



# TOWARDS PRIESTHOOD

Te Huinga o ngā Pīhopa  
Katorika o Aotearoa

New Zealand Catholic  
Bishops Conference

April 1998

## FOREWORD

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*"He now went up onto the mountain and summoned those he wanted. So they came to him and he appointed twelve; they were to be his companions and to be sent out to proclaim the message."*  
(Mark 3:13-14)

In preparing men for the ordained priesthood, the Church continues the work of Jesus. The Church in Aotearoa New Zealand is called to make a renewed commitment to relive what Jesus did for his apostles. The call is to form priests who have the heart of Jesus and who model themselves on Jesus, the Good Shepherd, who said: *"I have come so that they may have life and have it to the full."* (John 10:10)

People in our rapidly changing, increasingly secular, multicultural society urgently need evangelisation, to hear the message of the Gospel. This cannot be done without priests who have made their own *"the mind of Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 2:5). Through baptism / confirmation, all members of the Church share in the great commission, to *"to be my witnesses ... to earth's remotest end"* (Acts 1:8). The people look to their priests for leadership and support in this mission.

We believe that forming future priests is one of the most important and demanding tasks we face. The work of priestly formation will go on throughout the priest's life, with many experiences serving to shape and form the seminarian, and later the ordained priest.

The aim of this reflection on priestly formation, "Towards Priesthood", is to guide the formation of future diocesan priests. It expresses the Church's mind about the ordained priesthood, which has been clearly and frequently expressed in the last years of the twentieth century. There are essential aspects of the priesthood that do not change. These are spelt out in this document in order that the promise God made through the Prophet Jeremiah will continue to be fulfilled, *"I shall give you shepherds after my own heart"* (Jeremiah 3:15)

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# WHAT IS A PRIEST?

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## **Jesus Christ, Our High Priest**

The role of the priests in Israel was to act as intermediaries between God and the people, offering formal sacrifices to God. *"You (Aaron) and your sons will undertake the priestly duties in all that concerns the altar and all that lies behind the veil. You will perform the liturgy, the duties of which I entrust to your priesthood."* (Num. 18:7)

Christ has fulfilled and superseded the mediatorship of the Old Testament priesthood. He alone is our mediator, and his sacrifice has replaced all other sacrifices.

Through union with Christ, we are all a *"chosen race, a royal priesthood, a consecrated nation, a people set apart to sing the praises of God..."* (1 Pet 2:9). This priestliness or consecration to holiness is the real meaning of what is usually called the common priesthood of all the baptized.

## **The apostolate of the twelve**

To carry out his mission to the world, Jesus gathered around him "the twelve" and in this way formed the nucleus of what would become the Church. Through their ministry, Christ would continue his ministry. In other words, the apostles did not stand between Christ and his people as intermediaries. Through their ministry, Christ continued his own presence and his own activity.

This is also true of those in whom the apostolic succession continues to be made visible. The Church has always believed and taught that the ministry entrusted by Jesus to his twelve apostles continues in the ordained ministries of bishops, priests (also known as "presbyters" or "elders") and deacons.

The bishop's role is to ensure that in the midst of diversity the communion of the Church is maintained. The priest shares in this role through a ministry of the word that calls people into communion and celebrates this communion in the Eucharist. The deacon also shares in the bishop's role, through a ministry of the word that calls the community to be at the service of the word.

It is Christ's word that gathers, nurtures and forms us as his body. Ordained ministry is a sign that we become Christ's priestly people by receiving this word as something given by Christ, not by giving the word to ourselves.

Ministerial priesthood and the universal priesthood *"differ from one another in essence, and not only in degree. ... each in its own special way is a participation in the one priesthood of Christ."* (Lumen Gentium 10). Because they are both a participation in the priesthood of Christ, which cannot differ in kind from itself, it is the manner of participating, the function, that differs. By the sacrament of Holy Orders, some are given a function that is not given to all by their baptism.

The priest is the visible sign of Christ's relationship to his body. References to the priest representing Christ as shepherd, priest, head and bridegroom are images that illuminate the nature of that relationship.

The relationship of the priest to Jesus Christ, and in him to his Church, is part of the priest's very being by virtue of his sacramental consecration/anointing and is expressed in his ministry. He is enabled and empowered to perform specific acts of ministry that bring Christ's redeeming action into people's lives. Jesus Christ acts through him to save his people.

Because of his relationship to Christ, the concerns of the priest echo the concerns and mission of Christ himself. Like Jesus, he is called to witness in his relationships to fraternity, service, the common quest for truth and the promotion of justice and peace. Like Jesus the Good Shepherd, his concern must extend beyond his own flock - to the members of other Christian Churches and denominations - to the followers of other religions - to people of good will - to the poor and defenseless - to all who hunger, even unknowingly, for the truth and salvation of Christ.

