



CONGREGATIO
DE INSTITUTIONE CATHOLICA
(DE SEMINARIIS ATQUE STUDIORUM INSTITUTIS)

**INSTRUMENTUM LABORIS FOR THE APOSTOLIC VISITATION OF THE SEMINARIES AND
HOUSES OF PRIESTLY FORMATION IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

PART A: INTRODUCTION

1. Nature and Purpose

(1) Following the request made at the meeting of the US Cardinals and Presidency of the USCCB with Pope John Paul II and the Roman Curia, in April 2002, the Congregations for Catholic Education, for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, for the Oriental Churches and for the Clergy – with the agreement of the Secretariat of State and with the assistance of the Congregations for the Doctrine of the Faith and for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments – have organized this Apostolic Visitation of the seminaries and houses of priestly formation in the United States of America.

(2) The Visit will examine the various elements of priestly formation in the United States. Particular attention will be reserved for the intellectual formation of seminarians, to examine its fidelity to the Magisterium, especially in the field of moral theology, in light of *Veritatis splendor*. Special attention will also be given to the criteria for admission of candidates, and to the programs of human and spiritual formation aimed at ensuring that they can faithfully live chastity for the Kingdom.

(3) The Visit is a service to the American Bishops, and the Holy See offers it to them as a help. It is aimed at ensuring that US seminaries and houses of priestly formation are functioning correctly, and that they are responding properly to present-day needs.

(4) By itself, an Apostolic Visitation can never discover, and even less address, all the various concerns of priestly formation. The primary responsibility for the correct

functioning of the US seminaries and houses of priestly formation belongs to the competent Ordinaries, be they Bishops or Major Superiors. In the words of Pope John Paul II's Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores gregis*, "each Bishop will show his concern above all by selecting with great care those charged with the training of future priests and by establishing the most suitable and appropriate means of preparing them to exercise their ministry in a setting so fundamental for the life of the Christian community. The Bishop will not fail to visit the seminary frequently, even when particular circumstances have caused him to join other Bishops in making the at times necessary and even preferable choice of an interdiocesan seminary. A genuine personal knowledge of the candidates for the priesthood in his particular Church is indispensable for the Bishop. On the basis of these direct contacts he will ensure that the seminaries form mature and balanced personalities, men capable of establishing sound human and pastoral relationships, knowledgeable in theology, solid in the spiritual life, and in love with the Church ... When the time comes to confer Holy Orders, each Bishop will carry out the necessary investigation" (n. 48). A religious Major Superior has an analogous responsibility for those members of his institute who are candidates for Holy Orders.

2. Procedure

(1) The Congregations for Catholic Education, for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, for the Oriental Churches and for the Clergy are charged with organizing the Apostolic Visitation. They have formulated this *Instrumentum laboris* which provides the guidelines for the Visit. They have also selected the Apostolic Visitors and will help prepare them by means of a meeting of all those engaged in this process. After having studied the Reports of the Visitors on the individual institutions, the appropriate Congregations will communicate their written observations and comments on the seminaries and houses of priestly formation to the respective Ordinaries (cf. [2.10] below). At the end of the Visitation, there will be a general letter, addressed to the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, which will present an assessment of current priestly formation in the USA.

(2) In addition to the Apostolic Visitors, all of whom are appointed by the Holy See, one Bishop has been appointed as the "Coordinator" of the Visit. His role entails the practical and logistical organization of the individual Visits: for example, he will schedule dates with those responsible for carrying out those Visits. The Coordinator will not accompany the Visitors on their Visits, nor will he receive a copy of the Visitors' Reports.

(3) The Episcopal Conference of the United States, for its part, has graciously agreed to offer every possible assistance so that the Visit will be fruitful. All costs of the Visit will be met by the Church in the US.

(4) Prior to each Visit, the Visitors will receive copies of the institution's catalogue, of the course syllabi, of its Rule of Life (cf. CIC can. 243²), a complete list of the faculty members³ and students (including details about their dioceses or religious communities of origin), and other relevant documentation.

(5) Before each Visit, the faculty and students will all receive a copy of this *Instrumentum laboris*, allowing them, prior to the Visitation proper, to express to the Visitors in writing, with signature, their opinions about the seminary or house of priestly formation.

