

25 January 2019

Your Eminences and Your Excellencies:

We are a group of Catholic women who teach in U.S. seminaries. We have been drawn together in a particular way by recent revelations concerning former Cardinal McCarrick. Our shock and grief at reports of abuse of seminarians prompted us to consider how we might offer counsel regarding seminary policies and formation practices. We offer the enclosed recommendations in the hope they will prove helpful as you determine how best to respond to the crisis occasioned by these revelations.

These recommendations are the fruit of prayer, reflection, and lengthy discussions, and draw on our combined 85 years of experience as seminary professors. We consulted with other women who teach in U.S. seminaries, and their input has shaped our final document. We believe our recommendations are informed by the “feminine genius” attributed to us by Saint John Paul II: the ability to pay attention to details that matter to individual persons. We offer these recommendations in the spirit of co-responsibility so movingly enjoined on us by the Synod of Bishops on Young People, Faith and Vocational Discernment (*Final Document*, 123).

In Part I, we recommend specific, immediate actions to ensure that all seminaries in the U.S. are currently taking appropriate action to protect seminarians from sexual abuse or harassment. In Part II, we offer observations and recommendations regarding formation for celibate chastity and formational measures to avoid clericalism. In Part III, we look at seminary culture at large and offer recommendations concerning the relationship between the bishop and the seminary and the qualities needed in a rector.

We love the Church and are grateful and proud to assist her in the formation of future priests. It is an enormous privilege to serve you, her bishops, as you select and form men for the priesthood. Please be assured of our ongoing prayers for you.

Your sisters and daughters in Christ,*

Susan Selner-Wright, PhD, St. John Vianney
Theological Seminary, Denver; previously
at Mount Saint Mary’s, Emmitsburg

Janet E. Smith, PhD, Father Michael J.
McGivney Chair of Life Ethics, Sacred
Heart Major Seminary, Detroit

Deborah Savage, PhD, St. Paul Seminary
School of Divinity, University of St.
Thomas, St. Paul

Theresa Farnan, PhD, St. Paul Seminary,
Pittsburgh; previously at Mount St. Mary’s
Seminary, Emmitsburg

Shawn McCauley Welch, PhD,
Kenrick-Glennon Seminary, St. Louis

*Seminaries are listed for identification purposes only. Nothing in this document should be read as a reflection on the situation in any particular seminary or on particular individuals.



Women at the Foot of the Cross, 18th-19th century Ivory, France

Sharing a Spirit of Discernment

Recommendations from U.S. Women Seminary Professors to the Presidents of Episcopal Conferences and the Bishops of the United States

January 23, 2019

Susan Selner-Wright, PhD, St. John Vianney Seminary,* Denver; previously at
Mount Saint Mary's, Emmitsburg

Janet E. Smith, PhD, Father Michael J. McGivney Chair of Life Ethics, Sacred Heart
Major Seminary, Detroit

Deborah Savage, PhD, St. Paul Seminary School of Divinity, University of St.
Thomas, St. Paul

Theresa Farnan, PhD, St. Paul Seminary, Pittsburgh; previously at Mount St. Mary's
Seminary, Emmitsburg

Shawn McCauley Welch, PhD, Kenrick-Glennon Seminary, St. Louis

*Seminaries are listed for identification purposes only. Nothing in this document should be read as a reflection on the situation in any particular seminary or on particular individuals.

“The Church's work of formation is a continuation in time of Christ's own work, which the evangelist Mark illustrates in these words: ‘And he went up on the mountain, and called to him those whom he desired; and they came to him. And he appointed twelve, to be with him, and to be sent out to preach and have authority to cast out demons’”

(Pastores dabo vobis, 2, citing Mark 3:13-15).

It hardly needs to be said that our beloved Church is in a state of crisis, one brought on by innumerable accounts of sexual abuse among the clergy and exacerbated by a recognizable historical pattern of episcopal cover-ups and secrecy. As women who are privileged to teach in seminaries, our deep love for the Church and concern for her irreplaceable witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ prompts us to offer our recommendations for what measures seminaries might take to help seminarians achieve chaste celibacy and avoid clericalism. Our recommendations are informed not only by our theological and philosophical training, but also by many years of exposure to seminary life and our own experience as members of the Body of Christ. We are faithful daughters of the Church and cannot sit by in silence as we witness the dramatic erosion of trust in her leaders, especially among the laity, faithful priests, and seminarians.

