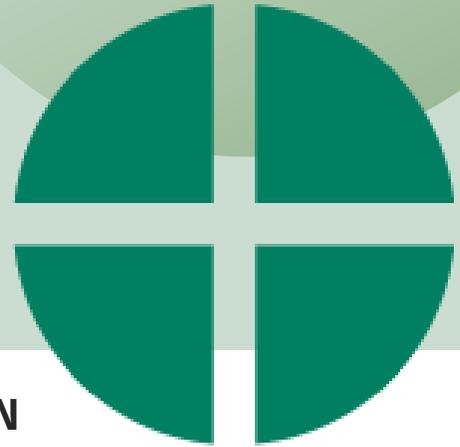


PRINCIPLES OF THE NEW PPF

The Program of Priestly Formation, Sixth Edition



PSYCHOLOGY IN ADMISSIONS & FORMATION

Scripture Reflection: Luke 8:16-18

The goal of the **psychological evaluation** is to help ensure that healthy men become priests. Psychological evaluations offer a greater understanding of developmental and other factors that can assist the vocational discernment for the individual and the Church. They can help in predicting whether a candidate can live a healthy life as a priest and be effective in ministry.

[The Guidelines for the Use of Psychology in Seminary Admissions](#) (Click to visit, [USCCB, 2015](#)) is a useful tool to consult regarding the purposes of a psychological evaluation, suggested components of a psychological assessment and report for admissions, desired qualifications of the psychological professional who conducts evaluations for seminary admissions, privacy and confidentiality, and the role of psychological information in formation.

The Guidelines state that evaluations can be helpful to:

- identify the presence of fundamental markers of human maturity;
- highlight strengths and internal resources available for formation work and future pastoral ministry;
- identify vulnerabilities that need to be addressed in formation;
- confront the seminarian with reliable information about himself that he may be tempted to resist;
- note factors that will influence how formators can most effectively work with the seminarian and offer the support he needs;
- help integrate the dimensions of seminary formation, especially in reference to human formation, such as the importance of affective maturity for intellectual, spiritual, and pastoral formation.

KEY WORDS

Psychological Evaluation

Application Process

Qualities of a Psychologist

Counseling in Seminary

It is especially important to engage professionals who are licensed and have the appropriate clinical experience and expertise to conduct the testing and evaluation process and to provide appropriate interpretation. But this is not enough. The Guidelines state that it is critical that the psychological professional's evaluation of the applicant for the seminary adequately reflects the Catholic understanding of the human person:

- As a transcendent being, created in the image of God.
- Who is a unity of body and soul, rational, real, and relational
- Whose flourishing will be realized in a life of committed self-giving through the priesthood
- Whose happiness cannot be reduced to the mere satisfaction of needs

The rector should also make provision for the availability of psychological and counseling services during the stages of formation. He ensures that those employed as counselors for seminarians are professionally licensed or certified; are well versed in and supportive of the Church's expectations of seminarians, especially concerning celibacy; and will not encourage behaviors contrary to Church teachings. The counseling that is given should be consistent with the policy and practice of the total seminary program.

Though counseling can be a helpful resource to aid the process of human formation, its role should not be overestimated. Seminarians in need of long-term therapy should avail themselves of such assistance before entering the seminary or should leave the seminary program until therapy has been completed. This is to help ensure that the seminary community remains a formative community rather than a therapeutic community. If such a departure occurs, there is to be no expectation of automatic readmission. A seminarian should not be considered for advancement to Holy Orders if he is engaged in long-term psychological therapy.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. In your ecclesiastical entity, how are the results of psychological evaluations communicated to applicants?
2. How are priest formators made aware of the results of psychological evaluations while protecting the confidential nature of the information?

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What should happen to the psychological evaluation report if a seminarian is dismissed from the formation program?

All seminarians have the right to privacy. Applicants and seminarians should know what will happen to their psychological evaluation report if they leave seminary while in formation. If a seminary rector

decides to retain copies of evaluation reports he is responsible for following all laws related to privacy and confidentiality. Taking into account all civil law requirements, the seminary may not release private information without consent.