

DIOCESE OF GREAT FALLS-BILLINGS



SEMINARIAN HANDBOOK 2003

DISCERNING A CALL TO DIOCESAN PRIESTHOOD

I. Before Application:

Note: These are Issues and Programs to consider before seeking a formal application as a diocesan seminarian.

A. Questions About Self...

1) How long have I been living a healthy and devoted Catholic lifestyle?

- a) Do I regularly attend Mass?
- b) Do I regularly receive the sacraments?
- c) Would people know me as a healthy and sincere Catholic?
- d) If a recent convert to the Catholic faith, have I had enough time to live the Catholic faith so as to experience the joys and struggles of it? (If one is recently through RCIA, it is recommended that he wait at least 3-5 years before making application, during which time he actively lives the Catholic faith).
- e) How well am I known by my pastor and other priests? Have I visited

with them about my thoughts on priesthood?

- f) Am I a “balanced” person, healthy in physical, spiritual, psychological and emotional ways?
- g) Am I a celibate person, and am I ready to live a lifelong commitment to celibacy?

2) Am I a ministering person?

- a) How long have I been actively involved in my parish?
- b) How have I been actively involved in diocesan ministry?
- c) How have I been involved in community service?

3) Am I free in the eyes of the Church to consider Seminary?

- a) Am I free from the bond of marriage or vows?
- b) Am I free from the responsibility of parenting minor children?

B. Help In discernment...

- 1) Reading materials are available from the Vocation Office. These can help one in discerning a possible vocation. Ask the Vocation Director for these materials.
- 2) Many seminaries provide “live-in” experiences (over weekends) to help the potential candidate reflect more deeply on the call to ministry as a priest. A candidate may want to attend one of these; the Vocation Director has more information.

C. Meeting with the Vocation Director...

- 1) An initial meeting should be arranged with the vocation director whereby the potential applicant will be asked to share his background and thoughts leading him to consider priesthood.
- 2) A letter of recommendation from pastor/pastoral administrator by prospective candidate should be secured at this time and shared with the Vocation Director.
- 3) Upon recommendation by the Vocation Director, the potential applicant can begin formal application for status as a seminarian for the Great Falls-Billings Diocese.

II. The Application Process for the Diocese:

A. The application form for the diocese

- 1) This form must be completed by the students for either college seminary or major seminary.
- 2) An application form will not be given to someone unless the Vocation Director feels they have adequately satisfied the conditions necessary before application, as noted in the pervious section.

B. Necessary Sacramental Documents

- 1) Baptismal and Confirmation Certificates
- 2) These must be issued within the last 6 months.

C. Official Transcripts

- 1) From High School
- 2) For any post high school work

D. Reference Names

NOTE: You are asked to submit names and addresses of 10-15 people. The Vocation director will write to these people asking for a reference. Reference names should include:

- E. Pastors and priests you have worked with
- F. Teachers and/or school administrators

3) Employers

4) Peers

E. Detailed Autobiography, including

- 1) Family life
- 2) Relationships outside the family
- 3) School and work experience
- 4) Major satisfactions and problems experienced in life
- 5) Prayer and faith experiences

F. Your Response to “What Does The Priesthood Mean to Me?”

G. The report of a physical examination

- 1) This is done at the expense of the applicant. A report is to be sent to the Vocation Director.
- 2) ALL applicants are asked to be tested for HIV. The results will be confidential. You may chose Not to have the HIV test bill sent to your insurance company. The Vocation Director will visit with you about this testing before it is to be done.

- 3) Both college and major seminaries are asked to have a physical exam.

recommendations of the Vocation Director and Vocation Board.

H. Report from the Vocation Board

- 1) Psychological Examination – applicants applying for college seminary and major Schools of Theology must be tested before acceptance. The expense is paid by the diocese. A report will be submitted to the Bishop and the Vocation Director.
- 2) There will be background checks conducted on applicants. These will include criminal and driving records, along with a social security trace.
- 3) Individual Interviews – The applicant is expected to meet with various individuals to discuss priesthood. (The Vocation Director will help in arranging these meetings, but it is the responsibility of the applicant to see that these are pursued).

I. Review of Application

- 1) After all interviews and testing have been discussed with the Vocation Board, the Vocation Director will present its recommendation to the Bishop.
- 2) The final decision of acceptance rests with the Bishop, based upon the

J. Time Line

- 1) It may take 3-6 months for the entire application process.
- 2) Applicants seeking seminar admission in the fall should have this application process completed by the end of April.

III. Diocesan Support

The Diocese of Great Falls-Billings seeks to assist the seminarian in their formation through a number of ways. For some, one method is with financial assistance. For the diocesan seminarians the following funding is provided by and through the Vocation Office:

- 1) For college students who seek entrance in a seminary, the diocese encourages the student to seek scholarships, grants and loans through the institution's financial aid office. After ordination, consideration will be given to help pay off any outstanding education debts.
- 2) For students in Pre-theology and Theology, payment of room, board, tuition, and retreat fees are paid for in full by the diocese. The following support is also provided:

- a) A monthly net stipend of \$150 is sent through the academic year (September-May).
 - b) Students receive \$100 per quarter/semester for books, etc. (maximum of \$350 per year).
 - c) Seminarians are sent \$400 a year to help with travel expenses to and from diocese-seminary.
 - d) Seminarians receive health insurance.
- 3) Diocesan seminarians are required to do a unit of Clinical Pastoral Experience (CPE) during a summer. This is paid in full by the diocese. During this time students receive a monthly stipend of \$300 to help off-set expenses.
- 4) Students are expected to work one summer in a parish – a stipend of \$300 a month is granted (June-August). Room and board is paid by the diocese to the parish.

PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS

JESUS, HIGH PRIEST AND REDEEMER FOREVER,
WE BEG YOU TO CALL YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN
TO YOUR SERVICE, AS PRIESTS AND RELIGIOUS.

MAY THEY BE INSPIRED BY THE LIVES OF
DEDICATED PRIESTS, BROTHERS AND SISTERS.
GIVE TO PARENTS THE GRACE OF GENEROSITY
AND TRUST TOWARD YOU AND THEIR CHILD

SO THAT THEIR SONS AND DAUGHTERS
MAY BE HELPED TO CHOOSE THEIR VOCATION
IN LIFE WITH WISDOM AND FREEDOM.