*"I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ as well as a partaker in the glory that is to be revealed. Tend the flock of God that is your charge, not by constraint but willingly, not for shameful gain but eagerly, not as domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief shepherd is manifested, you will obtain the unfading crown of glory"*  
(1 Peter 5:1-14) (Pastores Dabo Vobis 15)

## **The Mission of the Priest**

The Risen Lord calls ordained priests:

- To lead his holy people in love
- To nourish them with his Word
- To give them spiritual strength, support and guidance through preaching
- To strengthen them through the sacraments
- To renew in his name the sacrifice of our Redemption as they set before his family the paschal meal and ...
- To *"give their lives in the service of the Father"* as Christ did (preface of Chrism Mass, Roman Missal).

The Church's mission is to continue the work of Christ. The priest's ministry is entirely on behalf of the Church's mission. The priest is servant to the Church as mystery because he makes present the Church's sacramental signs of the Risen Christ. He is servant to the Church's communion because he is called to build the unity of the Church. He is servant to the Church as mission because he makes the community a herald and witness of the Gospel.

## **All share in the one priesthood**

Ordination makes priests members of the presbyteral order - bringing them into communion with other priests and their diocesan bishop. Through their communion with him, their priestly concern includes the universal Church as well as their own particular Church. All priests, whether diocesan or religious, share in the one priesthood of Christ. All work for the one cause - building up the Body of Christ. The ordained ministry of priests exists to nurture and promote the priesthood of the entire people of God, and so the priest must serve God's people in a positive, helping and humble relationship.

The pastoral situation today calls for a "newness": a new evangelisation involving the entire people of God; new fervour; new ways of announcing and witnessing to the Gospel. Priests need to be: deeply and fully immersed in the mystery of Christ; able to adopt new styles of pastoral life; able to live and work in communion with the Pope, the bishops, other priests, men and women in religious life and the laity. They need always to respect and foster the distinct roles, gifts and ministries present within the Church community in New Zealand.

## WHAT DO WE LOOK FOR IN A PRIEST?

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A priest should be:

1. **In love with God** - A priest is called to serve the spiritual needs of people today. People have a hunger for God and expect the priest to lead them to God. Therefore, he must be a spiritual, prayerful man who, through his own experience of God and profound communion with the Church, is able to communicate his experience of God to others and lead them into the heart of the Church. His very identity points to the unseen God, the Holy One. (PDV 21, 25,26, 47 DIR 55,56)
2. **Committed to his diocese** - He is to be a priest of his local Church (diocese), who understands and appreciates the role of his bishop, is an integral part of the presbyterate, and is prepared to work together in faith with other priests and the whole ecclesial community. (PDV 31, 45, 23)
3. **Prayerful** - A priest needs to be prayerful, able to reflect on the events of life in the light of faith, and therefore grow in holiness. This demands that the priest be at home with solitude and mystery. *"Following the example of Christ, the priest must know how to maintain the vivacity and abundance of the moments of silence and prayer in which he cultivates and deepens his own essential relationship with the living figure of Jesus Christ."* (DIR 40)
4. **Able to express his love for Christ in his love for his flock** - The path to holiness for the priest lies in carrying out the demands of his ministry, in all its variety and routine, with the deep charity that flows from his union with Christ the Good Shepherd.

In order to continue doing the will of his Father in the world, Christ works unceasingly through the Church. He operates through his ministers, and therefore remains always the source and wellspring of the unity of their lives. A priest can achieve this co-ordination and unity of life by joining himself with Christ to acknowledge the will of the Father. This means completely giving himself in pastoral charity to the flock committed to him. (PDV22)

A very special source of this pastoral charity (PDV 23) is the Eucharistic sacrifice. The Eucharist stands as the root and centre of the whole life of a priest. The priest must make his own what takes place on the altar of sacrifice. To do this the priest, through prayer, must continue to penetrate more deeply into the mystery of Christ. (PO 14)

*"It is above all in the **celebration of the sacraments** and the liturgy of the hours that the priest is called to live and witness to the deep unity between the exercise of his ministry and his spiritual life.... For the priest as well the truly central place, both in his ministry and in his spiritual life, belongs to the Eucharist."* (PDV26)

5. **A mature human person** - A priest's human personality acts as the bridge between his mission from Christ and the members of Christ's faithful entrusted to him. Therefore, he needs to be a mature human person with a true knowledge of self; a balanced, integrated person who is appreciative of all Christian and human virtues. He will be open to growth and able to adapt. (PDV 43, 44, 71, 72,73.)

