

Manual of Works for the Assessment of Seminary Applicants

1. Documentation Procedure for Seminary Applicants

When the Director or the Assistant Director of Vocations interviews each applicant, instruction will need to be given in the interview that any documents the applicant provides will need to be submitted by him to the Vocations Promoter. The Vocation Promoter will then put the application documents in the file of the applicant and write the date in which it was received in the form in his file entitled, *Checklist – Documentation of Applicant*. If it becomes convenient for any applicant to submit any of his documents to the Director or the Assistant Director of Vocations during his interview, these documents will need to be submitted to the Vocations Promoter at the nearest convenience. This will ensure that:

- a. none of the original documents are misplaced;
- b. all documents can be labelled and orderly filed for their efficient access; and
- c. confidentiality can be ensured in virtue of the files being under lock and key.

Furthermore, this procedure will enable the Vocations Promoter to:

1. track what documents are needed in each file to assist each applicant complete the requirements of his application, and communicate this to all who need to know, including the applicant himself;
2. have all the documents on hand which are required to prepare the report for the Archbishop of any given applicant.
3. be in a position to inform the Director and the Assistant Director of Vocations of any other matters which may arise pertaining to each applicant in virtue of being a *central point of contact* for all involved, and thus make communication efficient and less likely to be subject to complication.

2. Protocol for Accessing Documents of Applicants

All of the original copies of each document will be kept under lock and key in the Vocation Centre's filing cabinet. Further to the reasons stated above, this will enable the Vocations Promoter to fulfil her responsibility within her job description to “assist with the process of documenting applications for admission to the seminary.”

As a standard procedure, as soon as they are submitted, the Vocations Promoter *photocopy* the following documents for both the Director and the Assistant Director of Vocations, or, if it is more convenient, *scan* them and send them as an attachment in an email:

- application form;
- personal story;
- psychological report; and
- references.¹

If any of the documents listed above are photocopied, the Vocations Promoter will:

1. label the original copies with a Post-It-Note which states: *Original Copy. Do not remove.*
2. mark the photocopied documents with: *Name of the Director or the Assistant Director* for which it is designated to be read, together with the message, *Shred when no longer required.*
3. Notify the Director and the Assistant Director that photocopies have been placed in the filing cabinet for their reference.

Upon request from the Director and the Assistant Director, the Vocations Promoter will make copies of any other materials in the files of each applicant and distribute them to the anyone involved in the application process who may require them.

3. Procedure for the Screening of Applicants

The Screening of applicants takes place during several stages. If any given applicant is found by the Director or the Assistant Director to be not suitable or at least not ready to make an application for the seminary, the process terminates and does not proceed to the next stage unless, after consulting the Archbishop to update him about the essential details of the applicant, he gives the go ahead for the applicant to continue making his application. These stages consist of the following:

Stage 1: Even if he says he wants to make an application, the Director or Assistant Director of Vocations will get to know the aspirant in informal interviews before the intensive interview takes place. In these interviews, the aspirant's suitability should be assessed in a manner that informal interviews can at least afford. In addition to the document entitled, *Benchmarks for Candidates to the Priesthood and Religious Life*, among the qualities assessed are:

1. whether or not the applicant enjoys the favour of his Parish Priest. This is especially important if you have any questions regarding his level of faith-practice, character, life-style, reputation, etc.

¹ If an applicant asks a priest other than his Parish Priest to provide a reference, you would do well to provide his Parish Priest with the *Seminary Applicant Reference Outline* form, or to at least consult his Parish Priest over the phone and take notes yourself on what you learn from him about the applicant's involvement in his local Parish.

2. whether or not the applicant has articulated how his calling to the Priesthood involves characteristics which are unique to the Priesthood.² If he does not, he will need to be encouraged to keep discerning his vocation, even if he says that he wants to make an application;
3. whether or not the aspirant has had a recent conversion. If he has, this should be carefully noted as it is not uncommon for aspirants to confuse the grace of their vocation with the grace of their conversion.³ Aspirants who have had a recent conversion who want to make an application should be encouraged to keep discerning for at least a year;
4. whether or not the aspirant's discernment coincides with the insights of St Ignatius of Loyola's *discernment of spirits*;⁴
5. whether or not the applicant has a spiritual director. If he does not, he cannot begin making his application until he has one;⁵ and
6. whether or not the aspirant is employed or studying. He will not be able to begin making his application if he is neither working nor studying.

