

The perceptions of the recently ordained priests of Boston of their post-secondary education and formation in seminary

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BOSTON COLLEGE

Lynch School Of Education

Department of Higher Education and Educational Administration

Program in Higher Education

**THE PERCEPTIONS OF THE RECENTLY ORDAINED PRIESTS OF BOSTON OF
THEIR POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION AND FORMATION IN SEMINARY**

Dissertation

By

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

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Abstract

The Perceptions of the Recently Ordained Priests of Boston of Their Post-Secondary Education and Formation in Seminary

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Roman Catholic Seminaries are post-secondary schools where men study in preparation for ordination for priesthood. In recent visitations by bishops to American seminaries faculty and students at all the seminaries were interviewed regarding the effectiveness of the curriculum. Noticeably absent from the consultations were the priests who had recently graduated from the seminary. This study, influenced by Dr. Dean Hoge's study: *The First Five Years of the Priesthood* interviewed twenty men who were ordained to the priesthood for the Archdiocese of Boston in the years 2001-2006. Using Pope John Paul II's seminal work of *Pastores Dabo Vobis* the qualitative study focused on the four areas of formation: human, intellectual, pastoral, and spiritual. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and coded using axial coding and open coding as well as cross case analysis and triangulation. Among the findings are loneliness of the recently ordained, the need for clearer boundaries in relationships with faculty members and women in the parish, more realistic training, the need for more support from the archdiocese, and better screening of pastoral sites prior to and after ordination. The findings suggest from the perceptions of the recently ordained men that there is significant room for improvement in all areas of formation.

Dedication

*To my mother Josephine and in loving memory of my father Alfred
With profound gratitude and all my love*

Acknowledgements

It is very difficult in a few words to express the gratitude I feel toward all those who have helped me these last few years to complete this dissertation and degree. It has been a great privilege for me to be associated with such a great university as Boston College, and in particular, the Lynch School of Education.

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My desire from the beginning was to try to get out of the way and allow the recently ordained priests’ voices to be heard. The priests who formed the pilot group and the twenty men who shared their experiences and reflections with me were generous with their time and

their insights. I was edified by their integrity and their dedication. Without their willing participation this dissertation would not have been possible. I am also indebted to Patricia Brett, Jennifer Sparrow, Ann Kennedy and Francis for their friendship and invaluable technical advice and assistance. Thanks as well to my Oblates of Divine Mercy, especially Joan McCann, Jim Kelly, and Cheryl Himelright.

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+ Jesus I Trust in You.

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Chapter One

Statement of the Problem

The focus of this study is to examine the perceptions of men recently ordained as priests for the archdiocese of Boston of their seminary education and formation. This topic is an important one for our time. The archdiocese of Boston, the Catholic Church in America and most of the world is not ordaining enough priests to replace the ones it is losing due to retirement, disability, and death. The Church also experiences men having difficulties in their first few years of priesthood that sometimes result in a crisis. These crises may result in changing assignments shortly after ordination, leaves of absence, and/or men resigning from priesthood within the first few years (Appendix A). Dean Hoge, a sociologist who has conducted several studies about the priesthood and priests, found the following statistics about priests in the United States:

In 2000 the mean age of diocesan priests was 59...New ordinations are not nearly numerous enough to keep priesthood at a stable size. Our best estimate is that ordinations in the past few years stand at about 35% of replacement level, that is, for every 1,000 priests dying, retiring or resigning from the active priesthood, only about 350 are being ordained...The percentage of new diocesan ordinands who resigned was 5.5% for ordination years 1970-79; 5.1% for 1980-84; 7.3% for 1985-89, and 9.0% for 1990-94. (2002, p. 2)

The number of active priests in the archdiocese of Boston has decreased over the last few decades. Their mean age has risen and between death, retirement, resignation and disability the archdiocese is not replacing the priests it is losing. A recent committee

formed by Cardinal O'Malley to assess pastoral planning for the archdiocese had similar findings:

The Archdiocese of Boston is currently served by a total of 500 active priests. Of these, 38 are on health leave or unassigned, 97 are in special ministry and 365 in parish ministry. Of those in parish ministry, 10% are 65 years of age or older. At a projected average net-loss of 25 active priests per year and a projected average of 5 newly ordained priests per year, by 2015 there will be only 292 active priests, i.e., priests who are not retired or permanently disabled; only an estimated 212 will be available for parish ministry. (Archdiocesan Pastoral Planning Report, 2007, p. 3)

Purpose of the Study

The whole concept of seminary is often a foreign one even for devout Catholics. A man after being accepted into the seminary usually commits himself to six years of study, prayer and supervised pastoral internships. Through the process of acquiring the Masters of Divinity degree required for ordination he will have at least 114 graduate credits in theology and four years of supervised internship experiences. He will also have a faculty adviser and a spiritual director for his complete time in the seminary. Since Vatican II there has been a lot of discussion about the goals of seminary instruction and how well it is preparing men for their transition to priesthood in a very modern, diverse, and complex world. In 2005, Pope Benedict XVI commissioned the American bishops to make visitations of the seminaries in this country to evaluate their effectiveness and to make suggestions to the Congregation of Education at the Vatican to improve seminary curriculum. These visitations focused

primarily on seminary rectors, professors, and to a lesser extent, present students in the seminary. One group that is not being formally consulted is the recent graduates, (i.e., recently ordained priests). An important part of this research project is to evaluate the appropriateness and effectiveness of the seminary preparation through the lenses of men ordained in the past five years for the Archdiocese of Boston. These data will then be used to make recommendations to the archdiocese of Boston and its seminaries to help them in preparing future priests.

Significance of the Study

This study focuses on the men from Boston who have been ordained to the priesthood in the last five years (2001 – 2006) and how they assess the education and formation that they received while in the seminary. The theologate, i.e., the graduate portion of the seminarians' education, takes place within the context of a post-baccalaureate school. Similar to other professional schools (e.g., law school and medical school), the seminarian receives professional education (M. Div) and training that seeks to prepare him to provide professional service to the Church and to society. In the case of the diocesan seminary the goal is to prepare the man for public ministry as an ordained priest. Whatever profession one is being educated and/or trained for there are very fundamental questions that need to be addressed.

Erault asked the following questions:

- What is our professional knowledge base?

- What is best learned in higher education, what is best learned in professional practice and what is best learned through an integrated course involving both contexts?
- What has to be learned before qualification and what is best postponed until after qualification?

These are questions that need to be answered by all professional bodies when formulating their education, training and assessment programmes {sic}. Poorly planned curricula, focusing largely on the assessment of technical knowledge over a wide range of subjects perceived to be relevant have sought to create the impression of a competent professional, whereas the end result of a protracted shallow-learning process could easily be a less-than-knowledgeable professional. (O'Reilly, Cunningham, & Lester, 1999, pp. 2-3)

The above questions certainly are relevant for consideration in developing and critiquing the curricula of seminaries. The priesthood is a distinct profession and vocation, but the seminary must be informed by trends in higher education in other professional fields. While seminaries in one form or another have existed for centuries there is a great deal of current debate about how men should be prepared for priesthood. The academic preparation is substantial, but increasingly there is a desire to make seminary training more "practical." Dean Hoge, whose research heavily informed my own study, found that the recently ordained men he interviewed felt that the seminary needed to become more practical. I found similar sentiments in my own interviews. The trend toward applying pressure toward a more

“practical” focus is not reserved for the seminary. It is a movement in most areas of higher education today.

... This in turn is part of increasingly practice-focused developments on professional education in many, if not most, professions at the moment, a factor which has much to do with the relative status given to ‘academic’ knowledge compared with ‘practice knowledge.’ The debate around the relative value of these knowledges is in turn the site of ideological struggles: which should be more important in shaping the education of the practitioner? (Bines & Watson, 1992, p. 67)

The very word “formation” indicates that the seminary understands its role to be more than training for tasks. It aims at transforming the individual and equipping him with the platform that he will need for a lifetime of ministry. The life and vocation of a priest is far more complex than a skill set (although it includes it); it seeks to prepare a man to be oriented to continued education, growth, and reflection. Studies recently conducted by experts on professional education in England emphasized that educating practitioners involves more than training how to perform functions; it involves giving the practitioner the skills that he/she will need in being a competent and confident leader in a constantly changing environment. They identified some common goals that

.....cover a wide range of professions, considered from the perspectives of educators and researchers, professional bodies and government agencies. Throughout we find, again and again:

- An explicit awareness of the need to move beyond competence to a more dynamic concept of capability, embracing learning, culture and values;

- A concern with the education of the whole person for professional and social responsibility;
- A commitment to fostering critical, reflective professional practice through critical, reflective learning experiences;
- A willingness to grapple with the intellectual challenges of conceptualizing these new models of professional education for lifelong learning;
- An engagement in constructive dialogue between academia, professional bodies, employers and other interest groups about the purposes and methods of professional formation, assessment and accreditation. (O'Reilly, Cunningham, & Lester, 1999, pp. 2-3)

While the priest pursues a degree in the seminary his preparation goes beyond classroom preparation. He is being prepared for a future life and career that may span fifty years. He has to be prepared to continue to grow in his professional and vocational life.

...there is more to the capable practitioner than command of a body of professional knowledge or the ability to demonstrate competence at work; these may be sufficient in the short term, the period when the wider implications of actions are unknown or can be ignored, but neither is adequate for conditions at the end of the twentieth century. Those involved in professional development and higher education face a challenge to move beyond considerations of knowledge and competence to helping people develop as capable practitioners equal to the challenges of fluid environments and unpredictable change, taking responsibility for their careers and their learning,

and able to exercise the kind of practical judgment and systemic wisdom needed for a sustainable future. (O'Reilly, Cunningham, & Lester, 1999, p.1)

It is a very ambitious goal to seek to form men for priesthood. The issues noted above surface in many different ways in the review of the literature and the findings of the research. A seminary is a school, but it is more than a school. Priesthood is a profession, but it is more than a profession. Certainly seminaries are institutions of higher learning and as such they make a suitable subject for a dissertation in higher education. Seminaries also have very unique attributes that give them their own distinct literature and areas of concentration.

Since the education and training of future priests intentionally encompasses four specific areas, this study is also divided into the same four dimensions of formation: human, intellectual, spiritual, and pastoral. Specifically, this study discovered areas that the newly ordained priests felt adequately or well prepared through their higher education experience to enter into priestly life and ministry and the areas in which they felt they were less prepared. The purpose for this inquiry is to find out the perceptions of recent graduates about how well the seminary program helped prepare them for the practice of priesthood. The motivation behind this study is to be able to uncover helpful information to assist the seminary in educating and training future priests and also to share the information with diocesan officials so that they can more effectively develop programs of continuing formation and education for newly ordained priests.

There is a great deal of attention paid to the education and formation of seminarians in the years leading up to priesthood (e.g., two visits to all American seminaries in the last twenty five years by bishops at the mandate of the Vatican's Congregation of Education), but

there is not much emphasis or research about what needs to be done to assist the seminarian/newly ordained priests make the adjustment to public ministry. This area is a critical one for a variety of reasons: the perseverance of the man in his vocation, his continued development personally (humanly), intellectually, spiritually, and pastorally. No matter how good and thorough a professional training program is it cannot anticipate all the situations that one will confront on “the front lines,” nor is one ready for situations one will confront if they have only been encountered in a laboratory. Therefore, it is important that education and formation continue beyond the confines of a seminary for those in their first years of ministry. In the words of John Paul II (1992), “In order to accompany young priests in this first delicate phase of their life and ministry, it is very opportune, and perhaps even necessary nowadays, to create a suitable support structure, with appropriate guides and teachers” (PDV #76).

It is true of every profession and every walk of life that learning is a life-long enterprise. Recently there has been a great deal of research on recent graduates in the field of education making their transitions to classroom teachers and why many of the new teachers leave within their first few years of teaching. For example, Susan Moore Johnson working in the Project on the Next Generation of Teachers at Harvard has focused on the challenges faced by new teachers and made important recommendations regarding mentoring and other support that will ease the transition and help in retention (Johnson, 2006). Many of the issues of transition and retention mirror the issues faced by the seminarian in his transition to priesthood.

By focusing on the first five years for the recently ordained priests I am not indicating that this period is the only period in which continuing education and formation should take place. I am merely identifying it as a most critical time. I am specifying Boston's archdiocesan priests because this group is one that I have access to in terms of geography. In this diocese the newly ordained priest lives in a rectory with one other priest (the pastor) for the first year or more (usually five years) before becoming a pastor himself. This initial adjustment period is one that has many obvious challenges inherent in it. The newly ordained priest is sent to a parish where he knows no one, to live with a man whom he does not know and who may resent his presence, and he has to adjust to an entirely new personal and professional situation. During these early years many men make good adjustments to their new life and situations. Many others do not make good adjustments. In some cases the priest has to leave his parish within the first year to be reassigned to another parish (which may or may not be better for him). He has no point of reference as to what is "normal" either in terms of his experience or what is reasonable to expect in the parishes to which he is assigned. He is moving from an extremely structured and evaluative environment where feedback is fairly constant to an environment that is far less structured. He loses the support of his peers as they now are in different parishes and even different dioceses. He loses his faculty adviser and spiritual adviser upon leaving the seminary. He moves into a public ministry that from his first day in the parish requires him to be a leader of a community. There is no formal mentoring program in place, no external evaluation, nor is there much of a "road map" for him to follow. The bishop assigns him to a parish, the pastor assigns him for his Mass schedule and pastoral responsibilities and he is sent on his way. It is an

overwhelming experience for most new priests and many do not fare well at all in such a “sink or swim” environment. This research with the newly ordained priests may offer specific recommendations to help the archdiocese develop programs that will assist the seminarians in their transition to the full practice of priesthood.

Definitions

Some terms in this study that will appear over and over again are: *formation, seminary, theologate, ordination, religious, [arch]diocese, diocesan priest*. These terms would not be immediately familiar to most people. The term “formation” is a very difficult word to precisely define. It is more than learning or training; formation aims at the interior life of a person. That is to say, that formation changes a person from the inside out as he/she appropriates the lessons and practices of his/her environment. For example, a seminarian is required to attend prayer services at certain times. His physical presence does not guarantee that he is becoming a man of prayer. Formation’s goal is to help the person (in this case a seminarian preparing for priesthood) be transformed internally through his open and full participation in the intellectual, human, spiritual, and pastoral activities of the seminary. A spiritual and sacramental focus on the word “formation” such as the word is used in a seminary environment is also going to point us to God’s essential role in the process. I find one of its most helpful definitions is found at the beginning of a document written at the June 2000 meetings of the Bishops of the United States titled “The Basic Plan for the Ongoing Formation of Priests”:

The grace of the new covenant embraces all who have joined themselves to Jesus Christ in faith and baptism. Indeed, it is sheer grace, all God’s doing. Moved by

that grace, however, we make ourselves available to God's work of transformation.

And making ready a place for the Lord to dwell in us and transform us we call *formation*. (Cameli, 1995, p.1)

There are other definitions of formation, but the above is a very good working definition for our purpose in terms of seminary formation. When I use the word "seminary" I am referring to the places of post-college preparation for men preparing for priesthood. There are high school seminaries (although these are becoming very rare in this country) and college seminaries, but when I use the word "seminary" it refers to the graduate level of preparation for priesthood. The post-college period is also referred to as the *theologate* or theology school to put it in contrast with the bachelor programs of seminary that focus on philosophy. A potentially confusing aspect of this study will be my use of the word "seminary" to refer to three distinct theology schools where the men from Boston study: St. John's Seminary, Blessed Pope John XXIII Seminary, and the North American College in Rome. The majority of the men preparing for priesthood for the archdiocese of Boston study at St. John's Seminary in the Brighton area of Boston.

St. John's is the archdiocesan seminary and it also prepares men from other dioceses, e.g. Fall River, Massachusetts and Portland, Maine. If a man is over thirty five years of age he may be sent to Blessed Pope John XXIII Seminary in Weston, Massachusetts. This seminary was founded by Richard Cardinal Cushing in order to prepare older men who were interested in preparing for priesthood. Sometimes these men were referred to as "delayed vocations." They are typically over the age of thirty-five, coming from other careers, and from dioceses all over the country. In recent years men ordained for Boston from

Blessed John Seminary include doctors, lawyers, and accountants. The third post-baccalaureate seminary that Boston men may attend is the North American College in Rome. Despite its name, the school is for American seminarians who have completed their college education. Further confusing the matter is that the degree that these men receive is not a Masters of Divinity, but rather a STB (Bachelor's in Sacred Theology). It is an equivalent degree to the Masters of Divinity and the men who study in Rome usually return after ordination for one additional year of study in order to receive the licentiate in Sacred Theology. Boston, as do most dioceses and archdiocese, occasionally sends men to Rome to study for priesthood. Boston often sends a man who has completed their college career in a "minor" or college seminary, but they may also send other men whom they believe would benefit from the experience of studying in Rome. Only a small percentage of the men are sent to Rome to study at the North American College.

Ordination refers to the sacrament received by the seminarian that results in his becoming a deacon and a priest. The ceremony by which a priest becomes a bishop is also called an ordination or a consecration. The bishop asks the man who is to be ordained a deacon to make a promise of obedience and celibacy and then the bishop lays hands on the man's head. By virtue of the laying on of hands and the consecratory prayer of the bishop the man becomes a deacon. A man studying for priesthood is ordained a deacon with the understanding that his time as a deacon is temporary; hence, he is referred to as a "transitional deacon." The deacon enters into a relationship with the bishop and the archdiocese by virtue of his ordination. Ordination is seen as a permanent commitment and it is at the diaconate ordination that the men preparing for priesthood promise to remain in the

celibate state for the rest of their lives. Deacons may baptize and officiate at weddings, but they may not celebrate mass, anoint the sick, or grant absolution for sins. In Boston a man is usually ordained a deacon in January and then ordained a priest in May or June of the same year. Some men are ordained “permanent deacons,” i.e., they are not preparing to be priests. If these men are unmarried at the time of their ordination they also promise celibacy, but a permanent deacon is usually a married man with a career outside of ministry. This study did not deal with these men as their preparation is different from those preparing for priesthood. When a deacon is ordained a priest he again promises celibacy and obedience to his bishop. He has hands laid upon his head, has his hands anointed with chrism and has the prayer of consecration prayed over him. The Church believes that a man, once ordained, is a priest forever. He is ontologically changed, i.e., his soul is configured in a particular way to Christ, and by virtue of his ordination and the granting of faculties by his bishop he is now able to celebrate the sacraments of Eucharist, Anointing of the Sick, and Penance (the forgiveness of sins) as well as baptize and officiate at marriages. With permission of his bishop a priest may also perform the sacrament of confirmation.

A *diocese* is a structure of the Catholic Church. The universal pastor of the Church is the Pope or the Bishop of Rome. Yet each local Church is formed around a local bishop who remains in communion with the bishop of Rome. In Massachusetts, for example, there are four dioceses: Fall River, Springfield, Worcester, and Boston.

Each diocese has its own organization, much of it mandated by canon law, and its own bishop. Parishes are organized into vicariates (usually about six parishes), vicariates are organized into regions, and regions into a diocese. Dioceses are organized into metropolitans

and the bishop of the metropolitan diocese is called an archbishop. For example, in New England there are two metropolitan dioceses which have archbishops: Hartford, Connecticut and Boston, Massachusetts.

A priest is not ordained as a “free agent.” A priest is ordained for service to the Church by a bishop. There is a distinction between *religious priests* and *diocesan priests*. A religious priest, for example, a Jesuit, Dominican or Augustinian priest takes vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience. His superior is called a provincial and the province in which he serves could be quite large, sometimes including several states. A diocesan priest does not take “vows.” He makes promises of celibacy and obedience to his bishop. His superior is the bishop of his diocese and except in unusual circumstances he would live his entire priesthood within the geographical boundaries of the diocese.

Limitations of the Researcher

Being a priest and having attended a seminary gives me an insight into the experience of men preparing for priesthood and the climate and culture of the seminary. My experience is also a limitation as it forms a lens through which I view and interpret the experiences of others. Despite my best efforts to be objective in gathering and analyzing the data it is important to acknowledge that in unintentional ways my biases may have influenced the findings of the dissertation.

I am an alumnus of St. John’s Seminary and a priest of the Archdiocese of Boston. I attended the seminary immediately after graduating from Merrimack College in 1982 and entered First Theology (I did not need a pre-theology year as I had been a philosophy major in college). I completed three full years of theology and was one year away from being

ordained a priest when I left the seminary in 1985. Then I worked for an insurance agency for four years before returning to the seminary in 1989. There is a mandatory period of residence before ordination so, in effect, I had to repeat Third Theology in order to be ordained with the class of 1991. My leaving of the seminary was a personal decision based on my own sense of not being ready to make a life-long commitment at that time. When I left the seminary I did not think that I was going to return, but I never entirely ruled it out.

Even though it was only twenty-five years ago since I first entered the seminary in so many ways it was a very different world in the seminary and the Church. There were many issues that were in the forefront of the Church and the seminary in those days. Many of the issues concerned academic or intellectual formation. Most of the seminary faculty had been educated in the years immediately following Vatican II so they mirrored many of the issues of that time. Some of faculty was more “traditional” or “conservative” while others were seen as more “liberal.” Underlying these distinctions was a different emphasis in preparing men for priesthood. Some wanted to emphasize a more classical, educational approach similar to what they experienced in the early 1960’s. Other faculty members felt that the preparation should be intentionally more “pastoral” in focus, i.e., less emphasis on what the Church teaches and more emphasis on how it is to be applied within pastoral settings. I never really saw it as an “either/or” dichotomy; I felt that both points of view had value and were necessary for proper formation. In my opinion, we must know what the Church teaches and be prepared to teach it in its fullness in a positive, enthusiastic way.

I felt that overall my seminary preparation was very good. I had excellent professors and many different and valuable pastoral experiences. I was pleased with my spiritual

director and the spiritual formation program in general. My taking time away from the seminary was very beneficial to me as when I returned I had more serenity about making the commitment and academically was able to take almost an entire year of electives. Many of these electives were taken at Boston College and Andover Newton Theological School. I also took courses at Weston Jesuit School of Theology. I found it helpful to me, personally, to be able to study with a diverse group of students and people of different faith traditions.

There was not at that time, however, much attention paid to human formation. Issues of sexuality, celibacy, boundaries, and loneliness were not dealt with much at all in the formal program of the seminary. There was not at that time an understanding that such matters belonged anywhere but within the privacy of spiritual direction. In retrospect it was a mistake, but it would be unfair to place too much blame on the past from the perspective of our recent history and present. I feel that in many ways since the turn of the century the seminaries have done a commendable job in trying to bring these issues to the forefront.

My concerns about the seminarians that I have experienced as a field education supervisor and observer of the seminary in recent years is that at times there is the presence of inflexibility. This inflexibility makes formation (and transformation) challenging and makes it difficult for the men to adjust from the more rarefied air of the seminary to the very real atmosphere of the typical parish. If I were to offer a criticism of the seminary of today from my own observations and reflection (as well as from the interviews with the newly ordained men) it would be that it must be intent on preparing men for the church that actually exists. The seminaries have corrected many of the failings of the recent past, but in doing so they risk becoming somewhat reactionary. It is a good thing in my opinion that they have

emphasized devotional life, prayer, and seriousness to studies. What seminaries must avoid is the temptation to isolate themselves too much from the world in which they are preparing the men to be sent to minister.

My own adjustment to the parish went pretty well. I was blessed to live in a rectory with a good pastor, Jim Lyons, and two retired priests: Monsignor John Dillon Day and Bishop Lawrence Riley (both deceased). They were very supportive of a newly ordained priest, patient with my failings, and very generous in their encouragement. The challenges that I faced were similar to some of what the recently ordained priests identify through this study: age differences with the other priests, absence of peers, loneliness, adjusting to my very public role in the community, having to do everything for the first time, and learning the very practical things I needed to learn, e.g. filling out forms for marriage.

I felt that much of my formation took place within the first five years of priesthood. The integration of the courses, pastoral experiences, and spiritual formation blossomed within the context of the parish setting. When I was thinking of doing a dissertation on seminary formation and education I wanted to do it from the perspective of men who were living their preparation as recently ordained priests. When I came across Hoge's study I found that his research spoke to what I had experienced: the first few years of priesthood are crucial to the continued growth, formation, and retention of the priest. I hope that through Hoge's work, my own study, and many other reflections on seminary and priestly life that the consciousness of the continued education and formation beyond the seminary becomes a point of emphasis for the priesthood. Ordination must no longer be seen as an end of education and formation, but truly a beginning.

Chapter Two

Summary

In this chapter I will review in a very brief outline form the history of seminaries with an emphasis on the American seminaries. My primary historical source is the work of John Tracy Ellis (1965). I will also present scholarly reflection on human formation, intellectual formation and curriculum issues, spiritual formation, and pastoral formation. John Paul II's work of *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (1992) and Dean Hoge's *The First Five Years of Priesthood* (2002) are the principle sources, but I also include many other notable authors and pastors, for example, Katarina Schuth, Cardinal Daneels, Cardinal O'Connor, Archbishop Pilarczyk, who articulate the issues of education and formation in the seminary. Some issues of particular note are the tension between theoretical and practical learning, the desire to place appropriate emphasis on intellectual formation while not crowding out the other areas of formation, and a growing recognition for the need for continuing education and formation beyond the seminary years.

