

Vatican Congregation for Catholic Education

Directives Concerning the Preparation of Seminary Educators

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The world's Catholic seminaries currently face a shortage of educators, the Vatican Congregation for Catholic Education says in the "Directives Concerning the Preparation of Seminary Educators" released Jan. 11. "The responsibilities of seminary formation have become more difficult and for that same reason the criteria for the selection of educators are very demanding," say the directives. The directives examine the qualities seminary educators need, the specific roles of rectors, spiritual directors, teachers and others in the seminary, as well as the place on the seminary staff of lay men and women, and permanent deacons. Beyond the scientific preparation needed, seminary teachers "should acquire good didactic and pedagogical qualities," the directives comment. Seminary educators must be well informed about the constantly changing world of youth as well as about ongoing developments affecting the priesthood. The directives discourage the "proliferation of major seminaries," adding that when existing seminaries are broken up into smaller units the shortage of qualified personnel in most cases becomes more acute. Dioceses and religious orders richer in seminary educators are encouraged to consider loaning personnel to other dioceses or regions where there is a shortage. The Vatican's English translation of the directives follows.

INTRODUCTION

1. Among the various means pointed out by the supreme pontiff John Paul II in the apostolic exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis* for promoting pedagogical style in seminaries, the specific preparation of seminary educators holds first place. In fact, seminary educators occupy the key position that determines the spirit and efficacy of the work of formation. The bishops, therefore, as those primarily responsible for the progress of the seminaries, "first of all should feel their grave responsibility for the formation of those who have been given the task of educating future priests."¹

Having considered the particular demands of this responsibility and its importance in the present circumstances, the Congregation for Catholic Education has thought it appropriate to invite the responsible ecclesiastical authorities to reflect on the present directives and, in accord with local needs, to make decisions with regard to them.

2. The problem that the congregation wishes to bring to their attention is certainly not new. It was already noted in the Second Vatican Council and is felt strongly throughout the whole church. The decree *Optatam Totius* requires that educators in seminaries be prepared "in sound doctrine,

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suitable pastoral experience, and special training in spirituality and teaching methods. To provide this training, special colleges should be established or at least suitable courses should be organized as well as regular meetings of seminary directors."²

3. The conciliar requirements had been further underlined by some recommendations of the extraordinary Synod of Bishops of 1967, then synthesized in No. 30 of the *ratio fundamentalis institutionis sacerdotalis*: "The task of seminary superiors is the most excellent of all arts, one which cannot tolerate an offhand or chance mode of action. Of necessity, therefore, besides natural and supernatural gifts they must have, as each one's duty demands, due spiritual, pedagogical or technical training, which they would best have acquired in special institutions founded or to be founded for this purpose in their own or in other regions." For the fulfillment of such initiatives, they were invited to seek the collaboration of congregations and priestly societies specialized in the direction of seminaries, and of special "technical commissions" of experts to be formed in individual nations.

4. Today, more than 25 years after the Second Vatican Council and the first postconciliar provisions, *Pastores Dabo Vobis* treats the topic in the light of worldwide experiences referred to in numerous interventions of the synod fathers. Moved by a lively concern for the strengthening of the pedagogical efficacy of the seminaries, they re-emphasized the conciliar requirements, putting a strong accent on the collegial, ecclesial and spiritual profile of the educators: "The task of formation of candidates for the priesthood requires not only a certain special preparation of those to whom this work is entrusted, one that is professional, pedagogical, spiritual, human and theological, but also a spirit of communion and of cooperating together to carry out the program so that the unity of the pastoral action of the seminary is always maintained under the leadership of the rector. The body of formation personnel should witness to a truly evangelical lifestyle and total dedication to the Lord. It should enjoy a certain stability, and its members as a rule should live in the seminary community. They should be intimately joined to the bishop, who is the first one responsible for the formation of the priests."³

5. In the present document the Congregation for Catholic Education, with the intention of recalling the various experiences and provisions of the past and of bringing them up to date according to the suggestions of *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, offers bishops and their collaborators in priestly formation some indications that can be useful as criteria for the evaluation of both past and current initiatives and as guidelines for planning for the immediate future.

To achieve this, first some characteristics of the present situation of the educators of the clergy and of their formation will be seen (I), then an examination of the principal responsi-

bilities in this field (II), some proposals of criteria for seminary educators (III) and some indications regarding their formation (IV). In conclusion, some concrete indications will be presented which can help render operative and effective the church's concern for this important ministry (V).

I. ASPECTS OF THE PRESENT SITUATION

An examination of the present situation is necessary in order to become aware of the real necessities in this field, characterized by the scarcity of educators, the increased demands of the educational task, and by various initiatives and experiences that have been recorded in different countries during the last decades.

1. Scarcity of Seminary Educators

6. First of all, one notes the great disproportion between the availability of directing and teaching personnel and the real needs of the seminaries.

There are some satisfying and positive situations in the church, above all in dioceses and nations that, thanks to sound spiritual traditions and to a prudent conciliar reform, have been able to create and maintain active Christian communities animated by a missionary spirit and by the ideal of the priestly vocation. They provide for their own needs and are often able to assist other areas which are in need. Nevertheless, in view of the overall situation, such conditions are unfortunately rare.

"A very grave situation presents itself in particular in the countries of the ex-communist bloc of Central and Eastern Europe, where for many reasons it is not easy to find suitable priests to serve in the seminaries; and when they are found, they cannot always be transferred from their ministries because they are considered indispensable to them."

7. The scarcity of educators is experienced even in many countries with ancient Christian traditions. Following the crisis of past years, the ranks of diocesan and religious clergy have thinned and the average age has greatly increased, while at the same time the complexity of new pastoral responsibilities requires instead an increase of shepherds of souls. A very grave situation presents itself in particular in the countries of the ex-communist bloc of Central and Eastern Europe, where for many reasons it is not easy to find suitable priests to serve in the seminaries; and when they are found, they cannot always be transferred from their ministries because they are considered indispensable to them.

8. Also in a delicate situation are dioceses — above all, in mission territories and in Latin

"*Pastores Dabo Vobis*" (I Will Give You Shepherds), Pope John Paul II's post-synodal apostolic exhortation on the theme of the October 1990 world Synod of Bishops, appeared in *Origins*, Vol. 21, pp. 717ff (April 16, 1992). The theme of the 1990 synod was "The Formation of Priests in the Circumstances of the Present Day."

For a discussion in the apostolic exhortation of seminary educators, see the sections subtitled "The Seminary as an Educational Community" and "The Professors of Theology" on p. 749 of the *Origins* edition. See also in "Pastores Dabo Vobis" the section on p. 746 discussing "The Setting of Priestly Formation."

For coverage in *Origins* of the October 1990 synod on the formation of priests, see in Vol. 20, issue Nos. 18-23.

For a discussion of ecumenical cooperation in seminaries, see the Vatican's 1993 Directory for Ecumenism, in *Origins*, the current volume, esp. pp. 154f (July 29, 1993).

QUOTE FROM A PAST TEXT OF CURRENT INTEREST:

"Though it is true to say that 'seminary work' (as those in it are wont to describe it) has not been easy in the past, seminary work faces particular challenges today.... Just as the apostles found themselves buffeted by winds that seemed out of control and cried out, 'Master, do you not care? We are going to drown!' so too those in today's seminary ministry often experience themselves caught in the conflicting winds of the contemporary church. And at times they must wonder if they are being left to drown.

"But why would the world of the seminary be subject to such conflictual winds? After all, for many the image of seminary is a place of retreat and quiet study. The answer is quite simple. The seminary and its program of priestly formation is not a free-standing phenomenon, something isolated from the life of the church. On the contrary, because the

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seminary prepares men to serve as leaders of the community of faith in prayer and service, the seminary is asked to do so in accord with how that role of service is understood by the church. And such an understanding of presbyteral service reflects a larger understanding of the nature of the church itself.

"Today, however, some 25 years after the closing of the Second Vatican Council, it is obvious that there are significant differences of opinion, one might say even fundamental divisions within the community of faith about the nature of the church and about presbyteral ministry....

"Whether it be from the students they prepare or from the alumni they have sent forth or from the bishops they assist, Sulpicians and others in seminary ministry find themselves buffeted by these and other winds.

"For example: Seminary leaders are told there is need for greater orthodoxy and at the same time of the need for the seminarian to learn theologies sensitive to the racial and cultural diversity of the church. Also, seminary faculties are reminded of the need for a priest to be a person of prayer, and at the same time they are criticized for not providing more managerial skills. Moreover, seminary professors are encouraged to nurture the unique identity of presbyteral ministry, but they are also exhorted to provide a collaborative sense of ecclesial ministry. And the list goes on....

