



Archdiocese
of Vancouver

DIRECTORY FOR THE FORMATION OF SEMINARIANS

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Directory for the Formation of Seminarians

A. Introduction

The [Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Vancouver](#) (RCAV) is the metropolitan archdiocese in British Columbia. It began as the Apostolic Vicariate of British Columbia in 1863 and became an archdiocese in September 1908 when it was established by Pope St. Pius X, with Archbishop Augustin Dontenwill, OMI as the first Archbishop.

Seminarians have been training for the priesthood in the Archdiocese of Vancouver since that time.

Archbishop William Mark Duke founded the [Seminary of Christ the King](#) (SCK) in 1932 as an archdiocesan seminary; the Seminary was entrusted to the Benedictines in 1939. The Archdiocese of Vancouver and Westminster Priory signed a contract formalizing this in 1948. The theology program began at SCK in 1951, and it was the general practice to send archdiocesan seminarians to SCK for all their studies until 1970, when Archbishop Carney decided to send seminarians to St. Peter's Seminary and the Pontifical Beda College in Rome. Since signing an agreement with Westminster Abbey on June 29, 2017, the Archdiocese has primarily sent men to live, be formed, and study at SCK in Mission. If the situation warrants it, the Archbishop may decide to send a man elsewhere for all or part of his seminary formation.

In 2013, the [Archdiocesan Missionary Seminary *Redemptoris Mater*](#) (RMS) of Vancouver was established. This missionary seminary provides priests who will serve not only for the Archdiocese of Vancouver, but also for the evangelization of Asia. The *Redemptoris Mater* seminaries were born as a fruit of the Neocatechumenal Way, and all their vocations come from members of its communities. RMS seminarians live at and are formed at this Seminary, under the supervision of its Rector, while receiving their academic training at SCK.

All seminarians referred to in this Directory are seminarians for the Archdiocese of Vancouver – whether their vocation arises from within the local Church or from the Neocatechumenal Way. Sometimes distinctions will be made; for the sake of clarity in these cases, the seminarians will be referred to as RCAV seminarians or as RMS seminarians.

B. Discernment of the Call: Application Process

Discerning a vocation to the presbyterate requires prayer, dialogue and evaluation. The discernment process involves the candidate, his parish community, his formators, and the Archbishop. With their assistance, the Archbishop examines each individual's suitability

using objective criteria that rely on the Church's Tradition and recognize the particular pastoral needs of the Archdiocese.¹

1. General Requirements

By the time of ordination to the diaconate, candidates should demonstrate the human qualities necessary for service to the Church as men of communion. Among these are psychological maturity, absence of any significant compulsions or addictions, a capacity for dialogue and communication, an ability to work collaboratively, a sense of responsibility, industriousness, psychological balance, prudence, and a capacity to lead, motivate and animate others.

An applicant should also be:

- a practicing Catholic living a deep spiritual life, as evidenced by
 - attendance at Mass more than weekly
 - frequent reception of the Sacrament of Penance
 - participation in activities such as retreats, days of reflection, spiritual direction, study of Scripture
- of good moral character and reputation
- living celibately
- involved very actively in his parish or in an ecclesial movement;

Applicants must be sufficiently fluent in oral and written English, so that they can participate successfully in the academic program and, once they are ordained, preach understandably. They may be requested to complete an assessment of written and spoken language skills.

Costs of the formation program are borne by the Archdiocese of Vancouver, or by the seminarian, depending on the stage of formation, location of the seminary he is attending, and whether he is a RMS seminarian. The policy is based on the premise that seminarians should contribute to the costs of their education, and that the Archdiocese is willing to help those in need of financial assistance.²

2. Requirements Related to State of Life

a. Single men

Those who wish to become priests must be living as chaste celibates and must understand and accept the Church's discipline regarding perpetual celibacy after ordination (cf. Code of Canon Law, c. 1037).

¹ Canon 1029 of the 1983 Code of Canon Law gives juridical expression to the qualities of those who are to be ordained: "Only those are to be promoted to orders who ... have sound faith, are motivated by the right intention, are endowed with the requisite knowledge, enjoy a good reputation, and have moral probity, proven virtue, and the other physical and psychological qualities appropriate to the order to be received."

² RCAF's Policy on Financial Assistance for Seminarians and Those Ordained to the Transitional Diaconate is available upon request from the Vocations and Seminarians Office.



b. Men who are widowers

A precondition for accepting widowed candidates is that they have already provided for, or can adequately provide for, the human and Catholic upbringing of their children. They should also be living as chaste celibates, and must understand and accept the Church's discipline that they cannot remarry after ordination. The same precondition is to be met by men whose marriages have been annulled.

3. Requirements Related to Age / Experience in the Faith / Cultural Experience

Men who have completed high school are eligible to apply to pre-theology to undertake philosophy studies at the undergraduate level. If a minor, there are times when the permission of the man's parents will also be required (i.e. medical examination, canonical impediments, etc.).

Those who have recently been baptized Catholic or entered into full communion with the Catholic Church must have at least three years after Baptism or full communion before entering the seminary.

4. Applicants from Outside the Archdiocese of Vancouver

While candidates from outside the Archdiocese can be accepted, there are significant challenges in this regard. Applicants are asked to arrange their own immigration and travel to Vancouver and reside in the Archdiocese for at least two years prior to applying to the seminary. This enables candidates from outside the Archdiocese to become acculturated to the local social and ecclesial setting.

These requirements do not apply to applicants for the RMS due to the unique missionary nature of their structure.

a. RMS Seminarians

The RMS is an international seminary. All candidates are available to be sent to any RMS in the world. Those sent to Vancouver are selected by the international team of the Neocatechumenal Way which, after diligent scrutiny, determines their readiness to enter the seminary.

