

Procedure for Making an Application for the Seminary

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Who is involved in the application process?

It is the role of the Archdiocesan Director of Vocations, Fr. Michael de Stoop, to assist each applicant to make his application. In doing so, he will consult those who know him, including his Parish Priest and his parents.

Each applicant is also referred to a psychologist for a psychological assessment which gives good indicators regarding his suitability and readiness for the Priesthood. Previous applicants have found this psychological assessment as a good opportunity to grow in self-knowledge. The psychologist we use for the psychological assessment is fully qualified and has over thirty years' experience. With each applicant's permission, a confidential copy of his psychological assessment is provided to those involved in reviewing his application. These people include the Archbishop of Sydney, the Most Reverend Anthony Fisher, the Director of Vocations, Fr. Michael de Stoop, and the Rector of the Seminary, Fr. Daniel Meagher.

In addition to Director of Vocations (or his Assistant Director), the Rector of the Seminary will interview each applicant. After these interviews and assessments the final step is that the applicant is interviewed by the Archbishop of Sydney, unless, upon reading the *Letter of Recommendation* written by the Director of Vocations (or his Assistant Director), he decides that he is not suitable, or at least is not ready at the present time.

What happens during the application process?

The application process consists of the following:

1. Prior to filling in the application form, the Archdiocesan Director of Vocations will ascertain what means each applicant has used to

discern his vocation. An aspirant will only be able to apply if he has demonstrated he has made efforts to discern his vocation by (i) establishing habits of personal prayer; (ii) having frequent recourse to the sacraments; and (iii) has a spiritual director from whom he has been receiving regular guidance. If he has not attended a retreat or any other event which could help him discern his vocation, this would be recommended. In this interview he will also listen to how the applicant feels called to the Priesthood. If the Director of Vocations (or his Assistant Director) has reason to believe that an applicant has been discerning his vocation correctly, he will assist him to fill in the application form for the Seminary.

2. Fr. Michael makes every effort to make each applicant feel comfortable and explains the application process to him. Among his explanations, he makes it clear that everything each applicant discusses is kept strictly confidential. To provide assurance of this, each applicant signs an *Informed Consent* document which means access to the information the applicant provides about himself is limited to the Archbishop alone, together with those he has appointed to assist him (the same people referred to in the answer to the question above, *Who is involved in the application process?*)
3. Each applicant is required to provide a photocopy of the following documents:
 - Full extract of Birth Certificate, Drivers Licence and/or Passport, or any other documents for identification purposes;
 - Baptism Certificate (Note: this must not be more than six months old. If an applicant needs to obtain a copy he will need to ask the parish where he was baptised to issue one);
 - Confirmation Certificate (if information about an applicant's Confirmation is included in his Baptism Certificate, it will suffice); and

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- Academic reports, awards and transcripts from your school education (including School Certificate and HSC) and any tertiary education (e.g., TAFE or university degrees).

Among the application papers Fr. Michael gives to each applicant are a *Medical Assessment Report* and a *Dental Assessment Report* which the applicant will need to take with him when he sees his local doctor and dentist. As they examine his medical and dental health they will sign these reports upon which the applicant will need to return them to the Vocation Centre. These reports provide the Archbishop with the assurance that the applicant at least enjoys reasonable health.

Also among the application documents are:

- A *Personal Story Outline* to help the applicant write a short autobiography. This will enable the Archbishop to learn more about the applicant. The Archbishop requests each applicant to write about the details of his family upbringing, especially the things which pertain to your faith development; your school and post school education; your interests/hobbies; personality; health; relationships; capacity to be celibate; faith life; and your vocational calling;
- Two copies of a *Reference Outline*, one which needs to be given to the applicant's Parish Priest, or at least a priest who knows him well, the other which he will need to give to someone who knows him well, such as an employer, work colleague, friend, relative, etc; and
- A *Sample Letter* which will help the applicant write a hand written letter to inform the Archbishop that he would like to apply for the seminary. This letter will feature as the first page of the report that Fr. Michael gives to the Archbishop so that among its formality it has the applicant's personal touch.

