New VD Institute 2020
An Introduction to FORMATION
Theology of Place

-Fr. Peter Marshall, Archdiocese of Indianapolis

-Here in this Place: Theology of Place as a Means of Enriching Diocesan Seminarian Spiritual Formation

-A way to “ground” your approach to Formation

-Big Question Mark—“What is the Spirituality of a Diocesan Priest?”
ARCHdiocese of MOBile

#ARCHMOB
Sold at Youth Events, Schools, Online—Build sense of Belonging and Common Stewardship
1825-First Bishop
Sense of History & Place
Gen 2 Design

Designed by Seminarians -Sense of Pride in where you are called to serve
Called to be a Shepherd

Of the Sheep that are in THIS Pasture —> Students of Both — Sheep + Pasture
Gave to Sems + All Archdiocesan Employees
My Truck
Available to all in the Archdiocese
Archbishop Rodi’s Car
Heavenly Father, we thank You for the men You have called to be priests in the Archdiocese of Mobile. From the Gulf Coast, through the Wiregrass to the River Region, we pray that You sustain and inspire them in their ministry.

We also pray for those You are calling to join them as Fishers of Men. Give them the grace to hear Your call clearly and the courage to respond, trusting that your plans are “for their welfare and not for woe.” Provide them with supportive families, encouraging parishioners and all the graces and experiences necessary to form them as men after Your Son’s own heart.

Amen.

MOST REV. THOMAS J. RODI
Archbishop

REV. MGR. WILLIAM J. SKOFNICK, V.G.
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Diocesan Spirituality

- Grounded in a Place—being conformed to the needs of the Body of Christ in a specific place

- If you are going to serve on the Gulf Coast—you better learn to like gumbo, red beans and rice and shrimp étouffée

- If you are going to serve at Our Lady of Fatima parish, you better develop a devotion to Our Lady of Fatima

- If you are serving our Hispanic community, you better develop a devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe
Fr. Edwin Leonard, Dallas

Particularity of being Formed to be a Priest in Diocese of Dallas
Summer Assignments

• Assign guys to parts of the Diocese different than where they are from

• College Guys—consider having them work a normal job for first couple of summers—have them find jobs in environments that are new to them

• Local Immersion—Living with a family in a certain community and working in that community

• Such experiences—Provide a lens through which to enter into the rest of their Formation Process —> End of the day, you are being called back HERE to communicate the Gospel to THESE PEOPLE
Study Local History & Culture

• Both of your State/Local Area + Church History

• Encourage them to visit parishes they have not

• Go Camping, Hiking, exploring, road trips in different parts of the diocese

• Ex: “Theology at Sea”—Deep Sea fishing Trip

• Ex: “Prayer in the Pines”—Couple days in the woods on retreat
Goal of Formation: Making YourSelf Known

- Fr. Chris Martin, St. Louis (Former NCDVD Pres)—Job analogy
  - $50,000/year to “Make Yourself Known”
- At Ordination—“Do you find him to be worthy?”
- Church should not have to ordain a Question Mark
- So make yourself known to Spiritual Director, Formation Director, Vocation Director, Bishop, Friends, Counselors, etc.
Internal vs External Forum

• Internal Forum—Grow in Self Knowledge and of what God is doing in your life —> So that, in time, you can bring it with confidence and trust into the External Forum

• Let’s try to be as open and honest with each other as possible —We are not here to trip you up! Or Mess with you! We are here to help you become the man Christ is calling you to be

• Set the Tone from the get go—Ex: Go over psychological exam with newly accepted guy and psychologist. Answer questions. Give seminarian copy of their psychological evaluation (Great idea from NCDVD) —sets intentional tone

• Counseling—each seminary deals with this differently—do your best to understand together the “Why? + Seminarian work towards being able to discuss it with you
Know Your Guys

• Have a Retreat once a year—focus on just being together

• Try to touch base somehow once a month

• Encourage them to call you and let you know about significant events at seminary or in their family—elected as Class Rep, won seminarian soccer game, sickness, family problems

• Visit them at seminary twice a year—meet with each of the individually

• Feed them whenever you can
Visiting the Seminary

• Visit once in Fall & once in Spring (In Fall, with my Archbishop)

• Bringing the Bishop—helps sense of accountability + we are in this together

• (1) Meet with Faculty to discuss all guys

• (2) Then meet Individually to go over the feedback

• (3) Meet with Rector at end to discuss any particular concerns that emerged during the visit + good to touch base in general
Good Questions for a Rector

- How can I help you?

