

# Section Two: Human Formation

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The Human Formation Programme at Oscott is based on *Pastores Dabo Vobis* 43-44, which sees human formation as the basis of all priestly formation and the *Ratio Fundamentalis* (2016).

## The Purpose of Human Formation

The focus of human formation is a lifelong commitment to personal growth. This is a process of change towards becoming the person, in the light of faith, that God created you to be.

Each one of us is invited to 'know yourself'; to have a deeper understanding of self in relation to others and his own inner life; to integrate his faith with his humanity; to let himself and the way he lives be shaped by the necessary search for truth and goodness.

"It is a journey which unfolds – as it must – within the horizon of personal self-consciousness: the more human beings know themselves and the world, the more they know themselves in their uniqueness, with the question of the meaning of things and of their very existence becoming more pressing. That is why all that is the object of our knowledge becomes a part of our life. The admonition 'Know yourself' is testimony to a basic truth to be adopted as a minimum norm by those who seek to set themselves apart from the rest of creation as "human beings", that is as those who "know themselves".

Fides et Ratio. John Paul II<sup>1</sup>

The priest is called to be a living image of Jesus Christ and so should try to "reflect in himself, as far as is possible, the human perfection which shines forth in the incarnate Son of God".<sup>2</sup>

The seminarian is encouraged to be honest with himself, flexible and open, sensitive to his own needs and the needs of others and reflective about internal resistance to change and any tendency to become defensive.

Human perfection is only achieved through grace. Human development, therefore, should not be seen as a task that has to be completed before spiritual development takes place; they go hand in hand. Human development is the enterprise of entrusting our human nature to respond to, and cooperate with, the Holy Spirit in order for it to be restored to its original beauty and dignity. "He who believes in Christ becomes a son of God. This filial adoption transforms him by giving him the ability to follow the example of Christ. It makes him capable of acting rightly and doing good. In union with his Saviour, the disciple attains the perfection of charity which is holiness. Having matured in grace, the moral life blossoms into eternal life in the

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<sup>1</sup> FER, 1.

<sup>2</sup> PDV, 43.

glory of heaven.”<sup>3</sup> This enterprise of responding and cooperating with the Holy Spirit on the journey to perfection is achieved through the practice of the virtues. The purpose of human development, therefore, is to lead a virtuous life and “the goal of a virtuous life is to become like God”.<sup>4</sup>

## The Virtues

Amongst all the virtues there are four which are pivotal for human development and which all other human virtues are derived from. For this reason, they are called the Cardinal Virtues: prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance. For the Christian, these, and all the other human virtues are practiced in the light of the three Theological Virtues: faith, hope and charity because they “adapt man’s faculties for participation in the divine nature”.<sup>5</sup> From this it can be understood that in practice it is not possible to separate human formation from spiritual formation because for the Christian, it is the Holy Spirit who perfects human formation by infusing the theological virtues “into the souls of the faithful to make them capable of acting as his children and of meriting eternal life.”<sup>6</sup>

## The Task of Human Development

Seminarians, therefore, by the nature of their calling, are required to learn to live the cardinal and theological virtues. The practice of each virtue has many consequences in the life of a seminarian; the following lists are examples but are not exhaustive.

**Prudence:** The importance of learning to keep boundaries and to judge when and where it is appropriate or not to disclose information. Learn discretion and to avoid gossip and calumny and defamation. Learn to make balanced judgements about activities and to learn good time management. To set the right goals for virtuous living. A willingness to change and grow in good self-knowledge. To be able to reflect on one’s own behaviour, not just in seminary but in pastoral settings and on holidays. To ponder on how one’s actions reflect love of God and neighbour. The necessity of educating and forming one’s conscience.

**Justice:** Developing attitudes of the right relationship with God and neighbour (charity); process of learning to act justly and to learn from mistakes. Being a person of reflection and humility. Justice and peace must begin in the seminary: e.g. thinking of others at the dinner table, remembering to turn lights off, and being aware of others’ needs.

