

# The Diocese of Fargo



*Manual for Seminarians*  
*2015*





OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

DIOCESE OF FARGO

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Dear Seminarians,

"It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain..." Jn 15:16

The vocation to the priesthood is a great gift from God to his Church. Through the priesthood, Jesus continues to be present to his people in a remarkable way - teaching, sanctifying, and shepherding them through frail human instruments. We do not choose this calling on our own, but through the gracious gift of God, who chooses us to "go forth and bear fruit that will remain." It is a singular call and invitation from the God who loves us and now asks us to extend his love and mercy to our world.

This time of seminary formation is also a gift, an opportunity to draw nearer to our Lord Jesus Christ and to arrive at a deeper understanding of his calling to you. Seminaries are places where God's grace will continue to form your character and prepare you for priestly service in the Church. Their programs of human, spiritual, academic, and pastoral formation are designed to form you more completely in the likeness of Christ so that you might be able to serve as his priest *in persona Christi*.

This Manual for Seminarians was developed so that you will know what will be expected of you in this time of formation. There are many expectations of a man who is looking forward to serving as a priest, and even for those who are discerning a call to the priesthood. These guidelines will hopefully allow you to have the best possible experience during your years of formation.

In this time of challenge and opportunity, the Church needs good and holy priests. The call to holiness is universal, but it is especially important among those in formation for the priesthood. It is my hope that this Manual for Seminarians will help you to grow in holiness and in all the virtues that will allow you to serve Christ and his people in the priesthood. As your bishop, I am proud of your decision to heed our Lord's call and to enter into priestly formation. Be assured of my daily prayers for you and for your priestly vocation. May the Holy Spirit guide you as you discern God's call, and may he assist you with every grace and blessing.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

†Most Reverend John T. Folda  
Bishop of Fargo

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The following guidelines and rules are intended to aid seminarians in their formation to be priests in the image of Christ for service to the Church and the Diocese of Fargo.

All diocesan personnel involved in the formation of seminarians are responsible for the enforcement of these rules and procedures. At times, exceptions may be made to these rules. It belongs to the bishop and/or his designated representatives to grant exceptions or modify existing rules and policies.

### ***The History, Culture and People of the Diocese of Fargo***

The Diocese of Fargo is in the ecclesiastical province of St. Paul/Minneapolis (USA), which is Region VIII of the United States Roman Catholic Latin Rite hierarchy and embraces the states of Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota.

Originally, the diocese was known as the Diocese of Jamestown, and embraced the entire state of North Dakota, when it was first established on November 12, 1889. But, at the request of its first bishop, the Most Reverend John A. Shanley, the see was officially transferred to Fargo on April 6, 1897. Bishop Shanley argued that Fargo was (and it still is) a much larger and more important city, and a better center for public transportation to enable him to travel about the diocese. In 1910 the territory of the diocese was divided into two parts, with the eastern half (thirty counties) becoming the Diocese of Fargo, and the western half of the state becoming the Diocese of Bismarck. The dioceses' boundaries are the state of Minnesota on the east, the state of South Dakota on the south, the Diocese of Bismarck on the west and the Province of Manitoba, Canada to the north. The Diocese of Fargo is located at the geographical center of North America. It covers a vast territory of 35,786 square miles.

The Catholic population reflects the historical development of this part of the United States. The first inhabitants were the Native American Indians. The first wave of immigration occurred in the 1730s to the early 1800s, when the traders and trappers - mostly of French Canadian origin - came, settled, and intermarried with the natives. The second wave of immigration was in the 1840s

through the 1880s when pioneer families moved in to take possession of farmland, plant crops, build railroads, and open up the land for settlement.

The immigrants came from Germany, Russia (often from Germany via Russia), France, Ireland, Italy, Poland, and various other European and Scandinavian countries. With the immigrants came missionary priests and women religious. This resulted in the building of churches, parochial schools, boarding schools, and orphanages to care for the education, religious and social needs of the people. The people of the diocese reflect their farm-family background. They tend to be straightforward, simple, direct, industrious, hard working and God-fearing.

North Dakota is a part of the Great Plains, called the “Breadbasket of the World” which supplies beef, wheat, corn, potatoes, soybeans, sugar (from beets), sunflower seeds and similar commodities to feed the world. This area is largely agricultural with a growing oil industry as well.

A major part of the urban development of the Diocese is in a thin north-south band along the eastern section of the state, within the “Red River Valley,” which is a vestige of the Ice Age which left behind deep deposits of rich top soil, and which stretches from South Dakota to the Canadian Province of Manitoba. It is in this eastern section that the two main cities of the Diocese are found: Fargo and Grand Forks, with populations of approximately 115,000 and 55,000 persons respectively. From a total Diocesan population of almost 400,000, one can readily see that this represents more than 40 percent of the population in about 12 percent of the geographical area. Even the smaller towns in the area (Drayton, Grafton, Hillsboro, Mayville, and Wahpeton) are larger and more populous than most others in the western geographical 88 percent of the diocese.