(6) When the Visitors arrive at each seminary or house of priestly formation, they will present the Rector with their Decree of Appointment, which will then be displayed on the public notice-board, together with the schedule and program of the Visit. In every way, the Visitors will ensure that their Visit is understood as an ecclesial act, to be carried out in an atmosphere of fraternal communion. At the same time, they will underline the Visit's serious nature.

(7) Every Visit should normally last a *minimum* of four days. The Visitors will examine *all* aspects of priestly formation. They must speak in private interviews with *all* faculty members, *all* students and, where applicable, the members of the Board of Governors. Furthermore, each priest who has graduated from the institution in the previous three years is to be invited to a private interview with one of the Visitors. The Visitors may share the contents of the interviews solely with the rest of the Visitation team and with the Holy See.

(8) After the Visit, the Visitors will express no judgment to the local Superiors either in writing or orally. Instead, they will together draw up a Report - to be very specific and detailed - which will be sent exclusively to the Congregation for Catholic Education via the Apostolic Nunciature in Washington. All the Visitors must sign the Report. Should a Visitor not be satisfied with the content of the Report, he is morally obliged to inform the Congregation for Catholic Education in writing of his own opinion.

(9) All Visitors will be bound by strict confidentiality, *sub secreto pontificio*.

² "In addition, each seminary is to have its own rule, approved by the diocesan bishop, or, if it is an interdiocesan seminary, by the bishops involved, which is to adapt the norms of the program of priestly formation to particular circumstances and especially to determine more precisely the points of discipline which pertain to the daily life of the students and the order of the entire seminary."

³ For "faculty members", this *Instrumentum laboris* means both formation faculty members (cf. *Ratio fundamentalis institutionis seminarii*, 27-31, "de Moderantibus") and teaching faculty (ibid., 32-38, "de Professoribus"). For "formation faculty members", only the first group is intended.

(10) Upon receipt of the Visitors' Report, the appropriate Congregation will draft its written evaluation of the seminary or house of priestly formation. This draft text will then be forwarded to the US Bishop or Major Superior responsible for the institution in question. In this way, the local ecclesiastical authorities will have an opportunity to refute any strictly factual errors that the letter may contain. Any contention of a *point of fact* should be supported with evidence. *Points of judgement* cannot be impugned. At the end of the process, the official letter of the Congregation will be signed and delivered to the Bishop or Major Superior via the Apostolic Nunciature in Washington, D.C.

3. Reference Documents

The Visit will be guided in a special way by the documents of the Holy See which deal with priestly formation. A list of such documents, which is not to be considered exhaustive, is included as an appendix.

In a particular way, the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores dabo vobis* and the most recent edition of the American *Ratio nationalis institutionis sacerdotalis*, the "Program of Priestly Formation", will serve as guidelines for the Visit.

PART B: TOPICS TO BE ADDRESSED DURING THE APOSTOLIC VISITATION

The following questions are provided as a guide for the Visitors. In drawing up their Report for the Holy See, they should follow the eleven headings indicated below. A particular question need not be addressed if the Visitors deem it to be inapplicable, although some questions - as indicated in the text - must always be answered. Furthermore, the questions are not to be considered exhaustive. The Visitors are to use their judgement when carrying out the individual Visitations.

1. *The Concept of the Priesthood (cf. Program of Priestly Formation, 26-93¹)*

(1) Is the doctrine on the priesthood presented by the seminary⁴ solidly based on the Church's Magisterium? Do the faculty and seminarians accept this teaching? In particular, are the most significant documents on the priesthood known to the faculty members and seminarians? Is there a specific course on the priesthood?

(2) Is a sound understanding of the priesthood also taught in the other academic courses and reflected in the programs of spiritual and pastoral formation?

(3) In religious houses of priestly formation, how is the religious charism of the institute integrated with the priestly formation of the candidates?

2. *The Governance of the Seminary (cf. Program of Priestly Formation, 441-505)*

(1) How does the Bishop/Major Superior exercise effectively his authority over the seminary?

(2) Does the Bishop/Major Superior visit the seminary and his students frequently?

