which binds the religious, moral and cultural progress of peoples with the good and learned ministers of the Lord was recently stressed by Pius XI in these memorable words: "It is such as confers on the Church dignity, efficiency, and life itself, and is of the greatest possible interest for the welfare of the human race. For the immense benefits which have been won for the world by Jesus Christ the Redeemer are communicated with men only through the ministers of Christ and the dispensers of the mysteries of God."¹³

We therefore readily endorse, after the example of Pius XII, the wise sentence pronounced by Leo XIII, of unforgettable memory, about seminaries: "With their estate the fortune of the Church is inextricably linked."¹⁴

Since then, on the one hand, we invite all Our brothers in the episcopate, the priests and the faithful to render due thanks to Almighty God, "giver of all good gifts," for the great benefits which have flowed from the wise institution of seminaries, we take the opportunity of the present centenary celebration to address to all a fatherly exhortation. We should like to say to all the members of the Catholic Church that they should feel themselves at one in the support of seminaries of every kind.

Undoubtedly it is on the supreme pastors of dioceses, on the rectors and spiritual directors of seminaries, on the teachers of the various subjects that the primary duty rests for the manifold work of the instruction and education of candidates for the priesthood. But their work becomes impossible, or more difficult and less efficient, if it is not preceded and supported by the fervid and incessant cooperation of parish priests and their assistants, of the Religious and laity who are dedicated to the teaching of the young; and in particular, by the cooperation of Christian parents.

Necessity and duty of creating a favorable atmosphere

Indeed, how is it possible to overlook the fact that the priestly vocation, from its beginning to its full realization, while it is of course principally a gift of God, nevertheless demands the generous collaboration of all, whether of clergy or laity? In fact, since modern civilization has spread among the faithful the esteem and the desire for worldly goods, it has lowered in many minds the appreciation of spiritual and eternal goods. How then could there arise many authentic priestly vocations in family and academic circles wherein only the values and benefits of worldly pursuits are exalted?

How few, alas, are those Christians who seriously ponder the warning of the divine Savior: "What does it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, but suffer the loss of his own soul?"¹⁵ And how difficult it is, in the midst of the infinite distractions and seductions of the world, to make our own the thought of the Apostle: ". . . We look not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are not seen. For the things that are seen are temporal, but the things that are not seen are eternal."¹⁶

Is it not perhaps by opening one's mind and heart to the vision and hope of eternal rewards that the Lord invited the poor fishermen of Galilee to cooperate with His divine mission? For seeing the two brother fishermen, Simon and Andrew, He said to them: "Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."¹⁷

And to Peter, who on behalf of the other disciples asked Him what would be their fate, as they had left all things for love of Him, Jesus gave the solemn assurance: "Amen I say to you that you who have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit on the throne of His glory, shall also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."¹⁸

In order therefore that a regard and a holy enthusiasm for the priestly life should grow and develop in the hearts of the young, it is necessary to create the requisite spiritual atmosphere, whether in the home or in the school. In other words, although few Christians are called to the priestly or the religious life, all are bound to live and act according to the spirit of supernatural faith¹⁹ and there-

fore to show the highest respect and veneration to those who consecrate themselves entirely to the spiritual well-being of humanity, to their own sanctification, and to the greater glory of God. Only thus can the mind of the Lord be spread among Christian people. Only thus will the flowering of priestly vocation be made easy.²⁰

Nature of vocation. Its first source: God. Necessity of prayer

The first duty then that devolves on all Christians in regard to priestly vocations is that of prayer, according to the precept of the Lord: "The harvest indeed is abundant, but the laborers are few. Pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers into his harvest."²¹ It is clearly indicated in these words of our divine Redeemer that the primary source of the priestly vocation is God himself, in His free and merciful will. Hence He said to His apostles: "You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and have appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain."²²

And St. Paul, while exalting the priesthood of Jesus above that of the Old Covenant, observed that every legitimate priest, being by nature a mediator between God and men, depends mainly on the divine benevolence: "For every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in the things pertaining to God . . . And no man takes the honor to himself; he takes it who is called by God, as Aaron was one."²³