The diocese and the state have had a checkered history of repeated cycles of economic “ups” and “downs”. At the turn of the century, there came a depressing drought, and many of the settlers left for a promised land elsewhere. When times improved, there was growth

again, but there was the unfortunate “Dust Bowl” era and the economic Depression of the 1930s, when 39,000 people left the state of North Dakota for California or other areas. Only with the last decade has the economy and population of the state recovered because of the Bakken oil boom.

The 1980s were again a “down-cycle” because of a devastating drought, and depressed prices for farm produce and for farmland. In 1970, there were 45,000 farm and ranch operations in North Dakota. By 1985, there were 33,500 farms, a loss of 11,500 family farms. Consolidations slowed and in 2012, there were still about 31,600 farms in the state. The central and western parts of the diocese have experienced more severe economic distress and many of the smaller towns have lost nearly all businesses. There are pockets of recovery due to oil and related industries.

The migration from the farm to the city continues in North Dakota. Fewer people are needed to supply the world with food due to technology and the restructuring of the world agricultural system. At the same time, some of the medium size towns in the state are experiencing a stabilization of the population due to technology and the influx of small businesses looking for industrious, hard-working people.

The Diocese of Fargo is trying to maintain an ongoing process of long range planning and implementation concerning parish life, ministry, and consolidation issues that will help it be more effective in serving the People of God in eastern North Dakota in the 21st century, the Third Millennium of Christianity.



# Formation

## *Pastores Dabo Vobis*

In 1992, Pope John Paul II issued a post-synodal apostolic exhortation on the formation of priests, “Pastores Dabo Vobis” (“I Will Give You Shepherds”). In that important document, in which he guides the Church in the process of forming priests in the circumstances of the present day, he highlights four particular areas of formation: human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral. The Diocese of Fargo is committed to forming its priests using these four areas as our cornerstones.

## Human Formation

*“The priest, who is called to be a 'living image' of Jesus Christ, head and shepherd of the Church, should seek to reflect in himself, as far as possible, the human perfection which shines forth in the incarnate Son of God and which is reflected with particular liveliness in His attitude toward others...”*

*“So we see that the human formation of the priest shows its special importance when related to the receivers of the mission: In order that his ministry be humanly as credible and acceptable as possible, it is important that the priest should mold his human personality in such a way that it becomes a bridge and not an obstacle for others in their meeting with Jesus Christ...”*

*“Future priests should therefore cultivate a series of human qualities, not only out of proper and due growth and realization of self, but also with a view to the ministry. These qualities are needed for them to be balanced people, strong and free, capable of bearing the weight of pastoral responsibilities.”*

*“Of special importance is the capacity to relate to others. This is truly fundamental for a person who is called to be responsible for a community and to be a 'man of communion.' This demands that the priest not be arrogant, or*

*quarrelsome, but affable, hospitable, sincere in his words and heart, prudent and discreet, generous and ready to serve, capable of opening himself to clear and brotherly relationships and of encouraging the same in others, and quick to understand, forgive and console." (PDV 43)*

There is perhaps no more important area of formation that needs to be stressed in the circumstances of the present day than the area of "human formation." For various and sundry reasons, many men grow and mature without developing the social, relational and personal skills and characteristics that truly ought to be present in a "man of God." It is not enough to be called by God to be a priest; it is not enough to be ordained and therefore sacramentally marked; it is not enough to be a man of prayer; it is not enough to "do the ministry." A priest must be a man whom his flock and all others can look to as an example of what it means to live a Christ-like human life in the day-to-day world.

This human formation is thus an integral part of the seminary experience, and the Diocese of Fargo looks at this as a serious formation issue. This formation is hard to "teach" – it can be quite intangible – but it must still happen and the seminarian will be evaluated in this area. It permeates the daily life of the seminarian. Below are some of the areas that human formation touches and the expectations the Diocese of Fargo has for its seminarians concerning them.

### *Physical and Psychological Health*

Just as the Son of God was one Person with two natures, human and divine, so we are one person with two parts: body and soul. The two are inextricably entwined. One ignores one to the detriment of the other. A weak body will often weaken the soul; a weak soul will often weaken the body. On the other hand, a strong body will often strengthen the soul, and a strong soul will often strengthen the body. The seminarian must take care of his body as well as his soul. This taking care of our bodies includes the health and well-being of our psyche.