5. Initial Period of Discernment

The first step in discerning a vocation to the priesthood is a period of private prayer and discernment, followed by eventual contact with the Archdiocesan [Vocations and Seminarians Office](#).

a. For men wishing to study for the Archdiocese of Vancouver

A man who feels called to the diocesan priesthood meets initially with the Director of Vocations and Seminarians (Director) or the Assistant Director. They will meet regularly over some months. The discernor may be asked to meet with a counselor. Active participation in the ongoing diocesan priesthood discernment group is generally expected at this stage. There are two types of accompaniment: individual and together with other discerners. During this period, the man will be expected to



demonstrate the proactive initiative to meet regularly with a spiritual director. To journey forward without any clear pastoral connection is unacceptable.

At some point, the man will be encouraged or discouraged from proceeding to the formal application process. Should the Director need to discourage someone from proceeding, he will consult with the Vocations Team and, if prudent to do so, also with the [Vocations Advisory Committee](#). If the man chooses to apply and he is refused or deferred and invited to reapply after a period of time, he will be informed of the reasons for the refusal in writing, and a copy of the letter will be kept in his file.

b. For men wishing to enter RMS

Discerners will approach the catechist of their Neocatechumenal Way community about entering the seminary. After a time of discernment in a vocational group, prospective seminarians will be encouraged to attend a retreat, after which they may be assigned to any of the *Redemptoris Mater* seminaries around the world. If a man is sent to Vancouver by the Neocatechumenal Way, he is considered accepted for admission and will enter the RMS here. RMS processes the necessary immigration papers required for the candidate to enter Canada. Once in Vancouver, he must provide, within a six-month period, documentation to complete “all that is required for admission as a seminarian for the Archdiocese of Vancouver.” (Rule of Life, RMS (2021), A.2.)

c. Formal application process

i. For men wishing to study for the RCAF

Should the man be encouraged to begin the formal application process, he will be required to complete the following³:

- A formal, scripted interview with the Director of Vocations and Seminarians
- A review of the canonical impediments
- An autobiography, which includes:
 - family background, significant childhood and youth experiences, educational interests, religious practices and attitudes, character strengths and weaknesses, reasons for considering the priesthood, so as to give an accurate picture of the candidate’s readiness for seminary life;
 - Employment history with dates and places of employment along with phone numbers, email contact and addresses of employers.
- Documents to be submitted:
 - Baptismal certificate

³ Cf. [Seminary Admission Requirements](#).



- Confirmation certificate
- Academic transcripts from all previous high schools, universities, or other postsecondary institutions or seminaries
- Letter of reference from pastor
- Letter of reference from employer
- Letter of reference from someone not a family member
- Government ID – if applicant is not Canadian, a copy of documents permitting applicant's entry into Canada
- Digital photo that clearly shows the face
- Others, if applicable:
 - If the applicant has been a seminarian elsewhere, the applicant should ask the rector to forward "his file" to the Director
 - If the applicant has been a postulant, novice or professed member of a religious institute, he must ask the superior to forward the a letter of reference and any evaluations to the Director

Once these have been submitted, the applicant will be asked to arrange for the following, the costs for which will be paid by the Vocations and Seminarians Office:

- A medical evaluation by a competent physician (according to questions provided by the Vocations and Seminarians Office)
- A psychological assessment by a designated psychologist, carried out with the applicant's free, explicit and informed written consent
- Police record check from countries where the applicant has lived for more than a year

Applicants to seminary should, at an early stage, be advised of their rights regarding privacy, confidentiality, and freedom of information. This includes being informed of laws and policies related to storage, access, and protection of their personal information Protocols adhering to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA). They should also be made aware of the RCAF's [Policy on Pastoral Conduct for Priests and Deacons Engaged in Ministry](#), [Safe Environment Policy for Archdiocesan and Parish Employees](#), and the [Safe Environment Policy for Archdiocesan and Parish Volunteers](#). Applicants should also be informed of their rights and the special care the Church has for keeping them safe from boundary violations during their seminary formation. This should include identifying the safe environment contact person they can inform of any concerns about boundary violations they may experience; for example, the [Safe Environment policies](#) at SCK.

When the above steps of the application process have been completed, the man will meet with three members of the [Vocations Interview Committee](#), who will provide their written assessments to the Director. The Director will



review everything and provide his assessment to the Vocations Advisory Committee which will vote and make a recommendation to the Archbishop.

Three kinds of recommendation may be made to the Archbishop: (a) immediate acceptance, (b) deferral or (c) refusal. The final decision regarding whether to accept a man as a seminarian is made by the Archbishop. He conveys his decision to the applicant by letter, and a copy of this letter will be kept in the applicant's file.⁴

On occasion, the Vocations Advisory Committee and the Archbishop may choose to "conditionally accept" a candidate for seminary. In this case the conditions of acceptance should be conveyed to the applicant in writing. This letter should include the expectation that progress in these identified areas or conditions be assessed at a subsequent point.

Once he has been accepted, the seminarian will sign a Seminarian's Agreement, which is included in the [Policy on Pastoral Conduct for Seminarians Engaged in Ministry](#).

There are two distinct acceptances: the Archbishop's decision to accept a man as a seminarian, and, later, that seminarian's acceptance into a specific seminary.

ii. For men wishing to enter RMS

In addition to completing the application process for the Archdiocese of Vancouver, RMS also requires the candidate:

- to obtain a police record check from the country where the candidate is from (cf. RMS Statutes (2015), II.6) as well as from any other countries where he has lived for more than one year
- to become proficient in English during his seminary studies (cf. RMS Statutes (2015), II.8)

The application process to become a seminarian of the Archdiocese of Vancouver begins once the man enters the Seminary. Once a man has been accepted as a seminarian for the Archdiocese of Vancouver, the RMS Vice-Rector will "carry out the procedures for admission and are responsible for relations with the Archdiocesan Seminary of Christ the King" (cf. RMS Rule of Life (2021), E.28).

⁴ Documents submitted by those not admitted to the program will be retained for ten years, after which they will be destroyed.



6. Stages of Formation⁵

Seminary formation takes place in a gradual process over many years. As a seminarian moves from one stage to the next, the expectations of increased thresholds of human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral development must be met. These will be outlined in this Directory.

