

CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION

**GUIDELINES FOR THE USE
OF PSYCHOLOGY
IN THE ADMISSION
AND FORMATION OF CANDIDATES FOR THE PRIESTHOOD**

I. The Church and the Discernment of a Vocation

1. “Each Christian vocation comes from God and is God's gift. However, it is never bestowed outside of or independently of the Church. Instead it always comes about in the Church and through the Church [...], a luminous and living reflection of the mystery of the Blessed Trinity.”¹

The Church, “begetter and formator of vocations”,² has the duty of discerning a vocation and the suitability of candidates for the priestly ministry. In fact, “the interior call of the Spirit needs to be recognized as the authentic call of the bishop.”³

In furthering this discernment, and throughout the entire process of formation for ministry, the Church is moved by two concerns: to safeguard the good of her own mission and, at the same time, the good of the candidates. In fact, like every Christian vocation, the vocation to the priesthood, along with a Christological dimension, has an essentially ecclesial dimension: “Not only does it derive `from' the Church and her mediation, not only does it come to be known and find fulfilment `in' the Church, but it also necessarily appears – in fundamental service to God – as a service `to' the Church. Christian vocation, whatever shape it takes, is a gift whose purpose is to build up the Church and to increase the kingdom of God in the world.”⁴

Therefore, the good of the Church and that of the candidate are not in opposition, but rather converge. Those responsible for formation work at harmonizing these two goods, by always considering both simultaneously in their interdependent dynamic. This is an essential aspect of the great responsibility they bear in their service to the Church and to individuals.⁵

2. The priestly ministry, understood and lived as a conformation to Christ, Bridegroom and Good Shepherd, requires certain abilities as well as moral and theological virtues, which are supported by a human and psychic – and particularly affective – equilibrium, so as to allow the subject to be adequately predisposed for giving of himself in the celibate life, in a way that is truly free in his relations with the faithful.⁶

The Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores dabo vobis* treats of the various dimensions of priestly formation: human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral. Before the text deals with the spiritual dimension – “an extremely important element of a priest's education”⁷ – it underlines that the human dimension is the foundation of all formation. The document lists a series of human virtues and relational abilities that are required of the priest, so that his personality * may be “a bridge and not an obstacle for others in their meeting with Jesus Christ the Redeemer of humanity.”⁸ These virtues and qualities range from the personality's general equilibrium to the ability to bear the weight of pastoral responsibilities, from a deep knowledge of the human spirit to a sense of justice and loyalty.⁹

** The specific understanding of “personality” in this document refers to affective maturity and absence of mental disorder.*

Some of these qualities merit particular attention: the positive and stable sense of one's masculine identity, and the capacity to form relations in a mature way with individuals and groups of people; a solid sense of belonging, which is the basis of future communion with the presbyterium and of a responsible collaboration in the ministry of the bishop;¹⁰ the freedom to be enthused by great ideals and a coherence in realizing them in everyday action; the courage to take decisions and to stay faithful to them; a knowledge of oneself, of one's talents and limitations, so as to integrate them within a self-esteem before God; the capacity to correct oneself; the appreciation for beauty in the sense of “splendour of the truth” as well as the art of recognizing it; the trust that is born from an esteem of the other person and that leads to acceptance; the capacity of the candidate to integrate his sexuality in accordance with the Christian vision, including in consideration of the obligation of celibacy.¹¹

Such interior dispositions must be moulded during the future priest's path of formation because, as a man of God and of the Church, he is called to build up the ecclesial community. Being in love with Him who is Eternal, the priest develops an authentic and integral appreciation of humanity. He also increasingly lives the richness of his own affectivity in the gift of himself to God, One and Three, and to his brethren, particularly those who are suffering.