The Diocese of Fargo expects each seminarian to:

- 1) Develop a consistent weekly program of physical exercise.
- 2) Give proper attention to cleanliness, hygiene, diet and general good health.
- 3) Be moderate in his consumption of food and temperate in his consumption of alcohol.
- 4) Observe civil law that forbids the use, possession or distribution of illegal drugs or controlled substances.
- 5) Understand the harmful effects of smoking.
- 6) See a personal physician regularly (suggested once a year) and have regular dental check-ups (suggested every year or two).
- 7) Be open to recommendations regarding psychological counseling.

### Community Life

The seminary community, although often very close-knit and concerned with similar goals, is but a preview of the parish community that one will be living in later as a priest. The seminarian must develop good community habits now to prepare for his parish life later.

Generally, seminarians will not hold jobs outside the seminary during the school year. Seminarians are expected to give first priority to the seminary program.

The Diocese of Fargo expects each seminarian to:

- 1) Live by the rule of pastoral charity.
- 2) Contribute his gifts to individuals and the community.
- 3) Be aware of his need, and others' need, for silence; this includes refraining from the playing of radios, stereos and television during times when silence is to be observed.
- 4) Be respectful of the right of every seminarian to privacy and freedom from interruption.
- 5) Attend community meals and events in accord with the expectations of the seminary.
- 6) Choose to be away from campus judiciously, realizing that requirements of prayer, chapel, class attendance and fraternity come before anything else.

## House Order

A priest lives in and for the Church. Most of his daily living needs (food, shelter, etc.) are met by the parish. He is a steward. Even of the things that are his own (e.g., clothing), he has a responsibility to use them appropriately. There must be an “order” to his life, and that order begins to be developed in his seminary years.

All seminarians are duty-bound to follow all rules and procedures of the seminary to which they are assigned. If difficulties arise, the seminarian should contact the Vocation Director immediately.

The Diocese of Fargo expects each seminarian to:

- 1) Keep his personal living quarters clean and orderly.
- 2) Respect and treat the seminary furnishings/property as his own.
- 3) Personal furnishings and art are to be of good taste and morals befitting a future priest.
- 4) Observe the dress code of the seminary one is attending.
- 5) Observe the dress code of the diocese during summer assignments or diocesan or parish events.
- 6) All seminarians are to be neat and well-groomed at all times.
- 7) Jewelry that is ostentatious or which signifies secular values is to be avoided. This means no earrings, bracelets, etc.
- 8) Follow seminary rules applying to off-campus weekends, vacations, times away and curfew.
- 9) Be prompt in paying bills and visit with the Vocation Director if there are difficulties.

## **Spiritual Formation**

*“Every man, as God's creature who has been redeemed by Christ's blood, is called to be reborn 'of water and the Spirit' and to become a 'son in the Son.' In this wonderful plan of God is to be found the basis of the essentially religious dimension of the human person...*

*The educational process of a spiritual life, seen as a relationship and communion with God, derives and*

*develops from this fundamental and irrepressible religious need.*

*And just as for all the faithful, spiritual formation is central and unifies their being and living as Christians, that is, as new creatures in Christ who walk in the Spirit, so too for every priest his spiritual formation is the core which unifies and gives life to his being a priest and his acting as a priest.*

*The essential content of spiritual formation specifically leading toward the priesthood is well expressed in the Council's decree *Optatam Totius*: 'Spiritual formation should be conducted in such a way that the students may learn to live in intimate and unceasing union with God the Father through His Son Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit. Those who are to take on the likeness of Christ the priest by sacred ordination should form the habit of drawing close to Him as friends in every detail of their lives.'" (PDV 45)*

“To draw close to Christ in every detail of their lives” – that is a very fitting description of the goal of spiritual formation. It is a spiritual work, but it will affect every part of the seminarian’s life, even the most down-to-earth and seemingly mundane aspects. But this spiritual formation is directed ultimately by the Holy Spirit who is within, and to grow in this kind of holiness one must be dedicated to the sacraments, liturgical prayer, Scriptural meditation and the various forms of personal prayer.

Each seminarian must be devoted to the Blessed Sacrament. This will help him to take on the likeness of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, and help him to understand that the Eucharist is the central mystery of the Church and the indispensable source of nourishment in the seminarian’s life.

Each seminarian must be committed to his own need for continual conversion. The great means of conversion established by Christ is the Sacrament of Penance. It should be revered and used regularly by the seminarian to help in the process of Christian transformation.

A life centered on the Holy Eucharist will extend itself to communal Morning and Evening Prayer, and shared prayer. Personal prayer as well is critical in the growth of one's faith.