The sexual abuse crisis must not be dismissed as politically motivated—or as a problem that can be dealt with by a few policy changes. Indeed, it is indicative of a much deeper problem, one that involves the very heart of who we are as Catholics. No matter the specifics of our vocations, in the first instance we are all called to be holy, invited to live lives of chastity and obedience to Christ. This is the Marian dimension of the Church, without which she has no inner life. And without a thirst for holiness at the core of our own personal commitments, the Church becomes just another institution, a hollow shell, without substance or meaning.

As women who have accompanied seminarians in various phases of formation, we think we have important insights to offer on seminary culture, from specific practices in human formation to the relationship between seminary rectors and bishops. The fact that we have not been shaped by seminary formation ourselves perhaps gives us a privileged perspective. Because seminarians often confide in us, because most of us have husbands and many of us have raised sons, we certainly bring a useful perspective to the formation of men. We have had many hours of discussion culminating in this document and have received input from other women in a number of seminaries. None of what we say here should be taken as a reflection on the seminaries in which we work or have worked.

We have prepared this document in a spirit of collaboration and co-responsibility (*Final Document of the Synod of Bishops on Young People, Faith and Vocational Discernment*, 123) and with the deepest respect for your office and the challenges you face in addressing the current

crisis. Our intention here is to offer our thoughts as an act of service to you and to your mission. We hope you will consider our recommendations regarding seminary formation and culture in that light and urge you to implement these recommendations with all deliberate speed.

Since we are all based in the US, we confine our observations and recommendations to seminaries in the US and its territories, but we hope that they may be of use to those attempting to reform seminaries in other parts of the world suffering from the same problems. We must all resolutely face the fact that there have been instances where the culture of some seminaries led to toleration or even facilitation of sexual activity and the sexual abuse or harassment of seminarians. We now know that those who have attempted to expose such corruption have often been disregarded and sometimes dismissed. Such a culture not only violates chastity but also creates a dangerous climate of secrecy and sexual indulgence that is likely to lead to sexual abuse of minors by a few, and continued sexual misconduct with adults by others.

The Church cannot recover from this crisis without assuring (1) the proper screening of candidates prior to admission to the seminary; (2) rigorous formation in the habits needed to achieve the virtue of chastity and to avoid the vice of clericalism; (3) the protection of seminarians from sexual abuse or harassment and from retaliation for reporting violations of chastity; and (4) and ongoing assessment of the methods used for fostering chastity and combatting clericalism.

We recognize that since the 2005 investigation of seminaries, important and positive changes have been made in many seminaries (regrettably not all) and that some seminaries have been zealous in trying to establish effective measures for chastity education, although we believe there is room for improvement even there. At the same time, although some seminaries take measures to combat clericalism, it seems an ignored issue in others. We hope that our recommendations will foster discussions and provoke seminaries to address this issue.

In Part I, we recommend specific immediate actions. In Part II, we offer observations and recommendations regarding formation for celibate chastity and formational measures to avoid clericalism. In Part III, we look at seminary culture at large and offer recommendations concerning the relationship between the bishop and the seminary and the qualities needed in a rector.

Part I. Recommendations for immediate action. We include here a timeline that we think is appropriate to the urgency of the situation. We know it is a challenging one and realize that it may require postponing other important matters. But truly, the importance of solid seminaries and well-formed priests cannot be overstated. We ask you to prayerfully consider giving high priority to the recommendations we make here.

I.1. Immediate internal review of all seminaries. All seminaries in the US should be instructed by the bishops in authority over them to immediately conduct internal reviews to ensure that no one living or working in the seminary is currently engaged in—or has a past history of engaging in—sexual misconduct (i.e. sexual activity with women or men, use of pornography, use of inappropriate “dating” apps, patterns of inappropriate innuendo or sexual jokes). Lay people (from the seminary faculty and possibly also from outside the seminary) should be part of the review team at each seminary. This review should include not only an audit of files but also interviews with members of the seminary community including seminarians and recent graduates of the seminary. The findings of these internal reviews and any actions taken in light of these findings should be shared with the sponsoring bishops, the board of the seminary, the members of the seminary community under review, and with the appropriate committees of the USCCB and the USCCB’s National Review Board no later than three months after the instruction is given.