*"Future priests should therefore cultivate a series of human qualities, not only out of proper and due growth and realization of self, but also with a view to the ministry. These qualities are needed for them to be balanced people, strong and free, capable of bearing the weight of pastoral responsibilities. They need to be educated to love the truth, to be loyal, to respect every person, to have a sense of justice, to be true to their word, to be genuinely compassionate, to be men of integrity and, especially, to be balanced in judgment and behavior."* (PDV 43)

6. **Accepting of his Vocation** - The priest must see his priestly vocation, ratified by the Church, as God's irrevocable gift to him. Because God calls him to be a priest, he freely and without reserve offers himself to God and the Church in his celibate life and in his total dedication to building up the Church. (PDV23, 36, 37, 44)
7. **Able to live and proclaim the Gospel** - The priest, as a servant of the Word of God, must humbly receive this Word from the Church, live by it faithfully, and always proclaim it joyfully and courageously. He needs to be able to read the signs of the times and to evangelise in today's secular society. (PDV 18, 59, 26 DIR35)

*"It is the first task of priests as co-workers of the bishops to preach the Gospel of God to all..... moreover, the priest's preaching, often very difficult in present day conditions, if it is to become more effective in moving the minds of his hearers, must expound the word of God not merely in a general and abstract way but by an application of the eternal truth of the Gospel to the concrete circumstances of life."* (PO. 4)



8. **Good with people** - The priest must be able to understand the needs of his people and share their hopes and joys, comforting them in times of distress, rejoicing with them in their joys and happiness. (PDV 43) The ability to relate to others in a warm and human way is truly fundamental for a person who is called to be responsible for a community.
9. **Able to accept and foster the work of others** - Since the priest needs to be able to work collaboratively with the People of God, fostering their indispensable contribution to Church and society he must learn to *"always respect and foster the different roles, charisms and ministries present within the ecclesial community."* (PDV 18)
10. **Able to embrace celibacy** - Priests need to be men who are at home with their own sexuality, emotionally mature, and committed to chaste celibate love. *"For an adequate priestly spiritual life, celibacy ought not to be considered and lived as an isolated or purely negative element, but as one aspect of a positive, specific and characteristic approach to being a priest."* (PDV 29,44)
11. **Self-motivated and self-disciplined** - Priestly maturity demands sufficient self-motivation and self-discipline to enable the priest to allocate sufficient time for his spiritual life, studies and pastoral activities (PDV 28, 69).
12. **Able to celebrate life** - Priests need to be able to celebrate life as a gift from God, and to have the ability to relax and be joyful and enthusiastic witnesses to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
13. **Sensitive to Te Tangata Whenua** - All priests working in New Zealand must be sensitive to the place of Māori people as the Indigenous people of New Zealand. They must have a knowledge of and respect for Māori language and culture.
14. **Comfortable with his own culture and accepting of others** - Priests must be aware of the significance of their own culture and the cultures of their people and be *"inspired by the Catholic principles of inculturation."* (PDV 55) A priest should be knowledgeable about his own primary culture(s) and be capable of evaluating, in Christian terms, both its strengths and its weaknesses. As a seminarian, he should have had close contact with the principal New Zealand cultures other than his own, as well as the opportunity for guided reflection on his personal reactions and ability to relate to those other cultures. A priest can never expect to be a totally effective pastor to people of cultures other than his own and needs to be able to work collaboratively with leaders of other cultures in any local pastoral ministry.

**15.Aware that there are needs he cannot meet** - The impossibility of being all things for all people also applies to gender differences, whether cultural or biological. When ministering to women, a priest needs to be alert to the possibility that some situations may require him to seek support and collaboration from women, as he would when dealing with any other cultural gulf.

**16.Able to empathise with the weak** - As well as having strength of character, a healthy personality and qualities of leadership, a priest must be able to empathise with those who struggle. This is not a matter of moral weakness, but a matter of knowing what it is like to be human and vulnerable - *"subject to the limitations of weakness."* (Hebrews 5:2)

The priest does not need to be above struggle and vulnerability in order to minister to others. It is precisely his "weakness" that God makes use of for his ministry. For so it was with Christ:

*"For the suffering he himself passed through while being put to the test enables him to help others when they are being put to the test ... For the high priest we have is not incapable of feeling our weaknesses with us but has been put to the test in exactly the same way as ourselves, apart from sin ...  
He can sympathise with those who are ignorant or who have gone astray, because he too is subject to the limitations of weakness." (Heb. 2:18; 4:15; 5:2)*

