

ARTICLE FOUR

PASTORAL FORMATION

I. PASTORAL FORMATION PROGRAM

A. THE PASTORAL ORIENTATION OF SEMINARY EDUCATION

397. The Second Vatican Council Decree on the Training of Priests emphasizes the pastoral orientation of seminary education, stating that a pastoral concern "should characterize every feature of the students' training."¹⁷⁸ The goal of seminary formation is to prepare priests with a comprehensive pastoral outlook, ready to assume the pastoral duties which their service to the community requires. Pastoral service extends to all individuals and groups, including all social classes, with special concern for the poor and those alienated from society. "Pastoral formation certainly cannot be reduced to a mere apprenticeship, aiming to make the candidate familiar with some pastoral techniques. The seminary which educates must seek really and truly to initiate the candidate into the sensitivity of being a shepherd, in the conscious and mature assumption of his responsibilities, in the interior habit of evaluating problems and establishing priorities and looking for solutions on the basis of honest motivations of faith and according to the theological demands inherent in pastoral work."¹⁷⁹

B. THE GOALS OF FIELD EDUCATION

398. Within that context, theological field education embodies this general pastoral orientation in specific ways, which might be summarized in these terms: Active pastoral engagement stimulates students to continued learning. It introduces them to the sacramental and spiritual, the specifically priestly dimension of pastoral work, as an essential component of their future role. As seminarians perceive how theology and the tradition of the Church shed light on contemporary pastoral situations, they also acquire important practical skills. Through prayer and theological reflection, pastoral experience is integrated with personal life and academic education. Authentic pastoral formation is ecumenically and multiculturally sensitive, alert to questions of social justice and collaborative in nature. Finally, it helps seminarians appropriate their role as spiritual leaders and public persons in the Church. Theological field education "needs to be studied therefore as the true and genuine theological discipline that it is: pastoral or practical theology."¹⁸⁰

399. Theological field education promotes learning through active engagement in a pastoral situation. Seminary formation is enriched as seminarians learn to relate field education with academic and spiritual formation. Such an exchange does not take place automatically. Field education is an enterprise as complex and educational in nature as the classroom. The latter provides the necessary theoretical background for the priest on mission; the former acts as a laboratory for learning through practice.

400. Theological field education provides an opportunity for seminarians to exercise leadership in the Church and to learn the priestly dimension of pastoral ministry. Good role models are the best teachers, witnessing to ways in which active pastoral ministry can be combined with a life of prayer and Gospel simplicity. Working with priests and others who reflect the spirit of Christ reinforces a priestly vocation. Learning by example and identification, an aspect of education often used in other professions, is of great importance in the pastoral formation of seminarians.

401. Theological field education fosters an aptitude for continued learning and growth. By experientially teaching students not only what they know but what they do not know or understand, pastoral experience can make them more eager to learn and to grow spiritually. "Pastoral study and action direct one to an inner source, which the work of formation will take care to guard and make good use of: This is the **ever deeper communion with the pastoral charity of Jesus.**"¹⁸¹

402. In theological field education, reflection and integration are closely related. Theological reflection is critical for practical learning in a formational context. Students perceive how theology and the tradition of the Church shed light on the pastoral situations they experience. Theology is illumined in the process. Academic work and pastoral ministry come to reinforce one another. This mutual interaction also helps seminarians to sense the presence of God in these experiences and to relate their life in Christ to the service of God's people. Such learning can represent a significant moment of personal integration for seminarians as well.

403. Theological field education helps seminarians gain pastoral skills. Catechizing, counseling, and group skills may depend on native talent, but they also can be taught. The communication of such practical skills represents a significant value in seminary education.

404. Theological field education fosters general integration in the formational process. The field-education program can be an integrating factor in seminary education by forging a close link between ministerial, academic, and spiritual formation. Students begin to grasp more clearly the significance of what they have learned in the classroom and to recognize their need for prayer. This process helps them to come to terms with the meaning of their own faith.

405. Theological field education provides opportunities for ecumenical and interreligious cooperation. Pastoral formation lends itself to such cooperation, which is a significant dimension of all priestly formation. Supervised field experience provides fertile soil for building practical sensitivity to Judaism, other Christian churches, and other world religions.

