

*You should put away the old self of your former way of life . . . and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new self, created on God's way in righteousness and holiness of truth.*

EPHESIANS 4: 22-24



# SEMINARIAN FORMATION

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# SEMINARIAN FORMATION

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Archdiocese of Seattle provides resources to assist potential seminarians in discerning a vocation, establishes standards for admission to the seminary program, and works with seminaries in ensuring appropriate formation for those preparing for ordination as priests for the Archdiocese.

## II. ELEMENTS OF DISCERNMENT

**SF 1. Before he can be considered for the seminary program for the Archdiocese of Seattle, an applicant must have completed an appropriate period of discernment.**

The duration of this discernment depends on the applicant's maturity, depth of participation and understanding of the Church, and readiness for beginning the Program of Priestly Formation.

**SF 2. The discernment process includes the following requirements:**

- 2.a. Applicants from outside the Archdiocese must demonstrate an understanding of the pastoral life and ministry in the Archdiocese of Seattle, usually by establishing a residence and registering for a parish at least two years prior to application.
- 2.b. Applicants recently received into the Church must wait at least three years prior to application to the seminary.
- 2.c. Applicants must be participating actively in the life of the parish. This must include regular attendance at Mass and active involvement in some parish ministries.
- 2.d. Applicants must participate in spiritual direction.
- 2.e. Applicants must demonstrate respect for celibacy and have a well-integrated celibate lifestyle.
- 2.f. Applicants must demonstrate the qualities expected of all persons seeking to minister in the Archdiocese of Seattle (see Appendix A).

### III. FUNDAMENTAL REQUIREMENTS OF APPLICANTS

**SF 3. To be considered for sponsorship as a seminarian of the Archdiocese of Seattle, an applicant must be an active, responsible Catholic who is registered and participating actively in a parish in the Archdiocese of Seattle, must meet the fundamental requirements, and must possess the personal qualities and attributes described below.**

- 3.a. Be an active, responsible, single Catholic man.
  - Must be baptized and confirmed or received into the Church *no fewer* than three years prior to application;
  - Must attend Mass regularly.
- 3.b. Be healthy physically, emotionally and spiritually.
- 3.c. Have the proper academic qualifications or be willing to study for them.
  - For college, applicants must have an acceptable academic background (high school diploma, passing grades).
  - For theology, applicants must have an undergraduate degree, and at least 30 credits of philosophy, and twelve credits of theology or religious studies.
  - If English is his second language, the applicant must be able to pass the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). A minimum score of 550 is needed to be admitted to seminaries.
- 3.d. Must be able to think critically and creatively.
- 3.e. Have a faith-centered lifestyle.
  - Show a desire for a deeper relationship with the Lord;
  - Have a genuine care for others;
  - Be willing to live simply;
  - Show respect, care, and love for the Church.
- 3.f. Be committed to developing a relationship with the people of God through the charism of celibacy.

- Must have developed the practice of celibacy;
  - Must not have lived a promiscuous lifestyle;
  - Should have healthy, age appropriate relationships with men and women;
  - Should seek support in appropriate ways from friends and family;
  - Must not have dependent children, or any children under the age of eighteen;
  - While previously married applicants may be considered, they must produce their spouse’s death certificate or have obtained a Declaration of Freedom. Those previously married more than once will not be considered. See additional notes at SF 9 for previously married applicants;
  - Have a generous spirit.
- 3.g. Be involved in a parish. This involvement must include some ministerial experience.
- 3.h. Have the recommendation of one’s pastor.
- 3.i. Be willing to be involved in whatever programs prepare one for the seminary and ordination to the priesthood.

Some applicants might need some academic courses or classes in English language skills.

- 3.j. Strives to work collaboratively with all.

The quality and requirements of collaboration are explained in “Church Governance through Consultative Leadership: Policies and Guidelines,” which should be read especially by those preparing for priesthood. (See CL: II, “Participants in Archdiocesan Governance”; III, “Participants in Parish Governance”; V, “Consultative Decision-making Process: Models of Decision-making, Church Model”; and “Appendix A: A Vision of Shared Responsibility.”)

#### IV. THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS: THEOLOGATE

##### **SF 4. The assessment process includes the following steps:**

- 4.a. An initial interview with the Office of the Vicar for Clergy.