Notes from these informal interviews are to be given to the Vocations Promoter so that she can include them in the database of each aspirant.⁶

Opportunity should be taken in these interviews to discover if there are any matters in the applicant's life which require therapy (if applicable).⁷ If

² To give some examples, "I want to be closer to God," or, "I want to serve Christ," or, "I want to use my gifts to help build up God's kingdom," etc. pertains to the universal call to holiness, not exclusively to the Priesthood; whereas, if an aspirant says such things as, "I want to identify my life exclusively with Christ," or, "I want to minister the sacraments to others," or, "When I see my Parish Priest minister to others, I feel attracted to mediate the love of Christ in the same way," he is expressing characteristics which are unique to a priestly vocation.

³ St Ignatius provides good insight even for those who have not had a conversion, but are subject to even more subtle deception (*Spiritual Exercises*, #336).

⁴ Most essentially, this consists of looking to see if the aspirant is being attracted to the Priesthood in moments of *spiritual (not natural) consolation*, especially *consolation without a preceding cause*, or *consolation which is disproportionate to its cause* (*Spiritual Exercises*, #330). Further clarity can be gained if the aspirant experiences detraction to the Priesthood in moments of *spiritual (not natural) desolation* (*Spiritual Exercises*, #317). It is hoped that further clarity will be gained in the seminary if the aspirant has not gained such self-awareness, however, if any of this is discussed in the application process, it should be carefully and accurately noted.

⁵ The spiritual director can never be consulted to ascertain the suitability of an aspirant for the Priesthood, nor to determine if he is ready to make an application (as this belongs to the internal forum), however, the Director or the Assistant Director of Vocations can and should consult the applicant's spiritual director to find out whether or not the aspirant has been receiving regular spiritual direction. The frequency of the spiritual direction should be noted in the applicant's file, and this detail is to be included in the letter of recommendation.

⁶ This information can be sent to her in hand-written notes, emails, or digital dictations to be transcribed by her. The purpose for which the Vocations Promoter keeps this database is two-fold: (1) to remind the Director and the Assistant Director of Vocations to follow up any particular needs of the aspirants which are referred to within the notes. Some examples of such reminders are: to send the aspirant some literature which may assist him; refer the aspirant to a psychologist for therapy; make a referral to a speech pathologist; or recommend a priest for spiritual direction, etc.; and (2) to help keep record of these notes in the Vocation Centre's database so that they are accessible to the succeeding Director of Vocations.

⁷ For example, within these informal interviews, each aspirant will need to be informed that there are a growing number of people in today's society who are struggling with addictions of various kinds, among which the most prevalent is viewing unchaste material on the Internet. The aspirant will then need to be encouraged to speak in confidence about any such addictions so that he can be referred to professionals who can assist him, thereby fast tracking his ability to make an

referrals are made, these are to be noted and also sent to the Vocations Promoter to be included in the database.

If an aspirant says he wants to make an application, and he appears at this stage to be suitable and ready, the document entitled, *Procedure for Making an Application for the Seminary* is sent to the applicant. The Vocations Promoter can send this document to the applicant if such assistance is required.

- Stage 2:* Assisting the applicant to fill in the application form. This form must always be filled in by the Director or the Assistant Director of Vocations within the intensive interview, not by the applicant himself.
- Stage 3:* Reception of applicants' *personal story*.
- Stage 4:* Reception of the applicant's *references*. In addition to receiving references from the applicant's referees, the applicant should be encouraged to make an appointment to see the *rector* of the seminary, provided that the applicant has thus far been determined to be someone the Archbishop is likely to accept for the seminary (otherwise, the applicant will receive an inadvertent message that the Archbishop will be interviewing him). This will give the rector an opportunity to provide his own comments to the Director or the Assistant Director of Vocations regarding the suitability of the applicant for the Priesthood and whether or not he is ready to enter the seminary.
- Stage 5:* Review of the documentation gathered in all of the above stages. Further documentation will be submitted by the applicant at later stages if he has not done so already, such as his medical and dental reports, academic reports and transcripts, etc., however, by this stage, the most essential information will have been received in order to be able to refer the applicant to Sister Lydia Marie Allen, RSM. Upon doing so:
1. the Vocations Promoter, under the direction of the Director, or in his absence, the Assistant Director of Vocations, will send a confidential copy of the applicant's *Personal Story* and *references* to Sister Lydia Marie and any other documents she may request;⁸ and
 2. the Director of Vocations, or the Assistant Director under the supervision of the Director of Vocations, will need to provide Sister Lydia Marie with

application which would otherwise become hindered if such additions become known about at a later stage when formal interviews begin.