Mary, the Mother of God, is the model of discipleship, faithfulness, conformity to the will of God, charity, and openness to the Holy Spirit. Each seminarian should honor and revere the Blessed Virgin Mary as the model disciple of Jesus.

Below are some of the areas that spiritual formation touches and the expectations the Diocese of Fargo has for its seminarians concerning them.

- 1) Attend the daily celebration of the Mass, as well as Morning and Evening Prayer.
- 2) Attend all other liturgical and devotional celebrations that are part of the seminary's spiritual formation program.
- 3) It is recommended to celebrate the Sacrament of Penance every two to four weeks.
- 4) Foster their interior life through Scriptural meditation, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and other personal prayer time.
- 5) Develop a strong and loving devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, and make the Rosary a part of their spiritual exercises.
- 6) Make an examination of conscience each night.
- 7) Practice weekly penance on Fridays.
- 8) Meet with an approved spiritual director at least once a month or as directed by the seminary.

### *The Virtue of Pastoral Charity*

Our Lord Jesus Christ calls every one of us to love God with our whole heart, mind, soul and strength, and to love our neighbors as He loves us.

The Diocese of Fargo expects each seminarian to:

- 1) Observe the rule of charity (love) in thought, word and deed.
- 2) Do everything to preserve the bond of charity that unites us in Christ.

- 3) Live charity in all the aspects of his life, e.g., in the residence hall, dining room, classroom, common rooms, gym and ball fields.
- 4) Respect others with differing temperaments and opinions.
- 5) Be understanding and compassionate in dealing with the weaknesses of others.
- 6) Avoid all gossip.
- 7) Be a gracious host to all visitors.
- 8) Offer support, encouragement and fraternal correction when necessary to his brother seminarians.

### *Simplicity of Life*

In imitation of Jesus Christ, the seminarian should be growing in his attachment to God and detaching himself from the riches of this world. He is called to live a simple life so that he may be more devoted to God and His Church.

The Diocese of Fargo expects each seminarian to:

- 1) Seek simplicity of life.
- 2) Practice stewardship of time, talent and treasure.
- 3) Live a life of detachment toward things and media.
- 4) Avoid appearances of luxury, excessive wealth and accumulation of possessions.
- 5) Ensure that his quarters reflect Gospel simplicity.
- 6) Accept appointments to work details that may not always be pleasant.

### *Chastity*

A seminarian's love must always be chaste and selfless after the example of Christ. Celibacy allows one to imitate the total self-giving of Christ. The future priest can give himself totally to God and His Church. Christ joined Himself in a spousal relationship to the Church. The future priest becomes sacramentally identified with this spousal love of Christ for His Church. Chaste celibacy is a sign of the Kingdom in which each person is in loving union with God and all other persons.

The Diocese of Fargo expects each seminarian to:

- 1) Perfect his imitation of the celibate Christ by sustained and disciplined prayer.
- 2) Discuss openly and honestly his sexual identity, chastity and celibacy with his spiritual director.
- 3) Use Covenant Eyes Accountability software (or seminary software) on smart phones, tablets, and computers.
- 4) Manifest toward one and all chaste, sincere, personal and sacrificial love after the example of Christ.
- 5) Live a chaste life, avoiding all forms of sexual immorality.
- 6) Be modest in speech, manners, and dress.
- 7) Be inclusive in friendships, and avoid exclusive relationships.

### *Obedience*

Future priests are to be formed in an obedience that has no earthly parallel. Obedience is a priestly value of primary importance. Christ was obedient to His Father, even unto death. Obedience to the Father is the very heart of the priesthood of Jesus Christ. A future priest must be disposed to accept all that is justly indicated by his lawful superiors, and in a particular way, if not legitimately impeded, must accept and faithfully fulfill tasks entrusted to him by the Bishop.

The Diocese of Fargo expects each seminarian to:

- 1) Have the attitude of Christ who became obedient unto death.
- 2) Accept and carry out, in a spirit of faith, whatever is commanded or recommended by the Holy Father and bishops in communion with him. This entails direct obedience to one's own Bishop.
- 3) Develop a spirit of obedience to the Bishop, Vocation Director, Rector, and other seminary officials and the rules of the seminary.
- 4) Treat superiors and priests with deference and respect and to call each priest, "Father."
- 5) Attend all required meetings and formation events given by the seminary or the Vocation Director.