At this time, one's involvement with the Church and one's understanding of priestly ministry will be explored. This is woven together with a general discussion of the person and his background (see Appendix B).

- 4.b. A second interview with the priest who directs Seminarian Services in the Office of the Vicar for Clergy.

The questions in this interview will go more deeply into the applicant's understanding of the commitments made by a diocesan priest and his readiness to begin the application process (see Appendix C).

- 4.c. A confidential questionnaire form, to be completed if the applicant is considered eligible to apply, including an autobiographical essay.

This written questionnaire covers a number of specific items along with an autobiography and Church references. With the return of the questionnaire, the person also signs and includes the Release of Information Form.

- 4.d. Several references are contacted in writing or interviewed, one of whom will always be the pastor.

- 4.e. The applicant's academic background is examined. Those entering the seminary may have a college degree in one of many fields but it is required by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) that each theology student shall have had thirty hours of philosophy and twelve hours of religious studies. They must also have been involved in appropriate discernment and formation before beginning first theology.

As a result of these requirements, most applicants who have not completed a college seminary program will first need to complete a pre-theology program.

- 4.f. A seminarian applicant must be in good health, defined as being free of health conditions that would impede him from serving as a priest of the Archdiocese of Seattle.

- 4.g. The application process will include a report from a physician that evaluates the overall health of the applicant.
- Serious, debilitating, or addictive physical or emotional conditions do not allow a person to devote the time and energy that is necessary to prepare for priestly ministry. Therefore, each applicant for the seminary will make arrangements for a complete physical, which will include

an HIV test. For those applicants who have a special medical condition, care will be taken by the Seminarian Review Committee to ascertain whether the applicant has a history of successfully managing his health, that the condition will not cause an undue burden on the resources of the Archdiocese, and that the condition will not prevent the applicant from successfully completing the formation process.

- The Associate Director for Seminarians, Deacon Candidates, and Vocations will consult the Director of Human Resources, when necessary, to ensure that complete and accurate information is obtained for each applicant.
- The Seminarian Review Committee will make recommendations to the Archbishop on a case-by-case basis for those applicants who have a special medical condition.

4.h. Each applicant will be evaluated by a psychologist selected by the Office of the Vicar for Clergy. The following are required elements of this evaluation:

- Psychological Testing Segment (five hours):
  - MMPI 2 (personality patterns);
  - Millon Inventory (personality traits);
  - Myers-Briggs;
  - Sentence Completion Test.
- Interview Segment:
  - Family of origin history;
  - Personal behavior pattern in work relationships, including social history.

4.i. A person whose evaluation indicates a need to be in a professional therapeutic relationship would ordinarily do this before entering the seminary program and the person would be responsible for the cost of the therapy.

4.j. Applicants must successfully complete a criminal background check conducted by the Archdiocese of Seattle.

- 4.k. Applicants are required to provide sacramental records (baptism and confirmation) as part of the application process.
- 4.l. After all the assessments are completed, the Review Committee will meet for an interview with the prospective seminarian and make a recommendation to the Archbishop concerning the person's readiness for seminary.

## V. RETENTION OF RECORDS

**SF 5. The applications of those not admitted to the program are retained for at least three years. After three years an appraisal will be conducted to determine the value of the records and their future disposition. The disposition of the file of the applicant to the program is subject to archdiocesan policies and retention schedules.**

## VI. THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS: COLLEGE SEMINARY

**SF 6. The Archdiocese of Seattle endorses applicants for the seminary and has a special sponsorship program for college seminarians.**

- 6.a. The college seminary is seen as a time of discernment for a young man interested in more deeply exploring the possibility of priesthood.
- 6.b. The Archdiocese offers to co-sign on student loans and provides a grant each year to help with some school costs for those college seminarians formally affiliated with the Archdiocese. This fiscal relationship best expresses the understanding of discernment that college seminary offers.
- 6.c. Applicants in a formation program who are already attending college may be supported at a college outside of a seminary.

**SF 7. The assessment of applicants for college seminary involves all of the same requirements for screening and application as described above for applicants for the theologate, with the following exceptions:**

- 7.a. The Psychological Assessment will be a preliminary assessment. A complete assessment will be required at the end of college seminary. The College Seminary

Psychological Assessment need only include the MMPI 2 and an interview with the psychologist.