Clearly, these are objectives that can only be reached by the candidate co-operating daily with the work of grace within him. They are objectives that are acquired with a gradual and lengthy path of formation, which is not always linear.¹²

A priestly vocation involves an extraordinary and demanding synergy of human and spiritual dynamics. The candidate, knowing this, can only draw advantage from an attentive and responsible vocational discernment, aimed at differentiating formation paths according to each individual's needs, as well as gradually overcoming his deficiencies on the spiritual and human levels. The Church has the duty of furnishing candidates with an effective integration of the human dimension, in light of the spiritual dimension into which it flows and in which it finds its completion.¹³

II. Preparation of Formators

3. Every formator should have a good knowledge of the human person: his rhythms of growth; his potentials and weaknesses; and his way of living his relationship with God. Thus, it is desirable that bishops – by making use of various experiences, programs and institutions of good reputation – provide a suitable preparation in vocational pedagogy for formators, according to the indications already published by the Congregation for Catholic Education.¹⁴

Formators need to be adequately prepared to carry out a discernment that, fully respecting the Church's doctrine on the priestly vocation, allows for a reasonably sure decision as to whether the candidate should be admitted to the seminary or house of formation of the religious clergy, or whether he should be dismissed from the seminary or house of formation for reasons of unsuitability. The discernment also must allow for the candidate to be accompanied on his path to acquiring those moral and theological virtues, which are necessary for living, in coherence and interior freedom, the total gift of his life, so as to be a “servant of the Church as communion”.¹⁵

4. The document of this Congregation for Catholic Education, *A Guide to Formation in Priestly Celibacy*, recognizes that “errors in discerning vocations are not rare, and in all too many cases psychological defects, sometimes of a pathological kind, reveal themselves only after ordination to the priesthood. Detecting defects earlier would help avoid many tragic experiences.”¹⁶

Hence, the need for every formator to possess, in due measure, the sensitivity and psychological preparation¹⁷ that will allow him, insofar as possible, to perceive the candidate's true motivations, to discern the barriers that stop him integrating human and Christian maturity, and to pick up on any psychopathic disturbances present in the candidate. The formator must accurately and very prudently evaluate the candidate's history. Nevertheless, this history alone cannot constitute the decisive criterion which would be sufficient for judging whether to admit the candidate or dismiss him from formation. The formator must know how to evaluate the person in his totality, not forgetting the gradual nature of development. He must see the candidate's strong and weak points, as well as the level of awareness that the candidate has of his own problems. Lastly, the formator must discern the candidate's capacity for controlling his own behaviour in responsibility and freedom.

Thus, every formator must be prepared, including by means of specific courses, to understand profoundly the human person as well as the demands of his formation to the ordained ministry. To that end, much advantage can be derived from meeting experts in the psychological sciences, to compare notes and obtain clarification on some specific issues.

III. Contribution of Psychology to Vocational Discernment and Formation

5. Inasmuch as it is the fruit of a particular gift of God, the vocation to the priesthood and its discernment lie outside the strict competence of psychology. Nevertheless, in some cases, recourse to experts in the psychological sciences can be useful. It can allow a more sure evaluation of the candidate's psychic state; it can help evaluate his human dispositions for responding to the divine call; and it can provide some extra assistance for the candidate's human growth. These experts can offer formators an opinion regarding the diagnosis of – and, perhaps, therapy for – psychic disturbances. Moreover, by suggesting ways for favouring a vocational response that is more free, they can help support the development of the human (especially relational) qualities, which are required for the exercise of the ministry.¹⁸

Even formation for the priesthood must face up to the manifold symptoms of the imbalance rooted in the heart of man,¹⁹ which is symptomized, in a particular way, in the contradictions between the ideal of self-giving to which the candidate consciously aspires, and the life he actually leads. Formation must also deal with the difficulties inherent in the gradual development of the moral virtues. The help of the spiritual director and confessor is fundamental and absolutely necessary for overcoming these difficulties with the grace of God. In some cases, however, the development of these moral qualities can be blocked by certain psychological wounds of the past that have not yet been resolved.

In fact, those who today ask admittance to the seminary reflect, in a more or less accentuated way, the unease of an emerging mentality characterized by consumerism, instability in family and social relationships, moral relativism, erroneous visions of sexuality, the precariousness of choices, and a systematic negation of values especially by the media.