Seminary History

Since the time of Christ men have been formed for priesthood. They may not have used the same words, but the early Church had a consciousness that there should be a level of education and formation for those men who would be priests. Seminaries as we know them have not always existed. Each generation has attempted to train priests for the needs of the faithful and the values and emphases of their own times and places. John Tracy Ellis provides some general categories and time lines for our consideration of the history of seminaries and their curricula. The issues of previous times help us to understand how the seminary of today

came to be and also enable us to see how similar questions keep appearing through the centuries as the Church grappled with the best way to prepare men for priesthood.

Apostolic Age

At the beginning of the Church, the first seminary was not a “school” as we would normally understand an institution of higher learning. The first “seminary” was actually the disciples gathered around Christ in his three years of public ministry. The Acts of the Apostles provides us with a glimpse of how these men traveled from town to town and in Paul’s letter to Timothy he gives him some description of the type of men he should select as priests. He warns him that he “should not lay hands hastily upon anyone” (I Tim. 5:22, 24-25). Priesthood was transmitted or conferred by the laying on of hands by the apostles and their successors to other men deemed worthy and capable of carrying on the priestly ministry.

Saint Augustine to the Middle Ages

After the first few centuries of the early Church, from approximately 550 until the opening of the Roman College of St. Ignatius in Rome in 1551, education and formation of priests was accomplished principally through three distinct ways: 1) Monastic schools; 2) Episcopal schools; 3) Universities (Ellis 1965, p.5). An example of a monastic school was St. Benedict’s monastery at Subiaco and then Monte Cassino. It was here that the classic curriculum of the trivium and quadrivium (philosophy and theology) was first introduced (Ellis, 1965, p. 6). “Of the monastic type of school it has been said: ‘all the enlightened ecclesiastics of the time were educated in monasteries and most of them were monks: it was

from the monasteries that the episcopal schools derived their teachers” (Ellis, p. 6). Young men entered the monasteries and were educated and formed by the older monks.

Sometimes these men entered the monasteries as children. For example, Thomas Aquinas was left at Monte Cassino by his parents at the age of five and later he studied at several universities in Europe (Ellis, p. 7). They lived as religious, i.e., according to a rule of life (e.g. Benedict’s Rule) and many studied for the priesthood within the walls of the monastery.

Episcopal schools, as the name suggests, were schools that were under the supervision of bishops and were attached to cathedrals. Because of their connection to cathedrals they also were located almost exclusively in cities. Some examples of episcopal schools include those at Chartres, Paris, and Seville.

Universities were not a typical place for the education or formation of priests in the Middle Ages. Some universities actually began as houses of formation for priests of the mendicant orders, e.g. Augustinians and Franciscans, which eventually grew into full fledged universities (Ellis p.9). As far as the aspiring diocesan priest was concerned the university was not particularly helpful for him as it had no specific spiritual training program and the years (not to mention the cost) necessary for him to complete his studies was prohibitive. Most students began what we would compare to an undergraduate program at the age of fourteen or fifteen. If a student stayed with his studies consistently at the university he would not receive his doctorate until his early to mid-thirties (Ellis, p. 11). For the diocesan priest there was no set way for them to be trained or educated.

In the patristic period, the leading theologians, e.g., St. Augustine and St. Athanasius, were bishops. Consequently theology tended to be pastoral theology. In the early middle ages, theology became a monastic theology, oriented toward the contemplative life. In the middle- and high-middle ages, the rise of Scholasticism caused theology to become university theology, with the methods and intellectual flavor of the university of that day.

In the 16th century the Reformation brought about the Counter-Reformation. That is to say that Luther, Calvin and the subsequent political and theological turmoil in the cities and the universities brought about a desire on the part of the Church to more definitively separate the Catholic seminaries from the university. The Council of Trent was the council that laid the foundation for these distinct seminaries. Since Trent (1545-1563), theology has become a seminary theology,"-a theology which is not related to pastoral work, or to contemplation, or to intellectual pursuits, but a theology which has a ghetto approach aimed at refuting 'adversaries' rather than at encouraging the students to probe the world with a theological vision that is ever-advancing" (Lee, 1965, p. 354).

To put the point in terms readily understandable to a twentieth century Catholic, there was then nothing to approximate the central control and direction of clerical education exercised by the Holy See's Sacred Congregation of Seminaries and Universities. In fact, the earliest forerunner of that branch of the Roman Curia came into existence only in 1588, when Pope Sixtus V erected a congregation that dealt largely with studies in the University of Rome. Actually, it was less than a half century ago that the congregation that has jurisdiction over the seminaries and

universities of the Catholic world received its present form by a motu proprio of Pope Benedict XV in November, 1915. (Ellis, p.9)

Seminary Education in the United States

I trust that it would come as a surprise to the contemporary student that the roots of seminary education in the United States were not in England or Ireland, but in France. France, as a result of a great deal of political turmoil, was exporting clergy at very high rates in the late 18th century. Archbishop Dugnani, Apostolic Nuncio to France, suggested that the Sulpicians open a seminary in Baltimore. In July 1791 St. Mary's Seminary was opened in Baltimore (Ellis, p. 46). Baltimore was the center of Catholicism in the United States in the 18th century and for much of the 19th century.

While St. Mary's was the first seminary in the United States it was by no means the only one or the last one to be established. Many bishops wanted their own diocese to have a seminary for training and educating their own priests. "Of the forty-three dioceses erected in the United States between the establishment of the hierarchy in 1789 and the Second Plenary Council in Baltimore in 1866, more than half undertook a seminary at one time or another with the widest variety of results" (Ellis, p. 48).

A second category of seminary was erected for the purpose of educating diocesan seminarians, e.g., Mt. St. Mary's in Emmitsburg, MD. These seminaries were run by diocesan priests and were geared to preparing men to be diocesan priests. They really began as a kind of minor seminary, i.e., high school and minor seminary, but eventually also led to major seminaries or theologates as we would refer to them today. The emphasis was on

helping the students grow in their spiritual relationship with God rather than on a rigorous intellectual component.

A third category of seminary was a kind of domestic seminary where:

a group of clerics assembled in the home of a bishop and were personally instructed either solely by a bishop or by the bishop assisted by one or two of his priests.

Clerical education in the Diocese of Boston began that way, a circumstance brought about by the war of 1812 which put Baltimore in the war zone and made Boston

parents uneasy about having their sons at St. Mary's. It was Fr. Francois Matignon,

the most famous priest of early Boston Catholicism, who suggested to the parents of

two youths who had been in Baltimore that they be permitted to continue their

education in the home of Boston's first bishop, Jean Cheverus. With this the domestic seminary was born, and it continued on through most of the administration of

Cheverus' successor, Benedict J. Fenwick. In describing his seminary for the Jesuit

superior, Francis Dzierozinski, in 1826, Fenwick said, 'I have two young men 21 and

22 years old [James Fitton and William Wiley] who are very promising, to whom I

give lessons twice a day. They are the foundation of my seminary. I would send them

to your college [Georgetown] and pay for their education, if I were not afraid that you

would persuade them to be Jesuits... (Ellis, p.50)

There was also present in the United States so-called "National Seminaries", i.e.,

seminaries where students would be taught and trained to minister to their ethnic populations.

One example of this phenomenon was German seminaries such as the establishment of St.

Francis Seminary in Milwaukee. The United States has had a history of establishing National

Parishes for French, Polish, Lithuanian and other populations and many of the priests who have served these parishes were educated in the United States at National Seminaries. Many American priests of Polish descent, for example, were educated at Orchard Lake in Michigan. At the request of Pope Pius IX the North American Seminary was established in Rome (December 8, 1859). Many diocesan priests through the years have been and continue to be educated there and many bishops and leaders of the American Church have received degrees from this institution.

The sheer multiplication of houses of priestly formation in the United States in the present century has been astonishing. By January, 1964, the grand total of seminaries of all kinds had reached 571, of which 112 enrolling 17, 061 students were exclusively diocesan in character, with an additional 9,640 candidates for the diocesan priesthood under instruction in other seminaries, making a total of 26,701. At the same time there were 459 scholasticates and houses of study of religious orders and congregations with 22,049 students, which when added to the diocesan candidates, meant that in January 1964, there were 48,750 students engaged in studies for the priesthood in this country. (Ellis, p.65)

In the United States there has always been a perceived lack of emphasis on the Academic training of the seminarian. The first rector of St. John's Seminary in Boston, Father Hogan, reflected in 1891,

due emphasis to the spiritual and moral aspects of the candidate's 'training'[must be given]; but, he, too, made a strong plea for the seminary to develop the student's intellectual capacities, as well as an appeal to the young priest to continue his study

after ordination. 'In reality there is room, even in the busy existence of a priest,' he maintained, 'for much more serious study than is commonly thought.' He believed that if priests would only try, they would soon discover how much more they could do than they had been doing. 'Day after day they will feel their powers expand with the effort,' he continued, 'and the ever-growing, varied knowledge will become one of the happy necessities of their existence... (Ellis, p.73)

Twentieth Century

Three primary reasons have been given for relatively low quality of academic work done by seminaries and seminary professors: it was seen more as a professional school than a place prizing academic excellence, those possessing aptitude could be sent after ordination to study, and modernism. "Modernism" refers to a liberal movement at the turn of the 20th century that put an emphasis on three intellectual issues that were threatening the authority of the Church in the opinion of Pius X: 1) an emphasis on scientific discovery; 2) a subjective approach to religion and doctrine; and 3) a historical/critical approach to bible study (Lemius 1981). Pius X wrote an encyclical entitled *Pascendi Dominici Gregis* to combat this movement that was attacking eternal truth and the Catholic Church as the ultimate authority of this truth. Pius X also wrote *Lamentabili Sani* which outlined 65 specific errors of Modernism. Against this backdrop one can see why there was a certain caution by theologians to push the envelope of theological reflection.

Even acknowledging the above tension, from the earliest part of the 20th century there was a desire in some quarters to emphasize the importance of the priests' education. The Seminary Department of the National Catholic Education Association as early as 1905 stated

that the seminarians were to be prepared so as to lead the educational systems of their parishes and dioceses (Cepelka, 1998, p.31). In 1913, much attention was paid to issues of curriculum at meetings of the department. They emphasized that seminarians should be trained with a particular focus on moral theology, Canon law, dogmatic theology, homiletics and natural sciences (Cepelka, p.31). The curriculum would be made up of six years of study that included philosophy, theology, Greek and Latin classics (Cepelka, p.32).

In the 1920's there were challenges to the curriculum from parties that felt that it should be more "relevant" to the problems and challenges of the times. One of the remnants of the Church's response to the reformation and the challenges of Luther and Protestantism was the emphasis on apologetics. Through apologetics the seminarian and priest was to be educated to answer the objections raised by the Protestant theologians and defend the Catholic Faith. This emphasis, and for many scholars "overemphasis", on apologetics continued to occupy much of the curriculum.

Unfortunately one of the effects of the Council of Trent has been that seminaries train clerical battleships rather than educate pastoral apostles. Seminary education is all too often viewed as training a man to defend the Faith rather than be a positive engine for salvation. Thus in 1898 a seminary rector writing a book on clerical education spent five chapters of his volume on apologetics, and only one chapter each on pastoral theology and liturgy. (Lee, 1965, p.354)

There was growing pressure in the early 20th century for the seminarians and priests to address the social issues of their time. Another pressure that was developing in the 1920s and

1930s was the desire of the seminaries to be externally accredited as institutions of higher learning. While not controversial today this movement was very controversial and in some circles was very much opposed.

In 1929, the topic was launched into a passionate debate by the Very Reverend Thomas W. Plassman, O.F.M., president of St. Bonaventure's Ecclesiastical Seminary in Allegheny, New York. In his 'A Protest Against Seminary Standardization,' he decried such efforts by asserting, 'Degrees have no place in the seminary. It seems like sewing a cheap button on a rich vestment. Humility is the basis of the spiritual life. The only degrees [a seminarian] needs are the seven degrees of Holy Orders. (Cepelka, p.33)

For the next forty years there was a continued movement toward accreditation of Seminaries and the desire to improve the education taking place within their walls. Sulpician Father J. Cyril Dukehart took the lead in these efforts and labored long and hard to urge seminaries to not only be accredited but to seek to be "models in the educational world" (Cepelka, p.34). In recent years the emphasis has been on the curriculum, but there is a caution to try not to "put ten pounds of content in a five pound container" (Cepalka, p. 35).

Vatican II (1960s) was a time of great change in the Church and its view to the education of seminarians. Rev. Monsignor William Baumgartner wrote in the preface of Sr. Katarina Schuth's book:

The first phase, up to Vatican II, started with the founding (and failure) of many small seminaries in the early and mid-1800s. The founding of large major seminaries followed in response to the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore in 1883. Later the

1918 Code of Canon Law contained detailed legislation for the conduct and staffing of seminaries, tying them very closely to Rome. The context was strictly controlled, quasi-monastic, and the dominant concept of priesthood in the first phase was that of 17th century reformer. In the second phase, the legislation of Vatican II altered the traditional context radically in directing that candidates for priesthood be educated in relation to the people they will serve. For three decades now theologates have worked diligently to interpret and implement these directives, thereby providing creditable programs at a graduate level with a deep sense of accountability to the Church for their quality and effectiveness. It becomes apparent that we are facing a third phase with the turn of the century, a challenge of accountability to the Church and her mission in a post-modern world with its emphasis on pluralism and otherness, and on the regional and local churches... If the seminary reformers at the turn of the last century were working to move beyond the older supposition that the priest should have just enough formal learning to administer the sacraments, current leaders now are asking questions about the impact of the rapidly changing cultural context on the preparation of both ordained and lay ministers for the Church. (Schuth, 1999, p.xiii)

The above summary of the history of seminaries in the United States reflects the path that the Church has taken since Vatican II in its approach to teaching and forming seminarians. John Paul II in his work *Pastores Dabo Vobis* identified four critical areas for formation for the seminarian and the priest: human formation, intellectual formation, theological formation, and spiritual formation.

Human Formation

“The whole work of priestly formation would be deprived of its necessary foundation if it lacked a suitable human formation” (John Paul II 1992, PDV 43-44). The human formation that takes place throughout life helps the man in his preparation for priesthood.

Hence the natural gifts, talents and capacities of the student must be nurtured and groomed so that the student might cooperate with the work of grace. Grace does not build on nothing. It builds on nature. Hence the natural, intellectual, moral and psychological capacities of the seminary student must be of central concern to those in charge of the process of his formation. (Vallee, 2001, p.32)

Many have reflected that young men today are not as mature or as settled as they were in past generations. Cardinal Danneels, for example, believes, as do many psychologists that adolescence is now extended even until age twenty-five or thirty (even in rare cases to forty or fifty!) (Danneels, 1998, p.14). He claims that society as a whole does not give men foundations. In the past seminaries would try to “shake a man’s foundations”, but increasingly there are none to shake. Another major concern is the attitude of the seminarian to authority. Due to family situations the men in many cases have not been under the authority of parents, specifically fathers. “Obedience, passivity and a willingness to ‘not rock the boat’ are qualities highly prized in the seminary. However, the priest needs to foster vision, independent thought and creativity in order to be an effective minister” (Vallee, p.34).

Danneels is also, of course, very concerned about the possibility of men living celibate lifestyles. While he believes much more work needs to be done in this area, he also concludes that it is hard to give reasons for celibacy or why one would choose it. Celibacy is

about love. A man (or a woman) embraces celibacy because of love. It goes beyond reason and can even be lived with joy. "An education in human formation necessarily includes an education in affective and sexual development" (Zullo, 1995,p. 33).

Cardinal Danneels tells the story of the advice given by St. Vincent DePaul to a sister who was in charge of novices in her community. There were two sisters: one was melancholy and obedient; the other sister was joyful, but disobedient. St. Vincent told her to keep the joyful sister and send the other sister home! (Danneels, p.15).

Sexual maturity is not a state to be achieved, but a process to be lived. What is important is a freedom to respond, even in the face of failure, by hanging in there and working it through. Above all we want our seminarians to learn how to be human and compassionate. (Zullo, p. 39)

How does one become formed? How does one desiring to be a priest learn how to be a priest? Huston Smith had this observation about elephants that is helpful in this context:

When a wild elephant is to be tamed and trained, the best way to begin is by yoking it to one that has already been through the process. By contact, the wild one comes to see that the condition it is being led toward is not wholly incompatible with being an elephant, that which is expected of it does not contradict its nature categorically and heralds a condition that, although startlingly different, is viable. The constant, immediate, and contagious example of its yoke-fellow can teach it as nothing else can. (Smith, p. 105) (Caserta, 1998, p. 39)

It is the seminary faculty that largely fulfills this role of modeling for the seminarians the life of priesthood lived with joy. Pope John Paul II wrote that the priest: "Should mold his personality in such a way that it becomes a bridge and not an obstacle for others in their meeting with Jesus Christ the redeemer of man" (PDV, 43). Part of this bridge building involves helping the men in seminary formation to be good human beings who are "balanced people, strong and free, capable of bearing the weight of pastoral responsibilities" (PDV 44). It is difficult to achieve the balance(s) necessary for the seminarian and priest to bridge the human and the spiritual dimensions.

If emphasis falls lopsidedly in one direction or another, just on origins and psychology or just on promise and spirituality, distortions inevitably set in. If formation is mainly human formation, an exploration and appropriation of one's origins, and principally an exercise in psychological development, the result in Sherryl Kleinman's words is a seminarian as a humanistic professional. If formation ignores the human dimension, focuses mainly or exclusively on the spiritual, and insists on what God will do, what God promises without a concomitant reflection on free human response, the results will be an idealistic candidate minimally grounded, however, in his reality or the reality of his people, a disincarnate approach to ministry and care for others. In short, in formation for priesthood, it is divinity and humanity, origins and promise, immanence and transcendence, or it is nothing at all. (Cameli, 1995, p.17)

Most experts agree that seminaries attempt to do too much, but have great difficulty agreeing on what should be taken out of the curriculum.

After twenty-five years in seminary work I am convinced that one of the major problems of the seminary system as a system is that it tries to do too much at once. Everything is squeezed into an academic calendar and, as a result, nothing is done well. The crowded schedule militates against developing both habits of prayer and habits of study. (Liddy, 1995, p. 20)

What is needed is an approach that seeks integration of life and culture into the formation process. “We must find ways to make these activities [going to a play, watching a ballgame, reading a novel] as much a part of our curriculum as apostolic placements, spiritual conferences, and academic formation” (Caserta, 1998, p.40).

There is a formation, however, that can only take place after ordination as the priest reflects on his experience as priest. This continued formation is essential for the priest’s own well being. Dr. Baars in a qualitative, psychological study in 1971 conducted interviews with priests from all over the country and from different age and experience ranges. As compared with the general adult population he concluded that 15% of priests were emotionally developed; 20-25% had serious psychological problems; 60-70% had lesser emotional maturity than their peers in the secular world. Even if one doubts the validity of the study due to its date or methodology, if there is even a kernel of truth within the study it is clear that isolation is probably the worst thing a new priest should experience. He “feels the same,” but every person that meets him after ordination knows not “Jim” but “Father Jim.” It is hard to do things that had always been easy such as making friends, separating work from “home” and personal from professional life. All of the above issues and others become problematic

for the newly ordained priest and he has little in the way of his human formation to prepare him for such adjustment issues.

The regular replay of disillusionment of young clergy after ordination, the pastoral and personal difficulties they report, their sense of being abandoned and not supported suggest that they have been on seminary life-support too long and living in a maintained environment, succored by others more than they realize. The challenge facing seminaries, then is to introduce more reality into these institutions which, under the claim of reflective formation, often lull seminarians into a maintained existence whose only real challenges are periodic examinations and evaluations.

(Leavitt, 2002, p. 150)

Further, the newly ordained priest is expected by many to be the “expert” and due to his role in the community it is difficult for him to know where to turn for support or who to confide in regarding his difficulties. While the pastor might seem to be the most obvious person for him to confide in, it is unusual for him to turn to him. The pastor is his “boss”, they live together, they work in close proximity, often there is a degree of competition between them, and there is often a very large difference in age, philosophy/theology, and experience. At the time that the newly ordained priest most needs a place to turn to mine the rich experiences that he is having he finds himself alone.

Intellectual Formation

It is necessary to oppose firmly the tendency to play down the seriousness of studies and commitment to them...The very situation of the church of today demands that teachers be truly able to face the complexity of the times and

that they be in a position to face completely with clarity and deep reasoning, the questions about meaning which are put by the people of today, questions which can only receive a full and definitive response in the gospel of Jesus Christ. (PDV, 56)

As referenced in my earlier presentation of the history of the seminary in the United States seminaries geared toward educating and forming diocesan priests have not always emphasized the pursuit of academic excellence. In fact, in many cases such a pursuit was discouraged. There are many reasons for a climate of anti-intellectualism and I would want to identify three distinct areas.

One principal reason for an anti-intellectual climate comes from the overload of courses and disciplines.

Today, there is often a pronounced anti-intellectualism among candidates for the priesthood. This is often occasioned by academic requirements being indiscriminately heaped upon other pastoral and formational requirements. ...

In addition to the crowded schedule, the academic program itself is often unfocused. There are just too many classes; five and six courses a semester. Generally, graduate students in other disciplines are encouraged to take at the most three courses a semester-enough time to read, think about and assimilate the material. (Liddy, 1995, p. 27)

A student is taking five courses a semester in courses such as Scripture, Sacramental Theology, Patristic Theology, Moral Theology, Liturgy, and Canon Law. In addition the student is involved in a supervised field placement, meeting with his academic adviser and

spiritual adviser, discerning a call to priesthood and participating in retreats and other “mini-courses” offered during the semester to develop or hone a skill such as leading workshops. The student is overloaded and survival often seems to be a more practical goal than excellence.

Secondly, as is the case with most institutions, there is not always clarity as to what the precise educational mission of the seminary is. That is to say, does one perceive the seminary to be a dynamic academic environment which stirs the passions of the future priest with excitement about ideas or is it a place of training for future priests with an academic component? Trying to be “all things to all people” leaves one most often failing to fulfill either mission. Leavitt summed it up very well:

The seminary will either evolve further into a vocational school for pastors or it will remain a theological seminary for priestly formation. It will either be foundational in terms of ideas, experience, and skills or it will become a formational website giving the impression of scope while seriously compromising depth. It cannot be both.

(Leavitt, 2002, p. 10)

It is important that the intellectual component be rigorous, if not curtailed somewhat in its scope, because priesthood is more than a “job.” It encompasses every aspect of the man’s life and if priesthood is to be lived happily it involves a level of commitment and passion. “We must turn out candidates who realize that there are passions of the mind, as well as those of the heart and know that the intellectual disciplines are not merely the domain of the philosophy and theology professors in their ivory towers” (Vallee, 2001, p.37).

A third aspect that contributes to an anti-intellectual atmosphere in the seminary is that acquiring the degree is not the ultimate goal. Everything is pointing toward ordination, not graduation. The seminarian studying for diocesan priesthood is not being prepared for a life of scholarship, but rather he is being prepared to serve as a pastor of a parish. In many cases, and for many men, the academic requirements are something to “get through” rather than to passionately engage. “Father Walter J. Burghardt, S.J. has remarked: ‘Perhaps the most serious threat to genuine intellectualism in the seminary is an atmosphere where the academic curriculum is primarily a requisite for ordination, something to be ‘gotten through, to be endured’” (Lee, 1965, p.355). In some cases the men exhibit barely adequate or even inadequate intellectual ability and seminary faculties have to decide whether the men should be allowed to continue on to ordination. Given the declining numbers of priests and pressures brought about by bishops, faculties often find themselves on the horns of a dilemma: should they maintain high standards of academic excellence or should they loosen the standards to get more men through the seminary? In many cases the students simply do not put all their effort into academics and that lack of effort should also be taken into account in the evaluation of the fitness of the candidate.

Purity of will must not be set against strength of intellect and pious laziness must not be permitted simply because a student is a likeable person. From the outset, seminary formation must commit itself to forming the whole person, heart and head, will and intellect. (Vallee, p. 36)

Continuing Education

To preach, to teach, to serve God's people as they deserve, in today's world, without continued study, reading, listening, discussing, whether in formal continuing formation programs of an authentic nature, or by way of one's own study, borders on the impossible. (O'Connor, 1996, p. 4)

Intellectual formation and continuing education is also a very big issue for the newly ordained priest. If the man is of traditional age, (e.g., twenty-six years old), he has been in school virtually all of his life. Many of the newly ordained priests express a certain amount of relief at being freed up from formal studies to do the work of ministry that they have spent a lifetime preparing for and anticipating. On the other hand, it is during these early years that gaps in their formal learning may become acute and ways to remedy the situation may not be apparent. While the five years of post-baccalaureate study culminate in a Masters of Divinity degree and a great deal of intellectual and pastoral competence, it is clear that no program can educate a man for everything that will be expected of him in the future. Further, as demonstrated by adult education courses and adult learning, the integration of learning and experience is very valuable for the learner (and often the institution).