In each of the stages, the seminarian will be evaluated in his human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral development. In order to move from one stage to the next, the applicant will need to have met the minimum threshold.⁶ The stages are:

- Propaedeutic, which includes the spirituality year
- Discipleship, which includes pre-theology, Arts (philosophy)
- Configuration, which includes theology, and can also include summer internships and/or a pastoral year
- Vocational synthesis

A man interested in studying for the priesthood begins as an inquirer. Once he applies and is accepted as a seminarian, he then enters the three main stages of formation, followed by the vocational synthesis stage. His application information follows him through the different stages.⁷

a. Propaedeutic stage, which includes the spirituality year

i. RCAF seminarians

Once an application has been accepted, the Director of Vocations and Seminarians will forward the complete application packet to the seminary designated by the Archbishop for RCAF seminarians to attend the spirituality year. Once this year is completed, the Rector of the particular seminary will forward the files and evaluations to the Archbishop of Vancouver and the SCK Rector for evaluation and approval. There may be some additional requirements that he must complete: for example, at SCK he will have to provide:

- English Proficiency Certificate (for ESL students)
- Student Enrolment Agreement

ii. RMS seminarians

RMS seminarians are excused from participating in the spirituality year. They begin their formation in Vancouver with the requirement of the propaedeutic year having already been met through the formation received in their

⁵ Cf. RCAF's policy on [Priestly Formation](#) which outlines this process more fully.

⁶ See USCCB, [Program for Priestly Formation](#), Sixth Edition (2022), nn. 59-61.

⁷ The stages are described more fully in section D below.



Neocatechumenal community and through the vocational centres in their country of origin.

7. Four Dimensions of Priestly Formation

The four dimensions of priestly formation are: human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral. These four aspects address the formation of the whole person.⁸

While the fundamental human traits required for ministry must already be present in the candidates, the seminary program fosters their ongoing maturity and capacity to collaborate with others as servant leaders. Formation for the priesthood is both grounded in the nature of priestly ministry and adapted to the pastoral needs of the Archdiocese of Vancouver. Priests must serve the multicultural and multiethnic population of the local Church. The formation program recognizes this diversity and respects and values the cultures and traditions of the candidates, including the contributions of Indigenous Peoples.

a. RCAF seminarians

To support the four aspects of formation, life at SCK includes:

- Daily Mass
- Liturgy of the Hours (prayer in common with community)
- Daily meditation
- Scriptural reading (15 minutes / day)
- Spiritual reading (30 minutes / day)
- Personal examination of conscience (every evening)
- Having a spiritual director
- Sacrament of Reconciliation (encouragement of biweekly confession)
- Keeping silence (especially 9 pm until breakfast)
- Twice a week a group sports activity
- Daily community time (from supper until 7:15 pm – obligatory)
- Apostolic work⁹
- Home weekend once a month

b. RMS seminarians

Men attending RMS receive their intellectual/academic formation at SCK. The other formational aspects of their life take place at RMS, where life includes (cf. RMS Rule of Life (2021), B.11, 16, 17):

- Daily Mass
- Morning and evening prayer

⁸ Cf. St. John Paul II, Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (25 March 1992), nn. 43-59; CCCB, Program for Priestly Formation (2022), nn. 108-166.

⁹ Cf. [Policy on Pastoral Conduct for Seminarians Engaged in Ministry](#).



- Daily rosary
- Regular meditation on Sacred Scripture (*Scrutatio*)
- Daily personal prayer
- Full day of spiritual retreat each month
- Sacrament of Reconciliation (every 3 weeks)
- Frequent spiritual direction
- Frequent Eucharistic adoration
- Spiritual theology class by Seminary's spiritual director once a week
- Two years of missionary experience (itinerancy)
- Apostolic / pastoral work in parishes
- Regular interactions with their Neocatechumenal communities

Furthermore, RMS aims to form priests incardinated in the Archdiocese with a special missionary charism. They are formed to foster the new evangelization through the Neocatechumenal Way and can be sent as missionaries anywhere in the world. The RMS in Vancouver is established particularly for the evangelization of Asia. The candidates' formation at RMS reflects the fostering of this special charism.

c. Human dimension

The *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis* (8 December 2016) (*RFIS*), published by the Holy See, and the CCCB's Program for Priestly Formation for English-Speaking Canada (26 July 2022) (PPF) highlight the significance of the human dimension of priestly formation. Since the "proclamation of the Gospel takes place through the human person and is mediated through his humanity" the fostering of affective and human maturity is a focus of this dimension of seminary formation (PPF, n.112). For this reason, the PPF encourages a continuity between the psychological assessment at time of admission and the seminarian's personal program for human growth during his formation (cf. PPF, n.118). The Archdiocese of Vancouver encourages seminarians to take advantage of resources offered to assist in this process including the growth counseling made available in the seminary. This growth counseling is distinct from the kind of in-depth long-term psychotherapy that, when determined necessary, is best engaged with prior to or outside seminary formation. The Archdiocese has a policy in place to provide for any costs related to seminarians accessing this growth counseling.¹⁰

Particular attention should be paid to an awareness of a healthy priestly identity, the danger of a culture of clericalism, the importance of the role of women and laity in the Church's life (cf. PPF, n.115), and engaging ongoing tools to assess one's progress in human formation.

¹⁰ The RCAV's Guidelines on Seminarians Seeking Psychotherapy is available upon request from the Vocations and Seminarians Office.



i. RCAF seminarians

According to the PPF: “Human development aims at developing within the candidate for Holy Orders a growing inner freedom, an appropriate level of maturity, and a capacity for healthy relationships fitting for priestly life and ministry” (n.112). It continues: “self-awareness and the integration of various facets of personal identity, the candidate grows toward greater human maturity” (n.113). The human dimension includes “integration among the following areas: physical, psychological, moral, aesthetic, and social” (n.114).

At the root of the necessary capacity to relate to others is affective maturity, which must be evident in every candidate with a high degree of certainty. He must therefore demonstrate a mature sexuality and a willingness to grow in the virtue of chastity as it applies to his state of life.¹¹ Likewise, a candidate must show clear signs of developing interior freedom and an authentic moral conscience.

ii. RMS seminarians

The human formation of the seminarians is grounded in the Neocatechumenal communities, which aim at forming Christians with an adult faith. This involves a journey that aims at holiness and configuration to Christ. It is of paramount importance that the RMS seminarians take part in their Neocatechumenal community where this formation is given.