Among the candidates can be found some who come from particular experiences – human, family, professional, intellectual or affective – which, in various ways, have left psychological wounds that are not yet healed and that cause disturbances. These wounds, unknown to the candidate in their real effects, are often erroneously attributed by him to causes outside himself, thus depriving him of the possibility of facing them adequately.²⁰

It is clear that the above-mentioned issues can limit the candidate's capacity for making progress on the path of formation towards the priesthood.

“*Si casus ferat*”²¹ – that is, in exceptional cases that present particular difficulties – recourse to experts in the psychological sciences, both before admission to the seminary and during the path of formation, can help the candidate overcome those psychological wounds, and interiorize, in an ever more stable and profound way, the type of life shown by Jesus the Good Shepherd, Head and Bridegroom of the Church.²²

To arrive at a correct evaluation of the candidate's personality, the expert can have recourse to both interviews and tests. These must always be carried out with the previous, explicit, informed and free consent of the candidate.²³

In consideration of their particularly sensitive nature, the use of specialist psychological or psychotherapeutic techniques must be avoided by the formators.

6. It is useful for the rector and other formators to be able to count on the co-operation of experts in the psychological sciences. Such experts, who cannot be part of the formation team, will have to have specific competence in the field of vocations, and unite the wisdom of the Spirit to their professional expertise.

In choosing which experts to approach for the psychological consultation, it is necessary to guarantee, as much as possible, an intervention that is coherent with the candidate's moral and spiritual formation. This is to avoid any harmful confusion or opposition. Therefore, it must be borne in mind that these experts, as well as being distinguished for their sound human and spiritual maturity, must be inspired by an anthropology that openly shares the Christian vision about the human person, sexuality, as well as vocation to the priesthood and to celibacy. In this way, their interventions may take into account the mystery of man in his personal dialogue with God, according to the vision of the Church.

Wherever such experts are not available, let steps be taken to specifically preparing them.²⁴

The assistance offered by the psychological sciences must be integrated within the context of the candidate's entire formation. It must not obstruct, but rather ensure, in a particular way, that the irreplaceable value of spiritual accompaniment is guaranteed; for spiritual accompaniment has the duty of keeping the candidate facing the truth of the ordained ministry, according to the vision of the Church. The atmosphere of faith, prayer, meditation on the Word of God, the study of theology and community life – an atmosphere that is essential so that a generous response to the vocation received from God can mature – will allow the candidate to have a correct understanding of what the recourse to psychology means within his vocational journey, and will allow him to integrate it within that same journey.

7. In faithfulness and coherence to the principles and directives of this document, different countries will have to regulate the recourse to experts in the psychological sciences in their respective

Rationes institutionis sacerdotalis. The competent Ordinaries or major superiors will have to do the same in the individual seminaries.

a) Initial Discernment

8. Right from the moment when the candidate presents himself for admission to the seminary, the formator needs to be able accurately to comprehend his personality; potentialities; dispositions; and the types of any psychological wounds, evaluating their nature and intensity.

Nor must it be forgotten that there is a possible tendency of some candidates to minimize or deny their own weaknesses. Such candidates do not speak to the formators about some of their serious difficulties, as they fear they will not be understood or accepted. Thus, they nurture barely realistic expectations with respect to their own future. On the other hand, there are candidates who tend to emphasize their own difficulties, considering them insurmountable obstacles on their vocational journey.

The timely discernment of possible problems that block the vocational journey can only be of great benefit for the person, for the vocational institutions and for the Church. Such problems include excessive affective dependency; disproportionate aggression; insufficient capacity for being faithful to obligations taken on; insufficient capacity for establishing serene relations of openness, trust and fraternal collaboration, as well as collaboration with authority; a sexuality identity that is confused or not yet well defined.

In the phase of initial discernment, the help of experts in the psychological sciences can be necessary principally on the specifically diagnostic level, whenever there is a suspicion that psychic disturbances may be present. If it should be ascertained that the candidate needs therapy, this therapy should be carried out before he is admitted to the seminary or house of formation.

The assistance of experts can be useful for formators, including when they are marking out a path of formation tailored to the candidate's specific needs.