The tactic of continuously adding to programs to keep up with changes around us will eventually cripple the seminary system's strengths...Continuing formation needs to relieve this pressure on theological seminaries. Teaching always happens too early and learning too late in life. (Leavitt, p. 9)

Unlike the religious or order priest, the diocesan priest has no resources set aside for him to pursue further studies. If the diocese wants him to teach in the seminary or work in the

marriage tribunal, for example, they may send him to study. But if the priest is not one of the identified “elite” sent to study he is on his own to arrange for his studies. The priest makes a salary of approximately \$20,000 a year and there is a provision of up to \$4,000 a year in the archdiocese of Boston to cover expenses like gas, professional travel, books, clothes, and other professional expenses. These expenses would include taking a course or courses. Given the cost of courses this amount is really not adequate for most graduate programs. Further, the time necessary for study is difficult to carve out. While a bishop is happy to hear that his priests are taking courses and working toward degrees it is expected that the man would be faithful to all of his other duties at the same time. Finally, the type of course that might be of most interest and value to the priest may not be readily available. He has over 100 graduate credits in theology; what he needs is usually much more emphasis on practical skills and applied learning. These courses are difficult to find even in an environment with ample access to institutions of higher education.

Further, there is no formal continuing education program for priests in the diocese. While there is no shortage of well-trained priests and laity that could offer continuing education courses to newly ordained priests there is no formal program in existence. What is offered are mostly ad hoc classes, for example, an afternoon session on preaching on the Gospel of John or a workshop on maintaining healthy boundaries in relationships. These programs certainly have a great deal of value, but they are often poorly advertised and poorly attended. Priests do not have the requirement of continuing education credits as many other professions do, e.g. optometry professionals, nurses, teachers, and insurance agents, so there

is no perceived necessity that a man attends these programs. In fact, what one finds is that the same few priests usually attend the workshops and some priests never attend them.

The priesthood has similar challenges to the tenured professorate. Once one is ordained it becomes very difficult to mandate too many things from the newly ordained priest. The problem unique to the priesthood, of course, is that the “tenure” is received at the *beginning* of his life and work as a priest. Due to the theological understanding of the ontological change that happens upon ordination one can only be removed from the priestly state for the most grave of reasons. “Through the sacramental ordination conferred by the imposition of hands and the consecratory prayers of the bishop, a special ontological bond which unites the priest to Christ, High Priest and Good Shepherd’ is established” (Congregation for the Clergy, 1993, p. 3). Coupled with a general decline in the spirit of obedience of the priest to his bishop, it becomes difficult to coerce a priest to do anything beyond his basic duties. Even if the bishop wants to initiate programs of continuing education and formation for his priests the initiatives will be dead on arrival unless the priests themselves support them.

Spiritual Formation

“It would be a grave error fraught with many dangers, should the priest, carried away by false zeal, neglect his own sanctification, and become over immersed in the external works, however holy, of priestly ministry” (Pius XI, 1935, p. 8, #37).

Vatican II emphasized that all Christians are called to holiness of life. Certainly, it is expected that priests (and others in religious life) would embrace this call with great fervor. “Nothing would seem more obvious than for the seminary to do everything possible to

cultivate a ‘lively’ sense of God and the divine” (Leavitt, p. 13). While it would seem “obvious”, the interior life of the seminarian and priest can become so cluttered with a very busy schedule that he may neglect the most important work of growing in a deep relationship with Christ and the Church.

The priest shares in Jesus’ role as Priest, Prophet and King and through the ontological change that happens through ordination the priest is called to embody Christ in a particular way. While he is a Christian with all other Christians he also lives with a special identity in Christ as a priest. “The special identity in God which I am claiming for the priest must be enfleshed in an appropriate spirituality” (Aschenbrenner, 1997, p.52).

Spirituality is not just one more dimension to our lives, in addition to work, rest, recreation, family and friends. Spirituality is the way that we *are* in Christ, the way that we respond as human persons and as priests to God’s providential love for us, the way that we assimilate the life of Christ in our concrete circumstances. (Pilarczyk, 1997, p.44)

It is the role of the seminary to help the seminarian grow in his personal relationship with Christ in such a way that he develops a priestly spirituality.

Pilarczyk (1997) identified three elements of a priestly spirituality: 1) permanently called to represent Christ; 2) in the service of the common priesthood of the faithful; 3) within the community of the Church. Ordination to the priesthood is understood to be permanent—for eternity. Such a commitment requires a very solid foundation in a life of prayer. His way of being with Christ is as a priest and he must seek to integrate his life experiences in his spirituality. The word “holiness” implies that integration. “We need

intelligent, generous, and prayerful priests, but never should one quality exist to the exclusion of the other” (Danneels, 1998, p. 16). Secondly, the priest is called to serve his brothers and sisters in Christ. He serves principally through preaching, teaching, and sanctifying. These are not merely “tasks”; they presuppose an integration and appropriation on the part of the priest. A man cannot give what he does not have. The seminarian/priest cannot lead others to Christ unless he himself is a pilgrim with them on the way. “When it comes to spiritual formation, in my opinion only one thing is important: to teach seminarians about Christ and to nurture in them the love of Christ. At the end of seminary what we want are priests who love Christ” (Danneels, p.20). This type of relationship does not happen by accident. Time and space must be created in the seminarian’s life to enable this love relationship to take root and flourish. It is absolutely essential that the seminarian create the space for solitude in his daily prayer life. Other aspects, i.e., intellectual and pastoral are evaluated by the seminary faculty and therefore more easily become priorities for the seminarian. He might neglect his prayer time because of pressing classroom or pastoral obligations. Yet, even though spirituality is not externally evaluated it is indispensable to the living of the life of faith, particularly for a priest. Some have referred to prayer as “wasting time with God.” It is important that the seminary schedule not become so structured that there is not enough time and space to “waste” in reflection, prayer, integration. “There is a certain wasting of time that is necessary for true learning. This is clearly true for prayer as well” (Liddy, 1995, p.23).

The third element that Pilarczyk identified in a priestly spirituality was “within the community of the Church.” The priest is an ecclesial being, i.e., he is a man of the Church. Spiritual formation in the seminary must lead him to solitude, but it must also enable him to

assume a leadership role in public prayer. In order for him to assume this role upon ordination he has to be encouraged to appropriate the faith of the Church through his studies and his private and public prayer experiences within the seminary environment.

When a man is in the seminary his life is very scheduled and he is held accountable for his presence at public prayer and liturgies. The old joke of the seminarian “moving to bells” has a certain truth to it. When the bell rings the seminarians go to pray, go to eat, go to Mass etc. But upon ordination the bells stop ringing. While certainly Masses and other formal obligations are scheduled, there is much more time that is unstructured. The new priest is often overwhelmed with his responsibilities and the expectations of his pastor and those whom he serves. In interviews with Dean Hoge newly ordained priests report that they find that their prayer life is not getting the attention that they would like to give it (Hoge p. 26).

Human beings are always in a process of becoming. Certainly, the seminarian is not expected to have it “all together” upon ordination (or at any other time for that matter). Perfection is not the goal of the spiritual journey so much as perseverance.

We have to learn to live with the gap. There is always going to be a difference between who I am and what I’m called to be...I’ve read all the books on priesthood, and if you read all of them about what a priest is called to be, it’s basically impossible. So you have to learn to live with the gaps. (Hemrick, 1995, p. 42)

Pastoral Formation

Today, in particular, the pressing pastoral task of the new evangelization calls for involvement of the entire People of God and requires new fervor, new methods and a new expression for the proclaiming and witnessing of the Gospel. This task demands priests who are deeply and fully immersed in the mystery of Christ and capable of embodying a new style of pastoral life. (John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 1982, 18: 1.c., 685)

The priest functions as a pastoral person. The priest is “in” the world. “Terence Cardinal Cooke told his priests in 1997: ‘the anointing that Jesus gives us is to help us bring Him into the world, not carry us out of it’” (Caserta, p. 42). It is the seminary’s responsibility to prepare the seminarian for his pastoral life as a priest; it is a task that most would admit has not always been a resounding success.

Pastors attribute their areas of strength and weakness to what they learned in the seminary. The majority...said they received a strong theological education which provided them with a good foundation in theology, biblical studies and spiritual leadership. On the other hand, more than 85% ...expressed dissatisfaction with the administrative and financial training they received. Nearly 75% said that seminaries should offer more practical courses in leadership, personnel and management.

(Clements, 2000, p. 27)

Clement evaluated over 20 major seminaries’ curricula and concluded that the seminaries still do not place an “academic premium on pre-ordination pastoral administrative leadership training” (Clements, p. 30). He believes that this lack of pastoral training leads to many difficulties in their priesthood.

Many have argued, for example Liddy, that seminarians need a whole year (pastoral year) to live in a rectory and work in a parish to understand what the life of the priest entails, learn practical skills, and discern whether they want to be priests for the rest of their lives. “Some seminary professors have remarked that students returning from a pastoral year seem more deeply committed to prayer and study” (Liddy, 1995, p.29). Certainly more extensive pastoral experiences make sense: “In regard to pastoral training, there is no substitute for action and reflection on action” (Liddy, p. 28).

Clements offered three recommendations : 1) offer more intensive academic programs geared to developing people skills prior to ordination, 2) more in-depth evaluation of the seminarians’ internship experience 3) “life long accountability” to continued education and evaluation. There is a danger in creating too much of a dichotomy between “academic” and “pastoral.”

If the priest is to acquire the ability to be responsible for his own priesthood in a way that recognizes that his priesthood belongs to the Church and is for the people, and is to develop a personal spirituality that will sustain him in this life, the formation will have to acknowledge, encourage and ensure that kind of responsibility for his ministry and life in the seminary. (Murnion, 1996, p. 23)

Ongoing formation keeps up one’s youthfulness of spirit, which is something that cannot be imposed from without. Each priest must continually find it within himself. Only those who keep ever alive their desire to learn and grow can be said to enjoy this ‘youthfulness’. (John Paul II, 1992, PDV #79)

Hoge's Study

Hoge's study addressed the perception that newly ordained priests find priestly life difficult and discouraging. According to the National Association of Church Personnel Administrators, who surveyed dioceses and religious orders as part of the project, about 10 to 15 percent of priests today resign in the first five years after ordination (Hoge, p. 16-17). The research team mailed questionnaires to a sample of active priests ordained between 1995 and 1999 and phoned as many resigned priests as possible who were ordained in 1992 or later. They also interviewed 27 active and resigned priests in person. The active priests were randomly selected from 44 dioceses and 44 religious institutes, and the final sample had 261 diocesan and 266 religious priests. Locating the resigned priests was difficult, and of 246 leads there were only 72 completions (57 diocesan, 15 religious). The surveys gathered information on two questions: (1) Why did some priests resign? (2) What factors enhance the level of satisfaction felt by the active priests? By comparing the samples, they found that resigned priests were ordained at an average age of 32 (vs. age 36 for active diocesan and 37 for active religious priests). Their average age of resigning was 36, so the typical period of priestly service was about four years. Also, almost all of the resigned priests (96 percent) were born in the U.S., vs. 80 percent of the active priests. The study found that resigned priests had served in disproportionately large dioceses, and they were more likely to report poor first assignments. Whereas 78 percent of the active diocesan and 74 percent of the active religious priests rated their first assignments as "very helpful" or "helpful," only 47 percent of resigned priests said the same. Their main complaints were "having unsupportive or problem pastors, too little privacy, and living situations which were too public." Both

active and resigned priests said the principal satisfactions of being a priest are administering the sacraments, presiding over the liturgy, and preaching the Word. Rated lower by both groups were administering the life of the Church, being respected as a leader of Christians, and living a common life with like-minded priests. The single biggest difference between active and resigned priests is on “living a celibate life,” making clear that difficulties in this area are a major factor in priestly resignations. It is interesting that both active and resigned priests reported great satisfaction in relationship with the laity with whom they work—rated higher than relationships with bishops, superiors, or other priests.

There were also fifteen questions about problems faced by priests. For active priests the greatest problems are “too much work” (15 percent saying it is a great problem) and “disagreement with other priests over ecclesiology and ministry” (12 percent). For resigned priests several problems were rated as much more serious: “living a celibate life” (47 percent), “loneliness of priestly life” (46 percent), “difficulty of establishing private living space” (36 percent), and “the way authority is too heavy-handed in the Church (34 percent), and “being a public person all the time” (31 percent). When resigned priests were asked when they first thought seriously about leaving the priesthood, 32 percent said before ordination and 68 percent said after ordination.

Obviously such data from Hoge’s study is important to my study as it points out many of these issues faced by the men were present in the seminary. The researchers asked active priests whether they are thinking of resigning. One percent of the diocesan and 3 percent of the religious priest said they probably or certainly will leave. Another 4 percent of diocesan and 11 percent of religious said they are “uncertain about my future.” Seventy-eight

percent of those who resigned describe themselves as active Catholics. When asked whether they would be interested in being an active priest if priests could be married, 64 percent said yes. Only 20 percent of those who resigned have or are in the process of getting a dispensation from the priesthood. “The rest oppose the idea in principle, find it too intrusive, or want to keep open the option of returning to the priesthood later” (Hoge p.33).

The researchers’ telephone and personal interviews with priests who resigned identified four principal reasons why they left. All four categories have one condition in common—that the men felt lonely or unappreciated—which Dr. Hoge describes as a necessary factor in the decision to resign.

My research questions were based on data gathered in previous research done by Dean Hoge of priests ordained in the last five years: *The First Five Years of Priesthood: A Study of Newly Ordained Catholic Priests*. The questions are also informed by the issues that were surfaced in the review of the literature contained in this chapter and my personal experiences and that of my contemporaries with the adjustment into priesthood from seminary. In Hoge’s study the interviewers asked both active and resigned priests for their recommendations to church leaders and seminary rectors. These four suggestions came up consistently among both active and resigned priests:

1. More openness about sexuality. Seminaries need more open discussion of sexuality in general and of topics such as celibacy and homosexuality in particular. Discussion needs to take place in classes and also in formation programs and personal counseling.

2. More realistic seminary training. Provide more real-life experiences during seminary training, including having a pastoral year away and having women in some seminary classes.
3. More attention to the newly ordained priests. Bishops and chancery officers should give more attention to new priests, and older priests serving as mentors should be more available to help them. The “attention” that priests desire seems to be more a kind of “checking in” from officials as opposed to “crisis management.”
4. More support programs. Encourage support programs and gatherings of priests where they can share their experiences. A number of priests suggested “support groups that discuss real issues, not just exchange pleasantries.”

These conclusions come directly from Hoge’s work (Hoge, p.96-101). I explored these recommendations as “sensitizing concepts” (Bowen, 2006) and compared how the Boston men’s data fit within his conceptual categories. That is to say that it was not my intent to replicate Hoge’s study or to use his findings as hypotheses so much as to have a starting point for the analysis of my data. Hoge used a mixed method approach and his focus was more on adjustment issues of the newly ordained than on curriculum issues, but there are many areas of overlap and his study is helpful in providing an initial framework for the data gathered from my open-ended study questions.

Chapter Three

Methodology

The purpose of my study was to determine how the recently ordained priests assigned in parishes of Boston evaluated their education and formation in the seminary. I used qualitative analysis in this dissertation. Initially I had hoped to use a mixed method approach, i.e., qualitative and quantitative analysis. However given the relatively small N (population) of Boston priests ordained in the last six years, the power and confidence that quantitative analysis would yield did not seem to indicate quantitative analysis.

Qualitative analysis has much strength:

- Focus on naturally occurring, ordinary events in natural settings, so that we have a strong handle on what real life is like.
- The possibility for understanding latent, underlying, or non-obvious issues is strong.
- Such data provide ‘thick descriptions’ that are vivid, nested in a real context, and have a ring of truth that has strong impact on the reader.
- Qualitative data with their emphasis on people’s ‘lived experience,’ are fundamentally well suited for locating *meanings* people place on the events, processes, and structures of their lives: their ‘perceptions, assumptions, prejudgments, presuppositions’ (van Manen, 1977) and for connecting these meanings to the *social world* around them.

(Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 10)

Qualitative Research

It is that “lived experience” and the reflection on that lived experience that led me to believe that interviewing was the best way to access the “thick descriptions” of the priests who have been through five years or more of seminary in preparation for ordination.

It [interviewing] is a powerful way to gain insight into educational issues through understanding the experiences of the individuals whose lives constitute education. As a method of inquiry, interviewing is most consistent with people’s ability to make meaning through language. It affirms the importance of the individual without denigrating the possibility of community and collaboration. Finally, it is deeply satisfying to researchers who are interested in others’ stories. (Seidman, 1998, p. 7-8)

I decided to conduct a qualitative study because it gave me a “thickness” of data that would not have been available in a quantitative study. It was important that this study be done as independently from the archdioceses as possible in order to get as much honesty as I could from the men interviewed. Confidentiality was very important because while it must always be respected in any study, due to the nature of the continued relationship with the archdiocese as their employer it was imperative that I be as confidential as possible with the men.

The qualitative analysis would help me as to “why” the priests felt the way(s) that they did and how they felt that the gaps in their formation could be best addressed. As Cherry points out, qualitative analysis is helpful for the study of “social processes” and developing “units of analysis” (Cherry, 2000, p.51). These units include “practices,” “episodes,” “encounters,” “roles,” “relationships,” “groups and organizations” and “societies” (p.51).

These units were very helpful for my research since it was my desire to give voice to the actual experiences of the men and I believe that both Creswell (1998) and Denzin and Lincoln (2005) identified my approach as Grounded Theory (Marshall & Rossman, p. 4).

Grounded theory is a specific research methodology introduced in 1967 by sociologists Glaser and Strauss in their book, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*. As is true in other forms of qualitative research, the investigator as primary instrument of data collection and analysis assumes an inductive stance and strives to derive meaning from the data. The end result of this type of qualitative research is a theory that emerges from, or is 'grounded' in the data-hence, grounded theory. Rich description is also important but is not the primary focus of this type of study. As Strauss and Corbin (1994) note, 'the major difference between this methodology and other approaches to qualitative research is its emphasis upon theory development.' (p.274)

The type of theory developed is usually 'substantive' rather than formal or 'grand' theory. Substantive theory has as its referent specific, everyday-world situations such as innovative middle school science program, the coping mechanisms of returning adult students, or stages of late-life development. A substantive theory has a specificity and hence usefulness to practice often lacking in theories that cover more global concerns. (Merriam, 1988, p.17)

My "ground" was the interviews in the field of the men who were recently ordained. It was my desire to ask open-ended questions so that the priests' comments would stand on their own and the coding would not follow pre-determined categories, but truly follow

wherever the actual testimony of the men led. It is clear that as the interviewer I was the primary instrument of the data collection. John Paul II's classifications of the four types of formation were the only initial framework for the coding. The desire to explore the Boston men's experiences had both a "grounding" and a "specificity and hence usefulness" in mind. My desire from the beginning of the dissertation was to use this research to make suggestions to the seminary to help them improve in their preparation for men for the priesthood and to assist the men and the diocese in helping men more successfully transition from the seminary to the parish.

Consulting Hoge's research, John Paul II's *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, and input from other authors I constructed an instrument that sought to elicit open-ended responses to a series of questions about the men's experience (Appendix B). My focus was on "individual lived experience" and in order to best surface the reflection of the newly ordained men I used a main strategy of "in depth interviews" with the focus of my inquiry being the individual men (Marshall & Rossman, p.56).

Participants

My participants were the priests from the archdiocese of Boston who have been ordained in the last six years. The total number of men ordained to the priesthood in these years is 40 men. Through the public records of the archdiocese as published in their annual directory I made a list of all of the men ordained in the past six years as well as their names and addresses. I divided the men according to their ordination classes and contacted four men randomly selected from each class. If there was a member of the class that had left the priesthood I sought to include him in the study as well. I randomly selected the participants

by putting their names on pieces of paper and drawing them from a hat. If I was unable to contact them or if we were unable to schedule an appointment I proceeded to draw another member at random from the class. I was looking for at least twenty participants.

For my qualitative analysis pilot study I convened a focus group. The advantages of focus-group interviews are that this method is socially oriented, studying participants in an atmosphere more natural than artificial experimental circumstances and more relaxed than a one-to-one interview. When combined with participant observation, focus groups are especially useful for gaining access, focusing site selection, and even for checking tentative conclusions (Morgan, 1997). (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p.114)

It is especially in the interest of checking tentative conclusions and the appropriateness of my questions that I was most interested in piloting with the focus group. I piloted my questions with men ordained from 1995 – 2000. I sought out one man who has since left the priesthood, another man who attended St. John Seminary and another man who attended Pope John Seminary (the seminary for older men preparing for priesthood). I gathered them together in my rectory at Brockton for dinner and discussion. I lived alone there so there was no one else in the building and the men were quite willing to talk to me and help me with my project. What I discovered in the process of this pilot group discussion was that while my categories of human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral formation were appropriate, all the questions that I had anticipated asking could not be answered by each man I interviewed in a timely fashion. What I did going forward in each interview was to ask the questions in as open a manner as possible and then collapse the questions based on what the man had said previously. For example, a man may have answered three questions in one

short answer so I would not have him re-answer the question, but let the conversation flow as naturally as possible making sure that I was getting the information that I needed. The pilot group was very helpful as they indicated that there was very little emphasis on human formation in their time in the seminary. One of the men answered quite simply when I asked about the quality of human formation in the seminary during his time: “there was none.” While his reflection may not have been 100% accurate, it is certainly fair to conclude by the interviews that followed with the more recently ordained men that there was much more emphasis on human formation in the present seminaries than in the past. Their reflections on the other elements of formation (spiritual, intellectual and pastoral) were very close to the more recently ordained. I will share much more about the findings in Chapter Four.

I gathered my initial list of men from the public record of the names of the men ordained in the years 2001 – 2006 published in the archdiocesan directory. My goal was to interview twenty men from this group of men with a diversity of ordination class, seminary in which they studied, age, ethnic and professional background, and a variety of initial experiences. In the end I was successful in meeting the above goal. The process of accomplishing it was difficult for a number of reasons. First, because it was important that this study be done as independently as possible from the archdiocese the contact was from me without an introduction from the archdiocese. Many of the men knew who I was, but some did not. The entire process of conducting the interviews and having them professionally transcribed took a calendar year. I randomly selected men from the different classes with a goal of getting four from each class. That was not the final composition of the twenty men

interviewed, but each class had at least two men interviewed and truthfully there was not that much difference between the interviews of the different classes.

I wrote the selected men and followed up with a phone call attempting to set up the interviews (Appendix C). No one whom I contacted declined to be interviewed, but it was very difficult to find times that were mutually agreeable to have the interviews. In hindsight I would have offered a small incentive for the men who agreed to be interviewed because while theoretically they were open to being part of the process they had no reason to make it a priority. As time went on I focused on making two appointments a week and continued to expand my list until I got to the number and diversity that I was seeking. The final composition of the group was as follows: two men who studied in Rome, four men that studied at Blessed Pope John Seminary, and fourteen that studied at St. John Seminary (Appendix D). Nine men were ordained in the years of 2001-2003 and eleven men were ordained between the years 2004-2006. Each interview was transcribed by number, e.g. "tape 16", and each number was matched with a corresponding name. All of the names are pseudonyms. That is to say, no man is identified by his own name. The men were very open and cooperative with all of them agreeing to be tape recorded. While the tape recording permitted transcription I believe that it also hindered some of the men from a more complete sharing as they were very conscious of the tape recorder's presence and often shared more pointed comments after the recorder was shut off and the formal interview concluded.

Sampling Design

My desire in designing my open-ended questions was to have the men identify strengths and potential gaps in the formation program in the seminary and to ascertain how

these gaps become apparent as the newly ordained priest transitions from seminary to their first few years of priesthood.

Instruments

Dean Hoge, a sociologist at Catholic University, recently published a book in which he focused on priests in their first five years of priesthood (Hoge, 2002). As part of his study he did extensive interviews (both qualitative and quantitative) with men throughout the country who had been ordained in the last five years (Hoge, 2002, p. 158-175). I consulted his line of questioning in constructing the qualitative instrument.

I also crafted questions from the authors cited in the literature review to address common issues that scholars have focused upon in their writings on seminarians and newly ordained priests. This instrument (Appendix B) did not need to be formally modified after meeting with the focus group.

Of course, I was the primary instrument of the study. I believe that by being a brother priest I was able to gain a rapport with the men and was able to engage in discussion with them as a peer. I had credibility with them as one who lives the same experience and shares in the joys and sorrows that our lives entail. So in many ways I think the men spoke more freely with me than they would have to a lay person who they did not know prior to the interview. I also believe that there was a caution in speaking to me because I am a priest of the archdiocese (as they are). They may have been more open to a priest that was not diocesan or not from the Boston Archdiocese. For example, the men might have restrained from being critical of particular pastors or seminary professors because they were unsure of my relationship with them. They may have been cautious in admitting vulnerabilities as we

all travel in the same circles and I might potentially share information with others that could affect their reputation, standing, assignment, and/or promotion. They were in general very open; I am merely hypothesizing that there may have been more open or more personally revealing if I was perceived as more distant from them.

The tape recording certainly helped in providing the transcript and the ability for me to be more present to the men during the interview, but there is no doubt that the men were very aware of the tape recorder and especially early in the interviews they were affected by the presence of the recorder. For this reason I began my interviews in a very conversational way and had the men talk about themselves and their life experience prior to the seminary before plunging too deeply into more personal matters. While I felt that there was a great deal of trust there was also a caution because of the men's continued relationship with the diocese. It is different, for example, than simply interviewing recent graduates from a program or a university. The relationship of the men continues with the archdiocese and there is always a concern that they could be hurt by what they share with others. Many of the men had been hurt in the seminary by sharing personal experiences and/or struggles with their brother seminarians and having these prior experiences potentially made some of them more guarded in their responses to my questions. I bring out the men's experiences with sharing in the seminary in Chapter Four.

