

PRINCIPLES OF THE NEW PPF

The Program of Priestly Formation, Sixth Edition



INTIMACY WITH JESUS CHRIST

Scripture Reflection: John 15:1-8

A significant number of seminarians enter the **Discipleship Stage** as older adults with a wealth of education and practical experience, yet many younger men enter the Discipleship Stage with minimal or no higher education. Seminary formation must meet the various needs of these men at this stage. All men in the Discipleship Stage must receive philosophical formation to train their minds in right reason and prepare them to study theology. In addition, as future pastors and leaders, seminarians need to be broadly formed in the human, spiritual, and pastoral dimensions to develop as virtuous prayerful men who can engage with society. Thus, in the Discipleship Stage there is a systematic and rigorous formation that has at its core the goal of growing in an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ through the life of contemplation, philosophical study, and the training of one's character in the virtues which lay a solid foundation for future stages. By the end of the Discipleship Stage the seminarian will demonstrate:

Human Formation Benchmarks

- **Affective Maturity:** the ability to appropriately communicate emotions surrounding conflict and stress and a deepening of the moral virtues (i.e., prudence, fortitude, temperance, justice).
- **Self-control:** education in the truth of one's being leading to freedom; a desire to overcome individualism; a fostering of the sincere gift of self.

Spiritual Formation Benchmarks

- **Consistent Prayer:** a habit of regular spiritual reading; the ability to speak about God's work in one's life; a habit of personal and communal prayer and spiritual direction.

KEY WORDS

Discipleship Stage

Affective Maturity

Commitment to Celibacy

Faith & Reason

Spiritual Formation Benchmarks (Cont.)

- **Commitment to Celibacy:** the ability to articulate an understanding and awareness of God's call to a lifelong commitment to celibate chastity. The ability to articulate and demonstrate appropriate boundaries with others, relating to all persons as beloved children of the Father, and a solid understanding and desire of a habit of healthy solitude.

Intellectual Formation Benchmarks

- **The Study of the Human Person:** the ability to articulate the Christian understanding of the Creator and his creation and understand how this differs from the ideologies that have shaped popular conceptions of the human person, the world, and its Creator.
- **Issues of Faith and Reason:** an understanding of the issues surrounding the intersection of faith and modern science, as well as the ability to articulate how faith and science can support one another.

Pastoral Formation Benchmarks

- **Apostolic Work:** the ability to relate well with men and women from diverse cultural backgrounds through freedom from prejudices against any class or group of individuals; demonstrated generosity and accompaniment with the poor; the ability to tithe; a willingness to work collaboratively with others and to take initiative in leadership situations with a missionary spirit and zeal.
- **Stewardship:** commitment to Christian charity and an awareness of global poverty issues.

By the end of the Discipleship Stage, the seminarian should determine with resolve that God is calling him to present himself for the priesthood. His transition to the Configuration Stage is marked by a level of self-knowledge that permits ongoing growth, especially in his relationships with others. God's grace will then build upon a more mature human nature.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. How will the Discipleship Stage in your ecclesiastical entity need to be modified to provide opportunities for seminarians to demonstrate competency in the benchmarks noted above?
2. What resources are available to assist seminarians who struggle to communicate clearly in both the written and spoken word?

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Should older and younger candidates share the Discipleship Stage?

The Discipleship Stage benefits from having a diversity of ages and backgrounds represented in the formational community. Some programs are designed to meet the needs of young men who have recently completed high school. Older men approach the seminary with considerable life

experience; variants of this stage may be developed to take these circumstances into account. Reducing the Discipleship Stage expectations for older seminarians should be resisted. Seminaries can benefit from the blessings that a variety of men in formation together can bring.