How excellent, therefore, and a free gift is the calling to participate in the priesthood of Jesus Christ, of whom the same Apostle writes: "Christ did not glorify himself with the high priesthood . . . and when perfected, he became to all who obey Him the cause of eternal salvation, called by God a high priest according to the order of Melchisedech."²⁴

Therefore with good reason St. John Chrysostom writes in his valuable treatise *De sacerdotio*: "Although the priesthood is exercised on earth it rightfully belongs to the celestial realm. For it was no man, nor angel, nor archangel, nor any other created power that arranged this function, but the Holy Spirit himself, and it was He, too, that inspired men to seek the ministry of angels."²⁵

But when discussing this divine call to the priesthood (to which no one can claim any right) it is worth recalling that it concerns not only the spiritual faculties of the chosen one—his intelligence and free will—but involves also his sensitive faculties and even his very body. For the whole person must be fitted for the task of carrying out, in an efficient and worthy manner, the arduous duties of the sacred ministry, a ministry which often demands renunciation and sacrifice, sometimes even of one's own life after the example of the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ.

We must not, however, imagine that God would call to the priesthood boys or young men who, insufficiently endowed in mind or heart, or because of obvious psychopathic weaknesses or serious organic defects, would afterwards be unable to carry out properly their various duties, or fulfil the obligations involved in the ecclesiastical life.

On the contrary it is comforting to hold the Angelic Doctor's doctrine that the Apostle's words about the first preachers of the Gospel can be applied equally to every one who is called to the priesthood. These are the words of St. Thomas: "Those whom God chooses for some task he so prepares and disposes that they may be found suitable for the task for which they are chosen in accordance with the words of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, 3, 6: 'He also it is who has made us fit ministers of the new covenant.'"²⁶

Timely development necessary and obligatory

But the duties of parents and pastors, and of all who are responsible for boys and young men are not confined to creating an atmosphere favorable to religious vocations and imploring the Lord to bestow His grace on new bands of levites. They must do all in their power to direct them to the seminary or religious institution as soon as they show clearly that they aspire to the priesthood and are suited to it. Only in this way will they be sheltered from the corruption of the world and enabled to cultivate the seed of the divine call in the most suitable surroundings.

Now begins the responsibility of the superiors, the spiritual director and the teachers: the responsibility, namely, of discerning in these young men, in a more exact

manner, the signs that they have been chosen by Christ as His future ministers, and of assisting them to prepare themselves worthily for their exalted mission. This complex work of physical, religious, moral and intellectual education that must be carried out in the seminary is well outlined in the canon of Trent: "Nurture them, and train them in piety and knowledge."²⁷

Priestly vocation and right intention

We come now to a question of the utmost importance: which of the signs of priestly vocation is the most characteristic and indispensable, so as to merit the special attention of those engaged in the instruction and formation of young seminarians—in particular the spiritual director? The answer is unquestionably a right intention, which may be described as the clear and determined desire to dedicate oneself completely to the service of the Lord. This answer is confirmed by the conciliar decree which lays down that only those young men be admitted to the seminary "who by their character and good will inspire the hope that they will dedicate their whole lives to the priestly ministry."²⁸

Thus Our predecessors Pius XI, in his celebrated encyclical, *Ad catholici sacerdotii*, did not hesitate to declare, when speaking of the intention required in the candidate for the priesthood: "He must look to the priesthood solely from the noble motive of consecrating himself to the service of God and the salvation of souls. He must likewise have, or at least strive earnestly to acquire, solid piety, perfect purity of life and sufficient knowledge such as We have previously explained. Thus he shows that he is called by God to the priestly state."²⁹

Moral certitude about priestly vocation and the bishop's call

It is sufficient, then, that the young men, before they be accepted into the seminary, show at least the beginnings of that intention and character that is required for the sacred ministry and the obligations attached to it. But before they be admitted to Orders, and especially the priesthood, the candidates must show, to the bishop or the religious superior, the evidence of mature decision and of progress in sanctity, in learning and in discipline that will in-

spire in their superiors the moral certitude that before them stands the chosen one of the Lord.”³⁰

The responsibility of the Ordinary in this matter is indeed tremendous, for it is he who must pronounce the final judgment on the signs of vocation in the candidate. He alone has the right to call to the priesthood and thereby set the Church’s seal on a divine call that has gradually grown to maturity.