"My friends ... I would suggest that it is important that as a Sulpician community you pursue the task of nurturing and sustaining a threefold spirituality that will empower your special ministry: a threefold spirituality for teachers and others in seminary ministry that will recognize, as is said in today's reading from Job, (1) that 'by reason of his power God is supreme' and 'what teacher can be compared to him?' and (2) a spirituality that will sustain a discipline of life unique to individual as well as

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America — that are registering a noticeable increase in candidates for the priesthood. They aspire to organize their own seminaries, for which, however, it is not easy for them to find a sufficient number of adequately prepared educators. The improvisations and makeshift solutions upon which at times they rely turn out to be problematic and insufficient to guarantee a good level of spiritual, intellectual and pastoral formation for the future clergy.

9. In order to overcome such difficulties, some dioceses have received and in various cases continue to receive generous help from religious institutes. However, this collaboration is diminishing as a result of the vocational difficulties of the institutes themselves. In not a few cases the religious have had to reduce their service to the seminaries or even suspend it due to the lack of personnel prepared for such responsibilities.

2. Need for Pedagogical Renewal

10. The complexity of the situation in which the seminaries find themselves is confirmed in the detailed analysis of the spiritual conditions of the world and of the church of today found in the first chapter of *Pastores Dabo Vobis*. The responsibilities of seminary formation have become more difficult, and for that same reason the criteria for the selection of educators are very demanding. The need to promote a more dynamic and active pedagogy open to the realities of life and attentive to the process of personal growth, which is ever more differentiated and complex, demands gifts of proven solidity to a degree almost unknown in the past. Furthermore, to be an educator today calls for a constant effort to keep up to date, above all in the field of one's specific competence. It also requires the capacity to follow the whole formation process assiduously and attentively, constantly aware of the spiritual needs of the community and of every individual. This carries a constant and absorbing personal commitment which presupposes the necessary psychological and physical capacity of the candidates proposed for the work of formation.

11. Another circumstance brought to light by the apostolic exhortation that can at times render more difficult the selection of ideal formation personnel is the need to have priests available who are animated by the spirit of communion and collaboration, who possess "a knowledge of how to work in groups."⁴ Therefore, the selection and formation of individual educators, even those personally very gifted, are insufficient if they are not capable of constituting a true and proper "teaching team" whose members are united in spirit and collaborate fraternally. For this reason it is necessary to choose candidates who seek authentic priestly ideals, correct spirituality and doctrine, and who know how to commit themselves in a common project of formation. Experience shows that without true teamwork it is impossible to make the seminary function well. This constitutes, on the one hand, the promise of real progress in the work of formation, but on the other hand increases the difficulty of finding priests who are apt for this type of activity.

3. Initiatives and Experience in Action

12. The prior or initial preparation of educators has been attempted only in those dioceses and nations where a certain availability of vocations and priests allows a good selection of formation personnel in relation to the needs of their respective seminaries.

But even in these cases, and still more so in all the other situations, more weight is given to the "charism" and to the personal gifts of the candidates than to the need for a specific preparation and for specialized studies. Generally, one is content with a solid theological and spiritual formation and a good psychological equilibrium, trusting in the formation to be acquired successively through teaching experience and attendance at meetings and encounters.

The idea of special institutes for the educators of the clergy has consequently not yet found a sufficiently ample realization. Therefore, an analytical reflection on current experimentation is not yet possible.

13. The practice of holding periodical meetings and courses of short and medium duration with the goal of bringing the educators up to date is more widely diffused. In general, these have been seen to be very useful, above all when they take place in a serene and serious spiritual atmosphere under the guidance of bishops and in demanding and structured programs. A more careful evaluation however is required in the case of initiatives proposed by very "specialized" persons or groups, above all in the field of psychology. These are valid to the extent that they express a pedagogical position rooted in evangelical values and in the ecclesial orientation appropriate to candidates for the priesthood, but they are less fruitful and even at times a source of disorientation when they do not fully satisfy this condition because of unilateral and questionable methods and content.

Regarding this, it should be emphasized that the magisterium of the pope, the documents of the Holy See and the *rationes institutionis sacerdotalis* of the national episcopal conferences, approved by the competent Roman offices, remain an indispensable reference point and criterion of inspiration.

14. In various cases the assistance of "technical commissions," which take their concrete form and name according to the local circumstances and traditions, is employed and duly appreciated, above all in those places where their composition is balanced, their members animated by an authentic ecclesial spirit and where they avoid the risk of assuming inappropriate responsibility for the running of seminaries and for vocational discernment.

It has not yet been possible to form such commissions in nations with a small number of dioceses where the organizational demands in this respect are not so great.

The contribution of religious congregations and of priestly societies institutionally linked to the formation of the clergy has proved very valuable. They show a praiseworthy availability and spirit of initiative in this area.

15. The scientific and didactic updating of formation personnel is often promoted with a certain assiduousness by associations that exist in the diverse theological and philosophical disciplines. Their annual congresses and weeks of study, already routine especially in large nations, are normally planned and directed by professors of the large ecclesiastical faculties in collaboration with the episcopal commissions for priestly formation or for the doctrine of the faith. The experiences of the past few years have shown that such cooperation and understanding are increasingly necessary as a guarantee of a correct orientation and one which responds to the true spiritual and pastoral needs of priestly formation.

In recent times a valuable teaching aid has been offered to educators in seminaries through the publishing of textbooks and bibliographical appendices which some faculties are promoting with laudable zeal, responding in this way to the explicit desire of many bishops and seminarians. Such aids merit therefore a sincere recognition, and they are to be encouraged.

16. The initiatives briefly noted here, even if they have not fully achieved the goals fixed by the official norms of the church, are nevertheless truly efficacious. They are to be considered an important step in the renewal of seminaries. Where these have taken place in a serene and constructive spirit, the life of seminaries has been strengthened. The exchange of ideas and practical experiences, of information regarding the use of the pedagogical sciences and the communication of the results of scientific studies have been and are of inestimable value to educators. There are also many other contributions: greater doctrinal, spiritual and pastoral depth with regard to priestly life and ministry; commentaries on the relevant documents of the popes and of the Holy See; wider personal contacts with colleagues and experts; and, not least in importance, closer ties with bishops; in this way they better sense themselves aided and understood by the bishops.

II. EDUCATORS AND THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR THEIR FORMATION

17. As is clear from the Gospels, the formation of the apostles is a responsibility that Jesus reserved for himself, attributing a fundamental importance to it for the future of the church. He then entrusted this responsibility to the apostles so that they might continue his work in the same way, with the special assistance of the Holy Spirit, and might become in turn educators of their disciples and collaborators. For this reason, it can be said that the Divine Teacher is the first inspirer and model for every educator and that "there cannot exist any genuine formational work for the priesthood without the influence of the Spirit of Christ."⁵

The uninterrupted tradition of the church bears testimony that bishops, successors of the apostles, have always exercised this mission as educators of the ministers of Christ at the service of the people of the new covenant, while fulfilling their inalienable responsibility in different

ways according to different circumstances of time and place, and using various forms of mediation and collaboration. In fact, this responsibility generally included the task of choosing and preparing suitable educators for the future clergy.

18. "The first representative of Christ in priestly formation is the bishop":⁶ In this way the postsynodal apostolic exhortation affirms the responsibility of the bishop for the initial and continuing formation of his clergy.

The bishop exercises the duty and the proper and exclusive right which belong to the church in the formation of those who are destined for the sacred ministry⁷ when he chooses, calls, forms and admits to the sacrament of orders the candidates whom he considers fit. From this formational responsibility concerning the candidates for the priesthood comes the need that he "should make a point of visiting them often and in some way 'being' with them."⁸

However, he cannot normally carry out this ministry alone. The vocational discernment and the formative responsibilities are of such complexity and importance that they are greater than what is possible for one person alone.

The bishop therefore calls other people to share with him a great part of his responsibilities in this field: He should choose collaborators who are particularly apt and attend to their formation with special attention and solicitude. He needs "priests of exemplary life" and "maturity and strength of personality ... both from the human and from the Gospel points of view."⁹

The superiors (or administrators) and teachers placed at the service of seminaries are therefore the closest collaborators of the bishop in his responsibility to form the clergy of his diocese. They should be aware that they have received this responsibility from the bishop, exercising it in close union with him and in conformity with his directives. It is not a private but a public activity, one that enters into the very structure of the church: "The seminary is in itself an original experience of the church's life. In it the bishop is present through the ministry of the rector and the service of coresponsibility and communion fostered by him with the other teachers."¹⁰ Therefore they carry out an eminently ecclesial service characterized by fraternal relations, by collaboration with colleagues and by hierarchical dependence on the local bishop, in communion with the supreme pontiff, sincerely heeding his directives for the universal church.

However, carrying out responsibilities of leadership in a seminary also requires a just autonomy of action for the rector, determined by the Code of Canon Law (cf. Canons 238, 260, 261), and by the statutes and regulations of the seminary.