- 7.b. The initial and secondary interviews are conducted as noted above, as is the background check and confidential questionnaire.
- 7.c. Following this initial screening, a recommendation about acceptance as a college seminarian is made to the Archbishop, who makes a final determination about acceptance.

## VII. ASSIGNMENT TO THE SEMINARY

### **SF 8. The Archbishop determines the appropriate seminary assignment.**

After careful and periodic review, the Archbishop selects several seminaries to assist him in the formation of seminarians. The Archbishop considers the formation needs of each applicant and the strengths of the seminary programs where the Archdiocese has a formal affiliation. This process provides an opportunity for the Archbishop or his delegate to identify key formational issues for the new seminarian and for the seminarian to demonstrate his openness to formation.

## VIII. SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Previously Married Applicants

### **SF 9. A previously married person is an applicant for the seminary if that person meets the following criteria:**

- 9.a. The person should have worked with a counselor prior to application to ascertain his readiness for a celibate commitment and should meet all the standard requirements of anyone applying for the seminary.
- 9.b. The person gives evidence of above-average maturity and involvement in the Church.
- 9.c. The applicant has the spouse's death certificate or if the former spouse is living, a Declaration of Freedom to marry from the Church and the grounds for the annulment cast no

doubt on the person's ability to be a seminarian (e.g. psychological incompetence).

#### Applicants with Children

**SF 10. Applicants with dependent children will ordinarily not be accepted into the seminary program.**

Any minor child of an applicant is considered dependent even if the applicant does not have current financial or parenting responsibilities for the child. Additionally, it may be determined that an applicant may still have responsibility even if the child or children have reached adulthood.

#### Applicants Recently Received into the Church

**SF 11. Applicants who have recently been received into or are returning to the Church must wait a minimum of three years before applying to the seminary program.**

11.a. Before the application process begins, the discernment process must take into account a potential applicant's maturing faith, participation in the life of the church, and realistic understanding of the life and ministry of a diocesan priest.

11.b. In the case where a applicant has been absent from the church for a significant length of time (that is, more than a year), he must be an active member of a parish for a minimum of three years before applying to the seminary program (see Section III).

#### Applicants Transferring into the Archdiocesan Seminary Program

**SF 12. Seminarians seeking to transfer to the Archdiocese of Seattle must have written permission from their religious superior or diocesan arch/bishop before beginning formal inquiry or application to the Archdiocese of Seattle.**

**SF 13. After acceptance by the Archbishop, a seminarian must be at least in his second year of formation with the Archdiocese of Seattle and have received a favorable evaluation from his current seminary before petitioning for ordination.**

Applicants with Personal Debt

- SF 14. Applicants must resolve any personal debt before acceptance into the seminary program for the Archdiocese. College student loans, provided that they can be deferred until after study at the theologate, may provide an exception.**

## IX. FORMATION GUIDELINES

The Program of Priestly Formation

- SF 15. The Program of Priestly Formation as promulgated by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, guides and directs the admission and formation of seminarians for the Archdiocese of Seattle.**

The Office of the Vicar for Clergy is responsible for ensuring that the seminaries where the Archdiocese of Seattle has an affiliation fulfill these standards.

Support from the Archdiocese

- SF 16. During theology years, the Archdiocese of Seattle provides for tuition, room and board at the seminary, as well as medical insurance, internship stipends, and grants for books and transportation to and from the major seminary.**
- SF 17. For those in college seminary, the Archdiocese of Seattle provides a small grant each year, cosigns on student loans, and pays interest on these loans as it accrues.**

If a college seminarian goes on to the theologate, this loan is deferred. If he is ordained, the Archdiocese of Seattle will repay seventy-five percent of the college loan.

- SF 18. The Archdiocese provides regular communication with the seminarian through visits by the Archbishop or his delegates, participation in seminary evaluations, and annual meetings with all those in the seminary program.**

Responsibilities of Seminarians Outside of the Seminary

- SF 19. Seminarians are responsible to witness to their call by comporting themselves at all times as applicants for the priesthood.**

After acceptance, seminarians must be attentive to the public witness they give as those preparing to serve as priests and use appropriate judgment about the public and private choices that demonstrate the growing maturity of applicants for priesthood.