On this matter, the Catechism of the Council of Trent rightly declared: “Those who are called by the legitimate ministers of the Church are said to be called by God.”³¹ Confronted with the regrettable defections of some ministers of the sanctuary, which could have been prevented by a greater severity in selection and training, the shepherds of dioceses will do well to keep in mind the severe warning which St. Paul gave Timothy: “Do not lay hands hastily upon anyone, and do not be a partner in other men’s sins.”³²

Other elements necessary for the proper development of a vocation

We have recalled briefly the essential element of priestly vocation, which is the clear, definite and enduring intention to embrace the priestly state, through a desire especially for the glory of God, the salvation of one’s own soul, the souls of one’s brethren and of all who have been redeemed by the Precious Blood of our divine Savior. It will not be out of place now to refer to the other factors involved in the total preparation of the future minister of the altar.

This problem, which is of the utmost importance in the life of the Church, has been dealt with repeatedly by Our predecessors and all are well acquainted with their most recent pronouncements, such as the encyclical *Ad catholici sacerdotii*³³ of Pius XI; the exhortation *Menti Nostrae*³⁴ of Pius XII; the encyclical *Sacerdotii Nostri Primordia*³⁵ of John XXIII.

In addition, the ecumenical council has under examination a constitution “On the formation of seminarians,” the approval of which will bring up-to-date the provident regulations of Trent and of the various documents of the Apostolic See which followed. This new document is destined

to give a great impetus to the work of enlisting candidates for the priesthood, and to that other more important and demanding task of directing properly the ascetical, liturgical, intellectual and pastoral formation of these candidates.

While We look forward with confidence to the learned deliberations of the council on the question of seminaries, We feel compelled by Our supreme pastoral office to invite all who are engaged in the education of young aspirants to the priesthood to give careful consideration to certain dangers which threaten the efficacy of the system of training now in use in the seminaries; let them consider also which aspects of that training must be developed with greater care.

Dangers and errors

Just as the open field is at the mercy of every sower of poisonous weeds, so the mind of the adolescent today is more than ever exposed to dangers. His intelligence is threatened by a critical attitude to everything and everyone. His will revolts—even from earliest years—against any restraint imposed by natural law or by ecclesiastical or civil authority, and seeks untrammelled freedom of action.

In this way the higher faculties are weakened in their striving towards supreme truth and good. So it is not surprising that the sensitive powers, both internal and external, reject the necessary control of right reason and good will. For the faculties of reason and will have been cut off from the continuous and efficacious influence of grace and the supernatural virtues. This is why the adolescent in his conduct and his speech falls short of those ideals of humility, obedience, modesty and chastity that befit his dignity as a rational being and, more particularly, as a Christian, whose very body has become through grace a member of Jesus Christ and a temple of the Holy Spirit.

The adolescent who displays such a superficial and confused attitude of mind will surely develop into the type of man who claims many rights and accepts few obligations. Therefore this attitude of mind presents a really serious obstacle to the development of priestly vocations which must be based on solid conviction and a spirit of generosity. One must combat vigorously everything which threatens the

healthy education of the young, and especially of those whom Christ has called to continue His work of redemption. But with what weapons can one carry on this battle?

Remedy: the development of natural and supernatural virtues

In the first place, parents and teachers must cultivate in their children and pupils from the very earliest years the spirit of prayer, humility, obedience, dedication and sacrifice. This applies especially to those whose character appears more docile, more generous and more suited to the ideals of the priesthood. The superiors and teachers in the seminary have the responsibility of preserving and developing in their students those gifts which we have mentioned above, but they must also see to it that the candidate to Holy Orders, as he progresses in years, acquires and cultivates those qualities of soul that must be regarded as essential to a solid and complete moral formation.

