

Becoming a Shepherd of Souls

DECREE ON PRIESTLY TRAINING

All great reforms in the Church begin with the reform of the priesthood (St. John of Avila and Vatican II's Decree on Priestly Training). By the mid-1960s, with the declining number of priests, this decree called for a renewed interest in the cultivation of vocations to the priesthood. While every priest and parish organization fosters priestly vocations, it is the family that serves as "an initial seminary" where parents hand on the faith to their children. It is the responsibility of everyone in the Church to support and encourage these men, who are praying and preparing for ordination to the priesthood.

At the heart of the Archdiocese of St. Louis, Kenrick-Glennon Seminary is a closely knit community that prepares men to be "true shepherds of souls after the model of our Lord Jesus Christ." According to the Decree, seminarians are prepared as ministers of the Word, of worship and of service. Every moment of a seminarian's spiritual, intellectual, and disciplinary training prepares him for a life of servant-leadership.

Spiritual formation trains the seminarian to live in intimate and unceasing union with God. Conformed to Christ the Priest through their ordination they come to know Jesus Christ their exemplar, in an intimate companionship. Their communion with God allows them to be an effective bridge between God and His people.

Well-formed seminarians learn "priestly obedience" and to live "a simple way of life." Freely renouncing the goods of marriage for the sake of the kingdom, seminarians learn how to embrace the Lord "with an undivided love." Mature seminarians also develop human "virtues [such as] sincerity of mind, a constant concern for justice, fidelity to one's promises, refinement in manners, modesty in speech coupled with charity."

Seminarians receive a solid grounding in philosophy and theology. The study of the Bible becomes "the soul of theology" and the teachings of St. Thomas Aquinas are given special emphasis by the council fathers.

The pastoral formation of seminarians concerns itself with developing the capacity "to listen to others and to open their hearts and minds in the spirit of charity." Seminarians "are to be carefully instructed in the art of directing souls," to help the lay faithful live and share their faith in Jesus.

Those entrusted with the awesome responsibility of training men for the priesthood are earnestly exhorted "to realize that the hope of the Church and the salvation of souls is committed to them."

Q1: Who is responsible for cultivating vocations to the priesthood?

Q2: What are some of the ways that men are trained to be good priests?

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