406. Pastoral assignments of many kinds provide natural, firsthand introductions to the multicultural apostolate of the Church in many parts of the United States and so to the future ministry of many priests.

407. Theological field education can engender a sensitivity for justice, peace, and the integrity of human life. Social ministry offers opportunities for work in disadvantaged areas with marginalized groups: immigrants, migrants, refugees, the sick, the aged, and the poor.¹⁸² The study of social legislation concerning civil rights, health, education, and welfare provides additional opportunities. This aspect of priestly formation should encourage and facilitate seminarians' service of and concern for the poor and vulnerable, an essential dimension of Catholic faith and priestly ministry.

408. Theological field education provides an opportunity for collaboration. The field-education program introduces students to the experience of working with all who share responsibility for ministry in the Church. This helps students develop an understanding and appreciation of the role of all ecclesial ministries. As a result, they come to appreciate their own leadership role in relation to those with whom they will one day collaborate.

C. ELEMENTS OF THE PROGRAM

409. Evangelization; Catholic schools; catechetics; religious education; youth ministry; social justice; rural ministry; ecumenism; the care of the sick, elderly, and dying; as well as ministry in varied cultural settings indicate the breadth of experiences to which seminarians may be exposed in the course of their field-education program.

Emphasis on Parish Ministry ●

410. Among the diverse field-education experiences, parish ministry occupies pride of place.¹⁸³ The parish is where many newly ordained priests, certainly most diocesan priests, encounter their first sustained experience of ordained ministry. The parish is also the center of pastoral ministry in a diocese and an important work for many religious. It is natural that parish ministry is a particular focus of attention in field education.

411. Parish ministry will be an important factor in the lives of many religious. It is necessary that a portion of field education for religious include parish ministry. Such field experience should include attention to the relation of the parish and the parish priest to the diocesan bishop.

412. A field-education program systematically introduces candidates for the priesthood into varied pastoral experiences and equips them with the practical skills for ordained ministry.

Education and Supervision

413. To ensure that all pastoral experiences are truly educational, the individual parts of the field-education program must be closely integrated. The program should be carefully coordinated with the academic and formational dimensions of seminary education.

414. The director of field education assists the rector or another priest in the apostolic formation of seminarians. Because of the specifically spiritual and sacramental dimension of priestly ministry, it is important that the rector or a priest who has solid experience of pastoral ministry provide an overall vision for the direction of the field-education program, especially for theological reflection.

415. Within this context, the director of field education administers and coordinates the program of field education of seminarians and thus should be knowledgeable in theology and supervisory techniques. The director must have had parish experience and should be familiar with clinical pastoral education. The director should also be familiar with the value and practice of theological reflection and be capable of explaining its goals, objectives, and methods to faculty and students.

416. An important task of a director of field education is the development of supervisory skills on the part of those who oversee on-site the pastoral

assignments of seminarians. Supervisory skills cannot be presumed, and teaching them is a high priority of a field-education program. Good supervision guarantees that pastoral experience remains systematically educative and formational.

417. The director of field education may invite members of the academic faculty, according to their respective disciplines as well as their personal gifts and interests, to become involved in the pastoral program, for example in theological reflection or in addressing social justice concerns.

Programs of Field Education

418. The field-education program may operate concurrently with the regular academic and formational programs of the seminary, or it may be organized around intensified periods of supervised ministry.

Concurrent Program

419. The concurrent program of field education allows students gradually to move from one level of field education to another while participating in regular theological reflection at the seminary. It also allows them to see the importance of their theological studies as reflected in the experience of the field-education placement. Concurrent models are effective when the academic program and the field-education program are closely linked in the total seminary curriculum.

Pastoral Internship

420. The pastoral internship is a full-time residency internship in a diocesan or religious parish. The seminary may administer the internship, which is directed by an on-site trained pastoral supervisor who has demonstrated competency in parochial ministry, loves the Church, and has an appreciation of and respect for the priesthood.