The qualities of most fundamental importance, in Our view, are the spirit of reflection and of right intention in one's conduct, the free personal choice of good, even of the greatest good, and the control over the will and senses. This self-control will enable one to resist the promptings of self-love, the evil example of others, the temptations that arise from a nature weakened by original sin, from the world and the spirit of evil which still furiously attacks the chosen ones of the Lord in an effort to bring about their ruin.

Moreover, in his dealings with others the man who wants to bear witness before the world—with Christ and for Christ—to that truth which brings freedom³⁶ must be trained in the virtue of truth in word and action, and so must cultivate sincerity, loyalty, integrity, fidelity. He must follow Paul's exhortation to his beloved Timothy: "Recall these things to their minds, charging them in the sight of the Lord not to dispute with words, for that is useless, leading to the ruin of listeners. Use all care to present thyself to God as a man approved, a worker that cannot be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth."³⁷

Christian and priestly education must accompany natural development

The task then is to root out from the soul of the adolescent the insidious buds of sin and vice, and in their place

to plant and tend the seeds of virtue. In this work one ought to rely on those good qualities that are inherent in human nature, so that the spiritual edifice rests on the solid basis of the natural virtues. In this respect the wisdom of Aquinas was never more appropriate: "Since grace does not destroy nature, but perfects it, natural reason must be subject to faith, just as the natural tendency of the will is guided by charity."³⁸

Nevertheless, one must not exaggerate the importance of good qualities and natural virtues, as though the true and lasting success of the priestly ministry depended principally on natural resources. Nor must one forget that it is impossible to train young people perfectly in these same natural virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude, temperance, humility, meekness and the other virtues connected with them, if recourse can only be made to the principle of right reason and the methods of natural sciences such as experimental psychology and pedagogy.

For Catholic doctrine teaches that without the healing grace of our Savior it is impossible to fulfill all the commandments of the natural law or to acquire perfect permanent virtue.³⁹ From this undisputed principle there follows a great practical conclusion: The formation of the man must proceed step by step with that of the Christian and the future priest, so that the natural energies are purified and strengthened by prayer, by the grace which comes from frequent reception of Penance and the Eucharist, and by the influence of the supernatural virtues which receive protection and assistance from the natural virtues.

But this is not enough! As the Apostle warns us, the natural energies of mind and will must be ruled by faith and charity, so that all our actions carried out in the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ may merit an eternal reward."⁴⁰

Education in a spirit of sacrifice and the imitation of Christ

It is clear that all we have said must be kept in mind by those who are called to be with our divine Savior victims of love and obedience for the salvation of mankind, and to lead a life of virginal chastity, and of exemplary detachment, interior and exterior, from the empty riches of this world, in order that their ministry may be more

worthy and more fruitful. For they will be called upon one day not only to place all their talents at the service of the sacred ministry, but even to sacrifice many lawful desires, and endure hardship and persecution in carrying out faithfully and generously the work of the Good Shepherd.

Every true minister of Jesus Christ must be able to say with St. Paul: "To the weak I became weak, that I might gain the weak. I became all things to all men, that I might save all. I do all things for the sake of the Gospel, that I may be made partaker thereof."⁴¹ Such in fact has been the rule of life of many bishops and priests whom the Church by canonization proposes as an example to all the clergy.

This in broad outline is the exalted mission of training and spiritual formation that is entrusted to the rector and spiritual director of the seminary under the supreme guidance of the bishop. But their work depends for its completion on the collaboration of the various professors who are responsible for the full development of the intellectual faculties of the candidate for priesthood.

The fruit of this intelligent and harmonious collaboration between superiors and professors will be the total formation of the young man, not only as a human being and a Christian but above all as a priest, whose whole personality must be penetrated by the light of divine revelation. For it is divine revelation which ensures that "the man of God may be perfect, equipped for every good work."⁴² It is worth recalling the warning of Chrysostom: "The soul of the priest must shine forth like a light which illuminates the whole world."⁴³

Studies

The cultural formation of the young priest must certainly include an adequate knowledge of languages and especially of Latin (particularly for those of the Latin rite). His familiarity with history, science, mathematics, geography and art must be equal to that of the educated classes among whom he lives.