The development of interior freedom, of an appropriate level of maturity, and of a healthy relationship with God and neighbor (cf. PPF, n.112) are qualities that are achieved in the catechumenal journey. In the same way, the development of humility, courage, common sense, magnanimity, right judgement, discretion, tolerance, transparency, love of truth, and honesty (cf. PPF, n.113), are qualities and fruits of the spiritual journey undertaken in the Neocatechumenal community.

The formators are responsible for ensuring that the seminarians live and make progress in this Neocatechumenal formation which is also carried out at RMS.

d. Spiritual Dimension

i. RCAF seminarians

Spiritual formation is accomplished through the prayer life in the seminary, among which are found: prolonged and silent prayer, daily reading and meditation of Scripture, silence and solitude, the daily celebration of the Eucharist, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, the Liturgy of the Hours, the

¹¹ Cf. [Policy on Pastoral Conduct for Seminarians Engaged in Ministry](#), which highlights standards of behaviour.



regular practice of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, the daily examination of conscience, regular days or weekends of recollection, and annual retreats.

As the PPF counsels, “Each seminarian is to choose his [Spiritual] Director with complete freedom from the Priests designated by the Bishop for this ministry” (n.129) with whom the seminarian meets at least every two weeks. It is recommended – but not required – that the spiritual director is also the seminarian’s regular confessor (cf. PPF, n.129). At the beginning of each academic year the seminarians are provided a list of approved spiritual directors, both monastic and diocesan priests, from whom they can select their spiritual director. Special requests of directors not on this list will be determined on a case-by-case basis by the SCK Rector.

The PPF also states: “Seminary formators have a vital responsibility to train seminarians in mature obedience so that they may grow in the ability to give their assent within the context of priestly life” (n.133).

The seminary also forms men in a spirit of simplicity of life and self-sacrifice (cf. PPF, nn.134; 144-147), in celibacy (nn.136-140), and in apostolic obedience (nn.141-143).

ii. RMS seminarians

Spiritual formation is directed at nourishing and sustaining communion with God and with our brothers and sisters. [...] This intimate relationship forms the heart of the seminarian in that generous and sacrificial love that marks the beginning of pastoral charity. The heart of spiritual formation is personal union with Christ, which is born of, and nourished in, a particular way by prolonged and silent prayer. By prayer, listening to the Word, devout participation in the sacraments, in the liturgy and in community life, the seminarian fortifies his personal union with God after the example of Christ. (*RFIS*, nn.101-102.)

The purpose of the daily proclamation of the Word of God during the liturgies is not to learn the Scripture passage by heart, to be acquainted with stories of Scripture, or to master special skills of exegesis, but to establish a real interior dialogue with Christ. The goal is an encounter with Christ who speaks through his Word in the concrete history of the seminarian.

Spiritual formation at RMS follows this order: first, the rediscovery of the liturgy, in particular the Eucharistic liturgy, source and summit of Christian life,¹² which is the fulcrum of the Neocatechumenal path; and second, the active participation of the assembly.

¹² Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 10.



The Christian community is a constitutive, essential and determining aspect of the Neocatechumenal Way, and thus also of the seminary. Each seminarian belongs to his own Neocatechumenal community based in a parish. The seminary community is temporary, transitory. The Neocatechumenal community to which every seminarian belongs is permanent, the rock for him to lean on in times of difficulty.

e. Intellectual dimension

i. RCAF seminarians

Candidates will study both philosophy and theology (cf. PPF, n.148). Their “comprehensive and extensive education... must be pastorally oriented, sensitive to ecumenical and interreligious realities, and responsive to the individual seminarian” (PPF, n.149; cf. n.202).

Over a minimum period of six years, candidates follow a comprehensive program of philosophical and theological formation, which is entrusted to the SCK. There the candidates will do philosophical studies and complete a Bachelor of Arts (BA), followed by theological studies to complete the Master of Divinity (MDiv).

ii. RMS seminarians

The academic formation of the RMS seminarians takes place at SCK.

f. Pastoral dimension

i. RCAF seminarians

Pastoral formation relates the human, spiritual and theological training to the practical demands of the priest’s ministry. Preparation is required for preaching, service at the altar, celebration of the Sacraments, engagement with works of charity and justice, and the skills needed to guide small communities, movements and volunteers. Specific subjects such as psychology, teaching methods, sacred music, ecclesial administration, information technology, and so on may also form part of the curriculum.

The PPF affirms: “the whole program must be permeated by a pastoral spirit ... The meaning of the Priest as shepherd ... includes a deep sense of communion and cooperation with laity, Permanent Deacons, consecrated men and women, fellow Priests, and the Bishop” (n.151.1).

In order to help the seminarian develop a pastoral disposition of openness and attentive accompaniment, he is to take specific Pastoral Theology courses as part of the formation curriculum. In addition, the supervised pastoral placement, as part of the pastoral dimension of formation, offers participation in apostolic activities; these involve pastoral placements, the pastoral year, and the Vocational Synthesis stage. (PPF, n.152.)



A coordinator of pastoral formation is responsible for the placement, ongoing support and evaluation of each seminarian's pastoral formation experience throughout his various stages of formation (cf. PPF n.190). This coordinator assists the SCK Rector and the Director of Vocations and Seminarians in ensuring a well-rounded and individually tailored program of pastoral formation.

Seminarians must be prepared for "collaborative ministry at all levels" and for "the call for the Church to shift from a maintenance mode to a missionary-evangelization mode" (PPF, n.154).

During their formation, seminarians are to take part in "apostolic activities" (cf. PPF, nn.157-159). The culmination of their preparation takes place during the pastoral year (configuration stage) when "the Bishop selects the Pastor who can make the apostolic activity of the seminarian truly profitable by supervision and direction" (PPF, n.160). This pastoral year "enables the seminarian to learn and discern through observation, participation, theological reflection, and evaluation" (PPF, n.160).

ii. RMS seminarians

Pastoral formation takes place at different levels. Every seminarian is asked to engage, possibly every year, in the initial catechesis of the Neocatechumenal Way taking place in archdiocesan parishes. This catechesis is an intense pastoral and theological experience that lasts for two consecutive months. In addition, twice a week every seminarian attends the Liturgies with his own community.