I. 2. Immediate implementation of reporting mechanisms. A system of regional “whistleblower telephone hotlines” should be established immediately to receive and investigate reports of sexual misconduct in seminaries. These regional hotlines should be coordinated by the USCCB’s National Review Board (which made a similar recommendation in August 2018) and the NRB should be authorized to investigate reports and to coordinate their findings with seminaries as they conduct their own internal reviews. Past and present seminarians should be instructed by their bishops and their seminary rectors to make use of these hotlines if they have anything to report. Seminaries also should develop their own internal reporting-without-retribution mechanism and require that a designated independent individual be apprised of any complaints made within the seminary and authorized to follow up on them. In this way, one individual will be aware of all complaints and responsible to ensure that proper measures are taken to deal with concerning situations.

I. 3. Constitution of regional working groups to discern best practices for formation in chaste celibacy and for avoiding clericalism. Regional working groups composed of lay persons, clergy and religious experienced in seminary work should be formed immediately to catalogue the best practices and policies currently in place and formulate recommendations for improvement in human formation for chaste celibacy and for avoiding clericalism. We would like to offer the observations and recommendations made in Part II of this document as a starting point for the working groups’ consideration. Given the urgency of the crisis, we would recommend that these regional groups make their work public by the fall of 2019 in preparation for a national conference to be held shortly thereafter.

I. 4. Organization of a national conference on formation for chaste celibacy and avoiding clericalism. A national conference should be organized and scheduled as soon as possible in 2019 to be attended by representatives from the regional working groups. Every bishop responsible for a seminary in the US or its territories should send at least one representative to this

conference. Participants will discuss the recommendations of the regional working groups, agree upon a national statement of best practices and policies, and make recommendations for implementation of these practices and policies. Participants also will agree on methods for continuing collaboration and communication while each seminary is implementing and assessing these practices. We recommend that bishops instruct the seminaries for which they are responsible to implement in 2020-2021 any of these practices and policies that are not already in place.

I. 5. External audit of all US seminaries to assess formation for chaste celibacy and avoiding clericalism. Beginning in fall 2021 and concluding no later than fall of 2023, an external audit of each seminary should be conducted by independent teams guided by a national commission to determine whether the best practices agreed upon in 2019 are in fact in place, whether they are proving effective, and what further changes may need to be made. While this is a large and daunting task, we hope that the importance of this work will make this external audit a high priority.

I. 6. Mandate longitudinal studies by seminaries. Seminaries should be directed by the bishops responsible for them to do their own longitudinal studies to test the effectiveness of formation practices. Priests should be surveyed at five year intervals to provide feedback on how effective the practices were and to make suggestions for improvement. When a priest leaves the priesthood, the seminary should formally document the specifics of the formation program in place during his years in the seminary and also investigate the status of the rest of his cohort. Seminarians who decide to leave the seminary should be carefully interviewed at that time about seminary life and seminary culture. Taken together, these measures could reveal possible patterns and allow for action to improve existing formation practices.

*For you know how, like a father with his children, we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory
(1 Thess 2:11-12).*

Part II. A. Formation for Celibate Chastity

Chaste celibacy is an essential aspect of the priest's living out his own vocation within the context of the nuptial mystery. It is the commitment of a spouse and a father who puts his masculinity and his sexuality in service of the Church rather than seeking his own selfish pleasure.

We fervently hope that thorough psychological screening will prevent men who have any tendency to pedophilia from entering seminaries. Moreover, we affirm the importance of the *Instruction Concerning the Criteria for the Discernment of Vocations with regard to Persons with Homosexual Tendencies*, which stipulates that "the Church, while profoundly respecting the persons in question, cannot admit to the seminary or to holy orders those who practice homosexuality, present deep-seated homosexual tendencies or support the so-called 'gay culture'" (#2). We also urge caution in the case of candidates who have experienced same-sex attraction in the past. Indeed, the presence of individuals already in the priesthood who have sex with males should give bishops and seminaries great pause in ordaining any man who has experienced same sex attraction lest they become prey for predator priests.

In the following recommendations, our focus is on the formation of heterosexual men in the virtue of chaste celibacy. This formation should be emphasized in every dimension of priestly formation and clear, concrete benchmarks for discernment of success in this formation should be established.

II. A. 1. The rector must be explicit with all formation faculty about what kind of sexual disclosures may remain in the internal forum of spiritual direction or confession and what should be directed toward disclosure in the external forum. This recommendation is in accord with the current *Program of Priestly Formation*, which states, "[c]are should be taken to ensure that issues of human formation that properly belong to the external forum are not limited to the spiritual direction relationship for their resolution" (PPF5, 131). The rector should specify appropriate protocols for encouraging seminarians to bring issues forward in the external forum when appropriate without violating the confidentiality of spiritual direction. For example, a spiritual director could counsel a seminarian that unless the seminarian discloses an issue appropriately in the external forum, he could not continue to be his spiritual director.