But the chief treasure of the mind of the priest must be the possession of that human and Christian wisdom

which is the fruit of a solid philosophical and theological formation according to the methods, doctrine and principles of St. Thomas in complete accordance with the teachings of divine Revelation and the Church's teaching authority.

Among the essential or complementary studies in his theological training there must be included Biblical exegesis, according to the laws of Catholic hermeneutics, canon law, Church history, sacred liturgy, archaeology, patrology, history of dogma, ascetical and mystical theology, hagiography, etc.

Participation in the life of the diocese

As he approaches major Orders, and in the first years of his priesthood, the student must be introduced to the problems of pastoral theology, and take an increasingly active part in the life of the diocese.

This will include a participation in the liturgy, catechetical instruction, the direction of Catholic Action amongst the youth, and apostolic work on behalf of the missions. In this way the future pastor of souls will gradually become acquainted with his particular field of activity, and receive a suitable preparation for it. Another valuable part of this preparation will be an adequate knowledge of Gregorian chant and sacred music.

All this will enable him to give a greater unity to his studies with his future pastoral ministry in mind, in the conviction that all his activity must have as its ultimate aim the coming of the kingdom of Christ and God, in accordance with the wise admonition of St. Paul: "For all things are yours . . . and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's."⁴⁴ Thus, at the present time, when the interests of God are being more and more neglected in the various fields of human activity, the priest must shine forth in the world as another Christ and a "man of God."⁴⁵

Exemplary sanctity

Holiness and learning must therefore be the distinguishing mark of him who is called to become an ambassador of the Word of God, Redeemer of the world. He must possess holiness in an exceptional degree, superior to that of the laity and nonordained Religious, as St. Thomas rightly

observes: "Because the religious state does not necessarily include ordination, it is clear that ordination confers a greater dignity. By ordination one is entrusted with the most exalted office as an instrument of Christ in the sacrament of the altar."⁴⁶

Therefore a very fervent devotion to the Blessed Sacrament must be manifested by the life of him who aspires to be its consecrator and dispenser. This devotion to the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ ought to be harmoniously completed by devotion to the Most Holy Name of Jesus and to His Most Sacred Heart.

Praise and exhortation

To conclude this exhortation, We wish to address a word of paternal encouragement to all who are engaged in a spirit of zeal and self-sacrifice in the work of recruiting and educating candidates for the priesthood in the secular clergy or religious orders. A special word of praise must go to those who carry on this work in those areas where there is a great shortage of vocations, and where the work of securing new ministers for the sanctuary is most difficult and often dangerous.

Our approval is directed next to those who, following the directives and exhortations of the Sacred Congregation of Seminaries and Universities, strive by their writings and discussions to perfect for the greater good of the Church the methods of seminary training in view of the particular need of time and place, and the progress of pedagogy, but with due respect for the proper purpose and spirit of the priestly life.

Prayer and fraternal charity

We turn to you, beloved sons, who like the apostles in the Cenacle are gathered in earnest prayer within the seminary walls. As you prepare under the maternal gaze of the Queen of the Apostles to receive the superhuman power of consecrating the Body and Blood of the Lord and of remitting sins, as well as the abundant grace of the Holy Spirit, which will enable you to fulfill worthily the ministry of reconciliation,⁴⁷ We say with St. Paul: "Let every man remain in the calling in which he was called."⁴⁸ Docility and fidelity to the divine call are indispensable for anyone who

wishes to cooperate more intimately with Jesus Christ in the salvation of souls and to assure himself a more splendid crown of glory in eternity. Treasure this inestimable gift which the Lord has given you, and serve Him from your earliest years in joy and exultation.⁴⁹

Finally, venerable brethren, it is Our earnest desire that you do all in your power to apply in your dioceses, to yourselves and to the faithful in your care—especially to your ecclesiastical students—these instructions, whose only inspiration has been love of the Church. As a pledge of Our desire, We impart to all a fatherly apostolic blessing.