**SF 20. Seminarians must take part in all programs of formation as determined by the Archbishop.**

Seminarians must also make a high priority of attending the gatherings called by the Archbishop for our seminarians. They must also demonstrate good stewardship in taking full advantage of the formation that the Archdiocese provides.

Responsibility for Health Management

**SF 21. Because the ministry of the priest requires sound health of mind and body, seminarians must observe a sound regimen of good diet, exercise, and regular medical check-ups to ensure their physical fitness and well-being.**

Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE)

**SF 22. The Archdiocese of Seattle requires each of its seminarians to complete a summer unit in CPE. The CPE program must be approved by the Office of the Vicar for Clergy.**

Summer Assignments

**SF 23. Beginning with the theology years, each seminarian is given a summer assignment.**

Following the end of the school year, seminarians are allowed two weeks of vacation and can take an additional ten days of vacation before the next school year begins. During the summer they will be assigned to work in a parish, a Spanish language immersion program, CPE or another pastoral assignment as determined by the Office of the Vicar for Clergy and approved by the Archbishop.

Second Language

**SF 24. Seminarians for the Archdiocese of Seattle are expected to learn a second language.**

24.a. For most, the second language will be Spanish. Exceptions to this requirement must be specifically approved by the Office of the Vicar for Clergy, and exceptions will be reviewed by the Office of the Vicar for Clergy on a case by case basis.

Learning a second language may be accomplished through seminary classes, language immersion programs, and pastoral assignments during formation.

- 24.b. It is imperative that seminarians learn and appreciate the importance of cultural expressions of faith, diverse norms and history of the many cultural communities present in the Archdiocese.

#### English as a Second Language (ESL)

The Archdiocese of Seattle is culturally diverse and needs seminary applicants who represent this diversity.

**SF 25. Applicants for whom English is not their native tongue must take the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL).**

- 25.a. In most cases, applicants whose native language is not English must achieve a score of at least 550 on the paper-based test or at least 213 on the computer-based test to formally begin the seminary program.
- 25.b. In addition to completing minimum requirements for seminary admission, ESL student applicants must be committed to ongoing formation in conversational and grammatical English as well as accent reduction for a minimum of five years after ordination.
- 25.c. To achieve a true experience of immersion, non-native speakers should seek occasions to socialize with native speakers of English during their seminary formation.

#### Solicitation of Funds for Personal Use

**SF 26. Seminarians must not solicit funds for financial support without the written permission of the Office of the Vicar for Clergy. Any seminarian who solicits funds or receives such support without written permission from the Office of the Vicar for Clergy is subject to dismissal from the seminary program.**

- 26.a. Through the direction of the Office of the Vicar for Clergy, the Knights of Columbus, the Serra Club and any other groups or individuals wishing to support seminarians will make contributions through the Office of the Vicar for Clergy.

- 26.b. College seminarians are strongly encouraged to seek scholarships, Pell Grants, tuition assistance, or parental support for reducing loan amounts for tuition, room and board.

#### Leaving the Program

**SF 27. Seminarians who decide to leave the program permanently must formally write the Archbishop, notifying him of their intention to separate from the program. Seminarians who decide to leave the program temporarily must formally write the Archbishop requesting permission to separate from the program. A seminarian who takes a leave longer than one calendar year will be asked to formally re-apply.**

Seminarians who have been supported financially by the Archdiocese in college and who leave seminary formation before ordination are responsible for repayment of college loans and must set up a repayment plan directly with the bank.

#### Evaluation

**SF 28. Seminarians must fully and honestly participate in annual evaluations.**

- 28.a. Annual evaluations are essential to both the seminarian's and the Archbishop's ongoing discernment of the seminarian's readiness to continue in formation and, eventually, his readiness for ministry.
- 28.b. The Archbishop delegates members of his staff to represent him in the evaluation process. Normally, the Vicar for Clergy attends the evaluation when a seminarian is being considered for ordination to the diaconate or priesthood in the months immediately following the evaluation.

#### Installation to Ministries

**SF 29. Seminarians petition formally through the seminary process to be installed as Acolytes or Lectors or to be admitted formally as Candidates for Holy Orders.**

Each installation requires a thorough discernment on the part of the Archbishop, seminary faculty, and seminarian.