Usually, between the study of philosophy and theology, the seminarians experience two years of itinerancy. This is a time of mission when they can be sent anywhere and can experience all levels of collaborative ministry.

During the summer, the seminarians have an opportunity to engage in pastoral work, usually outside the Archdiocese. The theologians engage in the summer parish placements arranged by the Archdiocese after their second and fourth year of theology.

C. Agents of Formation

Those engaged in the formation of future priests include "the Bishop, the seminarian, the presbyterate, Seminary formators, administrative personnel, professors, specialists, families, and laity" (PPF, n.168).

1. Archbishop

The Archbishop oversees the entire formation process of his priests (cf. PPF, n.169). He is to show great care for the discernment and formation of the candidates, for whom he is ultimately responsible. "By frequently visiting the Seminary and inviting seminarians



to diocesan celebrations, the Bishop manifests his closeness to and support of the seminarians" (PPF, n.170).

2. Seminarian

The seminarian is responsible for collaborating with all agents of formation in his ongoing growth. He "must grow in awareness that the principal agent of his formation is the Holy Spirit" (PPF, n.173). The seminarian owes "obedience to [his] Bishop and formators who are appointed to assist and accompany him in the various stages of formation" (PPF, n.173). The seminarian is also to proactively be his brothers' keeper at the seminary, journeying forward with them in a collaborative way. The cohesiveness of the seminary brotherhood is of the utmost importance. This level of relating and being united is then to be further developed in the presbyterate.

3. Presbyterate

"Priests of the local Diocese support the seminarians through their prayers as well as by visiting the Seminary and inviting seminarians to parish celebrations" (PPF, n.179). Opportunities for seminarian involvement in diocesan and parish life are encouraged throughout their formation.

4. Director of Vocations and Seminarians

The Director, who must be a priest, is appointed by the Archbishop.

The Director's duties include

to oversee all efforts involving the recruitment of diocesan vocations for men within the Archdiocese of Vancouver. The Director is responsible for implementing the vision for the Vocations and Seminarians Office, promoting a culture of vocations, accompanying discerners in their discernment for the priesthood, and forming seminarians. For seminarians enrolled in the Archdiocesan Missionary Seminary Redemptoris Mater, the Director collaborates with the Rector of the RMS according to its statutes.¹³

5. Community of Formators

"The members of the Formation Team ... have the responsibility as a team, presided over by the Rector, to recommend candidates to their Bishops after a serious accompaniment and a thorough examination of their suitability for priestly ministry" (PPF, n.184). Wherever possible, it is desirable that diocesan priests be part of this community of formators alongside the monastic faculty at SCK.

6. Teaching Faculty

The specific ministerial needs of the Archdiocese and the personal capabilities of the seminarians determine the most suitable academic program and its mode of delivery.

¹³ Summary of Responsibilities, Director of Vocations and Seminarians Ministry Description (June 29, 2023).



The Archbishop is responsible for approving those who will teach seminarians, and for deciding how and where the theological formation of candidates takes place. All teachers of theology and related disciplines must receive the *mandatum* given by the Archbishop.

7. Spiritual Director

Each seminarian must choose a priest as a spiritual director. The spiritual director helps to discern the working of the Holy Spirit in the seminarian's soul and accompanies his process of ongoing conversion. The spiritual director also makes practical suggestions which will foster an authentic priestly spirituality.

The spiritual director fulfills his responsibility in the internal forum. This relationship is completely confidential and does not enter into a seminarian's formal evaluation. Available seminary spiritual directors are approved by the Rector of each seminary and the Archbishop of Vancouver. The onus is on the seminarian to treat this vital relationship as a priority.

D. Stages of Formation

Although there are distinct stages of formation from inquiry through to ordination, those who are ordained must recognize that formation is lifelong in all aspects – “humanly, spiritually, intellectually, and pastorally” – so that the priest can continue to grow “into the likeness of Christ” (PPF, n.77).

1. Propaedeutic Stage: Spirituality Year

The propaedeutic stage is “a real time of vocational discernment, undertaken within community life, and a ‘start’ to the following stages of initial formation” (*RFIS*, n.60). This is a “a program distinct from that of the Major Seminary” which “should have its own house” (PPF, n.80, citing *RFIS*, n.60), and which should have its own director and formators. This stage lasts for one year (ten months).

The focus of this stage is to “provide a solid basis for the spiritual life and to nurture a greater self-awareness for personal growth.’ Seminarians begin to deepen their spiritual life through instruction on various ways of prayer and more fruitful participation in the Church’s Sacraments... instruction on and celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours, teaching on the Word of God... practice of periodic times or days of silence, disciplined use of communications and social media platforms ... mental prayer, and spiritual reading... ‘overall familiarity with Christian doctrine by studying the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and by developing the dynamic self-giving through experiences in the parish setting and charitable works” (PPF, n.82, citing *RFIS*, n.59).

The studies for the spirituality year are “supportive of the integral goal of this stage, that is, the foundation of a sustaining spiritual life and a growth in self-awareness.” Usually courses “of a non-credit status” are taken in the following areas:



- Reading Scripture within the context of its central role in the life and spirituality of a seminarian
- Principles and forms of the liturgy of the Church, especially the Mass, the Liturgy of the Hours, and the Sacraments
- Study of the Catechism of the Catholic Church
- Introduction to the documents of the Second Vatican Council and other important texts of the Magisterium
- Introduction to the schools of spirituality of the Church and its Saints through the study of the classic texts of Catholic spirituality
- Human development and principles of human formation within the seminary context, including aspects of sacrifice and self-giving
- Study of aspects of contemporary culture, especially in areas of social media, relativism, etc., and practical solutions to avoid negative influences (cf. PPF, n.203)

During this time, spiritual direction and retreat experiences are undertaken. “If there are any intellectual or academic lacunae in the experience of the seminarian, this period could be used to address them (PPF, n.204).