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- ¹ *John* 1, 9.
² *John* 1, 14.
³ *Luke* 2, 52.
⁴ *Matt.* 5, 13-14.
⁵ *Epist.* 12, Pl. 54, 650.
⁶ Mansi, *Ampliss. Concil. Collect.* XXII, 227, 999, 1013.
⁷ Cfr. Rocaberti, *Bibliotheca maxima Pontificia*, XVIII, 362; L. Pastor, *Storia dei Papi*, VI, 569; VII, 329.
⁸ P. Sforza Pallavicino, *Storia del Concilio di Trento*, ed. di A. M. Zaccaria (Roma, 1833), IV, 344.
⁹ Cfr. A. A. S., LXII (1960), 458-9.
¹⁰ Cfr. *Matt.* 13, 31-32.
¹¹ Cfr. *Acts* 15, 28.
¹² Pii IX P. M. *Acta*, I (1846-54), 473.
¹³ Apostolic letter "*Officiorum omnium*," A. A. S., XIV (1922), 449.
¹⁴ Apostolic letter "*Paternae providaeque*," *Acta Leonis* (1899) p. 194; cfr. Pii XII, A. A. S., XXXVII (1945) p. 207.
¹⁵ *Mark* 8, 36.
¹⁶ *2 Cor.* 4, 18.
¹⁷ *Matt.* 4, 19.
¹⁸ *Matt.* 19, 28.
¹⁹ Cfr. *Hebrews* 10, 38.
²⁰ Cfr. *1 Cor.* 2, 16.
²¹ *Matt.* 9, 37-38.
²² *John* 15, 16.
²³ *Hebrews* 5, 1 4.
²⁴ *Hebrews* 5, 5, 9.
²⁵ *De sacerdotio*, Lib. III, n. 4: PG, XLVIII, 642.
²⁶ *Summa Theol.*, III, q. 27, a. 4, c.
²⁷ Mansi, *Ampliss. Concil. Collect.*, XXIII, 147.
²⁸ Mansi, 726, 38-39.
²⁹ Litt. encycl. "*Ad catholici sacerdotii*," Dec. 20, 1935, A. A. S. XXVIII (1936), 40.
³⁰ Cfr. *1 Kings* 16, 6.
³¹ *Catech. Concil. Trid.*, III, "*de Ordine*", 3.
³² *1 Timothy* 5, 22.
³³ A. A. S., XXVIII (1936), 5-53.
³⁴ A. A. S., XLI (1950), 659-702.
³⁵ A. A. S., LI (1959), 545-579.
³⁶ Cfr. *John* 18, 36; 8, 32.
³⁷ *2 Timothy* 2, 14-15.
³⁸ *Summa Theol.*, I, q. 1, a. 8, c.
³⁹ Cfr. *Summa Theol.*, I--IIae, q. 109, a. 4, c.
⁴⁰ Cfr. *Col.* 3, 17; *1 Cor.* 13, 1-4.
⁴¹ *1 Cor.* 9, 22-23.
⁴² *2 Timothy* 3, 17.
⁴³ *De sacerdotio*, lib. VI, n. 4: PG, XLVIII.
⁴⁴ *1 Cor.* 3, 22-23.
⁴⁵ *1 Timothy* 6, 11.
⁴⁶ *Summa Theol.*, II--IIae, q. 184, a. 8, c.
⁴⁷ Cfr. *2 Cor.* 5, 18.
⁴⁸ *1 Cor.* 7, 20.
⁴⁹ Cfr. *Ps.* 99, 2.

ON SEMINARIES AND VOCATIONS

Discourse given on November 4, 1963 by Pope Paul VI in St. Peter's on the occasion of the 400th anniversary of the Council of Trent's call for the establishment of seminaries

The great rite we are celebrating speaks for itself. Its solemnity shows the importance of the reason which led Us to assign it this date—November 4, the feast of St. Charles Borromeo—and this seat, the Basilica of St. Peter, where the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council is taking place, and to entrust its celebration to the venerable Cardinal Pizzardo, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Seminaries and Universities.

With this extraordinary thanksgiving to God and with this great imploring of grace from God, we intend to commemorate worthily the fourth centenary of the institution of diocesan schools known as seminaries, for the training of pupils who are preparing to receive sacred ordination and to exercise worthily the priestly ministry.