## X. PASTORAL INTERNSHIP YEAR

**SF 30. Each seminarian is required to successfully complete a full year of pastoral internship in a parish within the Archdiocese of Seattle.**

The Archbishop formally assigns the seminarian to a particular parish through the Office of the Vicar for Clergy. Assignments are made based on a strong mentoring pastor, good living situation (preferably in a rectory setting), and the specifics of ministry available. The Internship is critical in preparing candidates for parish priestly ministry, and a positive evaluation is essential for a candidate seeking ordination. Previous pastoral experience can fulfill this requirement only with specific permission of the Archbishop.

## XI. CALL TO ORDERS

**SF 31. While the petition for ordination to the diaconate or priesthood normally is made through the Seminary Rector's Office, candidates must wait until the Archbishop formally calls him to orders before sending out invitations or announcing a date for such ordinations. It is solely the Archbishop's responsibility for determining a candidate's readiness for Holy Orders.**

### Ordination to the Transitional Diaconate

**SF 32. In the Archdiocese of Seattle, ordination to the Transitional Diaconate takes place in the home parish of each seminarian when possible.**

Diaconal ordination in the parish engages the parish community more fully in the seminarian's formation and can foster vocations. Each seminarian, parish staff, the Office of the Vicar for Clergy and the Archdiocesan Liturgy Office collaborate in planning these liturgies. All permanent deacons are encouraged to attend these liturgies and to vest and share in the sign of peace as the newly ordained deacon is welcomed into the service ministry of the deacon.

### Ordination to the Priesthood

**SF 33. In the Archdiocese of Seattle, priestly ordinations take place at St. James Cathedral in early June as determined by the Archbishop. Preparation for the liturgy is directed by the Archdiocesan Liturgy Office.**

## APPENDIX A: QUALITIES OF APPLICANTS

### **Persons seeking to minister in the Archdiocese of Seattle exhibit the following qualities:**

1. They are knowledgeable about Roman Catholic teachings and practices, including the teachings of the Second Vatican Council.
2. They express their spirituality as an integral part of themselves and nurture their relationship with God through regular prayer.
3. They speak and act in ways congruent with the Church's faith and its moral and social teachings.
4. They have achieved an appropriate level of affective maturity as shown in their ability to relate to persons of both sexes.
5. They understand and accept the Church's teaching around sexuality.
6. They respect all individuals and demonstrate sensitivity to the rich ethnic, racial, gender and cultural diversity of parishioners; they celebrate and integrate the individual uniqueness of all persons.
7. They maintain respect for the dignity, worth and potential for growth of individuals and communities and for alternative points of view.
8. They demonstrate some understanding of the cultural context of the local church.
9. They take responsibility for themselves, make decisions, and deal with the consequences.
10. They set goals, articulate their values, and make decisions in light of their values and without undue influence from others. At the same time, they can follow goals set by those responsible for the common good and act according to established procedures.
11. They identify their personal strengths and weaknesses, remain open to feedback from others and are able to change behaviors, attitudes, and needs.

## APPENDIX B: INITIAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How long since your full reception into the Church? (If less than three years, recommend a longer period of discernment before application).
2. Describe your parish involvement. (Applicants should have had previous parish ministerial experience)
3. Have you spoken with your pastor about your vocation? (If not, let the applicant know his pastor's recommendation is critical)
4. Have you ever been married? Do you have children? (A single previous marriage, if resolved by the Church, may still leave the possibility open, although the marriage cannot have been celebrated here, and the spouse cannot reside locally. Children who are still minors or are economically dependent will prevent an application).
5. What is your last year of education? The Archdiocese of Seattle fully sponsors men in the major seminary, or those students who have completed at least an undergraduate degree, but may need pre-theology.
6. Describe your sense of call to priesthood.
7. Talk about your employment history.
8. Do you have any debt?
9. Have you ever dated?
10. Who are your good friends?
11. Can you represent the Church in an official capacity? Is there anything that would compromise your ability to do this?

## APPENDIX C: SECOND INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is your experience of ministry; understanding of priesthood?
2. Do you have the capacity and commitment to embrace celibacy?
3. How do you relate to authority?
4. Describe your religious education.
5. Talk about your family, and describe your relationship to siblings and parents.
6. How have you experienced God's call?
7. Describe your prayer life.