## Intellectual Formation

*“[Intellectual Formation] is a fundamental demand of man's intelligence by which he 'participates in the light of God's mind' and seeks to acquire a wisdom which in turn opens to and is directed toward knowing and adhering to God.*

*“The present situation is heavily marked by religious indifference, by a wide-spread mistrust regarding the real capacity of reason to reach objective and universal truth, and by fresh problems and questions brought up by scientific and technological discoveries. It strongly demands a high level of intellectual formation, such as will enable priests to proclaim, in a context like this, the changeless Gospel of Christ and to make it credible to the legitimate demands of human reason.*

*“In reality, through study, especially the study of theology, the future priest assents to the Word of God, grows in his spiritual life, and prepares himself to fulfill his pastoral ministry.” (PDV 51)*

The Diocese of Fargo views the spiritual and intellectual formation of seminarians as an integrated whole. Just as the health of our body affects the health of our soul, and vice versa, so the health of our minds affects the health of our soul. Through his course of studies carried out in a context of faith, the Diocese of Fargo seeks to promote personal growth, critical understanding, disciplined study, the skills needed to express himself clearly, and instill in him the need to grow intellectually his whole life long.

The Diocese of Fargo expects each seminarian to:

- 1) Consult with the Academic Dean, and be open to suggestions or directives from the Rector or Vocation Director regarding class registration.
- 2) Discuss with his Formation Advisor how best to balance the many seminary activities and requirements.
- 3) Seek assistance from professors when an academic difficulty arises in a subject area.
- 4) Observe complete honesty in the pursuit of his studies.

- 5) Maintain an overall GPA as required by the seminary. Failure to meet this requirement can result in a seminarian being placed on academic probation.
- 6) Fulfill all academic requirements prescribed by the professor.
- 7) Attend and be on time for all classes.

## **Pastoral Formation**

*“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. The Council's decree Optatam Totius states so clearly when speaking of major seminaries: 'The whole training of the students should have as its object to make them true shepherds of souls after the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, teacher, priest, and shepherd. Hence, they should be trained for the ministry of the Word, so that they may gain an ever increasing understanding of the revealed Word of God, making it their own by meditation and giving it expression in their speech and in their lives. They should be trained for the ministry of worship and sanctification so that by prayer and the celebration of the sacred liturgical functions they may carry on the work of salvation through the Eucharistic sacrifice and the sacraments. They should be trained to undertake the ministry of the shepherd, that they may know how to represent Christ to humanity, Christ who 'did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for the many', and that they may win over as many by becoming the servants of all.” (PDV 57)*

It is one thing to *study and undergo formation* for the priesthood; it is quite another thing to *live* as a priest. It is necessary to take the human, spiritual and intellectual formation that one has received and begin to live it in a practical, effective and Christ-like way in service to the People of God. Some of this must come from experience – there is no substitute for that. The experience of pastoral service, combined with responsible supervision and

theological reflection will be important for the seminarian's development, and will then be an important component in further growth in his human, spiritual and intellectual formation.

The Diocese of Fargo expects each seminarian to:

- 1) Faithfully follow all Field Education guidelines and requirements of the seminary.
- 2) Fulfill all reading and writing assignments of the Field Education faculty.
- 3) Attend all presentations of the seminary Field Education Program.
- 4) Live and work in a parish, or have some other diocesan assignment, beginning with the summer after their first year of Theology or any other summer assignment that the bishop may give prior to First Theology.



## ***Requirements for Potential Seminarians***

A man aspiring to the priesthood should be practicing his faith by attending weekly Mass, going to confession regularly and praying in some way each day. He should be physically and psychologically healthy. He should begin to meet regularly for Spiritual Direction. He should be willing to study, learn, and acquire new knowledge. He should have a basic understanding of the teachings of the Catholic Church. He should have a desire to live as a priest and submit to the apostolic authority of the Bishop.

## ***Application Procedures***

A man wishing to be a priest should contact the Vocation Director. After an interview, the applicant will receive or be mailed an application packet, which will include the following:

1. Confidential Application Form
2. Autobiographical & Essays Guide
3. Reference List Form
4. Release of Information Form
5. Medical Examination Form
6. Criminal Background Check Form
7. Sexual Misconduct Policy Form

Applicants must provide the following information, which must be sent to the Vocation Office:

1. Two current Baptismal Certificate of applicant
2. Two current Confirmation Certificate of applicant (only if Confirmed Catholic through RCIA)
3. One certificate of canonical Marriage of parents
4. Two sets of Transcripts of academic records from high school and colleges. Official transcripts must be sent directly to the Vocation Office from each institution.
5. Current psychological examination (appointment set up through the Vocation Office).
6. Recent photograph (head & shoulders) - two copies or a jpg file >1 MB.

## *Seminary Programs*

The seminaries consist of education and formation programs designed to prepare a man for the duties and life as a priest.

### *College (Minor Seminary)*

The Diocese of Fargo uses Sacred Heart Major Seminary in Detroit, MI and St. Gregory the Great Seminary in Seward, NE for college seminary formation and education. A man choosing to begin his preparation for the priesthood at the college level would receive an education in philosophy, a requirement for acceptance by a graduate school of theology (Major Seminary).