⁸ My authorisation does not need to be given to you if she makes such requests in virtue of each applicant's signed declaration in the *Informed Consent by Applicant* form in which he acknowledges that the materials which are in his file for his application will also be used by the psychologist in the application process.

an email which notes any matters which she would do well to assess. Such matters will consist of things which have been learned and reflected upon by closely reading the documents which have been submitted in Stages 1 – 4,⁹ and any gut feelings which, although are not empirical, can nevertheless assist Sister Lydia Marie in her own assessment of the applicant in any particular areas of concern.

- Stage 6:* Reception of all other application requirements outlined in the document, *Procedure for Making an Application for the Seminary*.
- Stage 7:* Reception of Sister Lydia Marie’s psychological report. As soon as this is received, the Vocations Promoter will notify the Director and the Assistant Director of Vocations that it has arrived either by a Post-It Note or email.
- Stage 8:* The Director, after reviewing the psychological report with the Assistant Director of Vocations and discussing it with him, commissions the Assistant Director to write the letter of recommendation.
- Stage 9:* Under the direction of the Director, or in his absence, the Assistance Director of Vocations, the Vocations Promoter prepares a folder with dividers to be submitted to the Archbishop. Once this folder has been prepared, no one is to remove it from the file except the Vocations Promoter. This will enable the Vocations Promoter to make sure none of the original documents in each file are missing when it is given to the Archbishop. This protocol is important, because if the original documents are misplaced, copies cannot be made for the rector of the seminary. If the Director or the Assistant Director of Vocations has a serious reason to remove the folder, this must not be done without informing the Vocations Promoter.
- Stage 10:* The Vocations Promoter finalises all the content for the report, including the letter of recommendation, and hand-delivers it to the Archbishop’s secretary.¹⁰ If the applicant is accepted, the Vocations Promoter will:
1. provide a confidential copy of the report to the rector; and
 2. email a confidential copy of the letter of recommendation as an attachment to Sister Lydia Marie.

⁹ The copies of the original documents referred to in Stages 1 – 4 which the Vocations Promoter provides will help the Director and the Assistant Director of Vocations to do this as they can then be underlined and marked with comments so that no detail is missed when communicating any concerns to Sister Lydia Marie Allen, RSM.

¹⁰ If the Vocations Promoter and/or the Archbishop’s secretary are on leave, the Director or the Assistant Director of Vocations will need to hand-deliver the report directly to the Archbishop.

4. Procedure for Arranging Appointments for the Archbishop to Interview Applicants

1. Upon receiving direction from the Director or the Assistant Director of Vocations, the Vocations Promoter will set up the appointments for the interviews of each applicant with the Archbishop's secretary.¹¹ The Archbishop's secretary will need to be informed that these appointments are *tentative*, pending confirmation when the application requirements have been completed, including the psychological report.
2. As soon as the appointment has been made for each applicant to be interviewed by the Archbishop, the Vocations Promoter will:
 1. email Sister Lydia Marie Allen, RSM, informing her of the date and time of this appointment.¹² The Director and Assistant Director of Vocations are to receive a carbon copy of this email;
 2. put the Archbishop's appointment in the Director of Vocations' calendar; and
 3. Inform the applicant that this tentative appointment to be interviewed by the Archbishop has been made, pending confirmation when the application requirements have been completed.
3. Upon receiving direction from the Director, or in his absence, the Assistance Director of Vocations, the Vocations Promoter will confirm the applicant's appointment to be interviewed by the Archbishop with both the Archbishop's secretary and the applicant himself. The applicant will be informed to report to the Receptionist on Level 5 of the Polding Centre and wait there to be summoned by the Archbishop's secretary to be interviewed by the Archbishop.

¹¹ If the Vocations Promoter and/or the Archbishop's secretary are on leave, the Director or the Assistant Director of Vocations will need to make such appointments directly with the Archbishop.

¹² This will enable Sister Lydia Marie to know by what date the Director and the Assistant Director of Vocations will need to receive a confidential copy of her psychological report so that there is enough time for the letter of recommendation to be written.