When evaluating whether it is possible for the candidate to live the charism of celibacy in faithfulness and joy, as a total gift of his life in the image of Christ the Head and Shepherd of the Church, let it be remembered that it is not enough to be sure that he is capable of abstaining from genital activity. It is also necessary to evaluate his sexual orientation, according to the indications published by this Congregation.²⁵ Chastity for the Kingdom, in fact, is much more than the simple lack of sexual relationships.

In light of the objectives indicated above, a psychological consultation can, in some cases, be useful.

b) Subsequent Formation

9. During the period of formation, recourse to experts in the psychological sciences can respond to the needs born of any crises; but it can also be useful in supporting the candidate on his journey towards a more sure possession of the moral virtues. It can furnish the candidate with a deeper knowledge of his personality, and can contribute to overcoming, or rendering less rigid, his psychic resistances to what his formation is proposing.

The candidates can give themselves to God with due awareness and freedom, in responsibility towards themselves and the Church, when they have better mastered not only their weaknesses, but also their human and spiritual forces.²⁶

A certain Christian and vocational maturity can be reached, including with the help of psychology, illumined and completed by the contribution of the anthropology of the Christian vocation and, therefore, of grace. Nevertheless, one cannot overlook the fact that such maturity will never be completely free of difficulties and tensions, which require interior discipline, a spirit of sacrifice, acceptance of struggle and of the Cross,²⁷ and the entrusting of oneself to the irreplaceable assistance of grace.²⁸

10. It is possible that the candidate – notwithstanding his own commitment and the support of the psychologist, or psychotherapy – could continue to show himself unable to face realistically his areas of grave immaturity – even given the gradual nature of all human growth. Such areas of immaturity would include strong affective dependencies; notable lack of freedom in relations; excessive rigidity of character; lack of loyalty; uncertain sexual identity; deep-seated homosexual tendencies; etc. If this should be the case, the path of formation will have to be interrupted.

The same is also true if it becomes evident that the candidate has difficulty living chastity in celibacy: that is, if celibacy, for him, is lived as a burden so heavy that it compromises his affective and relational equilibrium.

IV. Request for Specialist Evaluations and Respect for the Candidate's Privacy

11. It belongs to the Church to choose persons whom she believes suitable for the pastoral ministry, and it is her right and duty to verify the presence of the qualities required in those whom she admits to the sacred ministry.²⁹

Canon 1051, 1° of the Code of Canon Law foresees that, for the scrutiny of the qualities required in view of ordination, one should provide, *inter al.*, for an evaluation of the state of the candidate's physical and psychic health.³⁰

Canon 1052 establishes that the bishop, in order to be able to proceed to ordaining the candidate, must have moral certainty that “positive arguments have proved” his suitability (§ 1) and that, in the case of motivated doubt, he must not proceed with the ordination (§ 3).

Hence, the Church has the right to verify the suitability of future priests, including by means of recourse to medical and psychological science. In fact, it belongs to the bishop or competent superior not only to examine the suitability of the candidate, but also to establish that he is suitable. A candidate for the priesthood cannot impose his own personal conditions, but must accept with humility and gratitude the norms and the conditions that the Church herself places, on the part of her responsibility.³¹ Therefore, in cases of doubt concerning the candidate's suitability, admission to the seminary or house of formation will sometimes only be possible after a psychological evaluation of the candidate's personality.

12. The formational institution has the right and the duty to acquire the knowledge necessary for a prudentially certain judgement regarding the candidate's suitability. But this must not harm the candidate's right to a good reputation, which any person enjoys, nor the right to defend his own privacy, as prescribed in canon 220 of the Code of Canon Law. This means that the candidate's psychological consultation can only proceed with his previous, explicit, informed and free consent.

Let the formators guarantee an atmosphere of trust, so that the candidate can open up and participate with conviction in the work of discernment and accompaniment, offering “his own convinced and heartfelt co-operation”.³² The candidate is asked to be sincerely and trustingly open with his formators. Only by sincerely allowing them to know him can he be helped on that spiritual journey that he himself is seeking by entering the seminary.

Important, and often determinant in overcoming possible misunderstandings, will be both the educational atmosphere between students and formators – marked by openness and transparency – and the motivations and ways with which the formators will present their suggestion to the candidate that he should have a psychological consultation.