II. A. 2. The sexual abuse crisis has taught us that all members of the seminary community need to have a clear understanding of the distinction and the relationship between the internal forum and external forum. If someone observes or strongly suspects inappropriate behavior they should not relieve themselves of responsibility with the erroneous thought, "That's a matter for the internal forum so it is none of my business." Everyone except an individual's confessor and spiritual director is in the external forum and should take appropriate action on what they observe or strongly suspect. When a seminarian, or faculty or staff member reports what they have seen or heard using the established reporting-without-retribution mechanism (see I. 2. above), this is not gossip--it is a way of taking responsibility for protection of seminarians and of the community.

II. A. 3. Laity should participate as non-voting members in meetings to evaluate seminarians' progress in formation. Women should always be included in these meetings, preferably female

faculty and women from the parishes or pastoral assignments in which the seminarians have served.

II. A. 4. All priests must be comfortable living a life of chaste celibacy and be able to draw strength from it. Seminaries should encourage seminarians to establish support and accountability groups while in seminary, and encourage recently ordained priests to continue in these groups. We would recommend that they consider including lay men in these accountability groups.

II. A. 5. Specific “examinations of conscience” should be developed to promote self-awareness pertinent to celibate chastity.

II. A. 6. Seminaries must be vigilant and zealous in finding ways to help seminarians develop the habits and virtues needed to live chaste celibacy. This must be an intentional and integrating focus of the four dimensions of formation, and especially a focus of human formation, as we make clear below.

II. A. 7. Intellectual Formation: Seminarians should have a sound understanding of Christian anthropology and the proper relationship of reason to the passions. They should understand that all the virtues including chastity are essential to full human integrity. They should understand that virtue is a habit; it is a matter of doing the right thing repeatedly and eventually doing so reliably; it means taking pleasure in doing the right thing.

II. A. 7. a. Seminarians should learn that chaste celibacy is a feature of the priesthood because it enables the priest to unite himself fully with Christ. He should come to see celibacy as a positive, freely chosen way of serving the Church “in and with the Lord.” Seminarians should learn to embrace priestly celibacy “as a priceless gift from God” that enables the priest to give himself wholeheartedly and lovingly to the people of God, without reservation, “as a singular sharing in God’s fatherhood and in the fruitfulness of the Church, and as a witness to the world of the eschatological kingdom” (*Pastores Dabo Vobis* 29).

II. A. 7. b. Seminarians should read sources that provide a powerful defense of chaste celibacy, e.g., the portion of John Paul II’s *Theology of the Body* on continence. During every year of formation, they should study another treatment of chaste celibacy to solidify their understanding of its importance and value.

II. A. 7. c. The curriculum (academic as well as pastoral) should include reflections on the nature of masculinity itself, its complementary relationship to femininity, and the charisms that characterize and distinguish men and women. (Such reflection will also be important to helping a man avoid falling into clericalism.)

II. A. 8. Spiritual Formation: Men who are committed to sound spiritual practices and are truly seeking an intimate relationship with the Lord will have a much greater expectation of achieving chastity and fully enjoying its fruits. A propaedeutic spirituality year, regular opportunity for Eucharistic Adoration, and instruction in the value of saying the rosary, making retreats, devotions and pilgrimages—all of these will help form men in habits and attitudes that sustain chastity.

II. A. 9. Human Formation: The virtue of chastity cannot stand apart from a full understanding of the human person and the movement toward his final end. Indeed, all Christians, no matter their vocation, are called to live lives of chastity and purity. The priest is called to celibacy out of a recognition that he gives himself, body and soul, to Christ and his Church, just as in marriage the spouses give themselves body and soul to one another. The demand for chastity in the priestly life originates in an understanding of this unity; chaste celibacy is a radical sign of contradiction in a culture blinded by dualism and materialistic anthropologies.

Our observation is that the great challenge of seminary formation is its human dimension. Many of the men come from broken homes or distressed family situations. They have been heavily influenced by the culture. Their human formation often lags behind their desire to respond to God's call. Thus seminaries should attend to this dimension of seminary life and even appoint directors of human formation and others with expertise in this area, e.g. trained psychologists sympathetic to the priestly vocation and well-formed in Catholic anthropology.

