

DIOCESE OF GREAT FALLS-BILLINGS



SEMINARIAN HANDBOOK 2009

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?

4) Am I aware of the expectations of serving in a remote, rural diocese?

a) How long have I lived in Eastern Montana? (The diocese normally expects two years residence in the diocese prior to accepting an application)

b) Am I familiar with and have I experienced the differences in ministry between city parishes (Great Falls or Billings, the rural parishes (Plentywood, Circle, Malta, and the reservation parishes (Poplar, Crow Agency, Rocky Boy)?

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) Upon recommendation by the Vocation Director, the potential applicant can begin formal application for status as a seminarian for the Diocese of Great Falls-Billings.

II. The Application Process for the Diocese:

A. The application form for the diocese

- 1) This form must be completed by the applicant for either college seminary, pre-Theology, or Theology.
- 2) An application form will be given to one applying by the Vocation Director feels if he feels he has adequately satisfied the conditions necessary before application, as noted in the previous section.
- 3) Appeal?

B. Necessary Sacramental Documents

- 1) Baptismal and Confirmation Certificates 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 4-6 people. The Vocation Director will write to these people asking for a reference. Reference names should include:

- 1) Pastors and priests you have worked with
- 2) Teachers and/or school administrators

3) Those who have observed you in the Church's service or served with you

4) Employers

5) 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. Medical History Report

1) This is done at the expense of the applicant. The Vocation Director will supply the forms.

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 seminarians must submit a Medial History Report.

H. Report from the Vocation Interview Board

1) Interview – An interview will be set up between the potential seminarian and members of the Vocation Interview Board. This interview will cover a broad spectrum of questions including personal life, academic accomplishments, religious experience, expectations and goals.

2) 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.

3) Background Checks – Conducted on applicants by the diocese. These will include criminal and driving records, along with a social security trace.

I. Review of Application

1) After all interviews and testing have been completed the Vocation Director will present a recommendation to the Bishop.

2) The final decision of acceptance rests with the Bishop, based upon the recommendations of the Vocation Director and Vocation Board.

J. Time Line

- 1) It may take 3-6 months for the entire application process.
 - a. Meet with vocation director during spring/summer 1 year prior to entry into seminary
 - b. Applications are handed out in August
 - c. Applications with medical history, less psychological testing due back to vocation director by December 31st
 - d. Meeting with Vocation Interview Board mid January. (Date and place set up by vocation director depending upon number of potential seminarians and locations.)
 - e. Psychological testing for those recommended by the vocation interview team in February
 - f. Final decision of acceptance by the bishop by March 30th.

- 2) Seminarians seeking admission to a seminary should normally have the proper seminary application process completed by the end of April.

- 3) Exceptions may be made to the above time line if circumstances warrant.

III. Diocesan Support

The Diocese of Great Falls-Billings seeks to assist the seminarian in his 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 those seeking entrance into a college seminary or recognized formation program, the diocese encourages them to seek scholarships, grants and loans through the institution's financial aid office. After ordination the diocese will work with the newly ordained to pay off student loans over a 10 year period. As long as the priest is serving in the diocese, the diocese will make these payments. If a seminarian is not ordained, he will assume payment of all debts related to his education. Once accepted as a seminarian, additional resources may be available from the Knights of Columbus, one's own parish, or others who support seminarians.

- 2) For seminarians 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 during the academic year (September-May).

 - b) \$100 per quarter/semester for books, etc. (maximum of \$350 per year).

 - c) \$400 a year to help with travel expenses to and from diocese-seminary.

d) Health insurance.

- 3) Seminarians in Theology are generally 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) Seminarians in Theology are expected to work every 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. This is arranged by the Director of Seminarian Formation. College seminarians should have summertime employment to help with the costs of education.

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.