Like Paul, the priest can afford to say:

*"It is, then, about my weaknesses that I am happiest of all to boast, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me; and that is why I am glad of weaknesses ... for Christ's sake. For it is when I am weak that I am strong." (2 Cor. 12:9,10)*

## WHAT IS REQUIRED FOR PRIESTLY FORMATION?

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The NZCBC, seminary staff, theologate staff, vocation directors and pastoral placement supervisors must have a correct and deep awareness of the nature and mission of the ministerial priesthood, as Pope John Paul II stated:

*"Knowledge of the nature and mission of the ministerial priesthood is essential..... for fostering and discerning vocations to the priesthood and training those called to ordained ministry." (PDV 11)*

All those entrusted with priestly formation (human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral) must be motivated by a genuine love for Christ and his Church, and loyalty and respect for the magisterium and its understanding of priesthood.

*"The bishops first of all should feel their grave responsibility for the formation of those who have been given the task of educating future priests. For this ministry, priests of exemplary life should be chosen, men with a number of qualities; human and spiritual maturity, pastoral experience, professional competence, stability in their own vocation, a capacity to work with others, serious preparation in those human sciences (psychology especially) which relate to their office, a knowledge of how to work in groups." (PDV 66)*

Prior to entry into the seminary, prospective seminarians will have guidance to help discern their vocation and appropriate pre-seminary formation. The seminary programme will then build on this initial formation.

*"The major seminary should strive to become a community built on deep friendship and charity so that it can be considered a true family living in joy. As a Christian institution, the seminary should become - an "ecclesial community", a community of the disciples of the Lord in which the one same liturgy (which imbues life with a spirit of prayer) is celebrated; a community moulded daily in the reading and meditation of the Word of God and with the sacrament of the Eucharist, and in the practice of fraternal charity and justice; a community in which, as its life and the life of each of its members progresses, there shine forth the Spirit of Christ and love for the Church." (PDV 60)*

Before accepting former seminarians or religious who seek to re-enter a seminary, the diocesan bishop must obtain the testimony of the former rector or superior concerning the reason for their departure or dismissal. (Canon 241.3) Particular attention needs to be paid to emotional, psychological and sexual maturity and doctrinal matters according to any norms of the Bishops' Conference. The diocesan bishop is to have moral certainty of the seminarian's suitability for ordination.

The common life and good of the seminary community and each person in it will be fostered and protected by following the statutes of the seminary drawn up in accordance with **Canon 237**.

Although priests will always have an irreplaceable role in the training and formation of priests, it is also vital that religious and lay men and women contribute their gifts and charisms. (PDV66)

The seminary is a "community of disciples of the Lord", united by love of Jesus and his Church, centred on the daily celebration of the Eucharist, animated by the joy and demands of the Gospel and living by the spiritual practices proposed by the Church to all priests. The seminary community aims to relive *"the experience of formation which Our Lord provided for the Twelve."* (PDV 60)

Because the mission of the Church and the priesthood is lived out in New Zealand, the seminary's life and programmes must include natural and vital contacts with a wide variety of persons and communities outside itself.

Within the seminary community as a whole, smaller stable groupings should be established. They would always include a First Year Formation Group with its own trained formator and formation programme. Such small groups must foster and enable healthy personal interaction, a spirit of Christian co-operation, responsible conduct, self-mastery, community spirit, proper use of freedom, development of one's gifts and generous response to the demands of charity.

Because the focus of these small groups is on formation for diocesan priesthood, ideally the formator would be a diocesan priest who would live with the students in order to know and accompany them on their journey to diocesan priesthood.

The seminary programme and spiritual direction should teach seminarians to value solitude and personal prayer as a necessary part of priestly spirituality. Occasions for silence and properly directed solitude should be provided, especially in retreats and days of recollection. (PPF 321)

*"Students should be led to appreciate the value of silence and recollection appropriate for prayer, study and thoughtful personal growth."* (PPF 146)

The academic programme will comprise the study of philosophy and study of theology required by Church law.

Because the entire training of seminarians is for a pastoral purpose and for developing pastoral charity *"The whole training of the students should have as its object to make them true shepherds of souls after the example of Our Lord Jesus Christ, teacher, priest and shepherd."* (PDV 57)

Therefore, students will spend a whole year in their own diocese, normally in their fifth year, experiencing life in a parish, under the supervision and example of a priest of their own presbyterate.

The experience of this pastoral year offers seminarians a valuable opportunity to test their vocation in a context similar to their future ministry. It also introduces them to the needs and resources of the local Church and to the local presbyterate.