19. Analogously, in due proportion and always in reference to Canon 659.3 of the Code of Canon Law, one can speak of the right and duty of the major superiors of religious congregations and of canonically erected societies of apostolic life to be able to give to their communities the priests necessary for the fulfillment of their mission. Such rights and duties actually include also for them, in conformity with No. 31 of the "direc-

communal needs, a spirituality that will provide time throughout the school year for Sulpician Fathers to grow in faith. Finally, (3) a spirituality that will allow you Sulpicians to do the impossible — namely 'to harvest the winds.'

"To harvest the winds.' What do I mean by that elusive poetic image 'to harvest the winds'? I mean that as scholars of the tradition, as students of the spiritual and as practitioners of ministry, the Sulpician community has the opportunity, under the guidance of the Spirit, to listen to the competing forces in the contemporary church; has the opportunity to cull all of them for their wisdom; and has the opportunity to develop a synthesis that will serve the church of the future.

"To harvest the winds.' For example, I believe there is a way in which one can celebrate the diversity of educational and life experience backgrounds found in today's seminary student community and at the same time provide the structure of critical thinking necessary for them to study theology. Another example: It is possible to become a student of the rich history of the church and of the authentic teaching of the ecclesial magisterium while still being open to the development of theology and ecclesial teaching."

(Excerpted from "The Conflicting Winds That Buffet Seminary Educators," by Bishop James Malone of Youngstown, Ohio, in *Origins*, Vol. 21, pp. 310ff Oct. 17, 1991.)

tive regarding formation in religious institutes," the responsibility of providing for the preparation of the educators for the formation communities in which the members of these families of consecrated life prepare themselves for the ministerial priesthood.

20. Keeping in mind the indications of the apostolic exhortation *Christifideles Laici* and of the apostolic letter *Mulieris Dignitatem* cited in *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, it may be appropriate to include in the formation work of the seminary, "in ways that are prudent and adapted to the different cultural contexts, the cooperation also of lay faithful, both men and women, in the work of training future priests. They are to be selected with care ... according to their particular charisms and proven competence."¹¹ There may also be opportunities for fruitful collaboration on the part of permanent deacons. The activity of these persons, "suitably coordinated and integrated in the primary educational responsibilities of those entrusted with the formation of future priests,"¹² will enrich the process of formation, above all in those areas in which lay faithful and deacons normally have a particular competence such as family spirituality, the difficult questions of the sciences, bioethics, ecology, the history of art, the means of social communication, and classical and modern languages.

"Educators can also receive useful formative contributions from priests actively caring for souls, from lay faithful who are engaged in the apostolate and from ecclesial associations and movements. The educators can take advantage of their experiences regarding the problems that everyday life poses to faith and pastoral care."

21. Educators can also receive useful formative contributions from priests actively caring for souls, from lay faithful who are engaged in the apostolate and from ecclesial associations and movements. The educators can take advantage of their experiences regarding the problems that everyday life poses to faith and pastoral care.¹³ A close and lively relationship of service and mutual esteem among the seminary, the presbyterate and the diocesan community is an indispensable condition for the complete fruitfulness of these contributions to the formation of the educators.

This being rooted in the

community of the clergy and faithful shows itself to be very beneficial above all in dioceses with long and sound traditions of priestly formation. It is necessary therefore to appreciate them and profit from them in the preparation of the candidates for the work of formation, seeking not only to conserve these traditions but also to transmit them, newly enriched, to future generations.

22. The whole Christian community should sense the problem of the selection and formation of seminary educators as its own. It is an aspect that cannot be isolated from the life and responsibilities of the diocesan community. Experience teaches that where the faith is vital, the charisms brought forth by God can work fruitfully, relying on prayer and on the support and solidarity of many.

Nonetheless, the direct responsibility of the formation of the educators in seminaries and in religious houses falls upon bishops and major superiors. They are the ones who should concern themselves with guaranteeing for the collaborators they choose an adequate, specific formation, either through personal contact or through suitable institutes or similar means.

III. CRITERIA FOR THE SELECTION OF THE EDUCATORS

23. The church is very demanding regarding the criteria for the selection of educators. According to the decree *Optatam Totius*, "seminary superiors and professors should be chosen from among the best."¹⁴ Regarding this point, the council echoes the encyclical of Pius XI *Ad Catholici Sacerdotii*, which addresses to the bishops the following exhortation:

"Be careful especially in the choice of moderators and teachers ... and assign to sacred colleges of this type priests endowed with the greatest virtue; and do not hesitate to remove them from duties which, though in appearance of much greater import, can in no way be compared with this foremost duty, whose elements are supplied by nothing else."¹⁵

This exact duty is to be understood in the sense of an urgent call to consider the problem of educators as one of the most important pastoral priorities. Nothing which can give seminaries the directing and teaching personnel which they need should remain untried in the diocese.

24. The essential qualities required, to which the cited documents allude, have been more explicitly specified in *Pastores Dabo Vobis*,¹⁶ in the *ratio fundamentalis*¹⁷ and in the national *rationes*. Among other things, mention is made of the need of possessing a strong spirit of faith, an active priestly and pas-

toral consciousness, stability in one's own vocation, a clear ecclesial sense, a skill for human relations and leadership, a mature psychological, emotional and affective equilibrium, intelligence united with prudence and wisdom, a true cultivation of the mind and heart, the capacity to collaborate, a profound knowledge of the mind of a young person and a community spirit.

25. The vocation of the educator implies, on the one hand, a certain "charism," which is expressed in gifts of nature and of grace and, on the other, certain capacities and attitudes that must be acquired. In every consideration regarding the personality of the educator, this double aspect must be kept in mind; each of the characteristics desirable in a seminary educator presents elements which are, in a manner of speaking, innate and others which must be progressively developed by means of study and experience.

Specification of the criteria for the selection of educators always presupposes an ideal which reflects the various qualities mentioned above, together with many others that may be deduced from the ensemble of the formation objectives indicated in *Pastores Dabo Vobis*. In the following sections an attempt will be made to present an ample selection of these without however pretending that all of these gifts and qualities are perfectly realized in any one person. The purpose is simply to offer a point of reference in the search for and choice of educators, which may also serve as criterion for programming their formation and evaluating their service. While keeping in mind the limits imposed by the actual circumstances and by human possibilities, it is useful to place the ideal somewhat higher than these foreseeable limits, so that it may constitute a constant challenge and stimulus to overcome these.

A. Traits Common to All Seminary Educators

1. Spirit of Faith

26. The purpose and goal of formation in the seminary can be understood only in the light of faith. For this reason the educator should be first of all a man of sound, well-motivated, convinced and profoundly lived faith in such a way that it shows in all his words and actions. A faith animated by charity radiates in his life the joy and hope of a total self-donation to Christ and to his church. This is manifested in the choice of an evangelical way of life and in a sincere adherence to the moral and spiritual values of the priesthood, which he seeks to communicate with sensitivity and conviction. Amid the variety of opinions in the dog-

matic, moral and pedagogical field, the educator is inspired by criteria dictated by faith, following with heartfelt and intelligent submissiveness the indications of the magisterium. In this way he knows himself to be a "teacher of the faith"¹⁸ for his students, helping them to discover faith's beauty and its values for living, and shows himself to be sensitive and attentive to their journey of faith, helping them to overcome their difficulties.

27. The educator who lives by faith teaches more by what he is than by what he says. His faith is manifested in a coherent priestly life animated by apostolic zeal and by a lively missionary sense. "Directors and teachers need to be keenly aware of how greatly the outcome of seminary formation depends on their own manner of thinking and acting."¹⁹ They manifest, in a simple and convincing manner, the spiritual richness and beauty as well as the fruitfulness of good works which arise from a faith lived in the form of ministry and priestly life. He who has found within the horizon of faith the meaning of his life and his own priesthood is capable of radiating the joy of his own vocation, communicating it to others.

The spirit of faith should be accompanied and sustained by love of prayer. Seminarians have more need today than ever to be taught "the deep human meaning and religious value of silence"²⁰ as a condition for knowing and experiencing the authentic sense of prayer, of the liturgy, of eucharistic worship and of a sincere Marian devotion. The teachers of faith should therefore become true masters of prayer and exemplary liturgical celebration for their students.