Let them avoid the impression that such a suggestion is the prelude to the candidate's inevitable dismissal from the seminary or house of formation.

The candidate will be able freely to approach an expert who is either chosen from among those indicated by the formators, or chosen by the candidate himself and accepted by the formators.

According to the possibilities, the candidates should be guaranteed a free choice from among various experts who possess the requisites indicated.³³

If the candidate, faced with a motivated request by the formators, should refuse to undergo a psychological consultation, the formators will not force his will in any way. Instead, they will prudently proceed in the work of discernment with the knowledge they already have, bearing in mind the aforementioned canon 1052 § 1.

V. The Relationship between those Responsible for Formation and the Expert

a) Those Responsible in the External Forum

13. In a spirit of reciprocal trust and in co-operation with his own formation, the candidate can be invited freely to give his written consent so that the expert in the psychological sciences, who is bound by confidentiality, can communicate the results of the consultation to the formators indicated by the candidate himself. The formators will make use of any information thus acquired to sketch out a general picture of the candidate's personality, and to infer the appropriate indications for the candidate's further path of formation or for his admission to ordination.

In order to protect, in both the present and the future, the candidate's privacy and good reputation, let particular care be taken so that the professional opinions expressed by the expert be exclusively accessible to those responsible for formation, with the precise and binding proscription against using it in any way other than for the discernment of a vocation and for the candidate's formation.

b) Specific Character of Spiritual Direction

14. The spiritual director's task is not easy, neither in discerning the vocation nor in the area of conscience.

It is a firm principle that spiritual direction cannot, in any way, be interchanged with or substituted by forms of analysis or of psychological assistance. Moreover, the spiritual life, by itself, favours a growth in the human virtues, if there are no barriers of a psychological nature.³⁴ Bearing these two principles in mind, the spiritual director can find that, in order to clear up any doubts that are otherwise irresolvable and to proceed with greater certainty in the discernment and in spiritual

accompaniment, he needs to suggest to the candidate that he undergo a psychological consultation – without, however, ever demanding it.³⁵

Should the spiritual director request that the candidate undergo a psychological consultation, it is desirable that the candidate, as well as informing the spiritual director himself about the results of the consultation, will likewise inform the external-forum formator, especially if the spiritual director himself will have invited him to do this.

If the spiritual director should believe it useful that he himself directly acquire information from the consultant, let him proceed according to what has been indicated in n. 13 for the external-forum formators.

The spiritual director will infer from the results of the psychological consultation the appropriate indications for the discernment that is of his competence, as well as the advice he must give the candidate, including as to whether to proceed on the path of formation.

c) Help of the Expert to the Candidate and Formators

15. The expert – insofar as it is asked of him – will help the candidate reach a greater knowledge of himself, of his potentialities and vulnerabilities. He will also help him to compare the declared ideals of the vocation with his own personality, thus encouraging the candidate to develop a personal, free and conscious attachment to his own formation. It will be the task of the expert to furnish the candidate with the appropriate indications concerning the difficulties that he is experiencing, and their possible consequences for his life and future priestly ministry.

The expert, having carried out his evaluation, and also taking into account the indications offered him by the formators, will present them – but only with the candidate's previous written consent – with his contribution to understanding the subject's personality and the problems he is facing or must face.

In accordance with his evaluation and competence, he will also indicate the foreseeable possibilities as regards the growth of the candidate's personality. Moreover, he will suggest, if necessary, forms or pathways of psychological support.

VI. Persons Dismissed From, or Who Have Freely Left, Seminaries or Houses of Formation

16. It is contrary to the norms of the Church to admit to the seminary or to the house of formation persons who have already left or, *a fortiori*, have been dismissed from other seminaries or houses of formation, without first collecting the due information from their respective bishops or major superiors, especially concerning the causes of the dismissal or departure.³⁶

The previous formators have the explicit duty of furnishing exact information to the new formators.

Let particular attention be paid to the fact that often candidates leave the educational institution spontaneously so as to avoid an enforced dismissal.