Of course, as a priest and an alumnus of St. John's Seminary I bring my own experience and my own biases and prejudices. Some of my personal biases that I would want to identify are the following:

- Seminaries need to pay more attention to human formation.
- The spiritual, human, pastoral, and intellectual formation needs to be integrated in an intentional way.
- Men should have more experience of rectory life before they are ordained.
- Part of the curriculum should be dedicated to more practical preparation.
- Men should have more interaction with lay people, particularly woman both in the classroom and in their pastoral assignments.
- It should be more difficult for men to go through the seminary in camouflage, i.e., men should be advanced to Holy Orders on the basis of demonstrated positive characteristics as opposed to being promoted as a kind of default position.

The above are only the biases and positions of which I am immediately aware. I am sure that I brought many other biases to the interviews, to the data analysis, and to the writing of this report, although I did not consciously steer the conversation or the analysis of the data toward my biases or projected recommendations, there may have been some subtle influence at play.

Implementation

After developing the instrument I submitted my request for a Human Subjects review (Appendix E). I then had my focus group meet and from the existing data and instruments and the information gained from the focus groups I finalized my instrument. I did not have to submit the revisions of the instrument to my committee and IRB (Institutional Review Board) for review and approval because I did not form new questions from my work with the focus group.

After receiving approval from the IRB I began to contact the priests and conduct the interviews with the randomly determined priests. I recorded the interviews with the men's permission (Appendix E) and then had the interviews transcribed.

I have no doubt that in-depth interviews should be tape-recorded, however, the literature reflects varying opinions on this point (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975; Briggs, 1986; Hyman et al., 1954; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 1989). I believe that to work most reliably with the words of participants, the researcher has to transform those spoken words into a written text to study. The primary method of creating text from interviews is to tape-record the interviews and to transcribe them. Each word a participant speaks reflects his or her consciousness (Vygotsky, 1987). The participants' thoughts and words become embodied in their words. To substitute the researcher's paraphrasing or summaries of what the participants say for their actual words is to substitute the researcher's consciousness for that of the participant. Although inevitably the researcher's consciousness will play a major

role in the interpretation of interview data, that consciousness must interact with the words of the participant recorded as fully and as accurately as possible. (Siedman, p. 97).

Transcript Coding

I coded the texts after their transcription. “Coding data is the formal representation of analytical thinking. The tough intellectual work of analysis is generating categories and themes” (Marshall & Rossman, p. 160). It was not possible to be specific regarding what codes would be used in advance as the coding system was developed (and revised) as the data were produced, transcribed and studied. My initial attempt at coding, or “open coding” produced sixty-one distinct categories. Creswell defines open coding as “form(ing) initial categories of information about the data being studied by segmenting information.” (Creswell, 1998, p.57). I then proceeded to collapse the categories through “axial coding” within the established framework of human, pastoral, intellectual, and spiritual formation. In axial coding “the investigator assembles the data in new ways after open coding.” (Creswell, p.57). This collapsing of categories resulted in twenty eight distinct categories. Finally, I collapsed the categories so that there were a total of sixteen distinct categories or four categories under each area of formation (Appendix F). This process was a difficult and time consuming process as I was attempting to collapse the categories without losing many important distinctions. I went through all the transcribed interviews several times and determined whether the subject’s response was primarily dealing with human, spiritual, intellectual and/or pastoral formation. Then within those categories I further categorized the subject matter. For example, I listed each answer in the following way: “tape 18, page 14, human formation, loneliness.” Then I marked them and color coded the responses. There

were a few responses that overlapped between categories and so I included the statement in two or more categories. I began to organize the data so that I could outline it and prepare the findings to present in Chapter Four of the dissertation.

Data Analysis

As I stated I had the interviews professionally transcribed. After coding the data it was apparent that many common issues emerged from the interviews. I identified areas of convergence and divergence through cross case analysis (Merriam, 1988, pp. 134-135). Throughout the process I also employed triangulation and peer debriefing techniques to determine throughout the research project whether the data I actually gathered reflected what the interviewees meant to articulate (Merriam, p.169). “Triangulation is the act of bringing more than one source of data to bear on a single point” (Marshall & Rossman p. 202). My study sought primarily to triangulate with the other subjects being interviewed as well as in a secondary way with Hoge’s study.

Peer debriefing includes “planning to use a research partner or person who plays the role of critical friend who thoughtfully and gently questions [my] analysis” (Marshall & Rossman p. 203). I occasionally asked other graduate students to read my work to give me feedback on my study. I found it helpful because often one becomes so close to his/her work that he/she thinks something is very clear, but it is not. I certainly found that to be true in this project.

Chapter Four

Summary

The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings from my interviews with the priests who have been ordained within the years of 2001 – 2006. The questions were based on the categories of formation as articulated by Pope John Paul II in his seminal work of *Pastores Dabo Vobis*. These categories are: human formation; intellectual formation; spiritual formation; and pastoral formation. The first category, human formation, refers to the man's experience and development as a human being. It is concerned with his life experience, family and work background, psychological health, ability to relate well with others, and his personality and suitability for ordained ministry. The second category, intellectual formation, refers to prior educational experience, aptitude for study, the curriculum that the seminary offers and the transformation that occurs in the man as a result of his studies. The third category is spiritual formation and it is concerned with the seminarian's relationship with God. Through the liturgical life of the seminary, personal and communal prayer experiences, spiritual direction and the overall program of spiritual conferences and retreats it is the desire of the church that the man grows in holiness of life and suitability for priesthood. The fourth category is pastoral formation. Through varied experiences in hospital, prison, campus, parish and other supervised experiences within ministerial settings the seminarian is assisted in growing in his understanding of ministry, his own gifts and limitations that he brings to ministry, and understanding how he will be expected to minister in the priesthood.

These above categories are all subdivided into four additional subcategories (Appendix F). It is not my intention to present the material in such a way that would give the reader the understanding that there is no commonality or duplication within and across the categories. For example the issue of loneliness cuts across the different categories and affects the men spiritually, pastorally, and humanly. The data could have been organized and presented differently but I have elected to stay within the overall categories as I feel that this particular format gives a consistent order to the overall report.

Human Formation

The four categories of human formation concern those dimensions of the individual man that he brings to the overall formation process and the factors which affect his personal growth. The categories that the men's answers fell into can be grouped in the following way: "cookie cutter" approach versus a more individual approach to preparation for priesthood; relationships between the seminarians and faculty members and/or other mentors; the issues of sexuality, celibacy, and loneliness; and the role that community can play in assisting the men in their personal growth and in integrating their experiences in their overall formation.

Cookie Cutter Formation

Until about 20 or 25 years ago it was the norm that a man preparing for priesthood would enter the seminary right out of high school. He would enter a college seminary (if he had not already been in a high school seminary), then go to a seminary theology school and be ordained at the age of 26. The men came from similar family and educational experiences, had similar cultural and economic backgrounds, and so the formation was designed to meet the needs of these men. Now men come into the seminary from very different ages,

backgrounds and life experiences. A “one size fits all” approach does not seem to work as well with the very diverse population in the seminary of today.

One of the principle issues that men raised was the issue of age and previous life experience. Peter said:

Going back to school again was tough. I had a job, a condo, a life on my own. I was never the best student anyway and I remember thinking the whole time, ‘everyone here is so much smarter than I am and holier than I am, and I still don’t know why I am here.’ So there was definitely an adjustment, yes. And I think—

it is hard for me because I try not to talk about it—I think there is a sense too that for the men who have had a career, to be in your thirties, and starting over in a long training process is very, very hard.

Matt had similar prior life experience:

At first I think that my transition to the seminary was fine in the sense that there were a lot of guys there, and there were a lot of guys there my age and maybe a little bit older. So we all kind of had the same experiences in the sense that we held jobs, we had apartments, we had lives, we had dated girls, and some of the guys had come close to being married so I felt like we had a lot in common.

What was interesting was that what had been the norm until recent times has now become slightly atypical, i.e., a man entering the seminary right out of college. One man finished college at twenty-one and entered the theologate. He was younger than many of the collegians and very much younger than almost all of the other men in the graduate school of the seminary. Steve remarked, “the age difference was huge and the guys who had already

been there had established relationships so it was a very interesting and challenging experience to say the least.”

Culture was also an issue for many of the men entering the seminary. Some grew up in other countries and/or speaking other languages at home. While the word “catholic” means universal, in Boston the predominant culture in the Catholic Church has been Irish. A look through the Catholic Directory at the list of priests reads like a phone book in Dublin. Priests with different cultural backgrounds in the Boston diocese, e.g. Italian, Polish, French, Portuguese, have long felt that they were at a disadvantage because the culture of the Boston Church has been so decidedly Irish.

Luke noted:

From the beginning it was very hard: the culture. It was very different from what I was used to as I did not know Irish people at all. The seminary, the priests were just so Irish. There is nothing wrong with that; it was just very different from anything that I had ever known.

While the numbers of men being ordained are not as high as in years past, in recent years men have been ordained for the Church of Boston from Vietnam, Haiti, China and other countries.

The men expressed a desire that the seminary become more responsive to the individual backgrounds, needs, and gifts that the seminarians bring. The group of men that formed the classes that were interviewed included medical doctors, lawyers, accountants, teachers, police, and many other professions (I am not indicating that the above people were

interviewed by me. I am merely acknowledging the diversity of backgrounds of the men.) Many of the men questioned the wisdom of having the same program of formation for men who are in their thirties, have worked professionally and lived on their own for extended periods of time as is offered for men who are twenty one or twenty two and have just graduated from a college seminary program.

As David said, “From my experience, what would help is a program geared more toward individuals and their experience.” Elvis put it this way:

Half of my class was schoolteachers, so they would have us go to the Office of Religious Education so they could show us how to do a lesson plan. We all knew how to teach; these guys taught school. Some taught in business...And we were like ‘we know how to do a lesson plan. What we would like to know is how to do this. Can you help me do this?’ They just weren’t flexible.

There were many men who expressed in a variety of ways a sense that the seminary had to get beyond a “cookie cutter” approach to formation and to tailor programs, field education assignments, and even course selections based on the men’s experiences and formation needs. To have all first theologians, for example, teach religious education may not be the best decision for someone who has been a teacher for many years. They may benefit from a different experience.

Steve said:

I think that if you are apprenticing to be a lawyer it’s still pretty clear who you are and what you’re about. When we are interning or shadowing a doctor or other professional we may want to be like them or not, but we know who they are in

relation to their patients. It is not all that clear who we are in relation to the priesthood. It has been very scandalous for the last thirty years or so and so for young guys, I think for a lot of us we are trying to develop that priestly identity on our own.

Priests as Faculty and Mentors

The men had varied experiences of priests who were faculty members, field education supervisors and mentors. Many of them expressed a frustration with the priesthood that was modeled by the faculty of the seminary. Stan was representative of many others:

I'll never forget my first human formation session. This will be one of my biggest critiques is that the faculty did not know how to mentor. The presence of the faculty during off hours, in terms of when we were not in class, was not much. You did not have many fatherly figures and you didn't have much presence. It could be that some of them didn't think to do it or how to do it, or they were stretched in other areas...but they didn't do it.

Kevin suggested:

Seminary professors, some of them are really super guys and in their times I'm sure they were great parish priests too, but they have a certain level of 'unrealness.'

That's not even a word but you know what I mean.

Mark said, "I think the priests in field education modeled the priesthood in a more realistic way than the priests at the seminary did...I think that the priests at field ed. certainly showed you the real face of priesthood."

Many of the men identified individual priests who served as models and mentors for them. Some of the men were full of praise for senior priests in the parishes that they served in

as deacons or as newly ordained priests. Many of the men spoke about how they borrowed certain traits from a variety of priests in order to form a kind of composite ideal. Les said:

If you didn't have that image of what priesthood was about and you get to the seminary and you wouldn't know what it was, you would be saying 'what is this about' because I can't pick, something about this guy, something about that guy, but I can't find an overall composite priest, you know what I mean?

There was also a sense among many of the newly ordained of a kind of "generation gap" between the more newly ordained and the priests who are middle aged. This gap was not presented so much as an age difference, but a difference in number of years since ordination. To generalize, the men seemed to feel closer to the priests who are now senior priests than to those ordained twenty to thirty years ago. The differences seem to be based around issues of priestly identity and theology. Bill articulated the sentiment for many:

I know that there are some bad priests out there. The men I am talking about are not bad men. Their idea of priesthood is different from mine. I think in some ways I've learned a lot from them and maybe I do things they do but I do them from a different perspective than them. My goal is salvation...their goal is...the priests

I have met are really social workers. That's their understanding of things.

That's not my—to me at this stage of the game, being a young man, even now still I'm at the age where I say to myself I just couldn't be celibate to be a social worker. I can do it to be called to be working for salvation, for the saving of souls, but not to be a social worker.

Celibacy and Sexuality

Celibacy is, of course, a very crucial element of the human formation of priests. The seminarians of the new millennium are involved in a great deal more programming around the issues of celibacy and sexuality than the typical priest was in his seminary days in the last century. Mark, for example, commented, "I have to say that from day one celibacy, human sexuality was really on the table. It was; they never danced around it. We had some great guys involved in our formation from the get go."

There was a great deal of discussion about the spiritual conferences and rector's conferences that were focused on the issues of celibacy and sexuality and the men felt that the subject was, as one man put it, "more than adequately covered." On the other hand, the consideration of the subject seemed somewhat removed from the intellectual and pastoral dimensions of formation. Austin said:

Well, that's a hot button topic for me because when I was in the seminary, I took an elective course called Human Sexuality and it was an elective and I took it, either in second pre-theology or first theology and I remember going to the rector and I said, this should not be an elective. It should be required. A course in human sexuality should be a required course. I always thought it was a mistake that it was not required.

Austin was suggesting that there needs to be an acknowledgement that celibacy is difficult and to live it out happily and healthily over a long period of time is very difficult indeed. Having programs or courses is very important, but even the best programs are not going to remove the challenges and temptations that men will face in their attempts to live

chastely in their priestly lives. One of my mentors put it succinctly: “celibacy is not natural, but it is not unnatural either.” Tom said:

We’re asking questions but I don’t think we have come up with the right solutions yet, but at least we are asking questions, which is a great thing. The only thing is that, and I am not saying I know the answers, but definitely we have a problem on our hands. I mean already in my time one, two, three, four guys have left. Three have left to get married; we know that. I mean six or seven have left, not all from Boston, and so there’s something else that we have to be doing...

One of the surprises for me in doing the interviews was the extent of the loneliness that the men experienced. Obviously, I was not surprised that men were lonely; what surprised me was the depth of the loneliness and how virtually every man commented on it as a major challenge in their lives. What became clear is that even though they attended the sessions and reflected on making a promise of celibacy they did not feel prepared to move out of the seminary into a parish and actually live the life of a diocesan priest.

Bill said:

{Several} years later it’s still not something that has gone away. It’s a very real issue that I am looking at, number one is that I still miss the community of the seminary x years later. I haven’t found anything to replace it and your classmate in the next parish doesn’t replace it either. That’s just the reality of it.

Steve concurred:

In that sense I don't think the seminary prepared us at all for what it means to be by yourself, alone all the time and I think in the future there's going to be more aloneness not less. So there needs to be an understanding of that in the seminary.

When I was on my way out of there I got the sense that they were not heading in that direction; I got more of the sense that they were stressing community and all this other stuff that doesn't happen out here. Show me a parish where there's a big community of priests?

Elvis commented:

I mean, they certainly talked about celibacy a lot, it was a topic that never went away.

That's good. I think it was good that we talked about it; however, I don't think they ever got us ready in a sense more of what it means to be in a place by yourself.

Celibacy, I don't mean to say it is easier when you're with a hundred other guys doing the same thing, but it is and so you kind of can go along with the whole program and be like what, if he's doing it you're all doing it. But then you are in a parish and most of the men and women you meet are married and you realize you are alone.

Manny said:

I think the seminary could do a better job of preparing guys for the sense of what it means to be by your self. There's a lack of that as far as I can see. Everything they kind of taught us about coping and dealing with feelings and everything else had to do with people being around that you could talk to. But, even in a place like this

where the pastor and I are friendly, I mean we are literally only together for three days a week.

The loneliness creates many challenges for men to remain healthy and faithful. The men were very forthright in identifying challenges to their fidelity and issues of boundaries. In their loneliness, and in some cases neediness, men felt that they were very vulnerable to falling to temptation and some of the men wrestled a lot with the concept of women friends. Austin said:

I've talked to some guys who've been ordained recently and they say they are afraid to have friendships with women. Whereas something like that should be seen as healthy and normal. It helps the man. It's not like you become ordained and then you can never, you know, talk to a woman again, that kind of thing. Certainly there are boundaries and strong boundaries but, you know, we don't cease to be sexual beings because we are ordained.

The priests shared how many of their peers became involved with these "friends" and have since left the priesthood to get married or are sifting through the pain and hurt feelings that were caused by trespassing boundaries. Even while acknowledging their loneliness they are fastidious about protecting their virtue. Jacob, for example, said:

There is a woman who is very attractive, older than me. She is very nice and a very faith filled person. She has often invited me out for lunch or whatever and I don't accept any of those invitations because she is attractive. I am not afraid I am going to attack her; I mean I am an adult and can control myself. I just think it is inappropriate for me to go down that road because you never know where these things could lead.

The man above also said that he will not have a woman ride in his car with him unless she is in the back seat when he is driving and that he constantly reminds himself that people that he encounters in the parish are not his "peers." He guards his boundaries very carefully and is very concerned not only about being appropriate in all his relationships, but also about maintaining the appearance of proper conduct.

There were also several comments about the adjustment to learning to work in such close proximity to women. Tom commented about his reflection group at the seminary which included a woman with impressive ministry experience and education:

(Name redacted), or something like that, you know. I think a lot of times you felt her putting forth her agenda and what she thought we needed as men and priests and all these kinds of things and you know I mean, I think, she never earned the right to be heard, so everything that she said, we'd roll our eyes and blah blah blah andIt's like 'are you trying to make us more feminine?' Or what is your agenda? There is a lot of suspicion there and the other thing is you are not a man; you are not a priest, and you don't know where I am coming from.

Another man, Luke, who had spent time in a college seminary as well said, "the adjustment to rectory life was strange. In the seminary you are with mostly men, men, every day men. But rectory life is mostly women. This was very strange for me to get used to."

Many of the men commented on the importance of having friendships with other priests. Other priests understand the challenges of living the life and can often offer insight, support, warnings and encouragement for their brother priest. Mark said:

I think you need to have friends; you need to have priest friends. Because the priest friends are the ones who live the experience. They know what it is like and if you have something that you want to talk about, or bounce off them whether it is something to do with your parish or something to do with your personal life then you can do it. Sometimes, like with any relationship you have to work at it, but it is worth it.

Community

The community of the seminary is an important part of the seminary and formation. Yet, “community” becomes kind of a buzz word that everyone seems to use and that everyone seems to want, but it is hard to actually live. Many of the men expressed a desire to have the men themselves more involved in the task of human formation. That is to say, not merely attend seminars and lectures, but actually sit around a table and talk to other men in the seminary. Luke commented, “Whenever there is formation, the students should participate more than someone talk, talk, talk. They need to have students talk about their lives instead of having some expert come in and talk.” Peter offered a similar sentiment:

We need appropriate intimacy. Even like sharing your heart and putting it out there. I mean with a small group of guys you might want to be able to talk about fraternal sharing in the sense of ‘I’m struggling with this,’ and you know, ‘I need your prayers for this.’... We do not know how to come together as priests to share in our ministering like in Christ....We just don’t get to that level.

There is reluctance for many men to share their vulnerabilities with one another. This problem is exacerbated by a sometimes competitive environment in the seminary and a lack

of confidentiality among the men and among the men and the faculty. If a man is going to share struggles, failures, doubts, or feelings there needs to be a very safe space created for that to happen. Some men shared painful experiences of being hurt because they risked sharing their feelings within a group. Phil said:

All this ‘community’ talk is bullshit. I was deeply hurt by gossip in the seminary around something I shared in a spiritual conference. It is like any other institution, there are groups that form and everything else and the sad fact is ...we are all supposed to be working toward the same goal: priesthood. We should have the attitude that we are there to help and support one another. It is even sadder that men are being hurt in a place where we are learning gospel values; we are learning about Christian attitudes and it makes it even worse. The hurt is exasperated by the fact that it is coming from a man who wants to be a priest.

Chris also reported being hurt:

I shared my story and it was a deeply personal story and no one said a word. And at that moment I felt hurt. I made myself vulnerable and no one else did. I felt like I was kind of stepped on or just...and I said, ‘you know what?’—and I probably used some choice words to myself—I said, ‘I will never share like that again because I am not going to put myself out to dry and you guys aren’t even sharing anything about what’s going on in your life.’ And so from then on formation ended. To me, I said, ‘you know, I’m keeping it out there because they’re not going to take it seriously then screw it, I’m not either.’”

If men are going to be help each other in the human formation process there need to be very clear understanding of the need for confidentiality and professionalism.

Mike said:

I think that for genuine human formation there has to be an openness, honesty and integrity to the process. If you're in one of those classes, not even a class, if you're in a group of your peers and somebody said 'you know I am having a struggle with my sexual identity,' or 'I find myself tempted to engage in inappropriate sexual behavior' these would not be earthshaking stuff in a pastoral setting. But in that setting you might as well drop a nuclear bomb on the table and it will be the conversation at every table that night at dinner.

Bill was so scandalized by the lack of trust in the seminary that he almost left because of it.

When I first got to the seminary I felt as though I was in a community that I had little connection with; I felt that many of the members of the community were odd. It was a strange atmosphere...an unholy atmosphere...I was literally scandalized at how priests and seminarians lack a sense of unity and a true community. It is something that very much surprised me and would surprise the faithful to see how much division, jealousy, backstabbing, and gossip takes place in the seminary and the priesthood.

What the men are left to do in the above climate is to either leave the seminary, move through the seminary in camouflage hiding their true selves, find some kindred spirits that they can trust to talk with about important issues, share with their spiritual advisors and/or

just mark time until they can get out of the seminary. The problem, of course, is that when men are not open and honest with themselves and with others they are not getting the full benefit of the experiences that they are having nor the learning and growth that can come when the experiences are reflected upon. Tom said:

At the same time it is really incumbent on the man to form himself. We heard this more than once and I think it is very true. It is incumbent on the man to be formed, to rely on the spiritual director, to rely on his faculty advisor, and to really use them as resources. Tell them everything that is going on; we're told them that time and again. Talk to them and find men you can trust and talk to them. Don't hang back."

That is always the bottom line. After everything is said and done it always goes back to the man himself to cooperate with grace and to do the best he can to develop the natural gifts that God has given him to become the best man and priest that he can be. John said:

Well they didn't offer anything that was well balanced at all. If you wanted to have a balanced lifestyle you had to do it on your own. Pretty much, the seminary said, 'we are going to provide you with these academic courses, and we have these things that you will have to be at, but as for you as a human being we are not going to pay much attention to that.'

The above represents one man's take on the seminary's human formation program. While perhaps it is more cynical than other reflections it is certainly accurate to conclude that the men felt that the human formation at the seminary had very serious gaps in it and that the gaps were at very foundational levels.

Intellectual Formation

There are four particular areas that the interviewees focused upon: task vs. formation, i.e., a recommendation that the intellectual preparation be less abstract or theoretical and more practical; concerns about faculty as principal formators and the boundaries necessary to maintain between students and faculty in order to ensure a healthy environment within the seminary; the level of academic rigor in the seminary program and suggestions for continuing educational opportunities; and the importance of integration with the other components of formation as well as integration between the all-male, clerical seminary environment and the very different and diverse world into which they are preparing to be sent to minister.

Practical Preparation

It was a virtually unanimous sense that while the intellectual formation was very broad in its scope, the men felt that there were significant gaps in the how to apply this theological knowledge in dealing with the daily tasks of ministry and the real life situations that those whom they now minister to as priests find themselves. Luke said, “One thing I will give you an opinion about, the coursework, sometimes too much about the books, the books. But it doesn’t really tell you about the parish, how to be a parish priest.”

One of the first indications that a gap exists between theory and practice is discovered when the priest goes out to celebrate mass and has to arrange the prayer books to preside at the mass. The mass of the day and the options that are present for the celebration of the mass are listed in a book known as the Ordo. After reading the Ordo the priest prepares the ribbons in the books so that he can celebrate the mass without needing to be flipping through pages.

It is an almost effortless task for the experienced priest, but like any task it does require a familiarity with the Ordo and the books. It is a familiarity that is lacking in many newly ordained priests. David remarked:

You didn't know any of those things unless you served as the sacristan in the seminary. And there are only so many that could do that, but I am over here one time and I'm flipping through the book and I jokingly said to the people, I said they didn't teach us this in the seminary, but the truth is, and they are laughing, but the truth is that they did not.

Another place where a gap between theory and practice appears is in the work that is expected to be done in meeting with couples preparing for marriage. One of the places where the lack of experience shows up is in the routine and important work of filling out forms for marriage and baptisms. Les said:

I thought the curriculum was pretty solid, pretty intense. I think in some regards it was very petty in the more practical stuff. You go out in the parish and you have all this theory. Like there were guys I talked to, classmates that didn't know anything about these forms, the permission to marry and all the other forms we fill out. They didn't know how to fill them out.