- What kind of parish would be good for this guy this summer? This year for his apostolate? For his first assignment as a priest?

- What kind of experiences would help this guy to mature? (leadership in the seminary, being mentored, learning a hobby, exercise, etc)

- How often do guys meet with their Formation Director?

- Could Formation Directors meet with their guys shortly before my visits to go over both Positive and Constructive Feedback that will be shared with me?
  
  - So they don’t hear feedback FIRST from Vocation Director —> tends to break down their trust of the “system”/“the man”
Good Questions to ask Your Guys

• “How are you doing?” —shows concern for them personally + opens the door wide for whatever they may feel called to bring up

• “How have you encountered Christ?” Ex: “The Mass”

• “What is something you have learned that has really hit home?”

• “How is your discernment? What experiences have you had that have confirmed your sense of being a parish priest in the Southern 28 counties of Alabama?”

• “Anything else you want to talk about?… Any concerns? Worries? Things you are really excited about?” —Amazing what they will bring up!
Visit Summer Assignments

• Visit toward the end of the Assignment

• Meet with their Pastor and let him speak candidly

• Meet with Seminarian and go over the feedback. Give him a chance to speak candidly

• Challenges they face tend to stir up the core struggles they are facing — can be very humbling for them but grace-filled

• Eat a meal together — you will be able to see how that relationship has gone — see what kind of rapport they have developed
Peer Ministry

- Encourage Fraternity among your guys — they could potentially spend the rest of their lives serving alongside one another back home

- “Big Dog”/Lead Seminarian at each campus
  - Help you to coordinate your visits, communicate with guys there, etc.
  - To help get the guys together regularly Ex: “Diocesan Nights”
  - Keep an eye on how guys are doing—if concerned about a guy, check on him + give me a call

- Try to have at least one other seminarian nearby during summer assignments so they can start to figure out “priestly fraternity” in the midst of a full pastoral life
CPE: Clinical Pastoral Experience

- Talk about it Positively!!! (Guys tend to have a negative stance towards it)
- Has been a game changer for a number of our guys
- In this day and age, guys are really delayed when it comes to emotional maturity, interpersonal relationships & integration in general —growing up in a virtual, disconnected world
- Really helps them to stretch and develop in ways they need to
Observing them in the Diocese

- Attend Youth Conference, Family Conference, March for Life etc.
- Have them help you out with retreats—Discernment Retreats, Youth Retreats, ENGIMA, Hombres Por Cristo
- EX: Christmas Skit & Luncheon for Archdiocesan Employees —see how they handle it, work together, deal with being in front of people
- Have them Visit Grade schools, high schools and College campus ministry (if not with you, check with Principals/ministers and see how they did)
  - College guys—tough for them to visit High Schools—too close in age
- Kids are experts in sniffing out WIERD —will let you know!!!
Make a Handbook

• Will save you thousands of emails!!!!

• Creates clear expectations

• Helps you to keep track of all the “rules and regulations” you and your bishop have come up with
Pray for Them

• Assign one day a month to each guy (Recurring event on your calendar)

• Offer him Mass that day

• Give him a call—just see how he is doing—mention you offered Mass for him and his intentions—“If nothing else, you got that going for you!”

• Helps keep things in perspective
  
  • God is in control, not you
  
  • Tempers your “wrath” when you want to punch them in the face
  
  • Opens you up to how the Holy Spirit wants to use you—bring things to your attention, nudge you, remind you of things, etc.
In silent prayer, which opens him to an authentic relationship with Christ, the seminarian becomes docile to the action of the Spirit, which gradually moulds him in the image of the Master. By this intimate relationship with the Lord and by their fraternal communion, seminarians will be helped to recognise and correct ‘spiritual worldliness’: obsession with personal appearances, a presumed theological or disciplinary certainty, narcissism and authoritarianism, the attempt to dominate others, a merely external and ostentatious preoccupation with the liturgy, vainglory,

*Ratio Fundamentalis* 42
REMEDY

• Let a Theology of PLACE root their Formation Process!!!

• Always mindful they are being FORMED to be DIOCESAN Priests

• Priest Shepherds ordained to spend the REST OF THEIR LIVES serving the Sheep in a certain PLACE …

• Not just any “Place” but THEIR PLACE

• “Treasure buried in a field” —your diocese is their Field, the treasure is their Calling to bring the Life of Christ to fruition THERE (Matthew 13:44ff—Yesterday’s’s Gospel)