(3) What is your impression of the faculty members? How does the Rector exercise his authority (cf. CIC can. 239 § 1; *CCEO can. 338 § 1)? Do the faculty members receive due preparation before taking on their duties? Do the Rector and teachers make their profession of faith "*coram loci Ordinario eiusve delegato*", in accordance with CIC can. 833, 6⁶?

(4) Is there a spirit of harmony and ecclesial communion among the formation faculty members? Do they show a sincere *sentire cum Ecclesia*? Do they give a good example of priestly living?

(5) Do the formation faculty members have responsibilities outside the seminary, which detract from their primary duties?

¹ Throughout this *Instrumentum laboris*, the references to the "Program for Priestly Formation" are to the 4th edition. Should a 5th edition be approved in the meantime, it would be understood that acronyms and houses of formation would be afforded the time necessary to implement the norms in line with the Decree of Promulgation.

⁴ Throughout the rest of this *Instrumentum laboris*, the word "seminary" will be used to indicate both diocesan seminaries and religious houses of priestly formation. Likewise, the word "seminarians" will be used for both diocesan and religious candidates for the priesthood.

⁵ An asterisk (*) in this *Instrumentum laboris* indicates that the entry pertains especially to the Visitation of the Eastern-rite seminaries.

⁶ "The following are obliged personally to make a profession of faith according to the formula approved by the Apostolic See: ... 6/ in the presence of the local ordinary or his delegate and at the beginning of their function, pastors, the rector of a seminary, and teachers of theology and philosophy in seminaries; those to be promoted to the order of the diaconate."

(6) Is there an appropriate demarcation of the seminary area and program, so that it is clearly an institution set apart for the formation of candidates to the priesthood (cf. *Pastores dabo vobis*, 61)?

(7) Is there a clear process for removing from the seminary faculty members who dissent from the authoritative teaching of the Church or whose conduct does not provide good example to future priests?

3. Admission Policies (cf. *Program of Priestly Formation*, 506-528)

(1) Do diocesan candidates receive any prior formation before being admitted to seminary, namely in a propaedeutic period (cf. *Pastores dabo vobis*, 62)?

(2) What are the criteria for admission of candidates to the seminary? How does the seminary check whether the requirements of CIC can. 241 § 1 have been met? In particular, does the seminary examine the applicant for those human qualities requisite in candidates for Holy Orders (cf. *Pastores dabo vobis*, 43-44)?

(3) Is psychological testing employed in the admissions process? If so, give full details. (*This question must be answered.*)

(4) Are the prescriptions contained in CIC can. 241 § 3⁶, and the related 1996 *Instruction to the Episcopal Conferences on the Admission to Seminary of Candidates Coming from Other Seminaries or Religious Families* adhered to (cf. *Pastores gregis*, 48)?

(5) How do Bishops/Major Superiors check the background of candidates who come from other countries, particularly regarding whether they have previously been in a formation program?

(6) In your judgment, are there any deficiencies in the seminary's admission policies?

4. The Seminarists (cf. *Program of Priestly Formation*, *passim*, but especially 529-548.)

(1) What is your general impression of the seminarists?

(2) Do the seminarists or faculty members have concerns about the moral life of those living in the institution? (*This question must be answered.*)

⁶ "The diocesan bishop is to admit to the major seminary only those who are judged capable of dedicating themselves permanently to the sacred ministries in light of their human, moral, spiritual and intellectual characteristics, their physical and psychological health and their proper motivation."

⁷ "If it concerns admitting those who were dismissed from another seminary or religious institute, testimony of the respective superior is also required, especially concerning the cause for their dismissal or departure."

(3) Is there evidence of homosexuality in the seminary? (This question must be answered.)

5. Human Formation (cf. Program of Priestly Formation, 191-207, 304-310, 326-332)

(1) How is the human formation of the seminarians integrated within the program of priestly formation? How are the human qualities listed in *Pastores dabo vobis*, 43-44, encouraged in the life of the seminary?

(2) Do the seminarians show an aptitude for and dedication to intellectual work?

(3) Is there a clear Rule of Life in the seminary (cf. CIC can. 243) by means of which the seminarians are formed in the virtues of obedience, chastity, poverty and self-denial?

(4) Do the seminarians know how to use alcohol, the Internet, television, etc., with prudence and moderation?