Even more significantly than the forms to fill out is what the actual content of the appointments with the couple preparing for marriage should be. Phil, for example, said:

I don't, I think it was covered with something else, I don't think it was a course on marriage. In fact, that is something I would say, thinking about my courses, it is not what I learned, it is what I didn't. I wish I had more the practical canon law,

I mean marriage...I would say, one thing that, you know when a couple comes in for marriage, that is the first time I realized, what the hell am I supposed to do?"

One of the underlying tensions within the issue of formation and education of priests is what prominence should be given to training men for the tasks of ministry that await them in the parish versus an emphasis on exposing the men to the great philosophers and theologians throughout history and encouraging the men to personally engage in deep engagement and reflection of these timeless issues. It would cease to be formation if the intellectual component of the seminary became a mere acquisition of a skill set. One of my mentors emphasizes frequently that for a priest to successfully live the mystery of priesthood the issue of salvation must be a personal issue for the man himself. A priest is more than a functionary; he is seeking to apply his learning to the very real situations that the people he ministers to are attempting to deal with and his intellectual training and reflection are part of what he brings to the task. While there were literally dozens of suggestions that the intellectual formation be more practical, there were also men who felt that one must be careful in creating too much of a dichotomy between the intellectual and the practical. Kevin said, "The seminary made me think differently and thinking more in a state of being. So intellectually I think it is a great program."

Steven reflected:

The theology courses were tremendously helpful. I do wish that we had some case studies on the moral end of things because we are dealing with cases. That's what we are dealing with, but I would say that I found none of the theology impractical, none of it. It is only useless if you don't know how to use it. You'll learn the stuff, things

that were theories. For example, the negative effects of contraception. I knew that intellectually but now I'm seeing it in people's lives. Do you know what I am saying? I see that. I mean I see these things. These things are real.

The above quotation affirms the importance of theology while suggesting ways that it could at times be presented in a manner that helps the student understand why the issues matter. The men felt that case studies, class discussions, exam questions, and theological reflections sessions are places where the connections between the theological theories and the practical applications of the classes can intersect in helpful ways for the man preparing for diocesan priesthood.

Academic Rigor

The actual academic program is daunting. For a man coming into St. John's Seminary or sent to the North American College from a college which is not a seminary college or from a business background with a bachelor's degree his program is six years. For an older man who has a bachelor's degree (and in several cases a medical or law degree) and attends Blessed Pope John Seminary his program is designed to be four years in length. No one is going to accuse seminaries of being degree factories. After six years and in excess of one hundred graduate credits in theology a man is given a Master of Divinity degree. Mark remarked, "I mean, I always enjoyed the seminary so much. I never had a problem academically and never thought they were asking too much. I mean it is the longest master's program in the world. It has to be."

By a very large majority the men did not find the program overly rigorous. Many noted that the structure of classes is more like a college than a university program. That is to

say, the core classes meet three times a week for one hour at a time rather than once a week which is more typical of graduate studies. Also, most of the courses involve several papers, test, projects, journals and other labor intensive activities that differ from the usual theology course at Boston College, for example. A few men referred to the sense that they were “churning” out a lot of work that would be more typical of an underclassman at a college rather than a graduate student in a theology school. One observation that I made was that the closer the men were to their undergraduate work the more likely they were to find the programs less challenging. Phil, who had been a recent honor’s graduate from a secular college, remarked, “I am a good student; that is my forte, but I think overall, I think it was too easy. I think it was not a graduate program. It was more like a college level; to me it was not a graduate program.” Another excellent student who entered seminary right out of college concurred with the above statement:

I mean I don’t think that it was all that challenging intellectually. I do have to admit that. I know that you’ll hear different things but that depends on various abilities and stuff like that. I didn’t find it very challenging intellectually. That’s the one thing I’d say.It wasn’t very challenging intellectually.

One of the challenges in designing the curriculum is that there are different levels of preparation and different levels of aptitude among the men. While some men clearly would be capable of doing very rigorous work at virtually any graduate or doctoral program in the world, there are also many men who have not been in school for many years and by any stretch would not be considered “academics.” Faculty are trying to meet a very diverse group of men in terms of their preparation and trying to strike a balance between the importance of

the academic preparation and formation with the overall program preparing men for diocesan priesthood. Kevin stated:

The thing that I found that was really difficult, I'd say and I think it was among I'd safely say half the professors as I recall where there was just this kind of assumption that you knew a lot more than you did coming in and the guys had a certain level of faith training. It was presumed that there was more than there was and so for me personally I found times when I felt like I was going way, way back just to get caught up to what assignments they were giving.

Several of the men felt that there was too much emphasis on academics in the seminary in relation with the other components of formation. Peter remarked:

I think intellectually they have no real problems. I think the theology classes, philosophy classes I think they are well taught, well thought out. I certainly don't think that is our problem. I think that maybe sometimes they stress it a little bit too much, the academic side, they forget what they are sometimes; the seminary is not a university. So sometimes I think the academics get stressed too much.

Manny concurred with the above comments:

Well I will tell you, that would be one complaint especially towards the end of the seminary time is that I think in some ways there was an overemphasis on the academic where the others {components} have to hunt and suffer a little bit. It's also evaluated you know, it is if you don't pray tonight who is going to know, but if you don't get that assignment in, you know, so I think part of what happens in an

academic institution is almost by definition the academics are going to push to the front.

Of course there is enormous pressure on the seminary to cram as much information and preparation into the men preparing to be priests as possible because from day one after ordination they will be expected to hit the ground running as full-fledged priests. Kevin stated:

Yeah, you know one of the guys in the years ahead of me said that you could call every single class in the seminary and go through the course offering book and just write 'intro' because it is all you have time for. One thing I found, kind of particularly just the way I think and I tend to want to focus on one thing at a time and so you really want to go back and look at some of the stuff. It was always like moving on and it was always just introduction to-and you did-you felt, I mean intellectually it was an absolutely immersion experience but it was kind of you definitely felt like you know you can spend the rest of your life in any one of these areas, you could go and have a field day in any one area.

I loved the above insight that the courses are really just "intro" courses; they are really just there to whet the appetite of the men and to try to light a spark that will inspire the men to continue their studies both formally and informally after ordination. Jacob concurred:

You know, to think that we're just going to give a guy six years of study or four years of study or whatever, you have everything you need, now go out. That's not realistic. In some ways I think it would almost be better to do two years in a parish and then to go back for at least a semester to learn certain things because now you are learning

things from a different perspective. Now if I learn, say I was going back for a degree program now, if I am watching something on the discovery channel, how can I use this teaching people? Do you know what I 'm saying? How can I use this for the people? How can I apply this to their lives? I mean you are always looking for that.

More than half the men mentioned a desire to learn Spanish, Portuguese, Vietnamese, or another language. Others mentioned focused courses on canon law, marriage, preaching, and practical courses on business and management principles as they prepare to be pastors. There has been little self-initiated study, but all the men are expected to participate in continuing formation program for the men ordained in the last five years. While I did not focus on this program in this research project it is clear that most of the men are generally pleased with the diocese's efforts at developing a program that keeps in close contact with the newly ordained and seeks to encourage their continued formation.

Faculty and Boundaries

A delicate issue that emerged in both the intellectual and human formation responses was the relationship between the seminarians and the priests on the faculty. The priests on the faculty have a very difficult set of responsibilities: they are teachers in the classroom, faculty advisers, mentors, celebrants of the masses, models of priesthood for the students and voting members who recommend whether or not a man should be formally recommended to his bishop for ordination. Clearly the above responsibilities are a very heavy load to put on any one man's shoulders. I have made a conscious decision from the outset to not single out individual members of the faculty for praise or criticism in this report. Similarly, I will not share particular comments about courses and/or subjects (many of which were positive in

nature). There are two primary reasons for this decision: first, many of the professors referred to in the interviews are no longer in their previous positions and secondly, I believe it is unfair to offer a potentially stinging, gratuitous comment in a “by the way” manner that may be unjust to an individual person. The issues of professionalism and boundaries, however, are simply too important to ignore and what the priests reflected in their answers was a systemic issue that deserves mention.

David said:

I think you {seminarians} should just go and take courses and the teachers teach and then have formation people. It’s a lot to ask people to do both and also the unhealthy nature of some of the boundary things I think very much affects the formation. It also affects the spirit of the house. I will tell you, and as I said I loved my seminary days but I will say with the cliques and the who’s with what, that really, we didn’t have the best community I would say for my last three years of formation. Actually, no, the last year was good because there was a gigantic clique in the seminary that, thank God had left. But of course, those professors started bringing to themselves their new group and that is very, very problematic. It’s very unhealthy and you know, it’s just basic professionalism. If you know how to be professional, you’ll learn how to do it in the seminary, but you know there’s no one overseeing to say, hey, there is no one looking to see if they are keeping professional standards.

Phil reflected on the same situation:

There are definitely boundary issues there. This is probably more of a human formation issue but I’ll say that there’s a major issue. From my time there was a

major issue of professors hanging out with students. You know, while you're there, you're the teacher they are the student. There is a real lack of professionalism in the seminary. There was at least in my time.

Two specific problems that are the result of the above are distrust by some of the students of the objectivity of the faculty members within their academic and voting responsibilities and secondly, the divisiveness within the community of seminarians as their loyalties are perceived to be divided as a result of individual students enjoying privileged relationships with particular faculty members.

Steve said:

I did excellent at {undergraduate institution}; the teachers knew where I stood on things. I could disagree. I was not afraid to enter debate, enter discussion; it did not impact your grade in a negative way. The seminary unfortunately was very different. There were too many personality conflicts; too much lack of professionalism. After a while I just stopped participating in class.

Matt observed:

The thing that happens is that you have this camp with professor so and so, and then this camp with another professor, and you and I don't like each other so maybe I tell stories about you to Professor X that ends up having an effect on your evaluation.

It does not take too much reflection to realize how important it is to have the faculty individually and collectively observe the highest professional standards and be fastidious in maintaining appropriate boundaries in their relationship with students. The failure in some

quarters to do so has affected the intellectual and human formation of several men who were clearly personally hurt by the perception of violations of professional boundaries and made it difficult for them to enter into the program with the level of trust that enhance a man's ability to be fully engaged in his preparation for priesthood in open and honest ways.

Integration

Integration is an essential goal of all the components of formation and also it is a goal within each individual component. A common criticism that emerged from the discussions with the newly ordained priests was that much of their learning in the classroom did not seem connected with: the real situations in which they now find themselves (see the discussion of "practical" above); the other components of formation; and the individual course within the larger context of their course work.

The data suggest that part of the job of intellectual formation is to help the students make connections between what they are learning in the classroom and what is happening in the rest of their formation. Elvis suggested:

I would suggest integrating spiritual life and pastoral issues with scripture; I would suggest shifting scriptural studies out of first and second theology and into third and fourth year. I would suggest having more of an emphasis on living a more real community life...

His suggestions seemed very sweeping, but he is thinking about how connections can be made within the program. We do not live or minister in silos; the work of integration is left in large measure to the men themselves, but the content and manner of how the intellectual material is presented can make an important contribution to its' effectiveness.

Mike stated:

I think I, you know, I think that I did not learn a real lot. I kind of started to learn, but none of my theological education was placed into a larger perspective and for me that is the way that I learn well is to look at one thing within the larger perspective of others.

One surprising finding for me was how little the men are taking advantage cross-registration at the Boston Theological Institute (BTI) which consists of St. John's Seminary, Boston College, Weston Jesuit School of Theology, Harvard Divinity, Boston University, Gordon Cromwell, Andover Newton, Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Seminary, and Episcopal Divinity School. The BTI offers the seminarians an opportunity to cross-register in the other schools' classes for their electives. The benefits of taking these courses are many: the seminarian leaves the sometimes confining environment of the seminary, meeting future colleagues from other faith traditions and/or lay or religious people from their own tradition, interacting with women as peers in the classroom, learning about other faith traditions from their own perspective (e.g. learning about Calvinism from a Calvinist), and encountering the climate and culture of these other institutions. Of the men that I interviewed only five men took a course on the BTI. Three of the men took courses at the other Catholic seminary, i.e., the cross registration was between Pope John's and St. John's which is technically not accessing the BTI. One took a course at Boston College and one took a course at Boston University. A sampling of the reasons given for not taking more courses on the BTI included: "scheduling conflicts;" "afraid that the courses would be too

difficult;” “out of my comfort zone;” “unclear about what the requirements would be” and “would not want to have to work too hard on an elective.”

Spiritual Formation

The men interviewed indicated four specific areas for discussion about their spiritual formation: the schedule of prayer, liturgy and spiritual conferences that were present in the seminary; the type of spirituality that was modeled (i.e., pastoral vs. “religious” spirituality); spiritual directors; and issues of honesty and integrity in the spiritual formation process.

If a poll were to be conducted of the people involved in the preparation for men for priesthood I would suggest that virtually everyone involved would say that the spiritual formation was the most important of all the components. The reality of the situation is that many of the men thought that every other component, but especially the spiritual component was over shadowed by the academic. Les said:

I don’t know if it has changed now, but I think there was too much of a focus-and I know that this will sound contradictory to what I just said about the intellectual life-but there was too much focus in the seminary it was a place of study rather than a place of Spiritual Formation.

Spiritual Schedule

The seminary seeks to form men in the habit of prayer. Built right into the schedule of the day is Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer and daily mass. Many of the men, such as John, appreciated the schedule, stating, “I am comfortable being told where to be and when to be there. The schedule helped me an awful lot; I found it to be very freeing.” Even among the men who did like having a schedule of prayer there was a realization that the rarefied air of

the seminary was difficult to replicate in the parish life once they were ordained. For example, Tom said:

I guess the thing that I really liked was when we prayed the office together. I always remember them saying that if you don't do it on your own then you will have trouble doing it on the outside, which has been true for me as well as classmates that I talk to.

Phil remarked:

I think some of the things are too structured. Again, to have like institutions and communities you need to have certain times of like prayer and mass and stuff like that but again it gives you an unrealistic picture of parish life. In some ways, again, I mean given the nature of it but if you are trying to prepare guys, you know, for parish life then I mean, like there are some mornings where you can't do Morning Prayer at 7:55. You know, you might not do Morning Prayer until ...whenever.

Jacob reflected:

You think well I can be like that when I get to the parish. I will just build it in. I mean at the seminary I didn't leave my room until I was done with morning prayer if it was a day that we did not have morning prayer so that was pretty easy to do, but here when you wake up at 6:30 and you have the 7:00 mass, you can't wait and then after the mass you sit down with the papers and...

Everyone I spoke with recognized two basic truths: prayer is essential in the life of the priest and the priest at his diaconate and priestly ordination promises to be faithful in praying the Liturgy of the Hours (which for a diocesan priest entails at the minimum Morning and Evening Prayer). With the exception of one man every one of them expressed a

struggle in living the life of prayer that they either promised or desired to live in the parish. The seminary does not appear to expect the men to be able to live the same schedule in a very busy parish as they lived in formation. What the seminary hopes is that the men will appropriate the habit of prayer, appreciate the importance of the prayer in their life, and not only comply with the promise to pray, but actually embrace the responsibility with joy.

Kevin said:

The seminary in some ways does not prepare you for not being a seminarian and so in some ways, this is like the parent throwing their child into the pool to swim in some ways and add to that {a busy parish} so there are some ways that it could never, ever prepare you. The spiritual part, when I look back I think they gave me all the tools but one thing that I continue to struggle with now {several years} later is putting all the tools to use because somehow life in a place like this always seems so immediate, and there's a real sense of urgency and so praying the office, making a holy hour, part of it is also my own personal struggle. I like discipline.

The above quotation really stood out for me as he spoke of the adjustment into life as a parish priest as a true immersion experience. Having the "tools" and having the discipline to put them into use are two different realities. Even with discipline life has a way of intruding into a schedule of prayer and even among those who chafe at the schedule of the seminary there was almost a nostalgia for the days when prayer was a requirement of the community rather than a struggle for an individual. A few of the men had an experience in their rectory of either occasionally or often praying together with other priests in the house. Several of the men indicated (not only within the spiritual component of questioning) that

they really desired to live more in community settings with other priests. They found such arrangements more conducive for healthy living, separation of work and living, and more support in living a life of prayer. Francis said:

I personally would welcome an opportunity as a living experience as a priest with a group of guys that had that. Not so much that you would be forced to be there for it but you could know that if I got home by 5:30 I could make evening prayer. That is why these religious places like Glastonbury Abbey have a regular crowd that comes every day.

“Religious” vs. Diocesan Spirituality

Some people who knew that I was interviewing men ordained in the last five years were trying to find out what my initial impressions were. While I was careful not to share data because of confidentiality, I felt comfortable in telling my questioners, “virtually all of the men have strong opinions about certain matters and they do not all agree!” In few places were these differences in feelings more apparent than in the increased emphasis on devotional life in the seminary. In recent times the rector of the seminary added a daily hour of Eucharistic adoration at St. John’s and Pope John’s has also increased their hours of adoration. Tom was very pleased with this development:

Well, I thought it was the greatest thing they ever did, and I am glad they did it, was to add the holy hour at 5:00 in the afternoon. I asked for it from the moment I entered the seminary. {The rector at the time} said that it’s required once a month we’ll have it once a week. I said okay, that’s something and it’s more than we had before that, but it wasn’t enough.

Kevin, while he thought adoration was a good thing did not want it to be the only kind of prayer life that was modeled in the seminary:

I think the seminary the fact that there is a holy hour every day is wonderful. I would also like the seminarians to have their spiritual life be less all about 'me and God' and more about, well have it be about me and God but about everybody else too. There can be a tendency to feel like I need to escape from reality in order to be with God. The people of God need, you know, they need priests who are with God but are with them also.

Some men expressed concern about this movement to more devotional spirituality.

David reflected:

I guess {the spiritual program} played out too strongly and was overly devotional. The emphasis on the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and you know I am not a fanatic about it. Sometimes it was like it was the only thing...it would solve all your problems. Just too much emphasis on all the devotions.

Striking a balance to the above dichotomy between liking the hour and disliking it

Mike offered:

So it was fine. Nice quiet time. You know some days I didn't appreciate it. Most of the time I probably didn't get the best out of it. Some days I was doing my homework. But in terms of developing habits of prayer...it was still beneficial to have that hour blocked out in your day.

Regardless of how the men felt about the addition of a daily Eucharistic Holy Hour, one area of great concern was the adjustment into parish life. Some of the men commented

on a direction of spirituality in the seminary that they felt was mimicking a monastery or abbey much more than preparing men for the kind of rectory life they were going to be living in. Elvis said, “Spiritual formation in the seminary, it prepares you but it also doesn’t prepare you. They say that you have to make adjustments and I didn’t believe them. I didn’t believe how different it really is in the parish.” Kevin stated beautifully what the challenge is that confronts the new priest:

I think that the biggest challenge I face is keeping myself connected to God and my spiritual life is my biggest challenge because you can so quickly put it aside and then you go a little bit putting it aside but then eventually it catches up to you and then you realize you are more tired or you are not as effective or things don’t seem to be clicking like they normally do. You are worn down; do you know what I mean?

The seminary does the best that it can in providing men with a foundation and habits of prayer. The structured life of the seminary gives way quickly to a very hectic, largely unstructured daily life for the priest. It is up to the individual priest to put the structure in his own life, i.e., to schedule times of prayer, to make plans for an annual retreat, to keep in contact with peers who can encourage and at times challenge him, and to find his own spiritual director and/or mentor.

Spiritual Directors

Another issue that emerged was the topic of spiritual direction and spiritual directors. Almost all of the men were satisfied with their spiritual directors and some of them were delighted. One priest gave his seminary spiritual director an “A+.” Typically the men meet

with their spiritual director for an hour twice a month. At the seminary the spiritual directors are all priests and are part of the faculty (although they are not voting members of the faculty and because of the internal forum nature of their relationship with the students they do not share the contents of their discussions with the seminarians unless there is some very serious reason to do so. Of course, they can never share information heard within the sacrament of penance). Some of the men use this time as an opportunity to go to confession and others use it as a time to talk about what is happening in their prayer life, academic problems, seminary adjustment, concerns about their suitability for priesthood, family situations, and virtually anything that is going on in the man's life. The relationship with the spiritual director is a very important one and for the most part the seminarians keep the same director for their entire time in the seminary.

Three concerns were expressed that are important to acknowledge. The first concern is that in Pope John's Seminary the students are assigned their spiritual director. There are two obvious problems with this arrangement. The first problem is that since there is expected to be a very deep level of sharing it is hard to assign the seminarians without any input from the men themselves; the second problem is that if after a while the man realizes that he might be more comfortable with someone else he might find it difficult changing directors for fear that he would hurt the other man's feelings. Two men from Pope John's expressed that exact sentiment. They wanted to change, but were reluctant to "cause problems" as one man put it.

A second concern was that the men were limited to priests and to priests on the faculty, i.e., no one could select a person from outside the seminary structure. One man wanted to have a woman for a spiritual director from outside the seminary and was told

straight out that it was unacceptable. Several of the men felt uncomfortable with priests on the faculty being their spiritual directors. Manny stated, "I'm not so sure, but I question whether having a spiritual director who is also on the faculty is the best approach."

Phil commenting on the need for a greater pool to choose from reflected:

So I think spiritual direction needs more of a variety. Now, I can understand if you know, the seminary formation says it needs to be a priest. I can accept that but again there could be, you know, guys who they are more comfortable with a religious woman or a woman in general, but who knows. But, I mean you need to open it up, you know, the availability of more spiritual directors. Not that live there, but I think you need to give guys more variety of spiritual directors.

A connected issue is the question as to the credentials of the men who serve as spiritual directors. Given the nature of the issues discussed and the need for expertise in spirituality, psychology, and human and priestly experience three men specifically questioned the training and/or degrees of the men identified as spiritual directors. Clearly this concern deserves a lot of attention by superiors.

A third concern and I believe a critically important issue is the policy that a man has to stop meeting with his seminary spiritual director upon his ordination to the priesthood.

Francis spoke for many with the following statement:

It seems to me that the biggest problem that a lot of guys have is---and you know, in the St. John's or Pope John's is you're ordained. You've built up to this point. You have a spiritual director. You have, you know, a faculty advisor, you have these people you've developed relationships with and then, it's severed. You're going

through the biggest challenge of your life and all the legs of the stool are collapsed.

It is hard to add anything to the above as the problem is stated in an extremely eloquent way. It seems to defy logic that the “legs of the stool” would be collapsed. Two specific suggestions were made by the men. The first one is to allow the men to keep their spiritual directors from the seminary for their first few years of priesthood. The second suggestion is to encourage the men to move in their last year or two to develop a relationship with a spiritual director and/or mentor so that when they leave the seminary there will be at least a plan in place to provide necessary support for the newly ordained priest. Tom said, “I think you got to get help. One of the best things I did for myself was to start meeting with my post-seminary spiritual director three months before I left the seminary.”

The above man deserves enormous credit for his initiative, but not everyone is so wise or forward looking. There are steps that the seminary and/or the diocese could take in a proactive way that might help men to begin making these contacts. Peter said, “There’s a thing the seminary could help you with, to say, ‘here’s a list of religious, priests, shrinks, whatever you need,’ to say that before you leave you start transitioning so that you have one.” If nothing else were to come from this research project I would hope that the above issue would be looked at very carefully.

Honesty and Integration

The best spiritual program design and the best spiritual director in the world will be rendered ineffective if there is not a fundamental honesty and openness on the part of the directee. Bill said:

I remember meeting with the spiritual director for the first couple of times and I basically clammed up and didn't want to talk to him about anything. I could see how if I hadn't by God's grace been open and honest and had good conversations with him that I could have just spent six years talking about crap. He probably would have let me.

Some men either consciously or unconsciously are trying to go through the seminary in camouflage, i.e., that they are trying to hide their true selves, their issues, their growing edges and just move ahead with as little turbulence as possible toward ordination. The relationship with a spiritual director presumes a level of intimacy and trust if it is to do the man any good. Mike said:

See and I don't know but I was always honest, you know what I mean. In times when I messed up and stuff, you know I'd say it. He always knew what was going on. And for me he was the best.

It is within the spiritual realm where a lot of the integration within the entire program really needs to take place. As the man reflects on his experiences with his director there is an opportunity to mine a lot of learning from these experiences. Everything is fodder for his reflection and potential integration. Two men used the opportunity of selecting particular

electives to help them grow and to integrate the different components of formation. Austin stated:

Some of the electives I took, I took a course on Carmelite Spirituality. I mean I saw a connection certainly-my initial thought was in my mind I was thinking, spiritual with academic but I don't know that that's a very strong-but, certainly on the human and pastoral level there is a much stronger connection.

Kevin said:

I took the electives that I felt were areas that I needed to work on. Some of the insights I gained from spiritual direction and spiritual conferences led me to see a particular course come along and say, you know what, that's going to be helpful to me.

Integration is something that has to be valued. Too often it is either taken for granted or expected to happen by itself or not valued as much as individual components of formation.

Peter said:

Particularly the academic one, because that is what is evaluated and that becomes the priority. And a student should not be, well, he's an A student and he's a B student. You should be evaluating this too-you should be-if you're not towing your weight academically, you should be challenged for that and disciplined. But you should be evaluated in how you are doing in formation too.