During the summer holidays, seminarians should be encouraged to join the work force in order to have contact with people in their daily lives. This is seen as highly suitable preparation for priesthood and gives them the opportunity to combine the demands of work with their commitment to prayerful preparation for priesthood. Experience of working in parishes is also provided as part of their formation. Seminarians could be placed in parishes or other ministry settings in order to give them broader pastoral experiences.

To make these pastoral experiences (Fifth Year Pastoral placement, summer holidays) truly effective each diocese will need a diocesan pastoral coordinator. This pastoral coordinator will also have responsibility for on-going formation of young priests.

*"The on-going formation of priests is the natural and absolutely necessary continuation of the process of building priestly personality which began and developed in the seminary with the training programme which aimed at ordination." (PDV 71)*

During seminary training, the seminarians will have appropriate supervised pastoral experiences.

*"When it comes to choosing places and services in which candidates can obtain their pastoral experience, the parish should be given particular importance, for it is a living cell of local and specialised pastoral work in which they will find themselves faced with the kind of problems they will meet in their future ministry." (PDV 58)*

It is important that, after their seminary training, priests experience ongoing formation.

*"Ongoing formation should always be a part of the priest's life. It is a duty in the first instance for young priests and they should have frequent and systematic meetings by which they continue the sound and serious formation they have received in the seminary." (PDV 76)*

# BECOMING A PRIEST

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The Apostolic exhortation PASTORES DABO VOBIS (42) outlined the different areas of formation as:

- Human
- Spiritual
- Intellectual
- Pastoral

These four areas are discussed more fully below and need to be reflected on and studied by seminarians and those involved in their formation.

## **HUMAN FORMATION:** ***the Basis of all Priestly Formation***

Jesus Christ, in his person and in his actions, perfectly embodies what it is to be a human person. Because the priest is to be a "living image" of Jesus Christ, he needs to shape his human personality in such a way that it becomes a bridge to lead others to Jesus Christ, and not an obstacle in their way.

People are attracted to Jesus and the Church when priests are open and kind, courteous, friendly, hospitable, prudent and discreet, sincere in words and heart, affirming and encouraging; when they are cooperative, generous and ready to serve, willing to make meeting and dialogue easy. Equally, people are alienated and turned away from Jesus and the Church when priests are poor listeners, arrogant, quarrelsome, unwilling to share responsibility, cynical or unkind. Therefore, the capacity to relate to others is of special importance for the priest who is called to be a "man of communion"(PDV 43) in the midst of a community.

*"The whole work of priestly formation would be deprived of its necessary foundation if it lacked a suitable human formation." (PDV 43)*

Human formation helps to cultivate qualities important for ministry so that as future priests they will be

*"balanced people, strong and free, capable of bearing the weight of pastoral responsibilities. They need to be educated to love the truth, to be loyal, to respect every human person, to have a sense of justice, to be true to their word, to be genuinely compassionate, to be men of integrity and, especially, to be balanced in judgement and behavior." (PDV 43)*

As a *"living image"* of Jesus Christ, sensitive to the needs of his people, a priest will be polite, well mannered, patient, appropriately dressed, well spoken, friendly, respectful of others (DIR 55), able to relate to women, men and children in a mature way.

Emotional maturity for celibate living requires enlightened and comprehensive preparation. (PDV 29)

Emotional maturity for the priest is about offering *"with the grace of the Spirit and the free response of one's own will the whole of one's love and care to Jesus Christ and to his Church."* This kind of maturity *"should bring to human relationships of serene friendship and deep brotherliness a strong, lively and personal love for Jesus Christ."* (PDV 44)

Sexuality finds its authentic meaning in relation to affective maturity. Seminarians should understand the connection between mature love and celibacy. In doing so, the insights of modern psychology can be a considerable aid. The goal of psychosexual, social and spiritual development should be to form seminarians into chaste, celibate men who are loving pastors of the people they serve. (PPF 287)

The primary duty of a priest is to proclaim God's word and to announce the reign of God. (PO 4) He does this by his life, the whole of his pastoral ministry, and especially in the liturgy and the sacraments. By his choice to accept celibacy as an integral part of his ministry, he is staking his whole life on the "kingdom" that he proclaims.

Priests are called to grow in their love for Christ, even to the point of loving in the way he loved. In this way, celibacy becomes part of the priest's personal love for Christ. It also gives him a way of putting people first - in his life and in his concerns - precisely because there is not a wife and family who would have the right to be first.

It is important for priests to appreciate the human and artistic values of their culture, and the cultural heritage of the Church: for example, music, art and literature. When they do so, they grow as persons and are able to communicate and evangelise more successfully.