In the case of a transfer to another seminary or house of formation, the candidate must inform the new formators about any psychological consultation previously carried out. Only with the candidate's free, written consent can the new formators have access to the communication of the expert who carried out the consultation.

In the case of a candidate who, after a previous dismissal, has undergone psychological treatment, if it is held that he can be accepted into the seminary, let first his psychic condition be accurately verified, insofar as possible. This includes collecting the necessary information from the expert who treated him, after having obtained the candidate's free, written consent.

In the case where a candidate, after having had recourse to an expert in psychology, asks to transfer to another seminary or house of formation and does not want to agree to the results being available to the new formators, let it be remembered that the suitability of the candidate must be proved with positive arguments, according to the norm of the aforementioned canon 1052, and, therefore, that all reasonable doubt must be excluded.

Conclusion

17. Let all those who, according to their different responsibilities, are involved in formation offer their convinced co-operation, in respecting the specific competencies of each, so that the discernment and vocational accompaniment of the candidates may be sufficient, thus “bringing to the priesthood only those who have been called, and to bring them adequately trained, namely, with a conscious and free response of adherence and involvement of their whole person with Jesus Christ, who calls them to intimacy of life with him and to share in his mission of salvation.”³⁷

The Supreme Pontiff Benedict XVI, during the Audience granted to the undersigned Cardinal Prefect on 13 June 2008, approved the present document and authorized its publication.

Rome, 29 June 2008, Solemnity of the Apostles SS. Peter and Paul.

Zenon Card. Grocholewski

Prefect

+ Jean-Louis Brugès, o.p.

Archbishop-Bishop emeritus of Anger

Secretary

¹John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores dabo vobis* (25 March 1992), n. 35b-c: AAS 84 (1992), 714.

²*Ibid.*, n. 35d: AAS 84 (1992), 715.

³*Ibid.*, n. 65d: AAS 84 (1992), 771.

⁴*Ibid.*, n. 35e: AAS 84 (1992), 715.

⁵Cf. *ibid.*, nn. 66-67: AAS 84 (1992), 772-775.

⁶A very full description of these conditions is given in *Pastores dabo vobis*, nn. 43-44: AAS 84 (1992), 731-736; cf. C.I.C., canons 1029 and 1041, 1°.

⁷Inasmuch as “for every priest his spiritual formation is the core which unifies and gives life to his being a priest and his acting as a priest”: *Pastores dabo vobis*, n. 45c: AAS 84 (1992), 737.

⁸*Pastores dabo vobis*, n. 43: AAS 84 (1992), 731-733.

⁹Cf. *ibid.*; cf. also Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree of Priestly Formation [Optatam totius](#) (28 October 1965), n. 11: AAS 58 (1966), 720-721; Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests [Presbyterorum ordinis](#) (7 December 1965), n. 3: AAS 58 (1966), 993-995; Congregation for Catholic Education, *Ratio fundamentalis institutionis sacerdotalis* (19 March 1985), n. 51.

¹⁰Cf. [Pastores dabo vobis](#), n. 17: AAS 84 (1992), 682-684.

¹¹Paul VI, in his Encyclical Letter [Sacerdotalis cœlibatus](#), deals explicitly of this necessary capacity of the candidate for the priesthood, in nn. 63-63: AAS 59 (1967), 682-683. In n. 64, he concludes: “The life of the celibate priest, which engages the whole man so totally and so delicately, excludes in fact those of insufficient physical, psychic and moral qualifications. Nor should anyone pretend that grace supplies for the defects of nature in such a man.” Cf. also [Pastores dabo vobis](#), n. 44: AAS 84 (1992), 733-736.

¹²In the developing formation process, affective maturity takes on a particular importance; this is an area of development that requires, today more than ever, particular attention. “In reality, we grow in affective maturity when our hearts adhere to God. Christ needs priests who are mature, virile, capable of cultivating an authentic spiritual paternity. For this to happen, priests need to be honest with themselves, open with their spiritual director and trusting in divine mercy” ([Benedict XVI. Speech to priests and religious in the Cathedral of Warsaw \[25 May 2006\]](#), in *L'Osservatore Romano* [26-27 May 2006], p. 7). Cf. Pontifical Work for Ecclesiastical Vocations, [New Vocations for a New Europe](#), Final Document of the Congress on Vocations to the Priesthood and to the Consecrated Life in Europe, Rome, 5-10 May 1997, published by the Congregations for Catholic Education, for the Oriental Churches, for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (6 January 1998), n. 37.