Integration and the personal growth that it involves are not always as measurable as proficiency in academic subjects, but it is certainly experienced by the priest and the ones whom he serves. It is often more visible in its absence than in its presence. Les said:

You know, if you're up on the altar or you're sitting with someone, they can pretty much tell this guy never prays or this guy doesn't buy into it or- you know, I think in the level where you deal with other people, they see it very quickly.

Integration is the work of the man and it is also the work of the seminary and the diocese. It is a life-long process that requires a persistent and honest effort. Seminarians need to be challenged and assisted in appropriating and integrating the learning and wisdom gleaned from their experiences into their personal, professional and spiritual lives. Matt said:

All the courses have to work hand in hand. I think the same thing has to happen you know in terms of the 'ship' (spiritual, human, intellectual, and pastoral), they all have to flow together somehow and I think, at least in my experience that was never sort of at the end. Maybe what it takes is almost like a course or like a workshop at the end and say okay, this is how everything ties in together, this is why you did this, this and this because you now have to take all these things, tools and bring them and make them a bigger part of who you are, make it your own as part of your priesthood.

The above represents a very noble goal. It is doubtful that any course or program can guarantee success in integration, but the men were very insistent that integration of all the components of formation must always be a goal within each component of formation.

Pastoral Formation

The areas of pastoral formation were in some ways difficult to collapse. The four categories are the following: screening and evaluation (which include the important elements of honesty and accountability); practical preparation as the man is immersed within a setting

seeking to integrate his learning; the issues of loneliness and maintaining boundaries; and the transition into priesthood and the expressed needs for continued formation and education.

Screening

“Screening” came up again and again in the subject of pastoral formation. Men felt that there was a need for screening of pastoral sites and supervisors, deacon assignments, and the placements of first priestly assignments for the newly ordained. The field education sites and supervisors are a very important part of the men’s pastoral formation and preparation. One of the first issues that many of the men raised was the importance of priests in their field education assignments. Bill said:

If you are studying to be a priest, your supervisor needs to be a priest. You are not studying to be woman religious; you’re not studying to be a lay worker in the Church. You are studying to be a priest. So you need to be around priests for all of your field education assignments. But you also have to be around sane, normal priests and they are not doing that now. They are around a bunch of narcissists and guys who use it as a trophy: “Look I’m a field ed supervisor so I must be great!

Elvis said, “I think that they should have at least warned us that ... you are going to be in field education assignments where you don’t have interaction with priests.”

Even of more concern to the men as to whether they were assigned to priests or lay people in their field education assignments were whether or not their supervisors were comfortable with the teachings of the Church. Luke said, “You know it would be nice to be assigned with priests who are supervisors who had a love for the Church. That whole idea

would never be part of the equation.”

Bill stated:

My next year I was teaching religious education at a dying parish with a religious sister who essentially-‘hate’ is a strong word but essentially had a strong, probably psychological dislike for men in general and certainly for priests and did not believe in the Church’s teaching on married priests, women priests, homosexuality and looked at field education supervision as an opportunity to promote her particular agenda. In addition to that she was really unprofessional and exuded unhappiness.

Another example is offered by John:

They {the supervisors} are not even Catholic. They have no idea what is going on the seminary- they don’t even know what a seminarian is, but they will judge who is going to be a good priest or not. And if they didn’t like priests they would take it out on you.

One could argue that it might be helpful to men to be exposed to people who are not male, celibate priests in their field education assignments. It might also be beneficial to work in close proximity with people who are not in lock step with all the Church’s teaching, because the reality is that many priests, religious and lay people that they will work with as priests will not embrace everything that the Church teaches. Even if one grants that there might be a helpful dimension to encountering dissent as a seminarian, one could certainly question whether it makes sense to have seminarians supervised by people who are not in conformity with Church teaching and may, in fact, use their evaluative power over the

seminarian to intimidate them or to punish them in their evaluations for being orthodox. Stan said:

I think it is real—they send you to these places and you would say ‘why would they send me here?’ These people don’t even believe in the Church. They didn’t like priests and in the evaluations they would take it out on you on the evaluations.

Without minimizing the very sincerely held sentiments expressed above, I also perceived among many of the men a basic reticence in having women as supervisors. The men expressed unease if not a distrust of any affective process of reflection as it related to their ministry. If I could generalize I would conclude that the men were open to being held accountable to their tasks and responsibilities, but did not want to engage in any kind of sharing that would open their feelings or expose vulnerabilities within the field education site. Steve said:

I don’t remember very much about the group supervision sessions other than feeling that they were difficult because of the ‘sharing’ thing. Because especially, I don’t know —there’s something about it when a woman comes in and tries to get you to share. I think—it’s not like there’s anything against women, but like the guys—it’s kind of a stereotype involved there.”

On the other hand, Austin shared the following reflection:

I was very blessed to have an extraordinary supervisor very late in my seminary career. I would be a different priest if I had not had her as my supervisor. By “different” I mean I would be—I wouldn’t be as good of a priest. She made me a

better priest....She was not agenda driven; her only agenda was my formation....She is still a mentor and friend to this day.

Even under the best of circumstances it is difficult for the men to be open and honest within the field education process because it is an evaluative process and men are afraid that if they are honest about their struggles, doubts, insecurities and weaknesses that the data may end up on their evaluations and result in a negative vote by the faculty. For too many of the men, sadly, the evaluations are a game to be played, rather than as a tool for reflection and growth. Below are some examples:

I found the, you know, the midterm reports and the end of the year reports and the plan for learning to be just a royal pain in the butt. It was paperwork that you just—I can tell you that we just sat down and just said what they wanted to hear. (Tom)

I don't know. Those {evaluations} were to me just something to kind of like, just trying to come up with something to write down so I could pass on to the next year. (Manny)

Some of those things were ridiculous. I was going to save all mine and give them to somebody else. Say, 'here, write all these things down; it worked for me. (Kevin)

The evaluation process is a problem because guys are just bluffing their way through the seminary. I don't know exactly how you do that, but I think a lot of it depends on the man too. You know because I think a lot of guys, they are so afraid that you are going to tell them that they have to leave the seminary and they want to be a priest so

bad that they kind of, you know, turtle up and when issues emerge they say 'well, I don't want to deal with the issues,' but it is sad because then they emerge later and...
(Mike)

There is a progression in terms of hours spent on the site and actual work done at the site as the man gets closer to ordination. In pre-theology the man may only have a five hour commitment at a site and is usually not asked to do too much. He may assist in a religious education course, for example, at a parish. In his first year of theology he may teach religious education at a parish and participate in theological and pastoral reflection as part of his supervision process. In second theology men typically work in a hospital setting and also participate in pastoral and theological reflection. They are usually expected to spend approximately ten hours a week in this assignment. In third theology the man receives his deacon placement and he spends two years in this assignment. This assignment calls for a different level of engagement on the part of the seminarian, i.e., he spends weekends, the summer and extended periods of time in the parish. He is also encouraged to stay overnight in the rectory on weekends and when his schedule permits. He develops a relationship with the priest, usually the pastor of the parish, who serves as a mentor and supervisor. Many men questioned the selection process for the deacon supervisors. There were many different experiences of the deacon assignments. Chris said:

I mean I think this is something that you know, it's amazing you know that the deacon experience for guys run the whole gambit. From a guy that gets to do nothing to a guy that practically celebrates mass. And, I think that the, you know, to be

deprived of that {ability to minister as a deacon}..., because you only have a short time, that's very unfortunate.

John noted:

It's like everything else. It's like supervisors, if you are going to assign a supervisor, assign a healthy, normal mentor. Don't assign these guys that are never around or are on every committee on the planet, you know, what happened to the regular working stiff that is out there successfully living his life as a priest? Why aren't guys like that asked to be supervisors?

The question of which priests are selected by the seminary to serve as deacon supervisors is critical for a number of reasons. The deacon supervisors actually get to see how the man lives in the rectory, how he interacts with other priests, lay people, and parishioners. He observes how the man functions even in a preliminary way as a public representative of the Church. His evaluation is a very important part of the recommendation to the faculty and to the bishop as to whether a man is going to be a priest. He has a very serious responsibility, yet none of the men could recall a man not being recommended for ordination by the supervisor. One man made the decision to leave on his own because he desired more time to discern his vocation, but none could recall a man being asked to leave.

Mark said:

There's a fair number—I'd say it's too high—of guys who have left right after ordination or guys who are ordained that never should have been ordained. Guys who are ordained within two months, they are already taking leaves of absence. I have...and I know a couple of these guys and you say to yourself: 'how did they miss

this in the seminary?’ How did they miss it and you know, when is the last time a guy approaching third or fourth theology was ever asked to move on? It’s almost like a right—you’re on your way; you’re good to go.”

Practical Preparation

A second issue that was very prominent in the interviews with the men was their expressed desire that their pastoral formation be more practical in nature. John said:

I think guys need to spend a year living in a parish before they are ordained. I think that would have been very helpful, but not in a parish that is in a rich place; they got to send a guy to a regular run of the mill place or even a poor place so that they can understand the regular struggles of a parish.

Steve felt poorly prepared by the seminary field education program:

I arrived in the parish {as a priest} and I had never prepared a baptismal prep class. I had to prepare that. I never did RCIA. I never prepared a couple for marriage. I never baptized a baby until I was a priest which is, you know, I had to learn how to do that. Funerals, we never, I mean I basically had to learn all that stuff and I think in some ways some of the more practical things would be very, very helpful. Now we did have a practicum, but unless you are actually doing the practice you are not really learning.

Supporting the above quotation, Phil offered the following:

Even like the real practical canonical questions. We had that class on marriage and the real practical marriage questions that we would face in the parish we didn’t do that stuff. I never knew about sending the paperwork, you know, if you’re doing an

inter-diocesan marriage, you send the paperwork through the chancellery to the other. I never knew that. So there's something in that area that is missing in terms of our preparation. We should know how to do these things and the seminary doesn't seem to be interested. They figure you are going to pick it up somehow.

... One of the things that I asked for and never received ...give me a list of books that I need to-you know, I came here and I don't have any homily helps; I have nothing to prepare my homilies, nothing to -I have to prepare people for baptism. What do I give them? I had no preparation for what to do or say at a funeral. I had two or three funerals in my first week. I got called to anoint in a hospice; I had never been to a hospice and was just trying to read through the book. I did not know how to anoint.

Transitions

Many of the above issues around preparation come into clearer focus when men were actually transitioning into the parish setting as newly ordained priests. David said:

One of the difficulties that we face is that unlike marriage, you know you get to know the person you are preparing to marry. You can learn who that person is in many ways before you get married. With the priesthood you have no idea of what you're getting into until you arrive as a priest to the parish. And then, you don't even know what you have gotten your self into until a year or two has passed.

Mike was very positive in his assessment of his preparation:

I think my parish as a seminarian/deacon at my assignment really prepared me for the transition. It was easy to transition in moving in here, becoming acquainted with the staff and the priests that lived here. That part was fairly easy for me.

Not every one had such smooth transitions. In fact, some of the transitions were downright rocky:

They don't prepare you to transition from the seminary at all. The seminary doesn't even celebrate you being ordained a priest. You know they celebrate you being ordained a deacon, but not a priest." (John)

Bill said:

I don't think they prepared us well for it. I mean other than, you know if you took advantage of being in the parish as often as you could be, but I think it was almost, individually I don't think we were prepared well, but it is really something you just have to do. You just show up and this is how it is. It is really hard to grow into.

Stan said, "I think one of the biggest transitional issues is often the pastor accepting the newly ordained as a real priest, as a brother priest."

Steve, when asked what advice he would give to a man being ordained tomorrow stated, "I would say here's a buck, go towards the Mass Pike and keep driving west. Do not turn around."

In response to further conversation the same man said:

If you told me to highlight something, I would never, not even for a million dollars, for nothing would I ever relive that transition period, never! I mean I look at these guys being ordained and I'm excited for them to be priests because the priesthood is beautiful. It has challenges I know, but I love being a priest. There's great value in being a priest, but I don't envy them one bit because the transition, at least for me,

was very, very difficult. There are just so many firsts you have to go through, but I would never want to relive it at all.

Matt reflected:

Well, I think this is why so many guys, so many of the guys that we know have left or they are taking leaves or are hanging by a thread because they are not being prepared for what is real.

The data suggest that there is a growth that is possible only within the commitment of actually doing the tasks and living the life of a priest. One man said that as he looked back on his first day in the rectory that he was probably more prepared than he thought he was and what he needed to do was to “trust his training.” There is wisdom in that sentiment. It is not possible to be prepared for every event that one is going to encounter in the priesthood. A man cannot celebrate his first funeral, for example, until he is ordained. While the preparation can always improve, there is a great deal of learning, practice and integration that must take place at the initiative of the man himself as he lives his life as a priest.

One of my favorite quotations by the priests was from Manny, who said, “You can never really be prepared. I mean we learn by doing don’t we? What is it that Aristotle said? ...’the harpist learns to play by playing.’”

The statement is just so true. It is not possible to truly learn how to be a priest and how to best implement the learning from the seminary environment until the parish is actually in the parish setting as a priest.

David said:

I always say, you know, you try to be a plumber and you try to fix that first leak and there is a plumber telling you what to do over your shoulder and it ain't that way here.. You know they can train you but they are not in the confessional with you, they are not coming into the office behind the closed door with you and some of the things that you talk about with others you are simply not allowed to talk about anywhere else, so that can be very, very difficult.

The man shares a very important insight. It is so essential that the newly ordained priest understands that he is not alone. That there is support for him and that it is very important that he does not try to go it alone. Mike said, "No one should be a lone wolf, a lone ranger, you know. No one should be that person and the diocese needs to engage the priests more to make sure that doesn't happen."

In a similar vein another man offered:

One of my classmates was in three assignments in three years. He's finally in an assignment where I think he's gotten the help that he needed and I could've told you that in the seminary. He was a lone ranger in the seminary and he wouldn't reach out to anyone.

Many of the men stated that there is a correlation between how a man is in the seminary and how he is as a priest. One man spoke about he believed that a "happy seminarian is a happy priest." One of the men spoke about how the men who were late for Morning Prayer in the seminary are now late for mass in the parish; the guys who were slobs in the seminary are slobs as priests. Some men can go from parish to parish, have the same problems in each setting and never look at themselves as at least, potentially, part of the

problem. Archbishop Alfred Hughes of New Orleans when he was the rector of St. John's Seminary used to say, "We bring ourselves" to whatever setting we engage. The same sentiment is expressed on the streets of Dorchester, MA: "No matter where you go, there you are." In many cases men are blaming others or external circumstances for their plight when the real issue(s) may lie within the man himself.

Without very strong procedures for accountability it is too easy for guys to never feel challenged to grow and change. The converse of that attitude is the man, like Peter, who understands that he is new and is trying to improve and grow:

Well, that's just the whole thing, when you look at the first year for instance, it's a year of firsts, every single thing is new, no matter what, your first Christmas, your first funeral, your first wedding, whatever. Everything is brand new. The first call at two o'clock in the morning, everything is new, so it is a year of firsts. In order to do it justice you have to give yourself that opportunity to experience it and be open to that first year experiences and get a sense of where it's at and then, okay step back a little and say what went well, what went not so well,...then you build on the positive things and make them better and work on the things that you need to develop a little bit more. You know, maybe you needed to put more time into you homily preparation, maybe you didn't return phone calls in a timely fashion, you work on the things you need to improve.

The archdiocese has made a sincere effort at helping men in their first five years of priesthood. They have appointed a priest, Rev. Bill Kelly, to focus on the continued education and formation of priests. He has been charged with developing programs, making

men aware of educational and spiritual opportunities, and working in a very intentional way with men ordained within the past five years. Cardinal O'Malley is a very active leader and participant in the programs offered for priests in the first five years. As I state elsewhere in the paper, it is not my intention to critique Fr. Kelly or his program. The offerings appear to be quite good, but the level of participation and engagement is largely dependent on the men themselves. Priesthood is different from virtually every other profession. Because of the ontological nature of priesthood once a man is ordained it is difficult to mandate his participation in any program. It is the equivalent of granting professors tenure before they are ever charged with teaching a class.

Some men, for example Phil, take very admirable initiative in their own continued education and formation:

Unlike other professions, like from an educator's point of view, in education you have to keep up, you know you have to get certain credits you know for your license. You get a master's degree you have to get a license every year. You have to do workshops and stuff like that. Anyway we don't have that sort of professional level. Last fall I took a class at {a BTI school} and it was {an issue that is very important to my ministry}. It was great so I am thinking I will take another course next semester.

Other men, like Mark, have a more individualistic approach:

I think the diocese is trying and that is good. I think Billy Kelly is trying his best to make sure that we are continuing learning, continuing getting together, but there's only so much that he can do'; there's only do much the diocese can do. You know as

well as I do that there are a lot of lone rangers out there and so you get all these guys that just kind of want to be left alone. You know, like ‘don’t bother me.

Tom proved the above point by offering, “I want to access the things I want to access without being deluged by a mountain of crap. For the most part, I want to get lost.”

Sadly some, like John, are more bitter in their attitude toward the diocese:

I think that unless you are in a very select group of people that the people at the chancery feel are important or want their attention, you are nothing to the archdiocese. The only time I hear from them is when they are looking for money. I get the same letters as everybody else: the Catholic Appeal, that’s pretty much the only personal interaction I have with the archdiocese, you know, unless they think I am doing something wrong. Then they call me right away.

It is very difficult to work with men who do not want to grow or to continue to learn. For the most part, however, the men are open to opportunities for continued education and formation. In the next chapter I will discuss this issue further, but in a preliminary way my findings suggest that the men would be open to continued formation and education if it handled some of the following challenges: practical its scope; responsive in its programming design; and free or inexpensive for the men to participate in the programs.

Loneliness

I was not surprised to hear that men were lonely in their adjustment to the priesthood. What did surprise me is how this issue was seen by the men as a pastoral formation problem as well as a human formation problem. It was painful to listen to

some of the men talk about their experiences of loneliness as newly ordained priests. Steve said:

I definitely think that they need to get them ready to be able to stand on their own two feet without other people around them. They definitely need to have some way, I don't know how you do it, I wish I knew how you did it, get them ready for being alone. I don't think they focus on that enough, but I think they need to deal, these guys coming out need to be aware that they are going to spend a significant amount of time by themselves, working through whatever they need to work through, but also working, like you're going to be by yourself two or three days a week doing your thing and you need to be able to do that, and I don't think the seminary prepares you for that. Seminary prepares people for religious life in a sense, community living and we don't have that,So I was at an ongoing formation program thing this year and one of the guys there, he is on leave now, said, 'I feel that I was duped by the seminary' and I remember thinking at the time, that's an odd thing to say. When you think about it, it is not really that odd. He was duped. He was duped into thinking that he was going to go to a place where everybody is great and everybody is going to get along and we are going to pray together and work together and live together and that is not how it is.

Bill said:

I think maybe for me the one transitional problem that I might have had is going from a larger group of individuals that you live with and kind of having that sense of camaraderie here and there is, but it's not the same, because they're not, I like the

pastor but he is my father's age. The senior priest is my grandfather's age. When I was at St. John's there were guys my age and I think being around guys my age is something I miss.

Despite many differences among the men: age, ethnicity, previous life experience, theological distinctions between the more conservative and liberal, and just about any other difference one could identify virtually all of them mentioned that they felt unprepared to live in a rectory which many times found them living in isolation from others.

Manny said:

Years ago we used to have these interns. One monk was studying with us and he was very gentle in doing it, but he was criticizing celibacy. His point was a good one. He said in the Orthodox Church a man does not live alone. You are either married and have a family or you are a monk and live in community. There is no concept of living alone. Being alone doesn't work. Being married isn't the only answer, but you know, being a healthy celibate is being supported by other celibates who understand your vocation, and living with them is healthy. People will object, but guys should be formed to live in communities. We have to form men to live in community. Now, not that we will be religious, we will still be diocesan priests. You can't tell me as a pastor that I must be here at 5:30 for dinner. I might have to be somewhere else, but at the same time I must make a commitment to a community.

An issue connected to loneliness for the men was the issue of boundaries. That is to say, that their experiences of loneliness created problems for them in relating to people in

their parish settings in an appropriate way. In some cases the priests shared that they had faced temptations in working in close proximity with the women in their parish who worked with them either in the rectory or in programs in the parish. Others shared painful experiences of becoming too close to individual parishioners and/or families and without realizing it creating problems with the perception of an inappropriate relationship if not the reality of same. The issue of boundaries is a crucial issue for the men to be made aware of prior to ordination and should be a matter of great attention with the new priest's mentor and/or spiritual director. The findings of the interviews raised this issue too often and too painfully to not make it a priority going forward. I am not including some of these quotations in this section because I fear that any of the quotations that I use might be too revealing of the individual and his circumstances.

Findings as They Relate to Hoge

As I wrote in Chapter Three, Hoge's study that involved quantitative and qualitative interviews with men ordained within five years found that the overall sense of the men interviewed yielded the following recommendations from the men:

1. More openness about sexuality.
2. More realistic seminary training.
3. More attention to the newly ordained priests.
4. More support programs.

It is clear from a reading of my findings that the Boston priests ordained in the years 2001 – 2006 had almost the exact same concerns about their seminary preparation as their

brother priests did from a few years prior throughout the United States. While my questions were shaped by the data of Hoge's study and to a lesser extent the other authors in my literature review I did not otherwise consciously steer people toward Hoge's findings or my research questions. In the interest of full disclosure, there was almost a year between my dissertation proposal and the bulk of my interviews being completed so the sensitizing concepts that would form a reference point for my findings were really not in the forefront of my thinking.

More Openness About Sexuality

My findings were very close to Hoge's findings in this area. The only place where my findings appear to differ is in the area of discussion about homosexuality. I think there are some basic reasons for that difference. First of all, it is a delicate topic and for many men is much harder to speak about face-to-face than through an anonymous survey. Secondly, it was spoken about specifically by one man and indirectly by two other men but was not significant enough in the interviews to highlight it in my findings. Thirdly, the issue is covered more in recent years in human formation programs and so it was not identified so much as a "gap," but rather an issue that is best seen as a cause for men to be going through the seminary in "camouflage" as they fear that if their sexual orientation and/or struggles were known they would be asked to leave the seminary. Finally, I believe it is an issue that needs greater attention in human formation and spiritual formation and that it was an issue that was just beneath the surface of what many men were articulating in their answers to my questions. Overall, my findings support Hoge's findings in this category to a very high degree.

More Realistic Seminary Training

It would be hard to be any closer to Hoge's findings than in the area of realistic training. The concerns expressed by men about working in close proximity to women, their reluctance to be in classes with anybody other than seminarians, their hesitance in sharing their feelings in the presence of women, and their desire for more practical pastoral experience all resonate perfectly with Hoge's findings.

More Attention to the Newly Ordained Priests

While my findings support Hoge's findings it would also be important to acknowledge that the archdiocese has made very good efforts in this area in recent years. This initiative is especially important given the findings that men in larger dioceses report feeling less supported than those in smaller dioceses. There are still very large issues about the diocese being involved in better screening of assignments, assisting the men in finding support from spiritual directors and mentors, and following up on an individual basis to assist in the adjustment into priesthood particularly in checking in to see if the priest has having any specific issues or if he is connecting to other priests in the diocese.

More Support Programs

Again, the men I interviewed emphasized the issue of the need for support and community right across the board. While the men were looking for support from the diocese and definitely appreciated the programming provided for the men ordained within the past five years, they also expressed a desire for sharing and community among their peers separate from the administration of the diocese. "Support Programs" that encouraged the men to talk and share with one another both in the seminary and after ordination were the

suggestion of several of the men. While issues of competition, maturity, honesty, and trust provide challenges to these types of groups being successful it is a very encouraging sign that the men themselves recognize the need for them

Final Thoughts About Hoge's Data

What was particularly striking is that Hoge in his study was able to identify, through the researchers' telephone and personal interviews with priests who resigned, four principal reasons for leaving. All four categories have one condition in common—that the men felt lonely or unappreciated—which Dr. Hoge describes as a necessary factor in the decision to resign. The issue of loneliness was without a question the number one issue that came up again and again in the interviews. As I mentioned above I found the width and depth of the sentiment of loneliness surprising and as I reviewed my questions and the transcripts of the interviews it is clear to me that I did not steer the conversation toward discussions of loneliness. The men themselves brought it up over and over and brought it up across the different categories of formation. Clearly, this issue of loneliness and problems associated with it needs much more attention within the seminary and in the continuing education and formation that takes place in the first five years of the priesthood and in the subsequent years as well.

Chapter Five

Discussion of Findings

Many significant issues and concerns emerged from my interviews with the recently ordained men. The issues cut across all categories of formation: human, intellectual, pastoral and spiritual. In this chapter I will discuss some of the findings with the intention of identifying areas of tension between the men's theology studies and professional educational needs. I will suggest some implications from these findings and make recommendations for how these areas might be addressed through changes in the seminary curriculum and/or programs for professional development after ordination. Some of the most glaring concerns were found in human formation.

Human Formation

The data concur with Hoge's findings that loneliness is the biggest problem for the recently ordained priests. The seminaries, in particular St. John's Seminary, deserve a great deal of credit for instituting within their curriculum spiritual conferences that are attentive to the issues of human sexuality, celibacy, and loneliness. It is difficult while living in a community atmosphere to simulate the actual experience of loneliness that the men report experiencing after leaving the seminary. Perhaps it is important to critically examine both how men are formed as well as how they live once they are ordained and are living away from the seminary's fraternal community. The conclusion of the men in this area was very strong: either the seminary should move away from a community based formation and prepare men to live alone or the living situations in parishes should become more communal.