- *New Working with Children Background Check (WWC)*: You will need to apply online for the New Working with Children Check for the Government of NSW. This check will not come to any expense because unlike paid workers, you do not need to pay anything to have your WWCC processed. Apply via the link below, and go to the blue box labeled “APPLY” under “For Individuals.” Please apply as a *volunteer* and select *Religious Services* in the drop-down list. When you fill in the online form, be sure to include your email address in the section is asked for, as this will enable the Registry of Roads and Maritime Services (RMS) to email your WWC Number to you, thus speeding up the process (it can take weeks or sometimes even more than a month to arrive in the mail). The Online Registration as well as the directions of “How to Apply” can be found at:

www.kids.nsw.gov.au/Working-with-children/New-Working-With-Children-Check/apply/-apply

Upon completing the online registration, you will receive a number which you will need to take, together with two original photo ID documents, to the Registry of Roads and Maritime Services (RMS).

The RMS will then send you a letter in an email with your WWCC Number. Please forward that email to the Rector’s Secretary of the Seminary who will verify you with the Government of NSW and keep that WWCC Number on file. The Seminary’s email address is: seminary@sydneycatholic.org Please send a carbon copy of that email from the RMS to the Vocations Promoter at: vocations@sydneycatholic.org You will need to save a copy of this letter on your computer and also print a copy to be kept in your file for validation of your WWCC Number for five (5) years which is the duration of its status.

4. Before Fr. Michael provides the Archbishop with each applicant's report he refers them to the psychologist, which the Archbishop has appointed to assess the suitability of each applicant for the Seminary. Each applicant has no reason to feel anxious about seeing a psychologist because many applicants have told Fr. Michael that they found the experience to have affirmed their calling. I am sure that you can appreciate that this measure is necessary so that the Church can be responsible in our acceptance of men who may be our future priests. You can be assured that the psychologist whom the Archbishop has appointed will be sympathetic to the noble aspirations each applicant has to pursue his vocation. After being interviewed by the psychologist, they will send a confidential copy of their report to Fr. Michael. He in turn includes this in the report he gives to the Archbishop and also uses it to help him write his *Letter of Recommendation*. You can rest assured that each applicant will not be accepted or rejected solely on the basis of the psychologist's report, nor any other information that is submitted to the Archbishop because it is the Archbishop's task alone to decide whether or not to accept each applicant.
5. Fr. Michael refers each applicant to meet the Rector of the Seminary of the Good Shepherd. The applicant can make a time to see him at any stage after being interviewed by Fr. Michael. This provides the Rector with the opportunity to give the applicant further insights into seminary life and assess his ability to make the transition of living within a community.
6. The last stage of the application process consists of being interviewed by the Archbishop of Sydney. This gives him the pleasure of meeting the applicant in person to let him know that he has accepted him to study for the Priesthood in the Archdiocese of Sydney.

What happens if an applicant is accepted to enter the Seminary?

If the Archbishop accepts an applicant to enter the Seminary he will receive a letter from him which will formally affirm that he is accepted. He will also receive a letter from the Rector of the Seminary, which will provide more information about the life and activities that takes place in the Seminary, including the dates of (i) when the First Year students begin; (ii) when the Opening Mass takes place to which the parents of the seminarians are invited; and (iii) their holidays.

What happens at the Seminary?

The men whose applications are accepted will live and study at the Seminary of the Good Shepherd, 50-58 Abbotsford Road, Homebush. You are very welcome to visit the Seminary and you need only contact the Rector of the Seminary to arrange such a visit.

His contact details are:

Phone: (02) 9752-9600

Email: fr.danny.meagher@sydneycatholic.org

The Seminary of the Good Shepherd is a place of work and study for men in formation and discernment for a number of places including the Archdioceses of Sydney, Perth and Canberra-Goulburn and also the Dioceses of Lismore and Wollongong.

First Year consists of a propaedeutic year which is like a ‘trial year.’ It functions as such because an applicant’s decision to enter the Seminary to explore a possible vocation to the Priesthood does not mean that he has made a decision to become a priest. At the end of that year (in fact at the end of every year of his training), each Seminarian will review whether or not he should continue.

