



EXCERPTS FROM *THE CONTINUING FORMATION OF PRIESTS - GROWING IN WISDOM, AGE AND GRACE*

In recent years, terms like *ongoing formation and continuing growth and learning* have replaced the phrase *continuing education*. The use of new terminology is more than a bow to the latest trends. Instead, this new language reflects a new awareness. Continuing formation conveys the notion of growth as a lifelong dialogue-journey through which a priest comes to greater awareness of self, others and God. Therefore, in what follows, the overarching concept of continuing formation will be used to convey the many faceted dimensions of the priest's ongoing development.

Sabbaticals may include a formal program in an established institution of learning, several short-term programs or an extended period of learning designed by the priest himself. Sabbaticals should concentrate primarily on theological, pastoral or ministerial areas of concern. However, since human growth in every facet of life contributes to the quality of ministry, a priest might use some sabbatical time for studying in other disciplines, e.g., the arts, music, languages, etc.

By spending time at local libraries, museums and concert halls, the priest can grow in his appreciation of the arts, music, poetry and the sciences. While these subjects are sometimes presumed to be unrelated to ministry, they can bring the priest into contact with a more inclusive life view and thus assist his ongoing formation.

Other community resources are courses, seminars and workshops in almost every field of learning. It would serve the priest well to look for and receive information on a regular basis about these opportunities.

Spirituality remains at the center of growth for priests. Contemporary spirituality emphasizes the growth of the person as holistic. It recognizes the interaction between the spiritual and material, and sees the correlation between the personal and communal dimensions of spiritual life.

Our culture and society will continue to evolve. As they do, and as technology grows, continuing formation programs will need to take note of how these technological developments help or hinder the growth of the priest. Continuing formation opportunities will most likely include interdisciplinary learning which integrates the theological and pastoral dimensions with the technological.