"Community" is a word that is spoken frequently in the seminary and was used often by the men in their interviews. Seminary is a different experience of community life than one

would find in a monastery. The men are not preparing to take solemn vows of chastity, poverty and obedience to be lived within the context of a religious order. The men are preparing to live as diocesan priests who make promises of celibacy and obedience to their bishop. That is not to say that diocesan priests cannot and should not live in more of a community setting. Almost all of the priests who I interviewed felt that they should live in community with other priests.

Living in community provides many obvious advantages. With priests increasingly living and working in parishes as the only priests in the parish, when in the rectory they always have the experience of being “on duty.” The seminarian has a rhythm to his day. There is time set aside for class, study, pray, meals, pastoral work, and rest. It is a hectic life, but there is also the opportunity for quiet time and social time with other seminarians. The priest has a framework of a schedule in the parish within the mass schedule. For example, most parishes have a daily morning mass sometime between 7 and 9 a.m. Priests often have funerals in their parishes so it is difficult for them to make any plans before noon time. The priest will often have hospital duty, a wake service to conduct, school or parish meetings, religious education classes, wedding appointments or rehearsals, confessions, a diocesan meeting, and other responsibilities. It is not unusual for a priest in the parish to start his day with a 7 a.m. mass and end it with a parish meeting that may not conclude until 9 or 10 p.m. He may then retire and one or more nights a week have a pager on in case he gets called to the hospital. On top of these obligations, of course, is the man’s desire and promise to pray the breviary and to spend time in personal prayer. It is difficult for the man to live a healthy, balanced lifestyle within this type of setting. In previous times there were several priests

living in the rectory, parish staff to cook and clean, and more of a sharing of responsibilities among the priests. Now the priests report that there is little or no separation from life and work, difficulty in getting another priest to cover vacations and/or days off, and little contact with other priests.

It is clear to virtually everyone, and every man who I interviewed, that the arrangement of having priests scattered throughout the diocese living in rectories by themselves is simply not an ideal arrangement. The Cardinal and diocesan officials have made it clear that the diocese would and does support men living in parishes together, but has not mandated it as there seems to be a sense that it would be preferable if these arrangements came from the priests themselves rather than “headquarters.” Frequently, for example, in the personnel process of assigning a new pastor there are discussions with the prospective pastor about the possibility of living with other priests in neighboring rectories. In such cases the diocese may encourage, but does not want to mandate the living arrangement on the priest. It should be noted, however, that simply having people get mail at the same address does not guarantee that there will be community. It is important that right from the men’s arrival at the seminary that they be formed to live within a community setting. One way of facilitating community living is to have the men live at least part of their time while in the seminary in groups with other men. They could go to the seminary for classes and then live in community with a group of seminarians and a formation team of priests. The men would share household responsibilities for cooking, cleaning, leading prayer, and other assigned duties. They would assist each other in their formation by their sharing in reflection groups, by peer correction and by holding each other accountable.

Several of the men questioned whether seminary faculty should be the only formators of men in the seminary. Part of the difficulty in making the transition to parish life is what one of the men spoke about as the “unrealness” of many of the faculty. His observation was not unique. The findings indicated that the seminarians looked more to parish priests as their role models of priesthood than their seminary faculty. Something that could be considered would be involvement by priests who are not serving on the faculty to assist more directly in the formation of seminarians. The formation teams could be comprised of live-in priests and also several other priests, preferably with parish experience who would have contact with groups of seminarians for workshops, seminars, and supervisory experiences. The teams should also, in my opinion, include lay people with particular gifts to share with men preparing for priesthood. For example, lay people who work successfully in catechetics, youth ministry, and/or hospital ministry could be very helpful in assisting the men as they prepare for priesthood. Now more than ever the men preparing to be priests must learn to work collaboratively with lay people, particularly women, in their professional life or they simply should not be seen as suitable candidates for ordination. In order for these teams to be of maximum value a very careful screening must be done on the people who would comprise the teams. The formation of priests should be a task for the entire diocese, not merely the faculty of the seminaries. Larger formation teams which include, but are not limited to an academic seminary faculty would seem to be a way of assuring that several people with different perspectives and gifts are involved in priestly formation.

Another advantage of living in community is that the seminarians would be more attentive to building relationships with each other rather than the faculty. A surprisingly large

number of the men mentioned that there was a problem with the faculty maintaining appropriate boundaries. By moving the seminarians from living solely in the seminary and having larger formation teams the academic faculty would share their role of formators with a larger pool of people. Boundary issues might be discovered and addressed by other professionals in the formation process if the process included more people at different sites.

By grouping the men together there would also be the possibility of grouping the men in intentional ways. That is to say, it might be helpful for men to live with some men that were approximately the same age and experience. It might be helpful, as well, for men to be exposed to different cultures, ages, and backgrounds within the smaller groups. In each grouping there could be a conscious effort to provide a level of challenge and support. Fowler, an expert on human development, wrote about the significance of both challenge and support for growth to happen (Fowler 1981). If there is too much support there is no impetus for a person to grow. Challenges help one to grow provided there is sufficient support. If, on the other hand, there is too much challenge the experience(s) may prove too overwhelming for an individual and the person may withdraw, become depressed, or simply be unable to cope with the experience. The careful and intentional introduction of challenges could be very beneficial to the growth of the men.

Programming could be arranged around the perceived needs of the group. The men interviewed made many important comments about feeling that human formation was too “cookie cutter” in its design. Formation teams could assess areas within the individuals and their entire groups that needed attention and design programming around these areas of concern.

The data suggest that there are fundamental gaps in many of the seminarians' human formation prior to entering the seminary:

- Work Experiences: Some of the younger men have never held jobs. It might be more helpful for them to work a summer on a road crew or behind a counter at a Burger King or Dunkin' Donuts than to go to a quiet rectory in the summer during their early years of formation. Being among lay people and doing hard work would be helpful in keeping the men grounded and appreciative of the challenges that many people whom they will serve as priests face in their daily lives. It would also help them to have a change from a very theoretical and intellectual environment to one where they were more directly involved in work. St. Ignatius, in the formation of Jesuits, felt it was important that their formation not be merely theoretical. He wanted the men to take turns serving as orderlies in the hospitals so that they could encounter the real lives, struggles, and sufferings of people (O'Malley, 1996, pp. 115-116). While I recognize that the Jesuits are religious and not diocesan, the wisdom of the insight still appears applicable for diocesan seminarians. The total curriculum should reflect a balance between all the areas of formation and two of the areas that need to be balanced are the intellectual and the human formation.
- Leadership Experiences: Seminary is too often about getting in line and doing what one is told. The priesthood has a very public leadership dimension to it. Formation should intentionally give men experiences speaking in front of

groups of people and exercising leadership roles. Several men in my study and in Hoge's found the adjustment into being a public person a very challenging one (Hoge, p. 25). Seminarians need to be prepared to speak at the drop of a hat and to be aware that practically everything that they say or do could be open to scrutiny and criticism. Whether leaders are born or made is a subject for debate, but unless the seminarian is prepared to be a public figure he is going to have a very rocky adjustment. The curriculum could easily be adjusted to give the men increased opportunities to stand in front of groups, to make presentations, to give practice sermons and/or to be called on to lead spontaneous prayer. Some of the above, of course, is already done, but the men suggested that this area is one that could be improved upon in seminary preparation.

- Working in Teams: Several of the men commented on their desire to have more individually tailored programs of formation based on their previous life experience. Without denying the value of their suggestion for more individual formation, it also came to light in the interviews with the recently ordained that when they went into the parish setting it became apparent to them that they had not learned how to effectively work in teams. Men should be given several opportunities to work in teams with other seminarians and with lay people outside the seminary, particularly women. Further, this ability should be an important part of a seminarian's evaluation. Priests simply need to possess the skill to work in collaboration with others; this skill is more needed

in the present and in the foreseeable future than in the past. Human formation needs to keep this goal clearly in focus throughout the formation process. It is also something that needs to be an intentional part of a post-ordination formation curriculum.

- Being Exposed to Divergent Views: A very strong finding from the interviews is that it is important that men preparing to be priests should be supervised and formed by men and women who embrace the teaching of the Church. It is unfair to the men and the Church to do otherwise. The men rightly challenged the seminary to do a better job of screening their pastoral assignments and supervisors in this regard. The data also suggest, however, that it is equally important that the men understand that the world they are preparing to minister in is a very diverse place with a variety of theological and political positions. They will live and work with people who do not share their beliefs and they have to have an understanding of that fact. Too often there is a sense among those working with recently ordained that there is rigidity or aggression in their approach to perceived opponents. Preparing the men to work with and among people with divergent views should be very much part of the human formation provided at the seminary. One important thing that the seminary could do is to consult their current and former students to determine even subtle ways that the predominantly white, Irish environment of the seminary creates an uncomfortable or unwelcome

atmosphere in the seminary. Through a process of self-evaluation the seminary could intentionally make itself more hospitable to other cultures.

- Cultivate Balance: Too many men before and after ordination simply do not have enough interests that enable them to live healthy lives. Part of the human formation process should involve making sure the men pursue healthy hobbies and interests: exercise, books, plays, attending concerts, movies, and many other opportunities that are part of a balanced, wholesome life. While it may seem to be a somewhat minor matter the truth is that outside hobbies and interests are very important to one's physical and psychological health. The priesthood is a vocation that is very demanding. It is important that the men also learn how to avoid becoming workaholics and make time for friends, recreation, exercise, vacations and enjoyment of their favorite hobbies. A lifelong commitment requires the men to develop a pace and quality of life that will help them persevere in a balanced, healthy way. While the above is not something upon which a student is usually evaluated, a healthy and balanced life is clearly going to be an indicator of happiness in the priesthood and perseverance in the priesthood. As well as having mentors model this type of balance I would suggest that the seminary could also make efforts to lead men to have an exposure to a variety of healthy recreational activities and interests through programming and/or group outings. For example, once a month an outing could be arranged to go to the Symphony, attend a minor league hockey game, go to a movie, or some other activity to give the men

exposure to different experiences. While not mandatory the men should be strongly encouraged to participate in these activities. At St. John's the men are already instructed to keep Thursday nights free for rector's conferences and community activities. The group outings could be arranged around the already existing schedule.

- Work on Boundaries: Over and over the men reported having difficulties maintaining appropriate boundaries as they transitioned into the parish. As discussed previously in this dissertation the concern about boundaries exists on many levels. The men report feeling isolated and alone. The men shared their difficulties in establishing appropriate working relationships with lay people, particularly women. In some cases their desire for intimacy and support led them to enter into inappropriate relationships with co-workers or parishioners. Also, even if the relationships were not based on physical attraction and/or tempted the men to violate their promise of chastity, some of the men felt that due to their loneliness and their desire for human relationships they had drawn too close to individuals and/or particular families. In some cases these relationships caused problems for everyone involved. The priests felt strongly that this area needs much more attention during formation and into priesthood. It needs to become a priority in formation and in continuing formation. Healthy relationships, appropriate intimacy and maintaining professional boundaries absolutely have to be a priority issue in human formation including doing a lot of programming

during conferences at the seminary and making it a very critical element for evaluation in the field education sites. The findings of this study should be shared with mentors and spiritual directors of the newly ordained as well so that they can make this area a point of emphasis in their meetings and discussions with the newly ordained.

- Gender Issues: The issues that emerged in the interviews around loneliness, boundaries, studying with lay people (largely women) in the seminary, collaboration, working with women as peers in ministry, and the larger issues about intimacy and appropriate sharing are clearly urgent issues that require a great deal of attention by the seminary and by the Church at large. This study is more descriptive than prescriptive in its focus, but the men themselves recognize that they have difficulty adjusting personally and professionally to the presence of women in their lives when they leave the seminary. While in the seminary they are in an almost completely male environment. Their rector, most of their professors, their spiritual advisors, mentors, and their peers are almost exclusively men. Beyond that they are predominantly celibate, male, and either priests or men preparing for priesthood. Obviously, once they leave the seminary and are sent to a parish the demographics change significantly. Several of the men indicated that they felt that they needed to be more prepared to make this adjustment to a more diverse population while still in the seminary. The presence of lay women on the faculty of the seminary, classes and ministerial opportunities where women are peers, more

collaboration with lay women in parish situations, and having mature women supervisors of the men in their pastoral settings could all be potentially helpful in beginning to address these issues. As valuable as experiences can be simply putting women in the classroom or the field education site will not by itself sufficiently address or solve the problems. The seminary needs to address the underlying attitudes of some of the men toward lay people and women in particular within the seminary formation process and in continuing professional development.

The data identify several red flags bobbing in the breeze and those charged with the formation of men preparing for priesthood must make it a point of emphasis in all areas of formation. One immediate step that could be taken is to organize a study of the specific issues raised by this study and other similar studies with the intention of offering recommendations for the seminary and archdiocese. The perspective or “lens” for my study was men ordained in the last five years. An important perspective for the future study would be lay people, especially women who could offer some personal observations, experiences, and recommendations. In the archdiocese of Boston there are many outstanding women who have taught in the seminary, been students in classes with seminarians, and worked alongside seminarians and newly ordained priests in pastoral settings. Their experience and suggestions would be very helpful in assisting the diocese in constructing and implementing a curriculum for both the seminary and continuing formation programs that seek to address this challenge to the men in their formation and priesthood.

There also emerged in the interviews a desire on the part of many of the men to have more sharing with their priestly peers, but they encountered a great deal of resistance to that level of intimacy. Gender issues and gender roles, while not always expressly articulated in the interviews, clearly were very significant in the men's experiences of seminary and formation. The data appear to indicate that more intentional focus on the issues of affectivity and intimacy in the life of men would be helpful in the men growing in self-understanding, naming some of the areas of dissonance or challenge in the sharing of their feelings with peers, and coming to a greater awareness of some of the dynamics that are often present in human relations. If this important work is going to be done by the men the seminary needs to make it clear that being able to participate in an appropriate level of sharing with one's peers and observing confidentiality and respect in regard to what one hears from others is an expectation of a seminarian. Even if it is difficult to have this level of trust and sharing in the seminary environment the data indicate that men are looking for it in their early years of priesthood.

The above represents a partial list of suggestions in the area of human formation. Fundamentally, what the study suggests is a shift in how human formation is approached: from men living only in seminary to living in small communities; from academic faculty alone being responsible for formation to a wider group of priests and lay people involved in the process; from human formation being seen as less important than academic formation to seeing it as a foundation for priestly formation.

Intellectual Formation

The men felt, overall, that the intellectual formation was very good. Some men even commented that it was “excellent” or “exceptional.” It is clear that there is simply a body of knowledge that the men preparing for priesthood must possess. The foundational courses of Scripture, Church History, Ecclesiology, Patristics, Christology, Sacramental Theology, Pastoral Theology, Pastoral Counseling, Moral Theology, and Canon Law are essential for the men to have taken prior to ordination. While virtually every man in Hoge’s studies and my own work suggested that the intellectual formation be less theoretical and more practical caution should be urged in this regard. Men need to learn the faith in as thorough a fashion as possible in order to be effective priests. While the man may not preach about processions of the Trinity, for example, it is important that his preaching and teaching be informed by the teaching of the Church in its fullness. Academic preparation is valuable not just to the extent that it will be “used” by the priest, but to the extent that it forms the man in his own intellectual growth. The issues that he is asked to think about become part of his spiritual, human, and pastoral formation as well. In summation, while both the literature and the interviews with the men indicate that the intellectual formation should include the practical dimension of ministry it would be a mistake to see intellectual content as not being “practical” in and of itself.

The above point is worthy of emphasis because seminaries are not merely training functionaries to perform tasks. The Church is training men to live a type of life that involves the ability to live a life based on an ideal. Preaching the gospel persuasively in a way that brings the teachings of Scripture and Tradition to people presupposes a depth and breadth of

knowledge and to engage increasingly intellectually curious lay people who are able to grasp and challenge complex philosophical and theological ideas is not the work of one lightly educated. A teacher faces a similar task as she/he stands before a class of students. The teacher needs content knowledge, an awareness of the human development issues of the students, different learning styles and cultural backgrounds of the class, and different theories about teaching and learning. Intellectual formation then cannot be done in a vacuum. It presupposes a community of people who have a variety of needs and gifts. For example:

- What are some of the intellectual needs of the laity?
- What spiritual needs does the priest find among the parishioners and how will he help them grow in their faith?
- What are the pastoral needs of those whom he serves? What does he hope to bring to them in response to these needs?
- What are the ministerial needs of the faithful and what are the ways that the lay people can be assisted in sharing in the important work of ministry in the Church?

Clearly the intellectual formation could and should include more practical application. Specifically, some of the men stated that courses should be taught with a pastoral application in mind. For example, Scripture courses should certainly anticipate that the men are preparing to preach on the texts. Scripture courses could also be offered at the same time as a homiletic practicum so that the study of each discipline would inform the other. Moral Theology, Pastoral Theology, and Canon Law courses could focus on content and case

studies that would have the men actually wrestle with some situations that they may run into in the parish. Courses could be offered at every stage of the seminarians' careers that would focus on integrating the different courses with one another. When I was in college I took a course in Humanities that was team taught by one member each from the English, Philosophy, History, and Religious Studies departments. It was a great experience to learn in this way as the professors were all teaching on an important theme, but doing so in an integrative manner. There are tremendous opportunities to do similar things in seminary formation. Also, some of the men suggested that symposia be offered that would seek to integrate the components of formation with one another. These courses might be taught in seminar fashion with an emphasis on the students integrating the components and making presentations to one another in the program. A constant focus throughout the entire intellectual formation must be appropriation, integration and articulation.

The level of rigor was also a concern for some. It is fair to conclude from the data that most of the men found their courses "not overly difficult", but very labor intensive. As stated earlier it is difficult to design a curriculum for such a diverse group of men in terms of their levels of previous education and aptitude. The seminaries do a commendable job in this area. A result of designing a curriculum that meets the broadest possible levels of academic aptitude is that some men who are academically gifted are going to be frustrated that the courses do not move rapidly or deep enough in content to suit them. Due to the fact that as a professional school the seminary is primarily preparing practitioners rather than future scholars (although some will be sent later to become scholars in their fields) there seems to be an emphasis on breadth of content rather than depth. One of the men remarked, "They

should just label every course ‘intro’ because that is what it is.” Most of the men agreed with that sentiment. What might be helpful is to design a curriculum that does not end at ordination. The men that study in Rome at the North American College return after their ordination and first summer as priests for a year of study. They go back to Rome as priests and spend a year in study to receive their STL (License in Sacred Theology). This curriculum is wonderful, but it may not be necessary or practical to send everyone back for full-time studies immediately following ordination. What the data suggest is that consideration be given to developing a curriculum that does not end at ordination. For the first few years the men might return to the seminary for one afternoon a week for courses that would go beyond the “intro” level and help them with the application of their learning. It would also help the men to be together and to be sharing their experiences with each other. Teachers and doctors increasingly continue their formal training and very close mentoring in their early years of professional life. By moving toward a curriculum that extends beyond ordination the seminary and priesthood would be acting in a way consistent with other comparable schools with a professional focus. It would acknowledge that a great deal of critical learning and integration takes place after ordination and it would provide a supportive structure to help the recently ordained priests move more effectively into their priestly life and ministry.

Further, continuing education should be aggressively encouraged by the archdiocese. Outside of a selected few, men have not been sponsored to pursue studies. Most of the men sent for study are sent for a very practical reason. They are sent to get degrees so that they can teach in the seminary, serve as judges on the marriage tribunal, or some other very specific task. Further, a recent group (2005) of consultants to the archdiocese from the

business community suggested that too much money was being spent on programs for clergy and ministry. The implementation of their recommendations even resulted in the elimination of funding for sabbaticals. In a recent conversation with a priest I was told directly by him that he had been contacted by the diocese while he was on sabbatical to inform him that while his approved sabbatical could continue he would have to fund the rest of it himself! Clearly, the data suggest that such a policy is extremely shortsighted. It may save pennies in the short run, but will ultimately prove very costly. One of the most valuable resources that any diocese has is its priests. Investing in their continuing education and formation not only makes practical, pastoral, and spiritual sense, but it is matter of justice for the men who have given their lives for the Church. An educational coordinator could be named as part of the clergy personnel office and work out plans with individual priests to assess their educational goals. Now obviously these “educational plans” would be somewhat modest for the most part because there would be an expectation that the priest would continue to work full-time in the parish. They might involve a program for a man seeking a Master’s degree in counseling, for example. They might also involve a course more directed toward enrichment such as an art class. At any rate the men would be able and encouraged to continue to grow and learn as they move through priesthood. Some of the local Catholic colleges might also be willing to assist financially in these initiatives if they were approached for input and support.

The data from this study concurred with data found in Hoge’s studies that the men should have more interaction with lay people and particularly women during their educational experiences. The students that studied in Rome reported that in their first several years of studies that they were in classes with lay men and women as well as with religious.

It was a very diverse group and the men that I interviewed (very small in number) saw it as a very positive experience. At St. John's and at Pope John's the men had classes almost exclusively of seminarians. It may not be wise to mandate particular electives, but men should be strongly urged to take at least two courses in the BTI. As mentioned previously in this study the benefits of taking these courses are many: the seminarian leaves the sometimes confining environment of the seminary, meeting future colleagues from other faith traditions and/or lay or religious people from their own tradition, interacting with women as peers in the classroom, learning about other faith traditions from their own perspective (e.g. learning about Calvinism from a Calvinist), and encountering the climate and culture of these other institutions.

The problem of the faculty maintaining appropriate boundaries with the students came through very strongly in their responses to questions about human and intellectual formation. Several of the men in discussing their classmates used terms such as "golden boys" or "pretty boys" to indicate what was clearly a widely held belief that some of their peers from early on in the seminary were singled out for particular praise and potential professional advancement. Given the very close nature of seminary living, i.e., the seminarians and faculty living in the same building, it is unwise for faculty to be inviting only certain students up to their room for drinks and conversation. It is similarly imprudent for individual faculty members to be gathering protégés around themselves and to be speculating with favored students about the students' professional potential for important diocesan positions after ordination. Many of the men who were not part of the "special" group felt that their vocations were not as valued and that the presence of the "favored"

students made true community much more difficult within the seminary as rather than the men relating to one another as peers, some were made to feel more or less equal than others. It is very important that the priests selected for faculty on the seminary must be chosen with the greatest possible care. There must be a thorough screening process for them and a very high level of accountability for them once selected. Academic credentials alone are not sufficient for one to be a priest faculty member of the seminary. The men also should be of the highest character and models of priesthood for the seminarians to emulate. If there is any question of appropriateness of behavior it should be thoroughly examined and appropriate action taken. Some men may be effective teachers in the classroom, but if they are not a positive influence in the other areas of formation then the Church, seminary and the seminarians would do better without them.

Spiritual Formation

The men saw a real adjustment between the schedules of prayer in the seminary (which most of them appreciated) to the lack of schedule in the parish. The data suggest that there may be ways to prepare men for the transition. First, the schedules are very helpful in the development of forming habits of prayer. What might help in the transition would be to have certain days when men may be encouraged to pray in small groups and some days when men would be encouraged to say their Morning or Evening Prayers on their own. Then the men could be encouraged to bring their concerns about how they are doing in these alternative prayer experiences to their spiritual directors. Such a policy would maintain the framework of the schedule while helping the men to prepare for how they will pray for the rest of their lives as parish priests.

A similar concern that the men expressed was the concern that the spirituality of the seminary was becoming too “monastic” for men who were preparing to be secular or diocesan priests. Eucharistic adoration, Marian devotion, fidelity to the Office, are all very important parts of the priest’s life and spirituality. To emphasize them in the seminary is very important and appropriate. To argue that because it will be difficult to maintain these practices later in the parish that they should not be embraced by the seminary seems to be lacking in logic. If, on the other hand, there is a concern that the men are bordering on fideism, i.e., practicing a spirituality that borders on escapism, then that is a concern that should be taken seriously. Men should be encouraged to try a variety of prayer experiences and to feel comfortable praying alone, in groups, silently, vocally, with priests, with lay people, with a written formula and spontaneously. People expect that their priests will be men of prayer and that they will be able to pray in a variety of ways or styles. The seminary is a good time for the men to experience a variety of different forms of prayer.

A concern that surfaced in this study is the training for spiritual directors. Given the importance and extremely delicate nature of the responsibilities it should be clear to everyone that the priests selected for these positions should not only be of the highest character (which no one questioned), but also have the academic and spiritual training that will enable them to do their jobs with the highest possible competence. Ideally the priests should have advanced degrees in theology and psychology. It would also be helpful if the men had been priests for several years with a variety of pastoral experience. This area might also be one where the diocese’s commitment to continuing education and formation for priests would enable the

priests to continue their education while serving as spiritual directors to improve their level of education and competence.

One recommendation that comes from the men in the strongest possible terms is that the recently ordained priests should be allowed to keep their spiritual directors for two years after ordination. If that is not possible or places too much of a burden on the spiritual directors then a plan should be in place so that a man is starting to transition with a new spiritual director in his last year of the seminary. It frankly makes little sense why the diocese would want to cut off an important means of support for the man in one of the most critical times in his life. Mentors and spiritual directors are most critically needed during the transition from seminary to priesthood. The seminary and the diocese should be very proactive in anticipating the needs of the recently ordained priest while he is still in the seminary.