It is known that this institution (of seminaries) was made by virtue of Canon XVIII of the 23rd session of the Council of Trent, dated July 15, 1563. The implementation of this decree immediately found zealous promoters, among the first of them St. Charles, who had just been made Archbishop of Milan, readily applied to his diocese and his province the decisions of the Tridentine Council.

Convinced as he was of the decisive importance of the institution of seminaries, he at once founded several. Undoubtedly he was the first to provide for the largest of his seminaries, set in the heart of the city, a monumental seat which is still regarded as one of the classic buildings of the sumptuous Milanese Renaissance, and which is about to reopen after restoration, and resume its centuries-old and providential function.

My Lord Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński will speak on the historic origin and ecclesiastic significance of the institution of seminaries this afternoon, in this very same basilica which is now being used as a council hall. We are grateful to him for adding to the interest of such a theme the prestige of his experience and of his dignity.

How great the esteem which we must all give to the seminary and what reward that educators and especially students will draw from this centennial commemoration, will be mentioned in an apostolic letter, addressed to all the bishops of the Church, the publication of which is imminent. It opens with the words "*Summi Dei Verbum*" and has been drawn up with the expert collaboration of the Congregation of Seminaries and of Universities.

To this pondered and ample document, as is required by the gravity of the theme which is the first of this form and importance of Our pontificate, we have entrusted many, though not all, the matters which We thought We should mention on such a propitious occasion regarding such a vast and important subject.

Therefore, it is not necessary that We dwell on this at length during this ceremony. That apostolic letter of Ours will express to you Our thoughts and Our wishes. But we would not wish to miss saying a word to these most beloved seminarians whom We see here taking part in the sacred rite, and whom We now want to embrace with all Our fatherly affection, regarding them almost as the representatives of their codisciples, of all the seminarians in the Church of God.

To you We open Our lips and We shall say to you, beloved students of our seminaries, along with St. Paul: "Our heart is wide open to you."¹

We regard you as the most authentic and generous representatives of youth, which among the supreme choices that must needs be made in the first lucid clear-sightedness of life and in the first revelation of true love, has discovered the best, the one choice above all others. Do you remember ". . . the kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field; a man who finds it hides it, and in his joy goes and sells all that he has and buys that field."²

We speak of that youth which has discerned among all the gifts which life offers and of which youth is avid, that one gift that is worth all the others. Do you remember “. . . Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls. When he finds a single pearl of great price, he goes and sells all that he has and buys it.”³

We speak of that youth which has distinguished one voice, among all those surrounding it and bewildering or enchanting it, a voice with a singular, mysterious but unmistakable tone, grave and gentle, mild and powerful, a soft and secret voice, sounding inside, as if tormenting, in the secret place of the conscience, and outside, as if pacifying, in the trust of serene and authoritative advice, of a call which, interpreting that inner life, says that it is divine and that it is indeed addressed to youth, who is not afraid of big things but fears, rather, evil and mediocre things. It is a voice which is at one and the same time an exhortation and a command, a voice as simple as a sigh and as profound as a drama, the voice of Christ, which again today, and today more than ever, says: “Come, follow me.”⁴

You young people who are listening to us, did you hear that voice: “Come, follow me”? It goes on: “I am the light of the world. He who follows me does not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”⁵

You well know what this dialogue is called. It is a vocation, and each one of you guards it in his heart as the secret of his life, the direction of his future, the strength of his action: “Come, follow me.”

Let Us here today, precisely as the Vicar of Christ, who first addressed (these words) to the Disciples who were to become His Apostles, repeat them to you, to your comrades and to any other young persons, of the present or of the future, who have the grace and the courage to listen to them: “Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.”⁶

This is tantamount to saying: the work of redemption is not accomplished in the world and in time without the ministry of dedicated men—men who, through an oblation of total human charity, implement the plan of salvation and of infinite divine charity.

Had God willed it, this divine charity could have spread itself and performed salvation directly. But the design is a different one. God will save men in Christ through a service rendered by men. God did not give the world only a revelation and a religion. He gave a Church, an organized society, a flexible community, in which brothers work for the salvation of other brothers.