Evidence of self-discipline, temperance, prudence, emotional maturity and the ability to form healthy friendships are essential indicators that a seminarian will be able to live chastely after ordination. In addition to these virtues, practical education on how to live chaste celibacy is vital.

II. A. 9. a. Benchmarks for formation in chaste celibacy should be formulated concretely rather than abstractly. For example, the concrete benchmark “knows that he should not be alone with females who could be romantic partners” is much more useful than the abstract benchmark “has a good sense of boundary limitations.”

II. A. 9. b. Seminarians should learn common sense practices for avoiding occasions of sin and regularly review with their confessor, spiritual director, formator and even peers how faithful they are in adopting these practices. They should certainly learn the dangers of pornography and be made aware of the "loneliness, manipulation, exploitation and violence" that lies potentially in wait in the digital environment (*Final Document of the Synod of Bishops on Young People, Faith and Vocational Discernment*, 23). Seminarians should be cautioned about the dangers of excessive use of social media and the many risks associated with the "dark side of the internet," including the fact that one mistake could impact the reputation and life of the person for a very

long time (24). Seminarians should also cultivate self-awareness so that they can identify what kinds of entertainment, reading, music, conversations, use of alcohol, etc. trigger sexual responses. They should have awareness of what moods or feelings lead them to seek out sexual stimulation, such as feelings of loneliness, fear, fatigue or inadequacy. Seemingly “outdated” practices such as not being alone with women who are of possible romantic interest, of severing relationships with old girlfriends, of meeting with women to whom they are not related only in public places, and keeping custody of the eyes should be reintroduced in seminarian formation.

II. A. 9. c. We support the language of the current *Program for Priestly Formation*, which affirms that “the seminary formation program is not the place for long term therapy or remedial work, which should be completed prior to a decision concerning admission” (PPF5, 43). Any man who is addicted to pornography or masturbation must not be admitted to seminary until those addictions are resolved and even then only if appropriate supports are in place to help him be accountable to continue his recovery. Candidates for admission who have used pornography in the past should be admitted only if there is appropriate support in place to help them be accountable to avoid falling into this again. Any seminarian who falls into use of pornography or habitual masturbation and cannot definitively break from these habits should not progress to ordination. Formators should establish benchmarks for indicating that a seminarian is sufficiently free from addiction to habits that violate chastity or purity.

II. A. 9. d. Seminarians should discuss among their peers and with their formators how to recognize that women or men are “pursuing” them. They should learn how to extricate themselves from compromising situations. They should engage in role playing to practice good responses. They should learn how to recognize the signs that a relationship is beginning to be problematic -- such as having too much joyful expectation of meeting with the person, of sharing private jokes or finding excessive delight in shared interests.

II. A. 9. e. The value of accountability must be stressed—seminarians should regularly review what practices are helping them be chaste and which situations and moods threaten chastity.

II. A. 9. f. Seminarians should be encouraged to form or maintain close, healthy friendships with men (priests, religious and lay) and with families who understand and support their priesthood (*Final Document of the Synod of Bishops on Young People, Faith and Vocational Discernment*, 164). It is vital that they develop the resources they will need after ordination for building chaste, holy friendships either within priestly community or within the larger parish community. (E.g. having “pick-up” basketball at the seminary and discussing how that could be implemented at the parish level; encouraging reading/discussion groups within the seminary and the continuation of that practice after ordination.)

II. A. 9. g. Seminarians should learn about the dangers of pastoral counseling situations where intimacy can develop that may lead to dependency and even a sense of being in love. Pastoral counsel should be done in a room with a window or an open door. Priests should not go to private homes if a woman (other than a member of his family) will be there alone.

II. A. 9. h. Seminarians should be told to expect that the same qualities that will make them excellent priests will also make them very attractive to women, some of whom may be situationally vulnerable or may not have the maturity to realize the inappropriateness of pursuing a close relationship with a committed celibate to whom they are romantically or sexually attracted. Seminarians must learn to take responsibility to enforce clear boundaries both in person and in all forms of communication (texting, Facebook, etc.) and to err on the side of caution.

II. A. 9. i. Comprehensive human formation should also include regular contact with mature women of faith who have demonstrated a love for the priesthood and womanly concern for the health, well-being, and vocation of the seminarian. We recognize that this brings with it certain risks and that care must be exercised to identify women who can be trusted with such a responsibility. But just as spiritual fatherhood is a reality, so is spiritual motherhood, and women imbued with the spirit of the Gospel could and should be tasked with a regular role in the formation of future priests.

*Whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many
(Mark 10: 44-45).*

Part II. B. Formation to Avoid Clericalism

Obedience and docility are important qualities in seminarians, yet too much emphasis on these contributes to clericalism. The ability to take prudent and bold initiative must also be fostered. A priest must not only be obedient to authority, he must become an authority—he must become a father capable of teaching, guiding, and protecting his family. The priesthood is reserved for men because only men can be fathers. Masculinity ordered properly is itself a human perfection, and seminarians need to be affirmed in their gifts as men and shown that authentic masculinity enables them to lead lives of heroic virtue for the sake of those whom they serve. True shepherds don't abuse other people sexually or otherwise; they serve and protect them.

Clericalism has contributed to the current crisis in two important ways: first, because clericalism leads clergy to believe that they “deserve” special perks that may lead them to engage in immoral

behavior; and, second, because it encourages priests and bishops to dismiss legitimate criticism of bad behavior, especially criticism made by lay people.

Clericalism has many facets. In essence, it is the sense that being a priest entitles one to a certain respect above that to be bestowed on others, especially lay people—respect not just for the office but for the person of the priest and all his decisions and actions. It is the belief that because of a priest’s ordination, education, and sacrifices, he deserves special deference, even obedience, and is not to be questioned by a lay person who may have greater expertise. It is accompanied by a sense that since priests have such an elevated status and have renounced spouse, family and career, they deserve to be compensated with nice things—nice residences, cars, vacations and dining at fine restaurants.

Laity can be at fault for nurturing clericalism, especially that of bishops. Laity can fawn over their priests and bishops and pamper them. This is often meant to show gratitude, love, and respect, but it can also serve to put clerics beyond criticism. Seminarians need to be warned about the tendency of laity to “hero-worship” clergy, so the special attention and deference they receive does not make them too proud.

Clericalism can be fostered in the seminary by encouraging seminarians to be unduly deferential to authority. Seminaries too frequently reward seminarians who never complain and who do not “rock the boat,” while those who take the initiative to question administrative decisions are too often treated as troublemakers. If they are taught to be unduly deferential to priests and superiors, it is likely that they will later, as priests or superiors, expect the same undue deference from others and may even begin to focus on their perceived entitlements instead of on the good of others and the call to service.

Finally, seminarians who are gifted in any particular area must be made consciously aware of the danger of becoming vain. The gifted homilist, the particularly humorous or delightful conversationalist, the handsome young man—all of these will be the subject of praise and attention and must be equipped in advance to recognize the perils of enjoying these.

To combat clericalism, we recommend the following:

II. B. 1. Seminarians should regularly engage in Eucharistic Adoration as an essential component of pursuing holiness. Adoration helps a person develop all sorts of virtues, but perhaps especially humility—the sense that one belongs to God and is here to serve God through serving one's fellow man. A sense of service is the antithesis to clericalism. Adoration helps a person fall fully in love with Christ and to get a true sense of being loved by Christ, of being ready to sacrifice everything for Christ, of being less dependent upon human respect for one's sense of worth. This strong relationship with Christ will help a seminarian be more courageous in appropriately

challenging the status quo in situations where misconduct is being tolerated, even if he fears this may threaten his advancement toward ordination.

II. B. 2. Seminarians should be encouraged to pray the litany of humility and should study the lives of priest saints who led humble and modest lives.

II. B. 3. Seminarians should be made conscious of the “power differential” between priests and laity and reflect on their responsibility to guard against using that differential to pressure laity to take on unsuitable tasks or even to engage in immoral behavior. Seminarians should be warned that exploiting this power differential is completely incompatible with the Christian life, especially the priestly office.

II. B. 4. Seminaries should put a balanced emphasis on developing in seminarians not only appropriate docility but also fatherly courage. The priest’s call is to be an effective spiritual father, not a docile member of the presbyterate; regular listening sessions should be held to allow seminarians to register their difficulties with practices of the seminary—for instance, with the schedule or work loads. Administrators should be receptive to such feedback and model for the seminarians how to take criticism well and how to make adjustments when adjustments should be made. Indeed, this situation offers an opportunity for seminary leadership to model what it means to be a “listening church,” as called for in the recent synod on young people (*Final Document of the Synod of Bishops on Young People, Faith and Vocational Discernment*, 8-9). Learning how to raise objections to proposals by authorities politely but firmly is necessary for a healthy collaborative atmosphere in the priesthood.