421. At the same time, the pastoral internship provides those charged with priestly formation the opportunity to observe seminarians' on-site performance in a live-in ministry situation. It also offers a timely opportunity for guidance and formation at a critical learning moment.

422. Because a certain academic, pastoral, and spiritual background is required for an effective pastoral internship, it ordinarily is scheduled around the midpoint of students' preparation for the priesthood.

423. Ministerial experience should be broad based and, insofar as possible, represent the ministry of the priest. The experience of a pastoral internship offers seminarians a valuable opportunity to test their vocation in a context similar to their future ministry. It also manifests the needs and resources of the local church and introduces them to the local presbyterate.

424. In addition to the evaluation by the on-site pastoral supervisor, the observations of those who served alongside interns and those who were served by them, including the laity of the parish, should be sought.

Summer Placements

425. Many dioceses place seminarians in parish or other settings of ministry during the summer months. To realize the full benefit of summer placements as part of the field-education program, the seminary field-education director should collaborate with the appropriate diocesan or religious officials. Guidelines, resource material, evaluations, and general direction may be provided by the seminary to help monitor such experiences. Balanced and accurate diocesan evaluations from supervisors and others in the pastoral placement are important for the seminary.

Transitional Diaconate

426. As the Decree on the Training of Priests has declared, it is the responsibility of the diocesan bishop or religious ordinary to decide whether it is opportune that candidates exercise the ministry of deacon for a fitting period of time before being called to the priesthood.¹⁸⁴

427. During this transitional period, deacons, under the guidance of a pastor, should begin the practice of the ordained ministry. Normally the field-education department will cooperate with the diocesan or religious personnel in the supervision of deacon internships, which should follow the prescriptions of the *Code of Canon Law*.

Clinical Pastoral Experience

428. Many seminaries encourage or require participation in a supervised and accredited clinical pastoral experience, usually in a hospital setting. Such programs are certified by national agencies and are sometimes required for the Master of Divinity degree. Participation in the clinical pastoral program is usually scheduled during the summer. Enrollment in specific programs should have the approval of the diocese or religious

institute or society and the seminary. It is the responsibility of the diocesan bishop, religious ordinary, and the rector to ensure that the Catholic, sacramental dimension of pastoral care is integral to all such programs in which seminarians participate. The focus on preparation for priestly ministry should be clear. Clinical pastoral education should enhance the sacramental, pastoral dimension of ministry, not substitute for it.

II. NORMS

429. Every seminary is required to offer a coordinated program of supervised field education and is responsible for the direction of pastoral education of seminarians.

430. The field-education program should be an integral part of the seminary curriculum and accredited as such.

431. The goals and objectives of the field-education program should be clearly stated and serve as the basis for the evaluation of seminarians in this area.

432. The director or administrator of the field-education program should have faculty rank and possess the requisite parochial experience and professional expertise. The director should model a love for priestly ministry in the Church.

433. The field-education program should provide diocesan seminarians with a broad exposure to supervised pastoral service, with primary emphasis on parish ministry.

434. Determinations about the concurrent or intensive residency program should be made by the seminary in collaboration with the dioceses or religious institutes or societies which it serves.

435. Supervision, theological reflection, and evaluation are necessary components of an effective pastoral program.

436. On-site supervisors should be carefully selected with an eye to their dedication to the Church and respect for the priesthood and should be taught the skills of pastoral supervision and evaluation.

437. In addition to on-site supervisors, others collaborating in the various ministries, as well as those served, should be asked to participate in the evaluation of seminarians in ministry.

438. The field-education program may provide the seminarians with ecumenical and interreligious programs of social action and outreach to the poor.¹⁸⁵

439. The program should include placements in which seminarians will experience the richness and diversity of the various cultural, racial, and ethnic groups that comprise the Church in the United States. Such placements also can provide opportunities to sharpen language skills.

440. The field-education program of whatever model should pay attention to the seminarians' need to root a life of service in personal prayer. Seminarians need supervision in developing the habit of prayer in the context of pastoral activity and in learning to establish a rhythm of life that provides an appropriate balance of service, study, exercise, and leisure. Evaluation of seminarians in ministerial placements should include observations and accountability in these areas.