### *Spirituality Year*

Some students will attend a Spirituality Year in Denver at some point before entering Theology. This is the normal requirement for men attending St. John Vianney Seminary in Denver.

### *Pre-Theology*

A student who has a college degree, but does not have the required courses in philosophy and religion will participate in a pre-theology program to meet the requirements to enter a graduate school of theology (Major Seminary).

### *Theology*

When a seminarian has completed the requirements for entering a school of theology, he will pursue a course of studies, which leads to a graduate level degree. The bishop will determine the assignment to a Major Seminary.

### *Pastoral Year*

Although a pastoral or parish year is not a time of structured studies, it is intended to be a time of continued discernment, instruction and involvement in parish life, and an opportunity to address individual questions or needs.

## *Ministries*



### *Candidacy*

All seminarians are required to petition the bishop in writing to receive Candidacy. All petitions must be sent to the bishop along with a letter of recommendation from the seminary and from the Commission for Holy Orders and Ministries. Seminarians petitioning for candidacy must be physically and mentally sound, in good academic standing and have received a favorable evaluation from their seminary faculty. Candidacy reception occurs with the bishop before or after First Theology.

### *Lector/Acolyte*

All seminarians are required to petition the bishop in writing in order to receive the ministries of Lector and Acolyte. All petitions must be sent to the bishop along with a letter of recommendation from the major seminary and from the Commission for Holy Orders and Ministries. Seminarians must have satisfactory preparation in all aspects of the respective ministry. The reception of Lector and Acolyte is usually received in a ceremony with the bishop during the summer before Second and Third Theology.

### *Ordination to the Diaconate*

Aspirants to the diaconate must have received Candidacy and have exercised the ministries of Lector and Acolyte. Aspirants must be at least 23 years of age, and must have completed the proper curriculum of studies, signed a Profession of Faith, passed a canonical examination, and fulfilled the requirements of a retreat. The proper oaths must be completed and the candidate must have the approval of the seminary and the Commission for Holy Orders and Ministries. All petitions must be sent to the bishop as well as a positive letter of recommendation from their seminary. The ordination to the diaconate takes place in a ceremony with the bishop at the Cathedral, or if necessary, in another church at the Bishop's discretion. The Diocesan Office of Worship will plan the ordination liturgy coordinating with the ordinandi.

### *Ordination to the Priesthood*

To be ordained a priest, a deacon must be at least 25 years of age. He must have satisfactorily completed a core curriculum of theological studies, passed a canonical examination and completed a five-day retreat. He must have the recommendation of a seminary rector, faculty, and the Commission for Holy Orders and Ministries. Deacons must have completed all documents as required by diocesan policy. The ordination liturgy planning is the same as for the Diaconate.

### ***Financial Policies***

The seminarian is making a commitment to the Diocese of Fargo when he decides to pursue a path that will lead to priestly service to the People of God in the diocese. In turn, the Diocese of Fargo and the People of God in the diocese make a commitment to supporting the seminarians. Part of the commitment of support involves financial assistance. This assistance includes gas reimbursements for travel to official diocesan events, book stipends and travel to/from seminary as indicated in the sections immediately below.

All seminarians are responsible for their own personal expenses, including but not limited to: car insurance, parking fees, special foods/health products, personal items, and clerical clothing. He is also responsible for the cost of the medical exam during the admissions process.

Seminarians who have served in the Armed Forces are encouraged to apply for Veteran Administration educational benefits.

If extraordinary need exists, financial aid may be available from the seminary. The Diocese of Fargo also has the Seminarian's Needs Fund for emergency or unusual needs.

### College Seminary

The college seminarian will pay for tuition, room and board at Sacred Heart Major Seminary (SHMS) or St. Gregory the Great Seminary (SGGS). The Diocese of Fargo will give a scholarship to each Fargo seminarian attending SHMS and SGGS. The Diocese will give a stipend each year to help pay for books, and will pay the cost of taking the psychological exams during the admissions process.

The Diocese will reimburse travel expenses up to \$500 to assist in getting to and from seminary. Receipts for gasoline, meals and lodging or airfare must be turned in to the Vocation Office for reimbursement. Students must have their own health insurance.

### Pre-Theology & Theology

The Diocese of Fargo will pay tuition, room and board, as well as a stipend for books. The Diocese will pay the cost of taking the psychological exams during the admissions process. Health insurance is available through the diocese (does not include vision or dental – see next page).

The Diocese will reimburse travel expenses up to \$500 to assist travel to and from seminary. Receipts for gasoline, meals and lodging or airfare must be submitted to the Vocation Office for reimbursement. Mileage without receipts will be reimbursed @ \$0.20/mile when the mileage form (available online) is submitted.