Most seminarians come to the seminary with significant life experiences. Because of this, the seminary must always be seen as a community of free and responsible adults among whom an atmosphere of trust must prevail. In recognition of this, the seminary must employ adult formation processes. The student for priesthood must be responsible for his own life and the decisions he makes while he actively cooperates with all the facets of his training.

*"The candidate himself is a necessary and irreplaceable agent in his own formation: All formation, priestly formation included, is ultimately a self-formation. No one can replace us in the responsible freedom that we have as individual persons." (PDV 69)*

Priestly life requires physical well-being and health. Therefore, students must learn to be physically fit and clean, and to have a well-adjusted diet and healthy sleep patterns. Healthy self-management requires training in signals of stress, the understanding of one's emotions and feelings, possible dependency patterns and how to deal with anger constructively, so that the student becomes comfortable with himself and free to enter into loving relationships.

The Kingdom of God announced by the Gospel is lived by people who are deeply bound to a culture, and the construction of this Kingdom has to take account of cultural elements. Therefore, human formation processes should always take account of the cultural inheritance of each student. (PDV 55)

## **SPIRITUAL FORMATION:**

### ***In Communion with God and in Search of Christ.***

Human formation that recognises the essentially religious dimension of the human person naturally leads to and finds its completion in spiritual formation. Since the human heart is restless until it rests in the Lord, the seminary needs to be a prayerful and reflective environment so that the student can continue to grow humanly and spiritually.

Spiritual formation introduces the candidate to a *"deep communion with Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, and leads to a total submission of one's life to the Spirit, in a filial attitude toward the Father and a trustful attachment to the Church."* (PDV 45).

The seminarian is being formed to take on the likeness of Christ. He needs to be led to see that his spiritual formation unifies and gives life to his **being** a priest and his **acting as** a priest. The Second Vatican Council made a point of highlighting the importance of integrating the spiritual and ministerial aspects of priesthood.

The spiritual life is a life of intimacy with God, but this very meeting with God brings us face to face with a need to meet our neighbour in humble and disinterested service. Therefore *"spiritual formation also involves seeking Christ in people."* (PDV49)



A goal of spiritual formation is to develop pastoral charity. Therefore *“preparation for the priesthood must necessarily involve proper training in charity and particularly the preferential love for the poor in whom our faith discovers Jesus, and a merciful love for sinners.”* (PDV 49)

The programme of priestly/spiritual formation builds on seminarians’ own experiences of God who has led them to the seminary. At the same time, it enables them to be open to ongoing conversion as they put on the mind of Christ.

The seminarian needs to learn:

- To live intimately with Christ, and
- To search for Jesus, and to come to know Jesus as Lord. The spiritual practices which the Church proposes to all priests will help him to do this.
  - ~ meditation on the Word of God
  - ~ active participation in the sacred mysteries of the Church, especially the Eucharist and the Divine Office.
  - ~ service of charity to all (PDV 45)
  - ~ devotion to Mary
  - ~ personal prayer
  - ~ regular reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation
  - ~ annual retreat
  - ~ regular meetings with his spiritual director

Seminarians should be encouraged to bring their studies to prayer, so that their devotional and spiritual life is founded on the rich heritage of the scriptures and the Church's tradition, and so that their learning is deepened and nourished by their prayerful reflection. As they bring together their studies and their prayer, students will experience ongoing conversion in their lives. They will acquire the attitudes manifested by Jesus in the Gospels, and more readily embrace the mind of the Church.

Since the priest leads the community in prayer and teaches others to pray, the seminarian needs to experience prayer with others in a community. He needs to learn to be comfortable in leading people in the Church's Liturgy, in other formal prayer and in more informal, spontaneous settings (for example, small group prayer, with families in need, at sick beds, and so on).

Seminarians need to be taught to reflect on the events of each day, including the mundane and the exciting, the joyful and the challenging in order to discover that the mystery of the Lord's death and resurrection is present in their own lives.

Formation for celibacy demands a spiritual dimension. Celibacy is not just a legal norm but a value profoundly connected with ordination whereby a man takes on the likeness of Christ, the Good Shepherd and Spouse of the Church. Celibacy must be a positive choice of undivided love for Christ and his Church, so that the priest is fully and joyfully available for pastoral ministry.

This formation in celibacy will help the seminarian to understand the Christian and truly human nature and purpose of sexuality in marriage and in celibacy.