He set up a hierarchy; He instituted a priesthood. Where the priesthood of Christ reaches, there reaches the message and the virtue of Christ's salvation. The Lord willed that the spreading of the Gospel should depend on the number and the zeal of the workers of the Gospel.

This is why the call to the service of the Gospel is of incalculable importance. It concerns the drama of the Salvation of the world. The gift of a vocation is a secret of God, but let it not be cowardice, sloth, pusillanimity, deafness, or impurity—beloved sons—that deprive it of youthful souls whom the thought of God would have made pure and strong for the ministry of His Kingdom.

Blessed be you, sons, who know these truths and convert them into daring and humble experience. Blessed be you, who know what the attraction of the ecclesiastic vocation can be today. It is certainly not dynastic custom, nor the liking for a peaceful living in a good benefice, nor yet the prospect of clerical honors, nor the will of others replacing or prevailing over that of the candidate, and not even pessimistic disgust for an unbearable world, nor the disappointment of dashed hopes which trace the path that leads you to the seminary.

It is not even the more noble aspects of culture and art, which in themselves can harmonize, in a subordinate way, with the authentic attractions which today lead a young man to become a priest. The authentic attractions which make you students of the seminary are paradoxical ones of the follower of Christ, who said: "If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."⁷

Vocation today means renunciation. It means unpopularity, it means sacrifice. It means preferring the inner to the external life, it means choosing an austere and con-

stant perfection instead of comfortable and insignificant mediocrity. It means the capacity to heed the imploring voices of the world of innocent souls, of those who suffer, who have no peace, no comfort, no guidance, no love; and to still the flattering, soft voices of pleasure and selfishness. It means to understand the hard but stupendous mission of the Church, now more than ever engaged in teaching man his true nature, his end, his fate and in revealing to faithful souls the immense, the ineffable riches of the charity of Christ.

It means, young men, to be young, to have a clear eye and a big heart. It means accepting the imitation of Christ as a program for life, His heroism, His sanctity, His mission of goodness and salvation. No other prospect of life offers an ideal more true, more generous, more human, more holy than the humble and faithful vocation to the priesthood of Christ.

This is not emphasis, beloved sons. It is not rhetoric. And above all, it is not suggestion or a lie that gives the Church the daring to speak thus. It is the knowledge that the Church has of your hearts, of the graces that the Lord has let flow into your souls. It is the esteem that she feels for you. It is the hope that she places in your youth and in your generous dreams.

And perhaps, sons, the Church would not dare to express, regarding you, such high and difficult prospects, if she did not have the practical possibility of being near you in announcing them, to help you in heeding them and following them. Had the Church not developed her art as a teacher of souls, and did she lack the place and instruments for exercising it, she could not speak to you with such frankness.

But today, the Church has made herself capable and will be even more so in the future, of exercising her sublime mission as the educator of future priests, because the Church has instituted her seminaries for this purpose. The seminary is the school of inner silence, in which speaks the mysterious voice of God. It is the training unit for training in the difficult virtues. It is the house where Christ, the Master, lives.

Do you remember the two disciples of John, on hearing that he said of Jesus, who was passing on the bank of the Jordan: "Behold the Lamb of God!"? They followed Jesus, who "turned round, and seeing them following Him, said to them, 'What is it you seek?' They said to Him, 'Rabbi, (which interpreted means Master) where dwellest thou?' He said to them, 'Come and see'."⁸

If ever, young men, the same question should rise from the uncertain and stirred up depths of your souls, who feel that Jesus is the only Savior and the One whom you are seeking and who is seeking you, and there should come to your lips (the question): "Master, where dwellest thou? Where can we meet you, unite with you and then take over your same mission?" Remember that through the Church, through your bishops, your superiors, your teachers, the answer is always the same: "Come and see." And the blessed door of the seminary will open before you. Amen.

¹ 2 *Cor.* 6, 11.

² *Matt.* 13, 44.

³ *Matt.* 13, 45.

⁴ *Matt.* 19, 21.

⁵ *John* 8, 12.

⁶ *Mark* 1, 17.

⁷ *Mark* 8, 34.

⁸ *John* 1, 38-39.



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