In Vancouver, the spirituality year originally took place at SCK. Since the fall of 2022, the Archdiocese of Vancouver has sent students elsewhere for this initial stage. RMS seminarians do not participate in the spirituality year due to the Neocatechumenal formation they receive prior to entering seminary.

2. Discipleship State: Arts / Philosophy

During the discipleship stage, students study philosophy as a preparation for the study of theology (cf. PPF, n.205). If they already have an undergraduate degree, they may study for two years. If they do not have an undergraduate degree, they must complete one (cf. PPF, nn.85, 206).

The minimum philosophical requirements include (cf. PPF, n.207.1):

- logic (one 3-credit course)
- history of philosophy (four 3-credit courses)
 - Ancient
 - Medieval
 - Modern
 - Contemporary
- systematic philosophy (four 3-credit courses)
 - Philosophical anthropology
 - Epistemology
 - Thomistic metaphysics
 - Nature (cosmology)



Additional philosophy courses could include (cf. PPF, n.207.2):

- Aesthetics
- Ethics
- Philosophy of religion
- Political philosophy (PPF, n.207.2)

Those completing a BA degree are encouraged to study sociology and psychology (PPF, n.207.3).

3. After the Discipleship Stage

“After the Discipleship Stage, the seminarian may petition for admission as a Candidate for Sacred Orders ... Candidacy signifies the Church’s willingness to call the seminarian to discern and prepare more intensely for Holy Orders in the Configuration Stage” (PPF, n.88). Typically, candidacy takes place after one year of theology studies.

4. Configuration Stage

The configuration stage lasts four years, during which seminarians study theology and receive different ministries toward ordination.

By the end of configuration stage, seminarians should demonstrate the following: Evidence of living the Cardinal and Theological Virtues, the Evangelical Counsels, particularly a healthy understanding and living out of celibate chastity; daily habits of personal prayer, including full recitation of the Liturgy of the Hours for each day; daily participation in the Sacrament of the Eucharist and monthly celebration of the Sacrament of Penance; docility to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit; sound pastoral judgment; respectful communication with his Bishop and other Diocesan officials; competence in Theology; pastoral skills; and the practical ability to apply Canon Law to concrete pastoral situations. (PPF, n.93.)

a. Study of theology

The four-year theology program should include the following 3-credit courses (cf. PPF, n.209):

- Introduction to Old Testament / Pentateuch and Historical books
- Psalms and Wisdom Literature
- Prophetic Literature
- Introduction to New Testament
- Synoptic Gospels
- Pauline Literature
- Johannine Literature
- Church History: Early Christianity
- Church History: Mediaeval
- Church History: Reform Era
- Church History: Modern
- Foundations of Theology/Introductory Theology



- Theology of the Trinity
- Christology
- Theological Anthropology
- Ecclesiology
- Sacramental Theology I: Sacraments in general, Baptism and Confirmation
- Sacramental Theology II: Eucharist
- Sacramental Theology III: Reconciliation, Anointing of the Sick, Marriage and Orders
- Integrative course – connection between doctrine and pastoral practice – includes “the elaboration of a theological synthesis as well as a comprehensive examination”
- Introduction to Moral Theology
- Catholic Social Teaching
- Bioethics: moral issues
- Married Love and Sexuality in the Christian Tradition
- Introduction to Pastoral Theology
- Pastoral Counselling
- Liturgical Theology
- Introduction to Canon Law
- Canon Law of Sacraments
- Introduction to Liturgical Homiletics

Other suggested and recommended areas of study (cf. PPF, nn.210-215):

- Languages – Biblical Hebrew and Greek; Latin
 - Introduction to Ecclesiastical Latin
 - Elementary New Testament Greek
 - Introduction to Biblical Hebrew
- Patristic Theology
- Mariology
- Ecumenism
- Christianity and World Religions
- Pastoral Catechetics
- Classic Christian Spiritualities
- Spiritual Direction
- Pastoral course on the celebration of the Eucharist and all the sacraments
- Homiletics
- Art of the Good Confessor
- Preaching Practicum
- Preparation for celebrating: Mass, Baptism, Marriage, Anointing of the Sick, Funerals
- Ministry of Sacrament of Reconciliation



- Ministry in the Sacrament of Marriage
- Priestly spirituality
- Christian Art and Music
- Parish Administration Seminar

b. Summer expectations

i. RCAV seminarians

After completing the first year of theology and every year thereafter, seminarians will receive a summer pastoral placement. The placements will be evaluated by the seminary and by the Director of Vocations and Seminarians.

Besides placement in a parish, other summer possibilities include: Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) through Providence Health Care, or the Institute for Priestly Formation's [Summer Program for Diocesan Seminarians](#) at Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska.

ii. RMS seminarians

Given the missionary charism of the RMS and also its archdiocesan nature, the seminarians studying theology will alternate between one summer of missionary experience with the Neocatechumenal Way and pastoral placement in the Archdiocese. The placements will be coordinated between the RMS Rector and the Director of Vocations and Seminarians.

c. Candidacy and Ministries

During the configuration stage, the seminarian will petition for and, if granted, receive:

- Candidacy
- Lector
- Acolyte

The seminarian will have time to exercise these ministries "both in the Seminary and in parish communities, where possible" (PPF, n.94). Scrutinies will be conducted before the reception of each of these ministries (cf. PPF, n.95).

