

REACHING OUT WEDNESDAYS

Topic: Houses of Formation

Diocese of Phoenix:

1. How are they formed? We had one from 2006-2010. It was based out of a retreat center in the diocese that allowed us to renovate an old building for discerners.
2. What are the requirements for admission? One must be actively discerning. I also had requirements that, to a lesser degree than what would be required at a seminary, ensured some spiritual and human formation. These would include guidelines for prayer of the Liturgy of the Hours, spiritual direction and basic accountability within the house etc.
3. Where are they housed? Near a campus, off campus, etc.? Our house was detached from the nearest college. This made it difficult to fill.
5. What have been the challenges of the house? Overall, I think that the effort and cost put in to this house (that may maintain some vocations) cannot be justified in light of the enormous amount of work needed to create a culture of vocations. I don't feel that having the house did much for us. At times, it was thought that the house would allow guys extra time for preparation for formation. This was not the case since the amount of guys that fit the profile to go to a house of formation was so small. In general, if a guy has a calling, he should be in seminary. For guys that have to tie up some loose ends with school and work, I have elected to send them to a healthy rectory where they can be active in the parish and see the priesthood that are discerning. This has been good for them, their pastors and the men discerning in those parishes. While a house of discernment sounds great on paper I have found it to be neither practical or effective.

Diocese of Joliet: I highly recommend that they have a priest assigned there full time. It is difficult for a full-time vocation director to do all of his needed ministry and keep track of the men in the house of formation.

Archdiocese of Newark: We have three seminaries (two major and one minor). In addition to being our Director of Vocations, I am also Director of Emmaus House of Discernment, a place where men can live who are discerning a call to priesthood. It is in the city of Newark, and currently we have fourteen men living there with me. We pray together each day and have dinner together. Some are students at Rutgers University studying English, others are from New Jersey and have their own jobs. This is not really a House of Formation, but of discernment. If this is the type of house the question is asking about, I would be happy to provide more information.

Diocese of Metuchen:

1. How are they formed? Was already in existence when I arrived, so not sure, but location and size seem to be the most important thing. See what already exists or is owned in the diocese.
2. What are the requirements for admission? Currently the requirements are up to the discretion of the Director of the House of Discernment and Vocation Director, it is designed for men who are working or attending college and thinking about the possibility of priesthood but are having difficulty making the decision to begin seminary. So, an individual must be working or attending school and seriously open to a vocation to the priesthood. It gives the individual an opportunity to experience life as a priest and if he might still consider that calling after a brief stay.
3. Where are they housed? Near a campus, off campus, etc.? It is housed in a large rectory of a parish, the church is adjacent to the property and it is fairly easily accessible to most major highways in our diocese.
4. What have been the benefits of the house? A place to call home for many seminarians. Allows us to form the individuals who might need some more time before they (or we) are ready for them to go to seminary. It has encouraged stronger bonds with the priests who live in or visit the house (we also share dinner with other local priests) A visible connection of discerners/seminarians that have lived in the house with the people of the parish

5. What have been the challenges of the house? The parish associated with the house is not overly busy, so it can be difficult to find work. It is not near a public transportation and can be difficult to get around without a vehicle. Amount of time required for the director of the house to be present can be extremely difficult to meet.