¹³Cf. [Pastores dabo vobis](#), n. 45a: AAS 84 (1992), 736.

¹⁴Cf. Congregation for Catholic Education, *Directives concerning the Preparation of Seminary Formators* (4 November 1993), nn. 36 and 57-59; cf. especially [Optatam totius](#), n. 5: AAS 58 (1966), 716-717.

¹⁵[Pastores dabo vobis](#), n. 16e: AAS 84 (1992), 682.

¹⁶Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, *A Guide to Formation in Priestly Celibacy* (11 April 1974), n. 38.

¹⁷Cf. [Pastores dabo vobis](#), n. 66c: AAS 84 (1992), 773; *Directives concerning the Preparation of Seminary Formators*, nn. 57-59.

¹⁸Cf. [Optatam totius](#), n. 11: AAS 58 (1966), 720-721.

¹⁹Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World [Gaudium et spes](#) (7 December 1965), n. 10: AAS 58 (1966), 1032-1033.

²⁰To understand these assertions better, it is opportune to refer to the following assertions of Pope John Paul II: “Humans, therefore, carry within themselves the seed of eternal life and the vocation to make transcendent values their own. They, however, remain internally vulnerable and dramatically exposed to the risk of failing in their own vocation. This is due to the resistance and difficulties which they encounter in their earthly existence. These may be found on the conscious

level, where moral responsibility is involved, or on the subconscious level, and this may be either in ordinary psychic life or in that which is marked by slight or moderate psychic illnesses that do not impinge substantially on one's freedom to strive after transcendent ideals which have been responsibly chosen" ([Address to the Roman Rota \[25 January 1988\]](#): AAS 80 [1988], 1181).

²¹Cf. *Ratio fundamentalis institutionis sacerdotalis*, n. 39; Congregation for bishops, Directory for the Pastoral Ministry of bishops [Apostolorum Successores](#) (22 February 2004), n. 88.

²²Cf. [Pastores dabo vobis](#), n. 29d: AAS 84 (1992), 704.

²³Cf. Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes, *Instruction on the Renewal of Formation for Religious Life* (6 January 1969), n. 11 § III: AAS 61 (1969), 113.

²⁴Cf. John Paul II: "It will therefore be right to pay attention to the formation of expert psychologists, who, with good scientific qualifications, will also have a sound understanding of the Christian vision of life and of the vocation to the priesthood, so as to provide effective support for the necessary integration of the human and supernatural dimensions" ([Speech to the participants at the Plenary Session of the Congregation for Catholic Education \[4 February 2002\]](#): AAS 94 [2002], 465).

²⁵Cf. Congregation for Catholic Education, [Instruction concerning the Criteria for the Discernment of Vocations with regard to Persons with Homosexual Tendencies in View of their Admission to the Seminary and to Holy Orders](#) (4 November 2005): AAS 97 (2005), 1007-1013.

²⁶Cf. *A Guide to Formation in Priestly Celibacy*, n. 38.

²⁷Cf. [Pastores dabo vobis](#), n. 48d: AAS 84 (1992), 744.

²⁸Cf. 2 Cor 12, 7-10.

²⁹Cf. C.I.C., canons 1025, 1051 and 1052; 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" (10 November 1997): *Notitiæ* 33 (1997), pp. 507-518.

³⁰Cf. C.I.C., canons 1029, 1031 § 1 and 1041, 1°; *Ratio fundamentalis institutionis sacerdotalis*, n. 39.

³¹Cf. [Pastores dabo vobis](#), n. 35g: AAS 84 (1992), 715.

³²*Ibid.*, n. 69b: AAS 84 (1992), 778.

³³Cf. n. 6 of this document.

³⁴Cf. note n. 20.

³⁵Cf. [Pastores dabo vobis](#), n. 40c: AAS 84 (1992), 725