2. Pastoral Sense

28. "The whole formation imparted to candidates for the priesthood aims at preparing them to enter into communion with the charity of Christ the Good Shepherd. Hence, their formation in its different aspects must have a fundamentally pastoral character."²¹ All of the educators should concern themselves with turning every aspect of formation toward this principal aim of the seminary. In particular the professors, without detriment to the proper academic character of their task, should stress the pastoral value of study, having it contribute to "revealing to the minds of the students with ever increasing clarity the mystery of Christ ... in such a way that the students will see the meaning of ecclesiastical studies, their interrelationship and their pastoral intent."²²

The educators will draw this sensitivity from their own participation in the pastoral charity of Christ, experienced in

the ministry they engaged in before their appointment and generously cultivated during their service as educators, though within the obvious limits allowed by their commitment to the seminary. In their various contributions to formation, they should seek to open the seminarians up ever more each day to the "problem that is strongly felt these days ... the demand for the evangelization of cultures and the inculturation of the message of faith,"²³ helping them to "love and live the essential missionary dimension of the church and her different pastoral activities."²⁴

3. Spirit of Communion

29. The educators should live in "the strictest harmony in spirit and action. Among themselves and with their students they should constitute a family such as to translate into practice the Lord's prayer 'that they be one' (cf. Jn. 17:11) and to nourish in each student the joy of his calling."²⁵

This "communion," authoritatively called for by the council, closely concerns the nature of the ministerial priesthood and the exercise of its ministry. As *Pastores Dabo Vobis* states in this regard, "precisely because within the church's life the priest is a man of communion in his relations with all people, he must be a man of mission and dialogue."²⁶ It can be said that the educator is authentic in his service and responds to the demands of his priestly ideal only in the measure to which he knows how to commit himself and sacrifice himself for the unity of the community and when in his thoughts, in his attitudes and in his prayer he reflects concern for the union and the cohesion of the community entrusted to him. This aspect of formational activity requires natural gifts and gifts of grace, and is cultivated through a special docility to the Holy Spirit, who is the link of unity in the heart of the divine life and in the life of the church.

Inspired by an authentic "ecclesiology of communion,"²⁷ the educators will be able to teach the seminary community to "witness in all their relationships to fraternity, service and a common quest for the truth as well as a concern for the promotion of justice and peace. This is the case above all with the brethren of other churches and Christian denominations; but also extends to the followers of other religions; to all people of good will."²⁸

30. As we have already mentioned, this principle of communion manifests itself in a prompt and fraternal capacity to collaborate.

The educators should be capable of a close relationship with the rector, who has the most important and weighty re-

sponsibility in the governance of the seminary, especially when dealing with establishing or safeguarding the unity of the formational program. The elaboration of the rule of life, of the programs of study and of the spiritual, pastoral and liturgical formation requires a mutual working together and a willingness to consider the common objectives and criteria of discernment given by the church and the bishop as normative and as prevailing over personal points of view.

"The teachers should be aware of forming a single body concerned for the interrelationships and the unity among the different disciplines. This task appears difficult in these times of widespread theological pluralism and the fragmentation of teaching staff, often forced to have recourse to the occasional collaboration of visiting professors."

This spirit of collaboration and understanding is of fundamental importance especially in the adoption of criteria of vocational discernment for the admission of candidates to the seminary and to holy orders. In this matter, while respecting the diversity of roles and responsibilities, all the members of the administration should feel themselves jointly responsible, showing a capacity for sound evaluations which are in conformity with the norms of the church. But also in other circumstances it is always necessary to keep in mind that not just the rector or spiritual director is responsible for the success of formation, but all the members of the educational team.

31. The spirit of collaboration that should be established among the teachers of the different disciplines merits its own consideration. The teachers should be aware of forming a single body concerned for the interrelationships and the unity among the different disciplines.²⁹ This task appears difficult in these times of widespread theological pluralism and the fragmentation of teaching staff, often forced to have recourse to the occasional collaboration of visiting professors. This difficulty creates the need for an even greater capacity to work together collaboratively.

32. A particular problem arises from the need to establish a good harmony between theo- 563

logical teaching and the formational policy of the seminary, with its vision of the priesthood and of the various questions concerning the life of the church. This spirit of understanding, which must be continually strengthened in the institutes which have their own theological teaching staff, is even more necessary in those cases in which studies are carried out at theological faculties or in other institutes of theological studies. To such an end, "the teacher of theology, like any other educator, should remain in communion and sincerely cooperate with all the other people who are involved in the formation of future priests and offer with scientific precision, generosity, humility and enthusiasm his own original and expert contribution."³⁰

Considering the fluidity and complexity of the problems in the theological, pastoral and formational field today, it should be clear that the desired unity of spirit and action remains for the educators an ideal that is acquired day by day and cannot be achieved all at once. Their capacity for collaboration and their sense of communion are put to a continuous and necessary test, and require therefore particularly balanced personalities who are gifted in this regard.

4. Human Maturity and Psychological Equilibrium

33. This aspect of the personality is difficult to define abstractly, but it corresponds concretely to the capacity to create and maintain a serene atmosphere, to keep friendly relationships which express understanding and affability, and to possess a constant self-control. Far from withdrawing into himself, the educator should take an interest in his work and in those who surround him as well as the problems that he has to deal with daily. Personifying the ideal that he proposes, he becomes an example to imitate, capable of true leadership and therefore capable of involving the student in the project of his own formation.

The importance of this fundamental personality trait must be constantly kept in mind in order to avoid pedagogical failures, which can happen in the case of educators who are unsatisfied, stressed and anxious. They pass their difficulties on to the seminarians, depressing them and hindering their normal human and spiritual development.

34. Intimately linked with maturity is wisdom, understood as the right consciousness of oneself, of one's own value and of one's own limits, honestly recognized and serenely accepted. A mature educator possesses a good critical detachment from himself, is open to learn, knows how to accept

criticisms and observations and is ready and willing to correct himself. Only in this way will he know how to be justly demanding also with others while not forgetting the difficulties and limits of human capabilities. A good and constant predisposition to wise, balanced decisions and to patience will assure that a sense of duty is never to be confused with a discouraging rigorism and that an understanding love should not become a weakness that gives in.

"The importance of this fundamental personality trait must be constantly kept in mind in order to avoid pedagogical failures, which can happen in the case of educators who are unsatisfied, stressed and anxious. They pass their difficulties on to the seminarians, depressing them and hindering their normal human and spiritual development."

5. Clear and Mature Capacity to Love

35. As an integral part and essential consequence of the above-mentioned overall maturity, it is important that educators have a good, mature affectivity. This term is understood as the free and stable possession of one's own affective world: the capacity to love and to allow oneself to do so in a right and purified way. He who possesses this capacity is normally inclined to a self-giving attention to the other person, to an intimate understanding of his problems and to a clear perception of his real good. Such a person also appreciates the gratitude, respect and affection of others, even while not exacting these and never making them the condition of his own willingness to serve. He who is affectively mature will never bind others to himself; instead, he will be able to form in them an equally self-giving affectivity, concentrated and founded on the love received from God in Jesus Christ and in the end always referred to him.

The postsynodal exhortation underlines in more than one context the importance of this aspect for the formation of future priests: It is not possible to guarantee them the necessary growth toward the serene and liberating possession of this mature affectivity if the educators are not examples and models of it in the first place.³¹

36. The educators therefore have

need of an authentic pedagogical sense, that is, an attitude of spiritual paternity expressed in an attentive, while at the same time respectful and discreet, accompaniment of the growth of the person, united to a healthy capacity for self-reflection and lived in a climate of reciprocal trust and esteem. It is a special talent that cannot be improvised. Pedagogical sense is to a certain degree innate, and cannot be learned like a theory nor substituted for by purely exterior attitudes; but at the same time it can be developed and perfected by the attentive and self-examining exercise of the task of formation and a good knowledge of the principles of a sound psychopedagogy.

6. Listening, Dialogue and The Capacity for Communication

37. The success of the formational relationship depends in great part on these three capacities. On the one hand, there is the educator with his role of counseling and guiding, and on the other there is the student called to adopt an attitude of free initiative. In this relationship a great deal depends on psychologically well-chosen and well-spaced-out interventions of the educator. It is necessary to avoid behavior which is too passive and fails to promote dialogue, but also to avoid an excessive invasiveness which may block it. The capacity for real and profound communication succeeds in touching the center of the person of the student; it is not satisfied with an external perception, in essence dangerously deceptive, of the values which are communicated; it stirs up vital dynamisms of capacity for relationships that bring into play the most authentic and radical motivations of the person, who feels accepted, stimulated and appreciated. Such contacts should be frequent, to measure progress, to orient goals, adapting the formational assistance to the pace of each one and succeeding in this way in individualizing the level at which the true problems and difficulties of each person are grasped.

38. To be capable of this, the educators should have not only a normal perspicacity, but also fundamental capacities in the human sciences of interpersonal communication and the dynamics of human decision. The youth of today are for the most part generous, but fragile. They feel a strong, at times excessive, need for security and understanding, and they show the marks of a family and social atmosphere that is not always healthy. It is necessary to attend to and integrate this need with great spiritual and pedagogical tact.

39. To fulfill his duty efficaciously, the educator should be a good communicator, capable of presenting clearly those

values and notions which are the object of formation, adapted to the receptivity of the students. The seminary, therefore, in the very formulation of the educational task should become a school of communication that while stimulating its true vitality prepares future priests for the delicate tasks of evangelization.