Although evaluation is ongoing throughout the man's years in the seminary, at "five points in the journey of priestly formation, the Bishop must be informed in writing by the Rector and community of formators regarding the suitability of each candidate. These five scrutinies have a clear ecclesial consequence and are related to:

- Admission to candidacy for Orders
- The ministry of lector
- The ministry of acolyte
- Diaconate



- Priesthood (PPF, n.259)

Scrutinies must be in writing, and must provide reasons – whether positive or negative – ‘to verify the actual presence of the qualities and personal circumstances of a candidate’ (PPF, n.260). When scrutinies are requested, the Rector of the respective seminary must inform the Archbishop of the following:

- Request of the candidate written in his own hand
- Most recent evaluation assessment report from the Rector (cf. c. 240 §2)
- Endorsement of the pastor of candidate’s parish of origin, or of the parish where he has domicile, when appropriate
- Report from those “to whom the candidate was sent for his pastoral service” – also insight from “women who know the candidate” (PPF, n.261)

i. RCAV seminarians

At the end of each academic year, the SCK Rector makes a recommendation to the Archbishop as to the seminarian’s suitability for the ministry. This recommendation is presented to the Vocations Advisory Committee and a recommendation made to the Archbishop, who makes the final determination. The timing of the reception of the ministry is managed by the Director and the Archbishop. Except for ordination to the diaconate and priesthood, this celebration may take place in a local parish.

ii. RMS seminarians

The RMS Advisory Council “has the responsibility of evaluating the seminarians at least yearly, and also when it is necessary for candidacy, promotion to the ministries of lector and acolyte, and ordination. The RMS Rector is to send written annual reports on individual candidates to the Archbishop, who will then consult with the appropriate Archdiocesan bodies regarding their suitability for continuing formation” (RMS Statutes (2015), IV.23). The Rector and the Archbishop determine the timing and place of the reception of each ministry. Ordination to the diaconate and priesthood take place in Holy Rosary Cathedral.

iii. Candidacy

At the beginning of theology studies, the seminarian is admitted to candidacy through the liturgical rite of admission to candidacy for the priesthood. Admission to candidacy does not constitute a right to ordination; nor does it entail entry into the clerical state or any financial claim on the Archdiocese. Rather, candidacy is the first official recognition of the positive signs of a vocation to the priesthood, which must be confirmed in the subsequent years of formation.



iv. Lector

The Director will coordinate with SCK and RMS for the reception of the minister of lector.

The Vocations Advisory Committee will review each candidate's fitness prior to the candidate's installation in the ministry of lector. This ministry is usually conferred at the beginning of the second year of theology. After receiving the recommendation of the Vocations Advisory Committee, the Archbishop selects those to be admitted to the specific ministry. After they have made petition, he informs them of his decision in writing.

A retreat or day of recollection will precede the reception of each ministry. The rite should be celebrated on a Sunday or feast day.

v. Acolyte

The Director will coordinate with SCK and RMS for the reception of the minister of acolyte.

The Vocations Advisory Committee will review each candidate's fitness prior to a candidate's installation in the ministry of acolyte. This ministry is usually conferred at the beginning of the third year of theology. After receiving the recommendation of the Vocations Advisory Committee, the Archbishop chooses those to be admitted to this ministry. After they have made petition, he informs them of his decision in writing.

A retreat or day of recollection will precede the reception of the ministry of lector and the ministry of acolyte. The rite should be celebrated on a Sunday or feast day.

vi. Ordination to Diaconate

In the Archdiocese of Vancouver, ordination to the diaconate normally takes place six months or more after completing theology at SCK. At the discretion of the Archbishop, ordination could be sooner. An interval of at least six months must elapse between conferring the ministry of acolyte and ordination to the diaconate (cf. c. 1035 §2).

A meeting of the Vocations Advisory Committee is held for the evaluation of candidates prior to ordination to the diaconate. This Committee will include in its considerations the assessment and recommendation of the SCK administrators and faculty. For RMS candidates, the Committee will consider the recommendations made by the RMS Advisory Council. The Vocations Advisory Committee will provide its recommendation to the Archbishop.

After receiving the recommendation of the Vocations Advisory Committee and the written petition of the candidate, the Archbishop discusses the candidate's readiness with the College of Consultors who vote on their



recommendation. The Archbishop makes the final decision and informs the candidate of his decision in writing.

A five-day retreat is required before ordination at a time and place determined by the candidate and approved by the Director (cf. c. 1039). For RMS candidates its place and time is determined by their Rector. The costs of this retreat are paid for by the Vocations and Seminarians Office.

Prior to diaconal ordination, the ordinand must make the profession of faith before the Archbishop or his delegate (cf. c. 833, 6°). He must also take the oath of fidelity and make a personal declaration concerning his freedom to be ordained and his grasp of the obligations and commitments entailed.¹⁴

An unmarried candidate must make a declaration regarding the obligation of celibacy. This declaration must be handwritten by the candidate and expressed in his own words (cf. c. 1037).

Those being ordained to the diaconate will be incardinated in the Archdiocese of Vancouver, including those studying at RMS (cf. RMS Statutes (2015) III.16).

5. Vocational Synthesis Stage

The vocational synthesis stages begins when the man leaves the seminary – sometimes as a deacon, but perhaps not yet (PPF, n.97). During this stage, the seminarian is to be accompanied by “an experienced and holy Priest” (PPF, n.97). The seminarian is assigned to a parish (PPF, n.99). “From the time of leaving the seminary until priestly ordination, this stage, under the direction of the [Arch]bishop, has as one of its goals the induction of the future priest into the pastoral life” (PPF, n.165).

During this stage the seminarian will meet on a regular basis with an authorized instructor in order to serve the integration of his ministry experience with his academic and personal growth.

a. Ordination to Priesthood

The Code of Canon Law gives juridical expression to the qualities of those who are to be ordained: “Only those are to be promoted to orders who ... have sound faith, are motivated by the right intention, are endowed with the requisite knowledge, enjoy a good reputation, and have moral probity, proven virtue, and the other physical and psychological qualities appropriate to the order to be received” (c. 1029).

Ordination to the priesthood normally takes place after the deacon has completed six months in a parish. Before ordination, the Rectors of SCK and RMS must verify for the Archbishop:

¹⁴ Cf. Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of Sacraments, Circular Letter on Scrutinies Regarding Suitability of Candidates for Orders, Prot. N. 589/97 (28 November 1997).



- Prescribed period of formation has been completed
- Candidate possesses the necessary human and spiritual qualities
- No impediments or irregularities are present
- Requisite Sacraments have been received
- Spiritual exercises have been completed as required (cf. PPF, n.262)

The final decision to proceed toward ordination belongs to the Archbishop (cf. PPF, n.263).

