



Program of Priestly Formation

Fourth Edition • November 1992

National Conference of Catholic Bishops

In November 1992, the fourth edition of the *Program of Priestly Formation* was approved by the general membership of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops. The Bishops' Committee on Priestly Formation was authorized to proceed with its publication subsequent to final approval by the Congregation for Catholic Education. This approval was received from the congregation on December 16, 1992 (Prot. N. 1897/65/IX/7). Accordingly, the publication of the fourth edition of the *Program of Priestly Formation* of the NCCB is authorized by the undersigned.

February 12, 1993

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Monsignor Robert N. Lynch
General Secretary
NCCB/USCC

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**National Conference of Catholic Bishops
United States of America**

DECREE OF PROMULGATION

In November 1992, the members of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops of the United States of America approved the *Program of Priestly Formation* (fourth edition) as the *ratio institutionis sacerdotalis* for the United States to be observed in all seminaries for the formation of priests.

This action of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, made in accord with canon 242 of the *Code of Canon Law*, was confirmed by the Congregation for Catholic Education (Prot. No. 1897/65/IX/7), signed by Pio Cardinal Laghi, prefect of the congregation, and dated December 16, 1992.

As president of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, I hereby declare that the effective date of this decree will be July 1, 1993, with full implementation by the first day of the 1994 academic year.

Given at the offices of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in Washington, D.C., April 8, 1993.

+ William H. Keeler
Archbishop of Baltimore
President
National Conference of Catholic Bishops

Monsignor Robert N. Lynch
General Secretary
NCCB/USCC

STATEMENT FROM THE CONFERENCE OF MAJOR SUPERIORS OF MEN

The Conference of Major Superiors of Men, recognizing its obligations to help ensure quality training and education for the ordained ministry, has over the past four years collaborated with the Bishops' Committee on Priestly Formation in revising the *Program of Priestly Formation*. We are especially pleased that the committee which drafted this revision of the document has seen fit to include sections dealing with ordained ministry within the context of religious life. Although academic requirements may be similar for both religious and diocesan priests, the religious priest will understand the ordained role and ministry as reflecting the charism and spiritual traditions of his religious institute.

The Conference of Major Superiors of Men adopts this *Program of Priestly Formation* as applicable to all religious seminaries in the United States. We do this at the invitations of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, preserving the rights and privileges granted religious in church law, especially regarding the religious and spiritual formation of their own candidates.

FOREWORD

In a communication of December 16, 1992 (Prot. N. 1897/65/IX/7) from His Eminence Pio Cardinal Laghi, prefect of the Congregation for Catholic Education, the fourth edition of the *Program of Priestly Formation* was approved for use in American seminaries. The *Program* is now normative for priestly formation in the United States.

We are proud to present the fourth edition of the *Program of Priestly Formation*, which is the result of the labors of many people over a period of three years. The project was initiated in 1989 by the Bishops' Committee on Priestly Formation under the chairmanship of Bishop James P. Keleher. The project initially was envisioned as a two-year, two-phased undertaking, the first year given over to study and consultation, the second to writing. The preparation of the fourth edition also coincided fortuitously with preparations for the international Synod of Bishops on Priestly Formation in 1990. In its initial stages, the fourth edition profited from the study and research in preparation for the synod. In its final stages, the fourth edition has been enriched at every point by the apostolic exhortation of His Holiness, Pope John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, a charter document for priestly formation worldwide as the Church enters the third millennium.

Following the pattern of earlier revisions, the Bishops' Committee on Priestly Formation entrusted the initial consultation and the preparation of a first draft to a committee composed of bishops, religious ordinaries, and seminary personnel. The members of the committee were: Chairman, Bishop Daniel M. Buechlein, OSB; Bishops Elden F. Curtiss and Donald W. Wuerl; Abbot Jerome Theissen, OSB; Fathers Robert Karris, OFM, and Donald Goergen, OP; Fathers Gerald Kicanas and Cale Crowley, SS; and staffed by Father Howard P. Bleichner, SS, executive director of the Secretariat for Vocations and Priestly Formation, and Robert J. Wister, executive director of the Seminary Department of the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA). In September 1990, as the consultation phase drew to a close, the Bishops' Committee on Priestly Formation designated Fathers Bleichner and Wister as general editors to ensure a uniform style to the document.

The text was greatly strengthened by broad-based and extensive consultation. Clearly the document is the work of many hands whose

contribution should be acknowledged. The members of the Bishops' Committee on Priestly Formation who brought the project to completion are Archbishop Daniel M. Buechlein, OSB, chairman; Bishops Elden F. Curtiss; John Marshall; John Vlazny; Terry Steib, SVD; Donald W. Wuerl; Enrique San Pedro, SJ; and consultant Bishop James P. Keleher. The work of the general editors of the document, Fathers Bleichner and Wister, also should be acknowledged.

In his letter of December 16, 1992, Cardinal Laghi writes, "When the Apostolic Visitation of Seminaries in the U.S.A. was announced, the series of voluntary visitations organized by the Episcopal Conference through its Commission was suspended. It would now be appropriate to initiate once again the Commission's visitation program. Such a move would have our full support." Our committee welcomes this recommendation. The successful implementation of the document will be greatly strengthened by a program of voluntary visitations by the Bishops' Committee on Priestly Formation. It is our hope every seminary, formation house, and study center in the United States will request such a visitation.

In the name of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Conference of Major Superiors of Men, I express our gratitude for the participation of all who assisted in this revision. Our heartfelt thanks to all those who work so generously and effectively for priestly formation in the United States of America.

Archbishop Daniel M. Buechlein, OSB
Chairman, 1990-93
Bishops' Committee on Priestly Formation