(5) How does the seminary monitor the seminarians' behavior outside the seminary?

(6) How does the seminary ensure that the seminarians learn a spirit of responsibility during their formation?

(7) Is the seminarians' vacation time used properly, in a way that helps and fosters their vocation to the priesthood?

6. Spiritual Formation (cf. Program of Priestly Formation, 140-161, 215-233, 264-303, 311-325)

(1) Do all in the seminary understand "the theological motivation of the Church's law on celibacy" (*Pastores dabo vobis*, 29)? In the seminarians' spiritual formation, is emphasis given to fostering a specifically priestly spirituality?

(2) Are the Church's liturgical norms faithfully observed? Is there a balance between the liturgical life of the seminary and the private prayer of the seminarians? Does the seminary reflect a prayerful atmosphere?

(3) Do all in the seminary participate in Mass every day? Do they make visits to the Blessed Sacrament? Do they receive the Sacrament of Penance with due frequency? Is the Liturgy of the Hours celebrated daily?

(4) Are there scheduled times for meditation and spiritual reading? Does the seminary encourage devotion to Our Lady and the saints? In particular, does the

seminary encourage the recitation of the rosary? How often is there Eucharistic Adoration and Benediction? How often are there scheduled days of recollection and retreats? What other exercises of piety, such as the Stations of the Cross, does the seminary celebrate, and how often?

(5) What is the role of the Spiritual Director? Is there a sufficient number of Spiritual Directors for the seminarians? Do the seminarians meet their Spiritual Directors regularly? Is there a list of priests who are considered by the Bishop(s) as suitable for the role of Spiritual Director (cf. CIC can. 239 § 2⁹; *CCEO can. 339 § 1)?

(6) How does the seminary safeguard the clear distinction between internal forum and external forum? Are all due precautions taken to protect the inviolability of the internal forum?

(7) Does the seminary have both ordinary and extraordinary confessors (cf. CIC can. 240 § 1¹⁰). How often are there opportunities for confession?

(8) Does the seminary present a sound spirituality? Are the seminarians educated in the classical forms and writings of Christian spirituality? Is the seminary free from the influences of New Age and eclectic spirituality?

(9) How does the formation integrate harmoniously the spiritual dimension with the human one, above all in the area of celibate chastity?

(10) How does the seminary foster "affective maturity" (*Pastores dabo vobis*, 44)? How are the seminarians formed to celibate chastity in the areas of friendships, human relationships, human freedom and the formation of the moral conscience? Do the formation faculty members watch out for signs of "particular friendships"?

(11) In the judgment of the Visitors, does the seminary provide adequate formation that will enable the seminarians to live celibate chastity? (*This question must be answered.*)

7. Intellectual Formation (cf. *Program of Priestly Formation*, 162-179, 234-241, 333-396)

The US system of intellectual priestly formation, with philosophy and theology often taught in different institutions, means that the Visitors will have to adapt the following questions to the particular situation of the individual seminary visited.

⁹ "Every seminary is to have at least one spiritual director, though the students remain free to approach other priests who have been designated for this function by the bishop."

¹⁰ "In addition to ordinary confessors, other confessors are to come regularly to the seminary. Without prejudice to the discipline of the seminary, students are always free to approach any confessor, whether in the seminary or outside it."

Presumably, for the College seminarians the answers will address studies in philosophy and the humanities, while for the Theologates the Visitation will deal with theology. The Visitors will want to study the relevant documents of the Holy See, as presented in A.3.

(1) Are all philosophical/theological tracts adequately taught, both as regards the time dedicated to them and in the scope of material covered? Do you notice any lacunae in the program of studies?

(2) Are the seminarians capable of dialoguing, on the intellectual level, with contemporary society? Do their studies help them to respond to contemporary subjectivism and, in particular, to moral relativism? (*This question must be answered.*)

(3) Do the seminarians receive a substantially complete and coherent grounding in Catholic dogmatic and moral theology? Is attention given to the unity of theological studies? Are the seminarians taught to love and be faithful to the Tradition and Magisterium of the Church? How are the seminarians helped to integrate their theological studies with their spiritual life?