## **INTELLECTUAL FORMATION:**

### ***Understanding the Faith***

*"The very situation of the Church today demands increasingly that teachers be truly able to face the complexity of the times and that they be in a position to face competently, with clarity and deep reasoning, the questions about meaning which are put by the people of today, questions which can only receive a full and definitive reply in the Gospel of Jesus Christ." (PDV56)*

Since people in New Zealand, including Catholics, have a higher level of education, priests more than ever need a thorough theological education.

*"The higher level of education on the part of Catholics requires more than ever a thorough theological education on the part of the priest. Effective preaching and teaching also requires skills in communication, but they first demand a sound and thoughtful theological foundation. Therefore "it is necessary to oppose firmly the tendency to play down the seriousness of studies and the commitment to them." (PDV56) (PPF 338)*

Intellectual formation is integrally related to human and spiritual formation. Through study, the seminarian deepens his appreciation of the Word of God, gives his heart to it, grows in his spiritual life and prepares himself for pastoral ministry.

The academic programme must focus on priesthood and have a pastoral orientation.

The goal of intellectual formation is the conversion of mind and heart in order for the seminarian to have a comprehensive grounding in the Catholic faith, a love for it and a passionate desire to share it. *"It will enable priests to proclaim the changeless Gospel of Christ and to make it credible to the legitimate demands of human reason." (PDV 51)*

The academic programme will encompass the subjects outlined in the Ratio Fundamental Institutionis Sacerdotalis.

*“As seminarians study divine revelation in the light of faith and under the guidance of the Church’s magisterium, they should grow personally into ever more committed disciples by virtue of what they learn. Only in this way will they be able to proclaim, expound, and guard the faith persuasively for the welfare of the faithful. Ultimately intellectual formation should teach seminarians to regard themselves as part of the tradition of authorized teachers and living witnesses by which the Gospel of Jesus Christ is handed down from one generation to the next.” (PPF 333).*

*"To be pastorally effective intellectual formation is to be integrated with a spirituality marked by a personal experience of God..... In this way a purely abstract approach to knowledge is overcome in favour of that intelligence of heart which knows how to look beyond and then is in a position to communicate the mystery of God to the people." (PDV 51, Instrumentum Laboris 39)*

As well as study of the sacred sciences, it is important that seminarians have a good knowledge of history and the human sciences. These will help them *“in reading the signs of the times in relation to the Gospel and the teaching of the Church. In this regard a knowledge of history and the human sciences is invaluable.”* (PPF 344) It will also help them to understand the world in which the Gospel is to be preached.

## **PASTORAL FORMATION:**

### ***Communion with the Charity of Jesus Christ the Good Shepherd***

The goal of pastoral formation is to form seminarians with a comprehensive pastoral outlook in order for them to minister with the charity of Christ the Good Shepherd. Therefore, a pastoral concern "Should characterize every feature of the student's training." (OT 19) "The whole training of the students should have as its object to make them true shepherds of souls after the example of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Teacher, Priest, Shepherd." (OT 4)

Pastoral formation will prepare students for the ministry of the Word, the ministry of worship and sanctification, and the ministry of the Shepherd.

*“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.” (PDV58)*

Learning by example and identification, an aspect of education often used in other professions, is of great importance in the pastoral formation of seminarians (PPF 400); for example, the fifth-year pastoral placement, and ongoing formation of newly ordained priests.

By learning through experience, seminarians not only learn what they know but what they do not know or understand. Furthermore, pastoral experience can make them more eager to learn and grow spiritually. (PPF 401)

Because peoples' lives are nourished by the Word of God, especially when that Word is proclaimed and expounded in the Liturgy, preaching is an essential and vital aspect of a priest's ministry:

*"Pastoral formation should present preaching as entailing a high sense of responsibility and dedication on the part of priests: it should never be improvised but should be prepared by study and prayer, expressing the perennial virtues of Scripture, tradition, liturgy, the Magisterium and the life of the Church. It requires consistency between the priest's preaching and his life."* (Past Guide 7)

The celebration of the Liturgy is a crucial aspect of the priest's pastoral care of people. In celebrating the Church's liturgy, he needs to be able to lead people into an experience of the presence of God. An important aspect of pastoral formation is the training of future priests for the celebration of the liturgy:

*"They should be trained for the ministry of worship and sanctification so that, by prayer and the celebration of the sacred liturgical functions, they may carry on the work of salvation through the eucharistic sacrifice and the sacraments."* (PDV57)

Authentic pastoral formation is collaborative in nature, ecumenically and multi-culturally sensitive, and alert to questions of social justice. Seminarians must be competent to care for Māori persons, using their own language and cultural practices.