In a recent document, the Congregation for Catholic Education speaks about the need to create a climate of communication among the students and with the educators that would train them to engage infrequent interpersonal and group dialogue, to be attentive to correctness of language, clearness of exposition and logical argumentation. This will serve as a corrective to the passivity which can be occasioned by the one-dimensional communications and images of the mass media.³²

Also teachers, to the extent that it is their responsibility, should cultivate the greatest possible ability to communicate, updating their own language and keeping in mind the demands of a proper inculturation of the truths of faith: "That all concerned without distinction, united in heart and will, should apply themselves to achieving that communion which, according to the Christian faith, constitutes the primary and ultimate end of every communication."³³

40. It is also the task of the educators to maintain the vitality of the formation community to orient it and to stimulate it so that it achieves its ends. This activity demands foresight, execution and the guiding of processes in which attitudes of responsible participation and openness to a generous and active commitment within the community can mature. This requires a knowledge of how to manage the specific tasks and diverse roles of the community of educators and the subdivisions of the larger community of the seminary, with a wise selection of means adapted for the coordination, motivation and direction of all energies toward the set goal.

Aside from certain natural gifts, the educator should acquire a knowledge of the methodological principles that rule the organization and the smooth operation of a complex network of relationships and responsibilities.

The attention which must be given to this matter, for example through the use of group dynamics or active teaching methods, has no other end than to obtain a greater and more profound involvement of the seminarians in the formative process, in which all should share and not merely undergo. Indeed, they "must not forget that the candidate himself is a necessary and irreplaceable agent in his own formation."³⁴

7. Positive and Critical Attention to Modern Culture

41. Inspired by the cultural richness of Christianity and rooted in biblical, liturgical and patristic sources, the educator of future priests must have a broad knowledge of contemporary culture. The relationships between educator and student and their efficacy are greatly helped by a knowledge of all that contributes to form the mentality and way of life of society today. This can be applied to the Western industrialized world and to the indigenous cultures of mission territories as much as to a particular social class of laborers, of farm workers, etc. Such an intellectual resource helps the educator to understand the seminarians better and to develop an appropriate pedagogy for them, situating it in the cultural context of our times. For example, the variety of currents of thought, the accelerated variability of political and social conditions, the literary, musical and artistic works generally poured out at great speed by the mass media, and the technological and scientific conquests with their effects on life should all be taken into consideration. A profound, positive and critical awareness of these phenomena contributes notably to an organic and well-thought-out transmission of contemporary culture, making it easier for the students to form an interior synthesis in the light of faith. The educator also should have formed this synthesis himself and should continually update it through the use of a wide scientific, philosophical and theological knowledge, without which there is no true integration of human knowing.³⁵

42. This quality presupposes that the educator has a healthy openness of spirit. Far from withdrawing and closing in on himself, he should be sensitive to the problems of the persons and social groups of the whole church. He should be a "magnanimous" man; that is, a man whose widespread vision permits him to understand events and their causes, their complexity and their social and religious implications, properly distancing himself from any attitude which is superficially emotional and linked to the ephemeral and the transitory.

B. Qualifications for the Principal Offices

43. Besides the qualities common to all, the concrete image of the educator takes on certain nuances according to the different duties entrusted to him. It is appropriate to refer briefly to some of them.

In order to become more aware of the qualities that should mark the rector of the seminary, it is necessary to con-

sider the various functions and responsibilities that his office entails. He represents the bishop; he is the first one responsible for the life of the seminary besides being its representative in both ecclesiastical and civil settings.³⁶ He follows and promotes the formation of the students under all its aspects, seeing to the harmony and reciprocal integration of every aspect. After hearing and evaluating the counsel and advice of his collaborators, he has the responsibility of making synthetic judgments to be expressed to the bishop regarding the suitability for admission to the seminary, to the various phases of formation and to holy orders. If the formational task is above all the creative and prudent projection and channeling of relations and experiences, the rector is its first agent and coordinator. It is up to him to assure the unity of the direction it takes and its harmony with the choices of the bishop and the church, assisting its realization in the widest possible collaboration on the part of all.

It is easy to see how much is asked for in terms of experience and authority in order to act in this complex of difficult administrative and educational responsibilities. In fact the requirements are great prudence, wisdom and balance.

44. The role of the spiritual director or father is also very demanding. The responsibility for the spiritual journey of the seminarians in the internal forum falls upon him as well as the coordination of the various exercises of piety and of the liturgical life of the seminary. He is also the coordinator of the other priests authorized by the bishop to give spiritual direction to the students as well as of the confessors in order to assure unity of criteria for the discernment of the vocation. Beyond the gifts of wisdom, affective maturity and pedagogical sense, he should have at his disposition a solid basis of formation in theological, spiritual and pedagogical culture, together with a special sensitivity to the processes of the interior life of the students.

45. Usually, especially in large seminaries, there is also a vice rector who assists the rector in areas of seminary life assigned to him and who replaces him when he is absent. He should show strong pedagogical gifts, a joyful love of the service he renders and a spirit of collaboration. Similar attitudes are also needed from the other collaborators: the business manager, the coordinator of pastoral activities, the prefect of studies, the librarian, the coordinators of various activities and those associated in various ways and at different levels with the responsibilities of formation.

46. According to the directives of the church, the profes-

sors should consider themselves true formation personnel even when the scholastic or academic institution is distinct from that of the seminary. They contribute to the formation of the future priests by means of a very important and delicate role: Instruction should nurture a solid mentality of faith that will enable the seminarians to become servants of the Gospel and teachers of the people of God. Regarding this formational responsibility, *Pastores Dabo Vobis* affirms that the professors "often have a greater influence on the development of the priest's personality than other educators."³⁷

It is therefore necessary that the professors be particularly sensitive to transmitting a complete and sound doctrine even while not neglecting the appropriate study of questions in greater depth as well as of the problems which may be present. To them falls the task of guaranteeing the overall growth of an adequate competence in the humanistic, philosophical and theological disciplines which will lead to a profound assimilation of the Christian mystery, complete and directed toward the pastoral ministry.

The teacher must show that his own knowledge, especially theological, has become a spiritual patrimony for him, an intimately assimilated value that has illuminated and transformed his life. In this sense, teaching should become a discourse made by a praying and believing subject in whom the understanding of the mystery coincides with an interior bond with it. One of the fundamental gifts of a seminary professor, therefore, beyond scientific and didactic competence is his ability to be a convinced witness of faith.

47. The long and detailed list of qualities required of formation personnel in seminaries should not lead one to forget that the suitability of a person does not result from the juxtaposition of these characteristics. A true maturity and fullness of gifts arises from the harmonious and integrated ensemble of elements possessed in depth. It is therefore necessary to consider the personality of the candidates for this ministry in his most fundamental attitudes and convictions, and in their totality. With reference to this the evaluation of the individual aspects of his spiritual physiognomy can be made appropriately.

IV. THE FORMATION OF THE EDUCATORS

48. Having specified the identity of the educator with its various requisites as the condition for an accurate selection of the candidates, the problem arises of a solid preparation for the duties involved. *Pastores Dabo Vobis*

underlines the necessity of a "special preparation of those to whom this work is entrusted, one that is professional, pedagogical, spiritual, human and theological."³⁸ This includes an initial phase, possibly before the office is received, and a successive phase of periodical updating — that is, continuing formation.

A. The Initial Phase

1. Diversity of Itinerary

49. The future educators present, in general, different formational needs depending on their studies and activities prior to their appointment and according to the diverse duties to which they are called.

Future teachers are in a better situation in this regard when, possibly after a suitable period of direct pastoral experience, they can dedicate themselves to specialized studies in the area of their competence. For the other educators — rectors, spiritual directors and collaborators — the path is different. There are few possibilities of obtaining previous specialized preparation for such a task in an institute for the formation of educators of the clergy, either because such institutes are still very few or because the conditions of ministerial service in which they find themselves generally do not permit them to dedicate themselves completely and for a sufficient length of time to such preparatory studies. There are many obstacles to the concrete realization of the recommendations of the council and of the synods. Therefore, great flexibility, joined with a sense of realism, is necessary in order to give the initial phase of the formation a useful and consistent program.

"It is important to distinguish between the fundamental requisites necessary for a basic preparation that must be required from the beginning and the various capacities and knowledge which can be acquired and cultivated even at a later time."

50. Holding firm to the goal of a special preparation beyond that common to all priests, it is necessary to seek within the variety of means and situations the most appropriate ways to attain it. Where the resources of personnel and means allow, the future educators should receive a solid previous preparation. In other cases

the preparatory phase will necessarily be combined with other habitual occupations and even with the beginning of work in the seminary.

51. There are dioceses which, to prevent precarious and makeshift solutions, program the selection and preparation of the educators in a gradual and remote way. Taking care not to confer disproportionate responsibility too soon in a way that would be inappropriate and educationally unhelpful, certain individuals who show signs of being suitable for educational work can be singled out during the seminary years and entrusted with some initial task of organizing others and of service to the community. After ordination, they can be placed in ministries the nature of which would stimulate the growth of and provide the possibility to evaluate such capacities. Finally, it is possible to begin their direct involvement in the formational community of the seminary with duties of collaboration such as that of assistant or vice rector, guided and sustained by their older and more experienced confreres. Such an itinerary, joined to attendance at meetings and courses of spirituality, pedagogy and psychology, which are easily available today in various academic centers, can prepare a priest to become a rector or spiritual director, allowing the bishop at the same time to weigh carefully the candidate's capacity and overall maturity.