(4) Is the moral doctrine taught in conformity with the documents of the Holy See – in particular the Encyclical Letters *Humanae vitae* (1968), *Veritatis splendor* (1993) and *Evangelium vitae* (1995); the Declaration *Persona humana* (1975); and the Circular Letter of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith *The Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons* (1986)?

(5) Are the text-books in conformity with Church teaching?

(6) Are the teachers academically prepared¹¹ and doctrinally sound?

8. Pastoral Formation (cf. *Program of Priestly Formation*, 180-190, 242-247, 397-440)

(1) Is pastoral theology taught? By whom?

(2) Where clerical pastoral experiences exist, is the "Catholic, sacramental dimension of pastoral care ... integral to all such programs in which seminarians participate" (*Program of Priestly Formation*, 428)?

(3) Who is responsible for the pastoral experiences of the seminarians? How are the seminarians' pastoral experiences evaluated?

¹¹ This includes having a doctorate, or at least a licentiate, which is recognized by the Holy See (cf. CIC can. 253 § 1; *Ordinationes Sane Congregantis pro Institutione Catholica ad Constitutiones Apostolicas et Epistolae Christianae rite occupandas*, ca. 7 § 1 (1979)).

(4) Do the seminarians show apostolic zeal?

(5) Do the seminarians have a "Catholic spirit" – an awareness and appreciation of the Universal Church beyond the borders of their diocese or religious congregation (cf. *Presbyterorum ordinis*, 10)?

(6) Does the institution teach a proper understanding of the role of women in ecclesial life? Do they understand the proper models of clergy-lay cooperation? Are the faculty and students familiar with the documents of the Magisterium on such issues¹²?

9. Promotion to Holy Orders

(1) Are candidates for Holy Orders scrutinized in accordance with CIC can. 1024-1052¹³

(2) What means are used to ensure that the candidates truly satisfy the canonical requirements? Is doubt about a candidate's suitability for Orders always resolved in favor of the Church (cf. CIC can. 1052 § 3¹⁴)?

(3) In particular, does the seminary check for the presence of impediments or irregularities for Holy Orders (cf. CIC can. 1040-1049; "CCEO can. 762-768), especially in the case of late vocations? (This question must receive a full and detailed answer.)

(4) Do candidates for Holy Orders always complete the prescribed course of studies before ordination (cf. CIC can. 1032 § 1¹⁵)?

(5) Are the *interstitia* between the ministry of acolyte and the ordination to the diaconate (cf. CIC can. 1035 § 2¹⁶) and between diaconate and priesthood (cf. CIC can. 1031 § 1¹⁷) observed?

¹² E.g. the Apostolic Letter *Adhuc Augustinus* (1988), the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles laici* (1988), the Interdicasterial Instruction *Eccliae de mysterio*, On Certain Questions Regarding the Collaboration of the Non-Ordained Faithful in the Sacred Ministry of Priests (1997), the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith's "Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Collaboration of Men and Women in the Church and in the World" (2004).

¹³ Cf. Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, "Circular Letter to the Most Reverend Diocesan Bishops and other Ordinaries with canonical faculties to admit to Sacred Orders concerning Scrutinies regarding the Suitability of Candidates for Orders" (1997)

¹⁴ "If, all these notwithstanding, the bishop doubts for specific reasons whether a candidate is suitable to receive orders, he is not to promote him."

¹⁵ "Those applying to the presbyterate can be promoted to the diaconate only after they have completed the fifth year of the curriculum of philosophical and theological studies."

¹⁶ "There is to be an interval of at least six months between the conferral of the ministry of acolyte and the diaconate."

10. *Services of the Seminary to the Newly Ordained* (cf. *Program of Priestly Formation, 549-572*)

Does the seminary assist in the on-going formation of recently ordained priests (cf. *Pastores dabo vobis, 79*)? How?

11. *Other Concerns*

The Visitors will indicate to the Holy See any other concerns that they may have about the formation program of the seminary.

¹⁷ "The presbyterate is not to be conferred except on those who have completed the twenty-fifth year of age and possess sufficient maturity; an interval of at least six months is to be observed between the diaconate and the presbyterate. Those destined to the presbyterate are to be admitted to the order of diacon only after completing the twenty-third year of age."