Pastoral formation aims to fill the seminarian with the pastoral spirit that enables him to be an effective priest by knowing his people, personally visiting them in their homes, while fulfilling his special obligation to comfort those who are sick and bereaved and those with special needs or difficulties. (Canon 529 PDV 58)

One of the priest's most important tasks is to identify and call forth the charisms of his parishioners. Priests need to be able to encourage and support others in their apostolate and in Christianizing the world. The priest fully collaborates with other members of the parish team, the parish pastoral council and all those involved in various aspects of parish life. However, the priest is more than a coordinator and

director of operations. He is sacramentally ordained to be an icon of Christ the Good Shepherd. He personally *"makes present"* the Good Shepherd in a way that cannot be transferred to those who assist him in the parish.

He is ordained to be what he must constantly choose to be - a good shepherd - one who knows his people and allows them to know him. His presence is a symbol: it tells people they matter, as people matter to Christ. Like Jesus himself, the priest will have a special concern for the poor and marginalized. Because of the priest, people come to know that Christ is one for whom life-long commitment, personal sacrifice and faithfulness are all worthwhile.

It is also through his ministry that he grows in holiness, that his own vocation continues to be nurtured. In ministering to others, he is ministered to. By his life, he encourages other vocations to the priesthood.

## CONCLUSION

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God promised through the Prophet Jeremiah:

*"I shall give you shepherds after my own heart."* (Jeremiah 3:15)

Today, this promise of God is still living and at work in the Church. The formation of priests is crucial for the future of the Church in Aotearoa New Zealand. This document charts the work of formation in the seminary and guides seminary staff, vocations directors, theologate staff and pastoral placement supervisors in their work. It also invites the whole Church in Aotearoa New Zealand to pray and work tirelessly in the promotion of vocations and invites seminarians to pattern their lives on Christ the Lord as they conscientiously prepare to continue the mission of Jesus Christ.

## **O Mary,**

Mother of Jesus Christ and Mother of priests,  
accept this title which we bestow on you  
to celebrate your motherhood  
and to contemplate with you the priesthood  
of your Son and of your sons,  
O holy Mother of God.

O Mother of Christ,  
to the Messiah-priest you gave a body of flesh  
through the anointing of the Holy Spirit  
for the salvation of the poor and the contrite of heart;  
guard priests in your heart and in the Church,  
O Mother of the Saviour.

O Mother of Faith,  
you accompanied to the Temple the Son of Man,  
the fulfilment of the promises given to the fathers;  
give to the Father for his glory the priests of your Son,  
O Ark of the Covenant.

O Mother of the Church,  
in the midst of the disciples in the upper room  
you prayed to the Spirit  
for the new people and their shepherds;  
obtain for the Order of Presbyters  
a full measure of gifts,  
O Queen of the Apostles.

O Mother of Jesus Christ,  
you were with him at the beginning  
of his life and mission,  
you sought the Master among the crowd,  
you stood beside him when he was lifted up from the earth  
consumed as the one eternal sacrifice,  
and you had John, your son, near at hand;  
accept from the beginning those  
who have been called, protect their growth,  
in their life ministry accompany your sons,  
O Mother of Priests.  
Amen.

## ABBREVIATIONS

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<b>PDV</b>	Pastores Dabo Vobis - Pope John Paul II, 25 March 1992
<b>PPF</b>	Program of Priestly Formation (National Conference of Catholic Bishops USA), April 1993
<b>DIR</b>	Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests - Congregation for the Clergy, 31 January 1994
<b>PAST GUIDE</b>	Pastoral 'Guide' for Diocesan Priests in Churches Dependent on the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, October 1989
<b>PO</b> Council)	Decree on The Ministry and Life of Priests - (Second Vatican
<b>OT</b>	Decree on Priestly Formation - (Second Vatican Council)
<b>LG</b>	Dogmatic Constitution on the Church - (Second Vatican Council)
<b>SC</b>	Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy - (Second Vatican Council)
<b>NZCBC</b>	New Zealand Catholic Bishops' Conference

+Peter J Cullinane	Bishop of Palmerston North President
+Denis G Browne	Bishop of Hamilton Vice President
+John A Dew	Auxiliary Bishop of Wellington Secretary
+Leonard A Boyle	Bishop of Dunedin
+John J Cunneen	Bishop of Christchurch
+Owen J Dolan	Coadjutor Bishop of Palmerston North
+Patrick J Dunn	Bishop of Auckland
+Robin W Leamy SM	Emeritus Bishop of Rarotonga
+Max T Mariu SM	Auxiliary Bishop of Hamilton
+Thomas Cardinal Williams	Archbishop of Wellington

**April 1998**