52. Whatever type of formational itinerary is chosen, it is necessary that in every case there be a serious program, examined in every detail regarding time, methods and contents. It is important to distinguish between the fundamental requisites necessary for a basic preparation that must be required from the beginning and the various capacities and knowledge which can be acquired and cultivated even at a later time.

2. Fundamental Lines of Formation

a. Doctrinal preparation

53. An ample and thorough doctrinal preparation is indispensable and must precede the taking up of any formational work, not only for professors but for all educators. One possible indication of suitability is that of having made good use of the philosophical-theological studies before ordination and, desirably, the earning of an academic degree is some ecclesiastical science.

It is necessary to determine that the aforementioned theological culture of the educators have some important characteristics.

—The clear perception of the com-

mon doctrine of the church, in conformity with the teachings of the magisterium and the consequent discernment of the limits of theological pluralism.

—Deep and motivated convictions regarding the importance of a sound philosophical and theological formation against the tendencies toward a superficial pragmatism and pastoral “immediatism.”

—A deeply assimilated theological culture in contact with life, which enables them to be apt for dialogue with the students in order to deepen their doctrinal patrimony and prepare them for their future pastoral duties.

—A suitable updating in the sacred disciplines so as to maintain a fruitful dialogue with the professors and an exchange of ideas regarding the formational problems of the students.

—A lively ecclesial sense joined with a consciousness of the nature and mission of the various states of life within the church.

—A special missionary and ecumenical sensitivity with regard to the problems of life in the church, the challenges of evangelization and the proper ways of inculturation of the faith.

54. In the theological background of the educator, clarity of ideas about the priesthood, its ministry and the conditions of life that it requires has a particular prominence. A good knowledge of historical, theological and pastoral problems is necessary, enabling the educator to give a secure orientation to the seminarians and respond in a pertinent and persuasive way to the difficulties that are raised by these problems. In the vastness of material to be treated, *Pastores Dabo Vobis* highlights how “the importance of a careful preparation for priestly celibacy, especially in the present social and cultural situations,” requires that those responsible for priestly formation “establish principles, offer criteria and give assistance for discernment in this matter.”³⁹ This presupposes a good consciousness of the pertinent indications of the pontifical magisterium and of the directives and practice of the Roman Curia, of sure scientific data, as well as of the judgments and exchange of experiences of expert educators.

It is particularly important not to forget the necessity of knowing exactly the various canonical norms regarding the admission of candidates to the seminary and to orders⁴⁰ as well as the norms concerning the running of the seminary in its various aspects.

b. Spiritual preparation

55. As for the specific spiritual preparation in the strict sense, besides the qualities common to every good priest it

is necessary to guarantee in the educators the formation of certain attitudes of great importance in this work:

—A true liberty of spirit which renders the educator sensitive and attentive to the movements of grace in order to be able to discern the signs of the divine will in the life of the candidates entrusted to his guidance.

—A spirituality free from every exaggerated subjectivism and rooted in the tradition of the church, which will render the educator attentive not to confuse subjective preferences and criteria with the essential demands of the plan of God.

—A proper concern for the deepening of the diocesan spirituality and the unity of the presbyterate, joined with a sensitivity for the specific characteristics of the various charisms of consecrated life.

—A healthy openness of spirit capable of harmonizing the classical forms of priestly spirituality with the new demands and nuances of the spiritual currents of our time.

—A sound knowledge of spiritual theology, of the laws of the development of the Christian interior life, of the rules of discernment and of the dynamics of the relationship between the spiritual director and the seminarian, drawing upon the classics of the Western and Eastern tradition and also dedicating an adequate attention to modern and contemporary authors.

—A love for the liturgy and an understanding of its role in spiritual and ecclesial formation.

—The assiduous and meditative reading of the encyclicals, the documents of the Holy See and of the local church regarding the priesthood and priestly vocation.

This complex of attitudes and knowledge is necessary so that the educator can provide a systematic spiritual orientation for the candidate and be capable of promoting and evaluating his progress in the individual stages along the way. Confessors also should have the same preparation.

c. Pastoral preparation

56. Significant pastoral experience is also indispensable for the educator in the seminary in order to enable him to harmonize the work of formation and discernment with the real needs of the faithful and of the ministry. The official documents of the church do not speak about the duration and type of this experience. In any case, it should be such that it allows the educator to be able to evaluate competently the attitudes of the seminarians for various pastoral duties and the effectiveness of the preparation which they receive for that purpose.

Among the abilities of the educators in this field, the following should be pointed out:

—The programming of the pastoral experience of the students, their supervision and evaluation.

“Significant pastoral experience is also indispensable for the educator in the seminary in order to enable him to harmonize the work of formation and discernment with the real needs of the faithful and of the ministry.”

—The harmonization of the intellectual formation of the students with the pastoral demands of the ministry.

—The ability to present the theoretical and practical needs of the various fields of pastoral life in harmony and dialogue with the teaching staff and in particular with the teachers of the pastoral subjects.

—An effective attention to the formation of a proper equilibrium between evangelization and human and social promotion, taking into account the general pastoral policies of the diocese and of the universal church.

—Integration into the living pastoral tradition of the particular church an openness toward the missionary dimension of ecclesial life.⁴¹

d. Pedagogical preparation

57. *Pastores Dabo Vobis* insists on the necessity of a good preparation in the science of pedagogy and in the human sciences.⁴² The same insistence was already present in *Optatam Totius*.⁴³ It is a question of an indispensable initial preparation for all educators, which should be continued and updated throughout their whole life. It is necessary to promote the maturation of the competence required so that the educator can carry out the systematic observation of the seminarian, single out which of his attitudes and inclinations are to be encouraged, which are to be corrected and the most significant traits of his personality.

The educator should be sufficiently prepared as not to be deceived or to deceive regarding a presumed consistency and maturity of the student. For this, “common sense” is not enough. An attentive and refined examination from a good knowledge of the human sciences is necessary in order to go beyond appearances and the superficial level of motivations and behavior, and to

help the seminarian to know himself in depth, to accept himself with serenity and to correct himself and to mature, starting from real, not illusory, roots and from the "heart" of his person.

58. Regarding this, it should not be forgotten that the principles of Christian pedagogy, which neither undervalue nor render absolute the contribution of the human sciences, remain normative and primary. On the contrary, they free this contribution of the human sciences from the ideological conditioning which often perverts the nature of this function.⁴⁴ The pedagogy of the seminary can never be neutral, even if it were possible that such a pedagogy could ever exist. It is totally permeated by evangelical values and oriented toward the formation of true disciples of Christ, willing to take upon themselves the easy yoke of his pastoral charity. The formal principles of pedagogy, sociology and psychology, as human sciences, acquire for the educator in the seminary a precise specificity inasmuch as they are put at the service of an always better realization of "Christian education,"⁴⁵ framed in an exemplary liturgical and sacramental life, in a systematic individual and collective spiritual direction, and in the disciplinary norms necessary for the candidates "to provide self-mastery, to foster solid maturity of personality and to develop other traits of character which are extremely serviceable for the ordered and productive activity of the church."⁴⁶ It is therefore a desirable synthesis of the educational experience of the church, matured in the light of faith, of past experiences, of the examples of the saints and the carefully weighed results of the human sciences.

"The educator should be sufficiently prepared as not to be deceived or to deceive regarding a presumed consistency and maturity of the student. For this, 'common sense' is not enough. An attentive and refined examination from a good knowledge of the human sciences is necessary."

59. The church calls for assuming an attitude of trust in these fields of scientific research and exhorts the maintaining of a climate of mutual comprehension and dialogue with her,⁴⁷ but at the same time she marks its limits, inasmuch as "each particular science is able to grasp only a partial — yet true

— aspect about man."⁴⁸ In fact, concrete dangers of generalization due to incomplete results and the risk of the ideological conditioning of such research exist and cannot be ignored.

The following are therefore necessary:

—A constant reference to an overall and complete vision of man, which is offered to us by a sound theological anthropology.⁴⁹

—A just philosophical mediation, for the necessary confrontation with the various psychopedagogical and social theories on the rational plane.

—A particular attention to the various magisterial pronouncements regarding specific moral problems,⁵⁰ and above all for the call for the respect for the intimacy and non-violability of the human conscience.⁵¹

3. *Specific Preparation for The Various Roles*

60. What has been set forth about the basic formation that is required for all educators should take on a few nuances aimed at the exercise of the particular duties reserved to the rector, to the spiritual director, to the teachers, to the coordinator of pastoral activities and to the other collaborators.