A troubling issue that was raised as a result of the interview process was the issue of honesty and integrity within the spiritual formation process. It is troubling because there is an assumption and presumption of sincerity on the part of those entering the seminary. Certainly no one is claiming that the majority of the men in the seminary are anything but open, honest, and sincere. If, however, men are misrepresenting themselves or are hiding significant aspects of their personalities from the faculty and/or their spiritual director it is obviously a cause for serious concern. This area is one that would benefit from having the men spend more time with one another in reflection groups. Peers can and will often be more challenging than superiors. The men need to be challenged to be open, honest, and willing to contribute to their own formation. A culture that seems to reward passivity and “flying below

the radar” has to be aggressively challenged. Faculty or others charged with recommending or voting for ordination should be encouraged to vote “yes” only if the man has given them a positive reason to do so. Too often the “yes” vote is a kind of default position. Logic and experience would dictate that it should be exactly the opposite. That is to say, the default position should be an abstention or a “no” vote until the man has given sufficient reason to vote “yes.” If the men are not appropriately open and honest in their relationships with their advisors, mentors, and peers this behavior should make those charged with the responsibility to make recommendations to the bishop reluctant to support the candidate for priesthood.

Pastoral Formation

Pastoral Formation is concerned with giving men the professional education that they will need to help them move effectively from the seminary to the parish as priests. There is a very obvious thing that the archdiocese can do to assist the newly ordained priests in having a better chance of making a successful transition into priesthood: do a better job of screening the parishes and pastors to which they are sent. It is shocking really to realize that there is no actual screening process in place. Often the placements are made based on which parishes are open for a parochial vicar or the reputation of the pastor. No one physically goes out to assess the setting. Some men have reported moving into rectories where they did not yet have access to a room, where the pastor has serious alcohol issues, where there are very difficult staff problems and/or other personnel in the house that might not be conducive to a man’s adjustment to priesthood. One man reported being sent to a house where two other priests in the house literally came to blows.

It should be acknowledged that there is no perfect setting. It should also be acknowledged that many of the men's problems in their first assignments are their own. However, with only six or seven men being ordained a year there is no excuse for not thoroughly screening every aspect of the parish and staff to which a newly ordained is being assigned. The pastor and new priest should be carefully matched and the vicar and/or regional bishop involved in "checking in" on a regular basis. It should not be left to the newly ordained to have to "blow the whistle" or seek out help from the diocese; the diocese should already be around and involved in conversation with the pastor and newly ordained priest. If the recommendation for the relationship with mentors and spiritual advisors begins in the seminary would be enacted it will also be more natural for interventions to take place before crises escalate too far.

A pastoral formation recommendation that could be made also would impact the intellectual formation. The practice of having men spend their time in a parish in the summer is not optimum time for the man to get a sense of parish life. I spent my summers in busy urban parishes: St. John-St. Hugh in Roxbury and Gate of Heaven in South Boston. Summer was a very busy time and I had numerous programs over which I had primary responsibility. Because of the general difference in activity in the summers between urban and suburban parishes it would seem reasonable that whenever possible the seminarians should have summer experiences in places such as Dorchester, Roxbury, South Boston, Lowell, Lawrence, Brockton, and Jamaica Plain. But even urban settings do not maintain the same types of activity in the summer as in the rest of the year. The seminary should seriously consider moving to a tri-semester schedule that would have the seminarians taking classes

over one or more summers during their time in formation and being sent out to parishes during the fall and/or spring semesters. Critics of this idea might suggest that such schedule changes would impact the relationship of the seminary with the other schools in the BTI which function on the more traditional two semester calendar and they might suggest that the students be asked to do a pastoral year in a parish instead. The data strongly suggest that a pastoral year might be a very valuable experience, but with good reason there is great reluctance to add any more years into the seminary program. Already the number of years for formation is a disincentive for men considering entering the seminary. To tell a man who is fifty-five years old that he is looking at five or more years of preparation or a man in his early thirties that he is going to be in the seminary for a minimum of seven years post-college it is going to be that much harder for the man to enter the seminary. The present length of time seems sufficient; what could be improved is how the amount of time is used and how the years immediately following ordination could be much more intensive in their curriculum of continuing education and formation.

As we discovered in the section on human formation, loneliness and maintaining boundaries are issues that are going to arise for many of the men in their early years of priesthood (and later years too). Having the priests move more toward community living might be helpful in confronting these issues as would having a mentor in place from day one. It would be very helpful for the men to be bringing these issues to their spiritual directors, mentors, and pastors and for those directing the men to be aware that issues of loneliness and boundaries should be at the top of the list of the issues that they discuss when they gather with the recently ordained priest.

Continuing formation and education is a concern for more than intellectual formation. As the men transition into pastoral situations the men felt that it would be very helpful if they were to come together and share their experiences with one another. Some of the men felt that there have been praiseworthy efforts to address human and spiritual formation needs of the recently ordained priests in the Archdiocese through programming directed by the diocese. What they felt needed more emphasis were the professional development needs that they experienced as they transitioned into the parish. For example, case studies, programming, application of canon law, and the need for general information could be based on the expressed needs of the men themselves as they encounter challenging situations in the parish. While the men were preparing for priesthood many of the attempts at “practical” situations were more hypothetical in nature. When the recently ordained priest actually encounters situations in the parish he brings a different energy to pastoral formation. He becomes more eager to learn and is open to suggestions from his mentors and peers as to how situations might be handled. It is in these opportunities that integration of learning from seminary can really begin to take place. Pastoral formation can only be begun in the seminary; it is truly a lifelong process.

Future Research

Sr. Katarina Schuth recommended possible further areas of study in a response published in Hoge’s book. Specifically, she recommended that “the background of seminarians and their motivations for priesthood need to be dealt with before and during formation if they are to be free and secure in their commitment to priesthood” (Hoge, p. 145). This particular recommendation would be most helpful in the human formation of the men.

The discussion regarding the honesty and openness of the men in the formation process obviously presupposes consideration of their motivation for being in the seminary in the first place. Studies could be designed that followed men from the beginning of their seminary preparation through their early years in priesthood to further research how background and motivation impacts their experiences.

Further research could also be done on the effectiveness of programs already in place to assist seminarians in their transition to priesthood, for example, comparisons between large and small dioceses in the retention and satisfaction of newly ordained priests. It would also be helpful to conduct research on dioceses that have several priests living together in community as opposed to priests living on their own. What are the advantages and challenges of these larger groupings of priests? Is there a significant difference in their sense of loneliness, retention and/or satisfaction with their lives? It would also be interesting to launch a longitudinal study that would follow seminarians from application to the seminary through the first five years of priesthood to actually observe what happens during the formation process to the man himself. That is to say, interview the men frequently during their time in the seminary exploring their thoughts about the human, pastoral, intellectual and spiritual formation as it is taking place. It would be interesting to study how the men's perceptions evolve over their time in the seminary. It would be helpful to explore how men's priestly identity forms and changes over time and experience in the seminary. If the times of changes in the understanding of priesthood fell into an observable pattern it might also be helpful knowledge for those designing the curriculum to have in terms of where to locate certain experiences and courses within the curriculum.

Of course, there are completely different tracks of study that could be followed. At the very beginning of my thoughts about my own study I was thinking about interviewing the recently ordained priests and also possibly their seminary professors, their pastors, pastoral staffs, and/or their parishioners. All of these constituencies have very important perspectives on the formation of recently ordained priests. Each of them has an important contribution to make to give the seminaries necessary feedback regarding seminary formation. It became very apparent to me very early on in the process that while all of the perspectives are valuable it is not really possible to do all of them in the scope of one study. Several pastors in the archdiocese of Boston have had two or more newly ordained priests assigned to them. I would recommend that a further study be done exploring what their perceptions of the education and formation provided by the seminary is and suggestions that they would recommend to improve it. I would certainly be cautious in drawing too many conclusions about the education and formation of future priests on the basis of one study looking at issues through only one lens or perspective. It would be important to gather data from a variety of sources from a variety of perspectives to get a more complete picture. It would be interesting to note areas of convergence and divergence between the studies.

Important, But Unexplored Issues

The previous pages unfolded very rich soil to be mined by the reader about the perceptions of the recently ordained regarding their seminary education and formation in light of their first years in parish ministry. I believe that the issues that emerged are significant and some require urgent attention. There is a tendency, however, to lose sight of the fact that the men represent only one constituency, i.e., that of the recently ordained. They

also are only responding to the questions that they are being asked. The interviewer, not the interviewee bears the brunt of the responsibility for what they did not say because I failed to ask them. Therefore, one must be careful in reading too much into what “they didn’t say.” There are, however, many other issues that emerged from the interviews that either formed unstated presuppositions, reflected views and assumptions about priestly identity and the role(s) of the priest, and/or the priest in relationship with the other, mostly lay members of the Church that should be mentioned in this section. I am not presenting the following as an exhaustive list, merely some thoughts for the reader’s consideration.

One issue that was not often explicitly mentioned but was very much present in the interviews was the concern about the clergy sexual abuse crisis. The men I interviewed were in the seminary when the scandal came to light and their education and formation was very much affected by it. Their curriculum, especially in the area of human formation, was adjusted quickly to address perceived previous gaps in their preparation. The men were also probably more closely bonded together than previous cohorts as a result of them sharing the experience of having to negotiate a phalanx of media trucks on the property of their seminary every time they entered or left the campus and also sharing the experience as the scandal continued to unfold in all its sordid detail of trying to explain to their family and friends why they still would consider becoming a priest. I suspect that many of the men internalized the pressure of desiring to be a “perfect priest” out of love for the Church. They certainly wanted to be different than the priests who had come before them. It is hard to quantify how much an impact the events that surrounded their time of formation had on them and on the faculty that were charged with their formation, but clearly it had an impact on them and continues to

have an impact on them and on the present and future seminarians. I would compare it to the awareness of Vatican II. That is to say that, for example, I was formed in the post-Vatican II seminary in the 1980's. Many of the priests that had been ordained for decades and many of the seminary faculty found it quite noteworthy that we were in a post-Vatican II seminary because they had reference to a pre-Vatican II seminary. Since I was born in 1960, almost my entire life was "post-Vatican II." I had no other point of reference. "Post-Vatican II" is not a significant distinction for my generation or the ones that follow it; since we have no other experience of the Church the "post-Vatican II Church" is the only Church we know.

Similarly, the men I interviewed did not have another experience outside of their time in the seminary in the shadows of the clergy sexual abuse crisis. It is not so much their task to be able to put their experience in a larger context; that is the task of people with other frames of reference to do. Specifically, for example, it would be interesting to explore further as the recently ordained reflect on the crisis what they feel is the most important area(s) of reform for the Church and priesthood. It would also be interesting to study how this group of priests identify and relate with the larger body of priests in the archdiocese.

As I gathered and coded the data what I kept thinking about was the identity of the priest. How do these men see themselves as priests and understand their priestly ministry? One of the men was very clear in articulating what the majority of the men felt when he said he was not ordained to be a "social worker." He saw being a social worker something to be avoided. To generalize from the findings and discussions with the newly ordained I would state that the men see their role with an emphasis more on their sacramental character and function than most priests who were ordained twenty years ago. If anything "social justice"

for them might be code for a liberal agenda that one should be cautious in embracing. Twenty or thirty years ago it was hard to find Eucharistic adoration or Benediction in this archdiocese. The priests of that time, however, were often found taking the lead in fighting for rights for renters, working at shelters for the homeless, and attending community meetings several times a month. Today many newly ordained have initiated Eucharistic adoration and devotions in their parishes, but do not seem to have much engagement in the larger community beyond the parish's concerns. I am not presenting a judgment, but merely an observation. In the past with a more "activist" identity of priesthood many could wonder why one needed to be a priest to work for justice. Now with the emphasis on sacramental ministry one could wonder what contributions one who is not a priest could make to the community. Any image of priesthood is always going to be incomplete or insufficient. The priesthood is not something; it is someone, namely Jesus Christ. Only Christ fully manifests priesthood. It is interesting and important to note what aspects of Christ's priesthood the recently ordained most value and model. While not often articulated this priestly identity forms the foundation for their self-understanding and their priorities.

Lay people were not mentioned much in the interviews with the men except regarding pastoral staff and/or those who attended mass. An area that deserves further study is the relationship between the recently ordained and lay people. How does the priest understand his responsibility to lay people? He ministers to them sacramentally, but does he also see them as members of the "same team," i.e., does he value their gifts, train them for leadership, respond to their intellectual needs and desires, and is he open to calling them "friends?" As much as the discussion of boundaries was and is important there is also the concern that fear

of violating boundaries will keep the priest in isolation and prevent him from having healthy, mutually beneficial relationships with lay people. Such a stance will also prevent lay people from occupying their rightful place in the Church and sharing their gifts with the community. “Lay people” and/or “women” must not be seen principally as a threat to celibacy. The seminary needs to cultivate healthy attitudes toward women among the men preparing for priesthood and through the curriculum and pastoral experiences ensure that men are having appropriate interaction with lay people, particularly women.

The data also raised in many different ways the issue of gender. It is men who are preparing for priesthood and it is largely, though not exclusively, men on the faculty preparing them for priesthood. Again, boundaries were a very legitimate concern expressed regarding faculty and student friendships. There were also concerns, although not explicitly addressed by most of the men, about same sex attraction among seminarians and how being in an all male environment would be particularly challenging for those men. A related issue is the reluctance of some men to form deep friendships with other seminarians or to share personal feelings or experiences within a group of peers in a support group. The culture of the seminary seems to discourage expressions of what most people would recognize as important human emotions such as love, struggle, doubt, and vulnerability. But, in reflecting on the issues expressed above I cannot help but wonder about the affective life of the seminarian and priest. Of course potentially inappropriate relationships should be confronted, but merely focusing on the negative aspects of relationships is not sufficient. What does healthy male affectivity look like? How is it modeled? Are there ways that the seminary curriculum, particularly in the area of human formation, can help men to grow in their ability

to express fraternal love in genuine and healthy ways? Merely denying or repressing emotions does not make them go away and in fact may exacerbate the problems of intimacy, loneliness, and celibacy.

Finally, there is something problematic about doing this type of study as it tends to present a picture that focuses too much on the negative aspects of the seminary, its curriculum, and its faculty and students. While I attempted to identify areas of strength and commendation I trust that the negative observations and subsequent recommendations will attract more attention. It is important for me to say that I am edified by the recently ordained priests that I had the privilege to interview. They are thoughtful, sensitive, caring and dedicated. For the most part they are also happy with their lives as priests and would choose it again if they had the chance. Likewise, the seminary and its faculty generally do a very commendable job in preparing men for the priesthood. This study and my comments should not be seen as condemning the present system, but as a desire to offer suggestions from the data to improve the seminary system.

Appendix A

Statistics Concerning Newly Ordained Priests of the Archdiocese of Boston (2001–2006)

Ordination Class	# Ordained	# Left Priesthood	# Left Assignment within the first five years*
2001	6	2	3
2002	5	0	2
2003	9	0	2
2004	7	0	3
2005	8	0	2
2006	5	0	0

*This number does not include those who were asked to transfer by the diocese. It only includes those who moved on their own initiative.

Appendix B

Questions for Participants

Human Formation

Could you tell me about your life experience prior to entrance into the seminary?

What was the adjustment to seminary life like for you?

Would you discuss how the seminary professors and priests in field assignments modeled priesthood for you.

Tell me about how the courses and spiritual conferences addressed issues of sexuality and celibacy?

Do you have any thoughts about what could be done to help seminarians grow in their maturity, their self-awareness, needs for intimacy?

Tell me about how effective you feel the seminary was in providing an environment that encouraged healthy friendships, personal growth, and a well-balanced lifestyle?

Intellectual Formation

How would you describe the curriculum of the seminary?

How would you describe the academic rigor of the courses?

Could you talk about courses of study that you feel were the most essential to your own growth?

Tell me about the courses or segments of courses that are most helpful to your pastoral ministry as a priest?

Overall, how do you feel that the courses that you took help you now in your life and ministry?

Did you take courses on the BTI (Boston Theological Institute e.g. Boston College, Harvard, Greek Seminary)?

Tell me about your experiences in these courses.

If you were going to make a recommendation to the seminary about its curriculum what would you suggest?

Spiritual Formation

Tell me about your experience of the spiritual life in the seminary.

Talk to me about the integration of the spiritual life with the other components of seminary formation (i.e., human, intellectual, and pastoral).

Would you care to identify any strengths of the spiritual program at the seminary?

I am wondering if you have any thoughts since you have been ordained and in a parish setting about how the spiritual formation in the seminary prepared you for a diocesan priest's spiritual life?

Would you have any suggestions about how to improve the spiritual life and formation in the seminary?

Pastoral Formation

Could you talk to me about your field education experiences?

Tell me about field education experiences in terms of integration with your academic and spiritual programs.

How do you feel about having lay people as your supervisors while in the seminary?

Tell me about your experiences of field education evaluations?

Would you want to make any suggestions for improving the pastoral aspect of the seminary?

Continuing Education/Formation

How would your adjustment to priesthood from seminary?

Could you tell about some of your initial adjustments or learning?

Talk to me about your first assignment as regards making a transition from Seminary to priesthood? (First pastor, lay staff)

Describe your living situation in your first assignment.

Tell me about your relationships now with friends from your time in the seminary.

How would you describe your relationship with the archdiocese since ordination?

Tell me about some of the “helps” to you in making a good transition to priesthood?

Would you identify some of the challenges that you experienced in making the transition into priesthood?

Tell me about what gives you your greatest satisfaction in your life and work as a priest?

Would you identify some areas of challenge or frustration for you in priesthood?

Have you been able to continue your education since ordination?

If you were going to continue your education what areas would be you most interested in or do you feel would be most helpful to you?

Describe for me the adjustment in your spiritual life as you transitioned from seminary to priestly life?

Some have suggested that keeping your spiritual director from the seminary or being assigned a mentor for the first few years of priesthood would be helpful. Do you have thoughts about those ideas?

What would help you to continue to grow in your spiritual life?

Did you feel that you were prepared pastorally to serve the parishioners from day one?

What advice would you give to the seminary to help them prepare seminarians for the transition into priesthood?

What advice would you give a man being ordained next week as he transitions into a parish to minister as a priest?

Appendix C

Letter to Newly Ordained Priests

May 2006

Dear (Prospective Participant):

My name is Rev. Richard F. Clancy. I am a priest of the Archdiocese of Boston ordained in 1991. Currently I am Archdiocesan Director of Campus Ministry and the Administrator of St. Casimir Parish in Brockton.

My purpose for writing you is that I am presently a doctoral candidate at Boston College in the Higher Education Administration program. The title of my dissertation is: Perceptions of the Recently Ordained Priests of Boston of Their Post-Secondary Education and Formation in Seminary. It is my intention to interview Boston priests ordained in the past five years in reference to the four pillars of formation identified by Pope John Paul II: human, spiritual, pastoral, intellectual. My focus, given that it is a higher education rather than a theological degree, is primarily on curriculum.

I am asking you for approximately an hour of your time so that I can interview you about your perceptions regarding your preparation for priesthood and your suggestions as to how the seminary and/or the archdiocese might assist priests in the future in making the transition from seminarian to priest. I would want to emphasize that I am not doing this project from the perspective of an archdiocesan official. I am a doctoral student working on a dissertation. At no time will I share with any other individual either inside or outside the Church what you personally share with me excepting, of course, if you report criminal activity or risk of harm to yourself or others.

There is no pressure to participate in this study, nor is there any immediate personal benefit for you. It is my hope that the information gained by my research may assist the seminary and the diocese in preparing men for priesthood. I will make every effort to protect the identity of the participants. For the purpose of my qualitative study I will ask your permission to tape record our conversation. I will keep the tapes under lock and key and after transcription will keep the identifiers and tapes in separate locations. After three years both the tapes and identifiers will be destroyed. In reporting the findings in my dissertation I will take care to protect the anonymity of the individuals who have participated in the study.

I will be contacting you in the next few days by phone to ask you if you are willing to participate in the study. Please do not feel any pressure to participate. Even if you agree to participate please understand that you are free at any time to choose to not answer a question or to end your participation. If you have any questions please feel free to contact me at 508-586-2226 or through email clancyri@bc.edu. Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

Rev. Richard F. Clancy

Appendix D

Participants with Pseudonyms

Austin	2001
Francis	2005
Steve	2003
Elvis	2003
Kevin	2003
Stan	2006
Peter	2001
John	2005
Mike	2006
Tom	2005
Phil	2003
Manny	2006
Les	2005
Mark	2004
Luke	2005
Chris	2002
Jacob	2003
Matt	2004
Bill	2002
David	2005

Appendix E

Institutional Review Board Application

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Introduction:

You are being asked to participate in a research study that assesses the effectiveness of the seminary curriculum in preparing men for the priesthood. The study is called "Perceptions of the Recently Ordained Priests of Boston of Their Education and Formation in Seminary." You are being asked to participate in this study because you were ordained in the past five years for the Archdiocese of Boston. If you take part in this study you will be one of about 20 people to do so.

Your participation is completely voluntary. Please ask questions if there is anything that you do not understand.

The person doing this study is Reverend Richard F. Clancy, a priest of the Archdiocese (1991), and a doctoral student in the Higher Education Program in the Lynch School of Education at Boston College. He is being guided by Professor Ana Martinez-Aleman of the Lynch School at Boston College. No funding has been received for this study, and neither Richard Clancy nor Professor Martinez-Aleman expects to receive any financial benefit because of the results of this study.

Purpose:

By doing this study I hope to learn how effective the seminary curriculum is in preparing men for the priesthood.

Procedures:

The research will be done in either my rectory at St. Casimir in Brockton or at your rectory office and will consist of an interview. The total amount of time involved is approximately one hour.

In the interview you will be asked questions about your perceptions of the human, intellectual, spiritual, and pastoral education and formation you received in the seminary.

Risks:

To the best of my knowledge, there is no more harm in participating in this study than what you would experience in daily life.

Benefits:

You will not receive any direct benefit from being in this research study, but I hope to gather information that will assist the seminary in evaluating the effectiveness of the curriculum and/or the archdiocese to develop programs in aiding men in making the transition from seminarian to priesthood.

Costs:

The only potential cost is for transportation if the interview takes place in Brockton.

Compensation:

You will not be compensated for participating in this study.

Withdrawal from the Study:

You may choose to withdraw from the study at any time.

Confidentiality:

The audiotapes of the interviews will have numbers on them and so your name will not be on any of the data. This informed consent document and the code linking your name and number used on the tapes will be kept in a locked cabinet in the campus ministry office of Rev. Richard F. Clancy in Boston to which only he will have access. The informed consent documents and the code list will be destroyed by shredding three years after the results of the study are published.

The audio tapes will be transcribed by a professional transcription service and any information that might identify you to the transcriber will be removed before your tape is sent to be transcribed. The tapes will be kept for three years locked in a cabinet in the rectory to which only Richard Clancy will have access and then they will be destroyed.

Although I will treat the information you give us as confidential, there are some circumstances in which I may have to show your information to other people. For example, I may need to report to authorities if I believe that a crime has been committed or if you indicate that you are a danger to yourself or to others. Although it happens very rarely, I may be required to show information that identifies you, like this informed consent document, to people who need to be sure I have done the research correctly. These would be people from a group such as the Boston College Institutional Review Board that oversees research involving human participants.

The information from the interviews will be combined with information from other interviews from priests taking part in the research. I will be looking for similarities as well as differences in the information the priests have given. When I write up the study to share it with other researchers in my dissertation, at meetings or in journals, I will write about this combined information. If I decide to use quotations from what you or another priest tells me I will omit any identifying information and use pseudonyms so that others will not be able to identify him.

Questions:

You are encouraged to ask questions now or at any time during the study. You can reach me, Richard Clancy at 508-586-2226 or clancyrf@comcast.net. You could also reach Professor Martinez Aleman at alemanan@bc.edu.

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in a research study, please contact the Boston College Office for Human Research Participant Protection, (617-522-4778).

Certification:

I have read and I believe that I understand this Informed Consent document. I believe that I understand the purpose of the research project and what I will be asked to do. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and they have been answered satisfactorily.

I understand that I may stop my participation in this research study at any time and that I can refuse to answer any question(s).

I agree to audio taping of the interviews _____ *initials*

I understand that the researcher will work to keep the information that I give them confidential. My name will not appear on the data collected. Instead a coded number will be used on the interviews and a pseudonym will be used if quotations of mine are published.

I have received a signed copy of this Informed Consent document for my personal reference.

I hereby give my informed and free consent to be a participant in this study.

Signatures:

Date

Consent Signature of Participant

Printed Name of Participant

Person providing information and witness to consent

Appendix F

Human Formation

- Cookie Cutter
- Priests as Faculty and Mentors
- Celibacy and Sexuality
- Community

Intellectual Formation

- Practical Preparation
- Academic Rigor
- Faculty and Boundaries
- Integration

Spiritual Formation

- Schedule
- “Religious” vs. Diocesan Spirituality
- Spiritual Directors
- Honesty and Integration

Pastoral Formation

- Screening
- Practical Preparation
- Transitions
- Loneliness

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