The Diocese of Fargo will also pay a stipend for summer assignments. See the Vocation Director for stipend amounts.

### ***Overseas Travel***

All seminarians need to communicate with the Vocation Office regarding any overseas travel plans at the very beginning of such planning - long before buying tickets. Discernment before making such plans should include discussions with your formation advisor, spiritual advisor, and the vocations office. Issues

influencing such a trip include your current financial needs, past and current support received, and the potential for scandal or gossip on the part of donors to seminarian formation.

### ***Health Insurance***

All seminarians are required to have health insurance. The Diocese of Fargo has a group plan available but seminarians should see if they are covered on their family plan first. The Diocese of Fargo will pay the insurance premium for seminarians in theology, pre-theology and the spirituality year. Seminarians are responsible for all co-payments, prescriptions, dental insurance, and dental expenses. The Diocese will help pay for a dental cleaning and basic exam every one or two years. Counseling or medical bills paid directly by the Diocese must be submitted to the insurance company for possible reimbursements (good stewardship).

### ***Pastoral Year***

A Pastoral Year is a time a seminarian spends in a parish or diocesan assignment away from a seminary and/or formal formation program with the intention of returning at a later date. If the seminarian wishes to have a Pastoral Year for any reason, he must submit a request in writing to the Bishop and send a copy to the Vocation Director. If a seminarian has financial obligation to the diocese, he must meet with the Vocation Director concerning that. Once a Pastoral Year is granted in writing, the seminarian is required to check in by mutually agreeable terms with the Vocation Director on a regular basis.

If necessary, the Bishop or Vocation Director may request a seminarian to take a Pastoral Year to review his call to the priesthood. In such a case as this, the seminarian will be required to contact the Vocation Director on a regular basis.

## ***Changing Dioceses/Religious Orders***

Any seminarian considering leaving the Diocese of Fargo for another diocese or religious order is to contact the Vocation Director, the rector of the seminary, his dean of formation and his spiritual director. All financial obligations to the diocese will be settled before a seminarian is officially released from the Diocese of Fargo. The new diocese or religious order may be asked to reimburse the Diocese of Fargo for all costs related to the seminarian's education and formation.

## ***Disaffiliation***

A seminarian who decides not to continue his preparation for the priesthood is to explain his intentions to the Vocation Director and the Bishop, state his decision formally in writing to the Bishop and send a copy to the Vocation Director. If a seminarian has financial obligations to the diocese, he must meet with the Diocesan Secretary for Finance and Administration. After these procedures have been completed, the Vocation Director will inform the seminary of his decision.

## ***Summer Assignment/Behavior***

Summer is a special opportunity for a seminarian to take stock of his growth in his vocation. During this time, he can learn a great deal concerning his own successes, failures, and various needs. This is true especially in spiritual development.

Most seminarians attend the ten-week summer program at the Institute for Priestly Formation (IPF) in Omaha. Most seminarians will spend one summer living in the bishop's house while working in Fargo and one summer working with the Diocesan Young Disciples program. These normally occur during college seminary.

All college (and some pre-theology) seminarians should be employed during the summer. They are expected to find employment without expecting assistance from the diocese. When

possible, the Vocation Office will offer suggestions for possible employment. Summer jobs should be appropriate to status as a seminarian. A seminarian should not take a job that does not allow for daily Mass and time each day for spiritual exercises.

Those in major seminary have pastoral assignments during their summers. There will usually be one parish assignment after 1st or 2nd theology. Deacons will also have an assignment in a parish and will receive their assignment from the Vocation Office.

The annual summer gathering has two parts. The first days are optional, simply fun and socializing. Beginning Tuesday at noon, everyone is required to be present and the days include recreation, prayer, work project, Liturgies for Candidacy, Lector & Acolyte, and getting to know one another better. We finish Saturday noon.

### ***Dress Code***

Cassock and surplice is the norm when seated with seminarians in the diocese at diocesan Masses. At other diocesan or parish gatherings, dress appropriately, i.e., trousers, dress shirt and tie, belt and dress shoes. For more formal occasions, wear a suit coat.

At a parish, dress appropriately, keep in mind that you represent the Church. Proper attire for a deacon is black pants, a black clerical shirt, and collar. Proper attire for other seminarians while in the parish office is office/chapel casual (i.e. slacks/kakis and polo/button down shirt). Rectory and parish life is an important part of seminary formation. At school, follow their clothing policy.