E. Evaluation Throughout the Stages

Throughout seminary formation, and particularly at the end of each stage, it is important “to assess whether the aims of that particular period of formation have been achieved, taking account of periodic evaluations (preferably each semester, or at least annually), which the formators will prepare in writing” (PPF, n.79, citing the *RFIS*, n.58). “These evaluations, which also take into account the seminarian’s self-evaluation of his own progress, help both seminarian and formators to engage the process of discernment seriously” (PPF, n.79).

In accordance with the goals of each of the four stages of initial formation, an assessment of the seminarian is required at each stage:

Human: affective maturity (relational); self-discipline; self-knowledge and transparency; health; use of technology.

Spiritual: prayer and spiritual life; chastity and celibacy; vocational discernment; personal relationship with Christ.

Intellectual: acquisition of knowledge and integration; study habits; ability to communicate the truth of the faith.

Pastoral: pastoral knowledge; pastoral skills; pastoral charity. (cf. PPF, n.166)

There are different steps in the evaluation process: the student’s self evaluation, and the evaluation of the seminary faculty and formators.

Evaluation takes place by the:

- Seminarian himself
- Seminary community
- Vocations and Seminarians Office
- Vocations Advisory Council
- Archbishop

Both evaluation and discernment come into play when arriving at a decision concerning readiness for ordination: “The process of coming to a decision on readiness for Holy Orders involves an objective and a subjective aspect. The decision is the responsibility of the person himself, the Formation Team, and the Seminary Rector” (PPF, n.255).

Evaluation processes should always be transparent; the student should be aware of the results of his evaluations (cf. PPF, n.256).

On an annual basis the Archbishop receives evaluations, recommendations and academic records prepared by the seminary authorities with regard to each seminarian. All aspects of the seminarian's formation are reported on.

1. Seminarian's Self Evaluation

At SCK, every year by March 1 seminarians are to submit their self-evaluations which they complete with the assistance of a Faculty Advisor. The self-evaluation is a form with questions concerning human and moral qualities, spiritual qualities, intellectual qualities, apostolic work, and vocational commitment. This self-evaluation will be sent to the Archbishop. This evaluation will also form part of the information evaluated by the Seminary faculty and formators.

2. Seminary Faculty and Formators' Evaluations

a. RCAV seminarians

At SCK, the following formal evaluation process is followed:

- 1) Monthly Meditation Reports: The seminarians are expected to be in church at 6 am every morning for meditation and 6:40 am on Sundays. At end of each month, they are expected to submit, in writing to the Rector, how many times they were late or how many they missed. The purpose is to encourage accountability. This report is not included in their files and is not part of a formal report, but their attendance/absence is duly noticed.
- 2) Annual Peer Evaluations: The seminarians send to the Rector a completed questionnaire used to evaluate their peers.
- 3) Annual Self-Evaluations: The seminarians submit to the Rector a 4-6 page self-evaluation, answering specific questions.
- 4) After summer and pastoral week, the theologians submit a 2-page reflection, including summary of experiences. Arts students complete a summer report.
- 5) Formator Meetings (Every 1 to 4 weeks): The seminarian meets regularly with his formator one-on-one to discuss various issues. The frequency depends on the seminarian's particular needs.
- 6) Rector Meetings (monthly): The seminarian meets regularly with the Rector one-on-one to discuss various issues.
- 7) Feedback on Apostolic work: Reports are submitted to the Rector after any apostolic work is completed during the summer and/or the school year.
- 8) Faculty may provide written or oral feedback annually before evaluations on:
 - Class deportment
 - Academic performance
- 9) The Director is invited to the Seminary for this annual evaluation meeting. He listens and asks questions, but he does not vote.



The information is collected and the Rector prepares a report for the annual evaluation meeting with the faculty. At the evaluation meeting, faculty provide feedback.

At this meeting, there is a secret ballot regarding recommendations about a seminarian's continuing to the next step of seminary formation and/or for advancement to ministry or orders. For each 4th Year Arts student, a secret ballot is cast to determine his readiness to go on to theology.

The Rector collects the feedback and prepares a draft report. This report is reviewed by the Vice Rector and two formators. The draft is also reviewed by the Rector and seminarian to discuss any clarifications, agreements and disagreements. After an agreement is reached with the seminarian, the Rector prepares three final copies that are printed and signed by the Rector.

- One copy is kept in the seminarian's file
- One copy is given to the seminarian
- One copy is submitted to the Archbishop who then forwards it to the Director of Vocations and Seminarians

b. RMS seminarians

The RMS Advisory Council "has the responsibility of evaluating the seminarians at least yearly, and also when it is necessary for candidacy, promotion to the ministries of lector and acolyte, and ordination. The Rector is to send written annual reports on individual candidates to the Archbishop, who will then consult with the appropriate Archdiocesan bodies regarding their suitability for continuing formation" (RMS Statutes (2015) IV.23).

The evaluation of each seminarian depends upon:

- 1) Regular meetings with the Rector
- 2) Regular meetings between the seminarian and the Advisory Council
- 3) Scrutinies made by the Advisory Council at important moments of the life of the seminarian (i.e., reception of the ministries and of ordinations)
- 4) Feedback from missionary work
- 5) Feedback from parish pastoral activity
- 6) Academic reports

F. After Ordination

Once a man is ordained a priest he is no longer a seminarian. He becomes a member of the junior clergy. Priests ordained seven years or fewer are provided additional formation opportunities as outlined in the [Ongoing Formation and Support for Junior Clergy](#) policy.



G. Leaving or Being Asked to Leave the Seminary

Sometimes a man chooses to leave the seminary, or he is asked to leave. His personal information is regulated by the [Files of Former Seminarians](#) policy.

Approved: Saint Andrew Kim Tae-Gŏn,
Saint Paul Chŏng Ha-Sang
and Companions
September 20, 2024

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J. Michael Miller CSB".

† J. Michael Miller, CSB
Archbishop of Vancouver

Bibliography

This Directory has incorporated information from the following documents:

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