The multiple tasks of the rector are characterized, as we have seen, by his relations with the bishop, with the other formational personnel, with the students, with the presbyterate and with the whole diocesan community. He is required to be a man capable of solid human relations on all levels and above all a man of communion, capable on the one hand of making the most of the contributions and competencies of all, and on the other hand of guiding the journey of individuals and of the community with a firm hand and a capacity for decision, and worthily representing the community on various occasions. In a special way it is expected that he have a clear sense of the seminary as an ecclesiastical institution in order to guarantee its specific goals and to safeguard its unity of direction and programming. Therefore "a unity of leadership expressed in the figure of the rector and his cooperators" is a necessary presupposition for the seminary to have "a clearly defined program" and in order that without hesitation or ambiguity this might be "at the service of the specific end which alone justifies the existence of the seminary, that is, the formation of future priests, pastors of the church."⁵² This deals with capacities and convictions which are presupposed in every rector, but which can and must be continually perfected.

61. The spiritual director, with his

duty of offering to the community and to individuals, in the confidential relationship of spiritual direction, a sure guidance in the search for the will of God and in vocational discernment should refine his capacities to welcome, to listen, to converse and to understand, together with a good knowledge of spiritual theology, of the other theological disciplines, and of the human and pedagogical sciences. No means should be spared to give him the possibility of attending an institute or at least an intensive course of spirituality.

The preparation of the spiritual director for his multiple duties and above all for that of care for the formation of the consciences of the students has its foundation in serious studies and in an extensive practice of directing, which, to give good results, should be continuous and prolonged in time. It should be kept in mind that:

—Spiritual direction is an essentially theological and ecclesial fact, distinct from psychological therapy or assistance; the person who receives direction should live it as a means and stimulus for his own journey of faith and obedience to the will of God.

—The spiritual director is consequently a witness of faith and expert in the progressive and humble recognition of the plan of God for the life of his children.

—The various community forms of spiritual orientation, exchanging experiences and the review of life may supplement spiritual direction but must never substitute for it.

—The spiritual director is therefore the first guardian of his own identity and of his own duties, which cannot be renounced or substituted for and which can neither be confused with those of the other educators nor improperly substituted for with other types of formational service.

62. Beyond the scientific preparation in their respective disciplines, the teachers should acquire good didactic and pedagogical qualities and the capacity to animate group work and stimulate the active participation of the students. A suitable perfecting of their didactic skill requires attention to clear and precise communication, an appropriate renewal of theological language⁵³ and a constant concern to emphasize the intrinsic unity and harmony of the whole doctrine of the faith, being careful to put a special accent on its salvific aspect. Their teaching will acquire greater vitality if they learn to establish the links between their teaching on the one hand and piety, life and pastoral problems on the other. Furthermore, they should familiarize themselves with

the scientific methods of theological work, follow the progress of these and introduce them by means of guided private study to the students. In order to be able to care for the integral and not just scientific formation of the students, teachers should always seek to become more a part of the seminary community by means of collaboration and formative dialogue. *Pastores Dabo Vobis* recommends that the educators "as a rule should live in the seminary community."⁵⁴

63. The pastoral activity of the seminarians, recommended by the norms of the church,⁵⁵ in order to be truly fruitful and to attain its formational objectives needs to be oriented and coordinated by a well-experienced priest assigned expressly to this ministry. He should familiarize himself with certain principles of effective supervision and evaluation of such activities and be inspired by the genuine principles of the sacred ministry in conformity with the norms of ecclesiastical authority. The priest with this duty, called director or coordinator of pastoral activities, should be respectful of the disciplinary arrangement of the seminary, proceeding in strict collaboration with the rector, with the other educators and teachers and, in particular, with the professor of pastoral theology.

64. Regarding the other collaborators, beyond the vice rector and the assistants — who should have at least a solid basic formation — a "technical" preparation is necessary for some particular offices such as those of librarian and business manager. For these and other similar offices an appropriate professional qualification is recommended, by means of attending a school or specialized courses. The importance of the library for the seriousness and good level of the studies and the complexity and delicacy of administrative problems require the collaboration of true experts in these offices.

B. Continuing Formation of the Educators

65. The continuing formation of the educators responds to the desires expressed in Vatican II and in the *ratio fundamentalis*.⁵⁶ It can be understood both as the progressive completion and the improving of the initial formation so as to overcome repetition and the loss of competence, and as a factor of profound renewal in the areas where educational methods and styles should be submitted to a more radical process of review. In any case, continuing formation in the various forms in which it is already undertaken and in those which may be devised in the future has the same extension as the field of initial formation as outlined in the preceding paragraphs. It

seeks the same end, refers to the same object and uses the same methods. That which distinguishes it is the evaluation of experiences and the possibility of finding the opportunities and the means of evaluating them and keeping them under critical examination.

1. Constant Updating

66. The experience of the educators is itself a privileged source of their continuing formation. The educator learns and perfects himself through the concrete exercise of his ministry, provided that this is submitted to a constant and fraternal examination in dialogue with the other educators, comparing diverse formational models and progressively enlarging a prudent experimentation with projects, proposals and initiatives.

The methodical analysis of concrete cases, which are often examined in courses of continuing education, proves at times to be more illuminating than the abstract explanation of principles. The educator can never close himself in the restricted sphere of his own personal experience, but should remain open to an evaluation and review based also on the contribution of the experiences of others.

"The need for continuous updating and a mutual exchange of ideas with his peers and with experts is seen especially in some spheres of ecclesial and social life which are subjected to greater changes: the spiritual situation of young people, the conditions of priestly life and ministry, the profound and rapid changes in the currents of philosophical-theological thought and in cultural thought in general."

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67. The knowledge of the world of youth and its nature is always open to

new developments. Research and studies on such topics are progressively growing in descriptive, analytical and reflective aspects, and should be known and studied with ever renewed interest. The postsynodal exhortation notes the influx of these changes: "There is a considerable discrepancy between, on the one hand, the style of life and basic preparation of boys, adolescents and young men, even when they are Christians and at times have been involved in church life, and on the other hand the style of life of the seminary with its formational demands."⁵⁷ The educator should be well informed regarding such transformations, which are always happening and taking on new aspects according to places and circumstances, in order to keep in touch with the reality that determines in great part his formational activity.

68. Besides an up-to-date knowledge of the world of youth as the point of departure of the formational process, it is also necessary to turn our attention to the conditions of priestly life and ministry which constitute the goal of this process. In the face of the changeableness and fluidity of pastoral situations, it is necessary to ask oneself continually what formational demands derive from them for future priests. The detailed analysis conducted in the first chapter of the apostolic exhortation underlines the importance of this aspect of the permanent formation of the educators, who are called on to ask themselves constantly the fundamental question, "How can we form priests who are truly able to respond to the demands of our times and capable of evangelizing the world of today?"⁵⁸

69. The formational activity in the seminaries is moreover profoundly influenced by that which takes place in the theological field and by the currents of thought and the attitudes toward life which derive from them. The responsibility of teaching philosophy and theology is, in this regard, very great. Not only the professors, but also the rector, the spiritual director and the other educators should constantly bring themselves up to date in critical and precise fashion regarding these questions, submitting with docility to the light shed upon them by the pronouncements of the magisterium.⁵⁹

2. Review

70. At times it will be necessary, in determined cases and in the face of complex questions, to choose some time of prolonged formation and of radical review of formational topics by attendance at specialized courses or by periods of guided review in some center of specialized study or some aca-

democratic institution. The scope of such periods of formation is to favor an accurate examination of the very personality of the educator, his ministerial commitment and his way of understanding and living his own mission of formation.

71. Periods of formation of this kind should include well-chosen and appropriately planned courses, be it in the field of ecclesiastical or of the human sciences, joined with practical exercises carried out with the help of a supervisor and submitted to him for attentive critical review. In this way the educator will be able to become more actively conscious of his own capacities and attitudes, accept more serenely his own limits, and update and improve the criteria which inspire his action.

In programs of continuing formation of this magnitude, prolonged periods of spiritual renewal should be planned (Ignatian months, spiritual exercises, times of solitude) to allow the educator to review his own mission in its most profound spiritual and theological connections and roots.

V. OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS

1. Problems of Formation

72. If it is licit to speak of a relaunching of seminaries in some geographical and ecclesial areas, it is necessary at the same time to recall the need for the specific initial and continuing formation of the educators. Nothing can substitute for the benefits of a renewed and reasoned conviction in this regard on the part of bishops and of the others who are responsible in this field.

Some nations and local churches have already taken appropriate decisions in the matter. Others should follow their example. To give a greater impulse to such initiatives, provisions should be made for a reciprocal exchange of experiences.