II. B. 5. Seminarians should be instructed on the importance of simplicity of life. They should learn the importance of not putting undue value on material objects and comfortable living. They should be warned about fostering friendships with the wealthy for the “perks” that come with such friendships. They should model for their flock the kind of modest lifestyle Christians should favor. They should understand that for a priest to have all the latest electronic gadgets, to go on luxurious vacations, to eat regularly at the best restaurants, and to drive new and “loaded” cars is not compatible with the life of simplicity suitable for all clergy.

II. B. 6. In dioceses where the current climate of distrust has been ameliorated, and with rigorous vetting and cautions in place, seminarians should spend time with families, perhaps joining them for regular meals, working on projects and going on local outings with them. Seminarians should get to know the dynamics of a strong Catholic family, perhaps especially those in families who care for children or other relatives with special needs, so they can appreciate the challenges and stresses of family life. Observing a strong Catholic father and discussing with him the challenges of fatherhood should help a seminarian develop his own sense of fatherhood.

II. B. 7. The presence of confident, virtuous, and spiritually mature women in seminaries is useful for discouraging clericalism among both the seminarians and the priests on staff. The presence of women in positions of authority in seminaries is also crucial in order to detect and correct “machismo” or misogynistic attitudes in seminarians, which exacerbate any tendency toward clericalism. Some seminarians arrive with unrealistic, romanticized ideals about marriage and family life or, due to life experiences, are cynical. The presence of women provides an important counter to these attitudes.

He was told, “Your mother and your brothers are standing outside and they wish to see you.” He said to them in reply, “My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and act on it”
(Luke 8:20-21).

Part III. Seminary Culture. We wish to reflect on two areas of seminary culture which need conscious and open consideration. These areas are (1) the relationship between bishops and seminaries, especially between bishops and seminary rectors; and (2) the qualities of an effective seminary rector. Our recommendations are designed to assist bishops in ensuring a healthy environment for seminarians and thereby to assure the people of God that men being ordained are unquestionably well-formed and worthy of their trust.

Part III. A. Bishops and Seminaries. We have already noted the dangers of an over-emphasis on docility and obedience among seminarians. We have similar concerns that bishops may not always give appropriate weight to the expertise of seminary staff, including seminary rectors. In order for seminaries to carry out their work effectively, and, perhaps even more important in this time of distrust, in order to maximize the faithful’s confidence in the men that bishops ordain to the priesthood, it is imperative that bishops take due cognizance of the assessments offered by seminary faculty, formators and staff. While we fully support each bishop’s role as the ultimate decision maker regarding a man’s candidacy for and ordination to the priesthood, we are also aware of situations in which there is evidence that grave and well-founded concerns of seminary staff were not adequately taken into account. (See, for example, <http://www.ncregister.com/daily-news/unholy-activity-uncovered-at-holy-apostles-seminary>.) Moreover, there is a danger that the financial relationship between a particular bishop and a seminary could unduly influence judgments about the suitability of candidates. We suggest that it would be very helpful for bishops and leaders of seminaries to think of their roles as not only hierarchical but also complementary and to maintain appropriate respect for the integrity of each role. We therefore recommend that the following measures be taken to assure that seminaries are appropriately independent of bishops who send seminarians for formation. We are convinced that these actions are urgently necessary in order to assure the people of God that past failures to protect and properly form seminarians will not be repeated.

III. A. 1. Each seminary should have a board of trustees, composed of qualified laity, religious and clergy, which has as one of its explicit charges the protection of the seminary's appropriate independence from the dioceses which send men for formation. The lay people on the board should be chosen for their understanding of and commitment to priestly formation and never primarily for their personal wealth. Where priestly formation takes place within an institution that also forms laity or candidates for the permanent diaconate, there should be a specific committee of the board which takes responsibility only for the priestly formation division and which robustly presents and protects the interests of that division within the larger institution.

III. A. 2. Bishops should explicitly instruct seminarians in formation for their dioceses to report any suspected or observed sexual impropriety by using the National Review Board's regional hotline and the mechanism established at the seminary in which they are enrolled (see I. 2. above). Any other required reporting must be in addition to that, never in lieu of that. Bishops should explain that such reporting is absolutely vital to restoring trust in both priests and bishops.

III. A. 3. Bishops should be held accountable for adhering to established norms with regard to men who have been dismissed from formation. (Current US norms: <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/vocations/priesthood/priestly-formation/norms-concerning-reapplication-for-priestly-formation.cfm>). (See III. B. 3. b. below for our recommendation to strengthen these norms.)

