

PRINCIPLES OF THE NEW PPF

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



A CAPACITY FOR RELATIONSHIP

Scripture Reflection: Galatians 5:22-23

The Propaedeutic Stage, which is always the first stage of formation, and should last no less than twelve months, seeks to provide seminarians with the basic groundwork they need to engage in priestly formation. This stage should have dedicated priest formators and an appropriate number of seminarians to support a healthy community.

During this stage, the seminarian is introduced to the life of the Church as a community in which excellence of character is nurtured, to the practice of daily participation in the Holy Mass, to love for Sacred Scripture, to the prayer of the Church (the Divine Office, or the Divine Praises in the Eastern Catholic Churches), and to the basic elements of the Christian faith as he discerns attentively and purposefully his potential vocation to priesthood in the presence of a supportive community of fellow seminarians and formators. This community is an ideal environment for growth in self-knowledge.

Each stage has benchmarks which should be used to determine a seminarian's depth of maturity before considering him for the next stage of formation. The benchmarks are intended to help all those involved in the preparation of seminarians for the priesthood, including the seminarians themselves. For example:

Human Formation Benchmarks

- **Self-Awareness:** The seminarian, with the help of formators, should be able to reflect upon his personal history (e.g., family of origin, use of technology, personal habits) and his needed areas of personal growth.

KEY WORDS

Propaedeutic Benchmarks

Self-Awareness

Vocational-Awareness

Cultural Competency

- **Relational Skills:** capacity for empathy and healthy friendships; basic social skills and good manners; openness to correction from formators; transparency in formation.
- **Self-Discipline:** capacity for hard work and awareness of the appropriate use of time.

Spiritual Formation Benchmarks

- **Prayer:** elementary discipline in public and private prayer; interest in and attention to spiritual direction; understanding of the importance of silence, and reading and meditating on Sacred Scripture.
- **Chastity and Celibacy:** ability to articulate the Church's understanding of the promise of celibacy, and the spiritual motivations for celibacy; growth in the virtue of chastity and habits of solitude.
- **Vocational-Awareness:** growth in the understanding of the priestly vocation and the ability to articulate a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Intellectual Formation Benchmarks

- **Scripture and Doctrine:** an initial understanding of Christian doctrine and anthropology as well as an initial familiarity of Sacred Scripture.
- **Study Habits:** signs of intellectual curiosity, and love of learning.

Pastoral Formation Benchmarks

- **Pastoral Charity:** demonstrating a genuine concern for others, a spirit of generosity, and a developing habit of self-donation through hands-on experiences of caring for the poor.
- **Cultural Competency:** awareness of the pastoral situation of the local community or ecclesiastical entity, as well as an awareness of the multicultural reality of the Church in the United States and the nature of the Universal Church, including language competency.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. How do these benchmarks influence the *horarium* of the Propaedeutic Stage?
2. How are these benchmarks used in conversations between seminarians and their priest (external) formator and spiritual director?

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What does it mean to have “dedicated formators” in the Propaedeutic Stage?

The Propaedeutic Stage must be truly clear and distinct, with its own formators dedicated to this distinct stage. The *horarium*, scope, and sequence of this stage should be different from the other stages requiring formators who have the time and

flexibility to accompany the men throughout the full twelve month period (minimum). Careful consideration of the availability of priest formators should be a priority when deciding the model and location of the Propaedeutic Stage program.