73. Even if it is not possible everywhere to create special institutes for the training of formational personnel, it is still necessary to move to a minimum of structured planning: to have groups of experts on hand in every nation whose collaboration can always be relied upon; to establish a well-defined program regarding both the duration and frequency as well as the content; a program that will respond to the needs and will guarantee a well-structured unity and continuity of the formation. In the areas of greater geographic extension and linguistic and cultural homogeneity an "itinerant" institute may be considered, which could offer intensive courses at the service of various local bodies.

74. Wherever possible, the collaboration of ecclesiastical

universities and of other academic institutes and centers of research and study should be utilized for the objectives of continuing formation, above all for the study of the human sciences. In these cases it would be well to arrange agreements ahead of time with the episcopal conference to assure the doctrinal solidity of the lines of formation.

75. Although, as has been seen, the means for a true and proper previous preparation of educators are in actual fact very restricted, it is still necessary that an appropriate period of specific spiritual and pedagogical preparation be granted to future rectors and spiritual directors before they are installed in their offices, perhaps combining this preparation with the exercise of other ministries in the seminary. A very special care should be dedicated to the initial and continuing formation of spiritual directors, considering the many difficulties of such a mission in today's seminary.

"Where lay faithful are involved in teaching in seminaries ... it becomes necessary to provide for their appropriate religious and apostolic formation so that their work may be in complete conformity with the ends proper to priestly formation."

76. In the preparation of professors it is necessary to require not only the corresponding canonically recognized degrees of study,⁶⁰ but also the possession of an appropriate spiritual, didactic and pedagogical formation so that their work may make an efficacious contribution to the integral formation of future priests.

77. Where lay faithful are involved in teaching in seminaries, in the sense indicated above in No. 20, it becomes necessary to provide for their appropriate religious and apostolic formation so that their work may be in complete conformity with the ends proper to priestly formation.

78. Greater use should be made of the numerous universities and pontifical institutions of formation in Rome for the preparation of educators, as has already been opportunely suggested by the *ratio fundamentalis institutionis sacerdotalis*.⁶¹ In this regard those nations who for various reasons cannot establish their own institutions will find in those centers substantial help, above all with regard to the pedagogical preparation of the future educa-

tors.

79. While recognizing the precious contribution which various existing congregations and priestly societies are providing in the training of formational personnel, new initiatives for the sanctification of the clergy and for priestly formation which God's grace gives rise to in the church should be followed with sympathy and openness, and should be given the benefits of help and the necessary discernment.⁶²

2. More Reasonable Planning And Distribution of the Educators in Seminaries

80. Since the efficiency of the community of educators in seminaries greatly depends upon its stability, necessary changes of personnel should be planned ahead of time so as to be able to program appropriate substitutions when needed.

Good programming, above all of the teaching personnel, is necessary where the system of so-called sabbatical years or semesters is in use so that all the fields of instruction remain adequately active, even during the absence of individual teachers.

81. While efforts will be made to correct the present scarcity of educators by means of a better preparation of the same, a more appropriate planning and distribution should also be considered. Above all there is a pressing need to regulate the proliferation of major seminaries or avoid the breaking up into small units of those already in existence. Given the scarcity of personnel, the call for a reasonable concentration of material needs and of personnel by means of the creation of interdiocesan (national, regional, provincial) seminaries should be given more consideration.⁶³

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82. Furthermore, the need for an "exchange of gifts" among sister churches, as John Paul II has insisted over and over again, demands that the dioceses richer in educators of the clergy should be willing to help those that are poorer. According to *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, the candidate for the priesthood "should prepare him-

self for a ministry which may mean in practice that his readiness to follow the indications of the Holy Spirit and of his bishop will lead him to be sent to preach the Gospel even beyond the frontiers of his own country,"⁶⁴ and therefore also to put himself at the disposition of some seminary. In such cases "those priests who seek to work in a nation new to them should take care not only to know well the language of that place but also the psychological and social characteristics peculiar to the people they wish to serve in humility."⁶⁵

To this end, the institution by the Holy See of the permanent interdicasterial commission for a more equitable distribution of priests in the world deserves mention. This commission has as its main goal the favoring of the interchange of seminary educators and vocations directors.

CONCLUSION

83. The present document, which the Congregation for Catholic Education places before the most reverend bishops and educators, has been written with a view toward facilitating a faithful application of the suggestions given in 1990 by the Synod of Bishops. These suggestions were taken into account in the apostolic exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis* of Pope John Paul II. Indeed a careful professional preparation of educational teams, the promotion of which is being sought, constitutes an indispensable presupposition for the realization of the aims proper to that synodal assembly. These consist in the creation of conditions in seminaries such as to be able to give to the church true shepherds of souls, sensitive to present spiritual needs. It is clear that only well-chosen educators, expert in the art of pedagogy, will be able to form priests who will have those spiritual, intellectual and human qualities which everyone cherishes and which have been pointed out in such great detail in the postsynodal exhortation.

It was for this reason then that there was a desire to underscore some particular doctrinal, pedagogical and organizational requirements on this subject.

These are requirements of which, to a great extent, the most reverend bishops are aware as well and which they seek to satisfy, overcoming at times many difficulties. In the present circumstances, however, as the synod has shown, these obligations have a great urgency and must be faced with greater courage, with a more decisive will and with more adequate means. It is hoped that in this regard those elements found to be lacking will be supplied and that all those who are responsible in this area will work to promote programs and initiatives capable of effecting further progress. It is therefore our strong common desire that the present positive experiences in various dioceses will be confirmed, strengthened and extended to the whole church in a spirit of mutual solidarity and collaboration.

Rome, given at the offices of the congregation, Nov. 4, 1993, feast of St. Charles Borromeo, patron of seminaries.

Cardinal Pio Laghi
prefect

Archbishop Jose Saraiva Martins
secretary

Footnotes

¹ *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 66.

² *Optatam Totius*, 5.

³ PDV, 66.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid., 65.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Code of Canon Law, Canon 232.

⁸ PDV, 65.

⁹ Ibid., 66.

¹⁰ Ibid., 60.

¹¹ Ibid., 66.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., 59, 66.

¹⁴ OT, 5.

¹⁵ AAS 28 (1936), pp. 37-52.

¹⁶ PDV, 66.

¹⁷ *Ratio fundamentalis*, 39.

¹⁸ *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 6, 13.

¹⁹ OT, 5.

²⁰ PDV, 47.

²¹ Ibid., 57; cf. also OT, 4.

²² OT, 14.

²³ PDV, 55.

²⁴ Ibid., 59.

²⁵ OT, 5.

²⁶ PDV, 18.

²⁷ Ibid., 12.

²⁸ 18.

²⁹ *Ratio fundamentalis*, 90; cf. 63.

³⁰ PDV, 67.

³¹ Ibid., 44.

³² "Orientations for the formation of future priests regarding the instruments of social communication" (March 19, 1986), No. 24.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ PDV, 69.

³⁵ John Paul II, apostolic constitution *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, 16.

³⁶ Code of Canon Law, Canons 238.2; 260.

³⁷ PDV, 67.

³⁸ Ibid., 66.

³⁹ Ibid., 50.

⁴⁰ Congregation for Catholic Education, circular letter, July 27, 1992.

⁴¹ PDV, 58.

⁴² Ibid., 66.

⁴³ OT, 20.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 11: "The norms of Christian education are to be religiously maintained and should be properly complemented by the latest findings in sound psychology and pedagogy."

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Paul VI, apostolic letter *Octogesima Adveniens* (May 14, 1971), No. 40.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Cf. John Paul II, address to the Third General Assembly of CELAM, Jan. 28, 1979, in Puebla: AAS 71 (1979) p. 195f.

⁵⁰ For example, Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Declaration Regarding Certain Questions of Sexual Ethics (*Persona Humana*) Dec. 29, 1975; letter to the bishops of the Catholic Church on the pastoral care of homosexuals, Oct. 1, 1986; circular letter regarding some aspects of Christian mediation (*Orationis Formas*), Oct. 15, 1989.

⁵¹ *Gaudium et Spes*, 16; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, admonition *Cum Compertum* regarding psychoanalytical exams (1961); cf. also Canon 220.

⁵² PDV, 61.

⁵³ Congregation for Catholic Education, "The Theological Formation of Future Priests," Feb. 22, 1976, No. 77.

⁵⁴ PDV, 66.

⁵⁵ OT, 21; *Ratio fundamentalis*, 97-99.

⁵⁶ OT, 5; *Ratio fundamentalis*, 31-36.

⁵⁷ PDV, 62.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 10.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 10, 67.

⁶⁰ *Ratio fundamentalis*, 34; "The Theological Formation of Future Priests," 118; Canon 253.1.

⁶¹ *Ratio fundamentalis*, 85.

⁶² Canon 605.

⁶³ Canon 237.2; however, the diocesan seminary is always the ideal in those situations where it can function regularly and decorously, "ubi id fieri possit atque expediat," as Canon 237 itself expresses in the first paragraph.

⁶⁴ PDV, 59.

⁶⁵ *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 10.