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In this way, time in the Seminary can be likened to a couple's period of Engagement (although it is much longer as it usually takes at least seven years of training before students for the Priesthood are ordained). When a couple become Engaged they are declaring their intention to get married but this does not mean their marriage will certainly take place or that the lifelong commitment has begun. Likewise, those who enter the Seminary prepare themselves to become priests, but it is not until the Archbishop lays his hands on them and consecrates them in their Ordination ceremony that they promise to dedicate their lives to the Church.

The Seminary is a place to prepare and discern for those who think they may be called to the Priesthood. They enter with an open mind and heart to what is ahead. There are a number of tools and helps each man is given during his time in the Seminary to assist him make his decision. These tools include prayer, spiritual guidance, studies in theology, retreats, and (in Fifth Year) a 'Pastoral Placement' in which each seminarian spends eight months living and working in a parish to give him a clear sense of what life as a parish priest is like. In addition, each seminarian's suitability is assessed by the Seminary staff at the end of every year throughout his training. If the Seminary staff observe that he does not appear to be called to the Priesthood they will bring this to his attention and also to the attention of those involved in his formation, including the Archbishop.

Seminarians receive a day off every week. This is usually on a Saturday. They also receive a total of about three months of holidays during which they are encouraged to be employed and do some pastoral work in a parish. When a seminarian is finally ordained as a priest he will continue to take a day off every week and will have four weeks of annual leave.

The Archdiocese of Sydney pays for the accommodation, food and education of each seminarian. As for their personal expenses, such as car expenses, books, clothing, entertainment, etc., each seminarian receives a stipend of \$6000 per annum to assist him. If you would like to find out

more about what life in the Seminary consists of you can go to the following website: www.sgs.org.au

What if a man decides to leave the Seminary?

The Seminary is a place to prepare and discern for those who think they may be called to the Priesthood. As such there is no expectation that any young man should remain in the Seminary unless he genuinely discerns he should continue. It is no failure for a young man to leave since the Seminary is *meant* to be a place to discern one's vocation. Naturally, some will discern it is their vocation and others will not. From my point of view, those young men who enter with an open mind are generous, admirable people to be commended no matter what course they ultimately take.

For those young men who decide to leave the Seminary at some point, their time would not have been wasted. Not only will they have completed some studies but they will find clarity of direction and renewed confidence in their future direction. They will have had many opportunities to grow in the knowledge of their faith, prayerfulness and virtue, which should provide a solid foundation for whatever lies ahead. Since the Seminary is not only a place of formation, but a place of *discernment* Fr. Michael usually discourage those who have been accepted to enter the Seminary to have any "Farewell Parties." This is because although such parties are certainly well-motivated and intended to be supportive they can tend to place pressure on prospective seminarians to live up to whatever they perceive the expectations of their family and friends to be.

What happens if an applicant completes his training and is Ordained to the Priesthood?

If a seminarian is ordained then his first Ordination would be to the Diaconate in which he makes a promise of celibacy and obedience to the Archbishop and his successors. Deacons are ministers of the Church who can proclaim the Gospel, give the Homily, and be the celebrant of Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals.

After being a deacon for six to nine months he would be ordained to the Priesthood if he decides to take this final step. This will enable him to celebrate the Mass and administer the Sacrament of Reconciliation (otherwise known as the Sacrament of Penance or Confession) and the Sacrament of the Sick. Soon after his Ordination he will be appointed to a parish as an Assistant Priest. He may be appointed to a number of parishes during the first few years of his Priesthood after which he will have gained enough pastoral experience to become a Parish Priest. This involves being entrusted with the pastoral and administrative responsibilities of running a parish.

The Archbishop of Sydney may ask certain men to do further studies and/or be appointed to special works, such as becoming a chaplain in a school, university, hospital, prison, or a chaplain for the police, the Army, Navy or Air Force if he can see they have particular gifts for one of these types of work.

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I hope this information has been helpful for you. Further to the information in this document, if you have any questions, you can contact:

Rev. Fr. Michael de Stoop
Archdiocesan Director of Vocations
Vocation Centre
Level 11, Polding Centre
133 Liverpool Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000
Phone: (02) 9307 8421
Fax: (02) 9307-8410
Email: fr.michael.destoop@sydneycatholic.org