### ***Holy Week & Easter***

Bishop Folda desires that seminarians be back in the Diocese for Holy Week & Easter – the greatest celebration of the year. The Vocation Office will assist with permission with the seminaries and travel plans for the seminarians. Carpooling is preferred for those seminarians closer to home and flights will be discussed on a

case-by-case basis. The Chrism Mass is the first Holy Week Liturgy where your presence is appropriate.

This is a great opportunity for prayer and strengthening the bonds of friendship with your brother seminarians. You are free to leave Fargo after the Easter Vigil.

## ***Relationships***

### ***Seminarian and His Family***

Seminarians should be ever mindful of the role of family in his vocation. It is important to keep them informed of personal progress and the procedure by which a seminarian advances to the priesthood. Parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters, and relatives are partners in a seminarian's vocation.

### ***Seminarians and the Pastor/Priests***

Seminarians should offer their assistance to their pastor when they are home for holidays, school breaks and in the summer. All seminarians should keep in contact with their pastor throughout their formation. The home pastor is a gift to a seminarian in his words, example, and guidance through friendship and mentoring.

### ***Seminarians and the Vocation Director***

Seminarians must keep in contact with the Vocation Director regarding important matters dealing with areas concerning requirements for priesthood.

### ***Seminarians and the Bishop***

All seminarians are encouraged to visit or write the Bishop. These visits and exchanges with the Bishop are important because they establish a relationship, which will benefit them both.

### *Seminarians and your Diocesan Brothers*

During this time of formation, you are brothers in a unique way even though we are all brothers and sisters in the Body of Christ. Therefore, get to know one another, whether together at events, carpooling while traveling, or during the school year through letters, email, Facebook, phone calls, etc. You can encourage one another and support each other through trials and difficulties that are a normal part of formation and life.

### ***The Commission for Holy Orders and Ministries***

The Commission for Holy Orders and Ministries is a commission of priests established to assist the Bishop in determining the suitability and qualifications of candidates to the priesthood, as they advance through Candidacy, Lector, and Acolyte on their way to Holy Orders in the Diaconate and Priesthood.

### ***Vocation Office Policy Concerning Files***

It is the policy of the Vocation Office of the Diocese of Fargo that files on any candidate or prospective candidates are the property of the Diocese of Fargo and will not be released directly to any candidate or prospective candidate, past or present. The file may be reviewed by the seminarian; certain pieces (i.e. references, etc. are not accessible). All requests or concerns should be submitted in writing to the Vocation Office.

### ***Communications***

Communication is an important part of formation so follow all policies at the Seminaries and from the Diocese regarding appropriate and timely communication. The Vocations Office also has expectations to foster good habits for the seminarians.

## Communications Etiquette

**Phone** calls should be returned within a day, or as indicated by the urgency of the caller. **Emails** from the Vocations Office or Diocese should be answered immediately or as indicated by the sender. **Texting** is fine for simple Yes/No questions (160 character message for a reason) and should not be used for lengthy messages – use email or the phone. If you don't leave a message, don't expect a call back. As a courtesy when leaving a voice message (for anyone) indicate your name, the topic/issue you are calling about, any further details, and a good time to call you back.

## Public Communications

Many people look to a seminarian as a spokesperson for the Church and the Diocese. For this reason, public communication should be cleared with the Communications or Vocation Office. This includes but is not limited to letters to the editor, interviews with news reporters, blogs, and comments on internet chat sites. If you are unsure about a post, please use good judgment by reviewing it with a formator or our offices here before posting it.

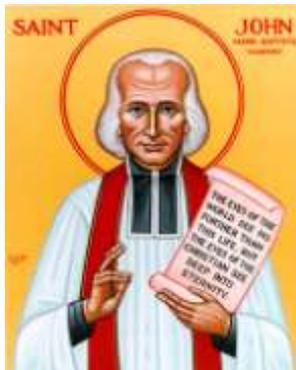
Facebook pages are allowed but the same prudence and charity in speaking the truth should be used. If there are regular breaches of prudence or other acts of poor judgment, you may be instructed to suspend such accounts.

## *Diocesan Newspaper*

The New Earth, the diocesan newspaper, will be sent to all seminarians studying for the Diocese of Fargo. If a copy of the New Earth is not received, the Vocation Office should be contacted. Seminarians are encouraged to submit articles to the New Earth on topics such as “their vocation journey,” “life at the seminary,” “hopes as a future priest,” etc. Articles should be submitted to the Vocation Office and appropriate articles will be forwarded to the New Earth.

**Any serious breach of the Diocesan policies concerning seminary formation can make a seminarian liable to dismissal by the Diocese of Fargo.**

## **St. John Vianney Patron of Priests**



**Pray for us!**

Revised September 2015

***Mary, the Immaculate Conception***



***Patroness of the Diocese of Fargo  
Pray for us!***