Part III. B. Seminary Rectors. We cannot emphasize enough the importance of the rector of the seminary. In our experience, the single greatest asset to the effectiveness of seminary formation is appointment of a rector who has BOTH the desire for this work and the characteristics required for the position. We recommend the following regarding such appointments.

III. B. 1. The bishop making the appointment (or his delegate) should first consult meaningfully with both ordained and lay people who have worked with the candidate in various capacities. The characteristics listed below could serve as a checklist to guide those consultations. We believe that in order to be an effective rector, a priest should

- a. be an experienced pastor.
- b. have an earnest desire for the specific work of forming others for the priesthood and be free of any ambition for the episcopacy which might hinder his independence in this work.
- c. have significant experience in at least one dimension of priestly formation, a well-grounded appreciation for all four dimensions of priestly formation, and no tendency to value one at the expense of another. A good rector sees human, intellectual, spiritual and pastoral formation as complementary and necessary to each other, never as competitors for seminarians' time.
- d. be free from clericalism and eager to work with other priests, religious and lay people in the formation of priests.

- e. have a profound respect for the mission of the laity and a clear and coherent ecclesiological vision that includes not only a proper regard for the hierarchy and ordained ministry, but also for the way in which the laity themselves participate in the three-fold office of Christ.
- f. be at ease around women and have a healthy regard for women's gifts and their role in the Church.
- g. be a person of independence and integrity who, when necessary, is willing and able to disagree respectfully but clearly with his own bishop or with bishops who send men to his seminary.
- h. have the virtue of prudence and the habit of "fatherliness" in abundance. He will need to know what kind of behavior is just a normal human mistake and what is a serious matter; he must know when to apply "rules" rigorously and when to be flexible.
- i. be able to win the trust of the formation staff, the faculty and the seminarians.
- j. understand himself as accountable ultimately to the members of the body of Christ, service to whom is the *raison d'être* of the priesthood.

III. B. 2. The bishop responsible for appointing the rector should personally review the candidate's full personnel file before making the appointment, assuring that his record is free of concerning complaints or accusations. He should have a frank discussion with the candidate about the candidate's vision of formation for celibate chastity and against clericalism. Where there is any doubt, the bishop must err on the side of protecting the seminary from an unfit rector.

III. B. 3. Once appointed, seminary rectors must

- a. ensure that seminarians are not exposed to any cleric, active or retired, when there is any reason to suspect that this cleric has engaged in sexual misconduct of any kind. Where there is doubt, rectors must always err in favor of protection of seminarians, no matter the rank of the suspected cleric.
- b. observe established norms with regard to men who have been dismissed from formation. (US norms: <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/vocations/priesthood/priestly-formation/norms-concerning-reapplication-for-priestly-formation.cfm>). We urge that these established norms be strengthened in light of what we have learned from recent scandals and in the spirit of the recent synod (*Final Document of the Synod of Bishops on Young People, Faith and Vocational Discernment*, 163). We recommend that rectors be required to automatically and immediately report the dismissal of any seminarian from the seminary to the Chair of the USCCB's National Review Board and to include a concise but specific reason for the dismissal. Such reasons would include, e.g., a pattern of cheating or dishonesty; one (or more) incident(s) of sexual activity with males or females after admission to seminary; addiction to alcohol, other drugs, or pornography which is characterized by ongoing use and has not shown measurable, significant recovery.

- c. refuse to admit any seminarian dismissed from another seminary for reasons which indicate unfitness for life as a pastor of souls. Where there is doubt, rectors should always err in favor of protecting the body of Christ from an unfit priest.
- d. carefully manage unused or isolated areas in seminary facilities which could become settings for inappropriate behavior.
- e. conduct exit interviews about seminary life and seminary culture with seminarians who decide to leave the seminary.

Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is a shame even to speak of the things that they do in secret; but when anything is exposed by the light it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it is said: "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light"
(Eph 5: 11-14).

It is an enormous privilege to be involved in the formation of men preparing to become priests. Like all Catholics, we cannot begin to express our gratitude to the priests and bishops who bring us Christ in the sacraments and who strive to bring the whole world to a love of Christ. It is precisely this recognition of the inestimable gift of the priesthood that has led us to offer our insights to help seminaries provide the best possible formation for chaste celibacy and humble service.

Thank you for considering our recommendations.



Virgin and Child, 13th century Ivory, France