**Fortitude:** Having the courage to say the uncomfortable. Link with faith. Constancy/habit, Faithfulness, Seen in prayer, intellect and pastoral, against peer pressure, Deepen Prayer life, Cooperation with grace, Conscious of making right decisions in place of temptations.

**Temperance:** Perhaps an unpopular word in modern society and is not just about food and drink but challenges us to reflect on our relationship with all our desires.

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<sup>3</sup> CCC, 1709.

<sup>4</sup> St. Gregory of Nyssa, *De beatitudinibus* I:PG 44, 1200D.

<sup>5</sup> CCC, 1812.

<sup>6</sup> CCC, 1813.

What is good for our bodily, spiritual and moral life? Temperance is not just about external rules but is of the heart and requires us to seek simplicity and balance.

**Faith:** Seminarians should show a yearning to know Christ not just in prayer but also in study, how they relate to others and how they offer service. There is a communitarian aspect to faith and we should help to strengthen the faith of each other. Faith and charity are so intimately linked, a person of faith is open to change – but they must discover what needs to be changed, each seminarian needs to have an encounter with Christ – it is a real relationship. Structures and opportunities can be given but ultimately it is personal,

**Hope:** Do we truly believe God's promises? How do we cope with disappointments? Hope gives orientation to 'Christian' justice and Christian fortitude, Virtue of hope is attractive, Trust that God makes the difference – not just the goal but changes the attitude here and now. Hope is entering a state of mind. It is a choice. Hope for the Christian is a certainty – very different to the world's view. Hope empowers us to live life in a particular way, faith is an intellectual virtue. Hope is a moral virtue.

**Charity:** Charity must be rooted in God and is about quality rather than quantity. We are asked to be generous, charitable, and kind to ourselves and others and we are asked to persevere in hope in acts of charity despite kickbacks.

In order that his sacred mission be as humanly credible and acceptable as possible, the seminarian is invited to mould his human personality in all these ways so that it becomes a bridge, not an obstacle, for others in their meeting with Jesus Christ.

Of special importance is the capacity to relate to others. This is truly fundamental for a person who is called to be responsible for a community and to be a 'man of communion.' This demands that the priest not be arrogant, or quarrelsome, but affable, hospitable, sincere in his words and heart, prudent and discreet, generous and ready to serve, capable of opening himself to clear and brotherly relationships and of encouraging the same in others, and quick to understand, forgive and console (cf. 1 Tm. 3:1-5; Ti. 1:7-9). People today are often trapped in situations of standardization and loneliness, especially in large urban centres, and they become ever more appreciative of the value of communion. Today this is one of the most eloquent signs and one of the most effective ways of transmitting the Gospel message.<sup>7</sup>

Consequently, seminarians for the diocesan priesthood should aim for a simple standard of life, avoiding a complaining spirit, in order to seek a spirit of detachment. They also need to see and encourage the best in others rather than highlighting their faults.

**Affective Maturity:** The growth towards affective maturity includes an education in sexuality and an appreciation of the virtue of chastity by which a man becomes "capable of respecting and fostering the 'nuptial meaning' of the body".<sup>8</sup> Consequently, human formation implies developing true, serene friendships in which the seminarian learns to bring to human relationships a strong, lively and personal

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<sup>7</sup> PDV, 43.

<sup>8</sup> PDV,44.

love for Jesus Christ. The community life of the seminary itself encourages this by fostering that essential training in freedom and self-responsibility by which we learn to master ourselves, to become more maturely open to others and to resist, fight and defeat selfishness and individualism.

## **Internal Forum and Confidentiality**

The Human Formation programme is carried out in an environment of confidence. Respecting individual privacy and confidentiality are fundamental requirements for keeping trust and respecting each other's autonomy.

The level of trust and confidentiality may vary from *public*, less bounded/controlled settings such as in the whole community, to *semi-public* group agreements in workshops and to *individual*, more defined and confidential settings such as in monthly Human Development meetings or in counselling.

The human development team will help you to explore a deep understanding of the boundaries, rights and responsibilities that facilitate a safe enough space for all of us to work in.

**St John Paul II Centre for Human Formation:** All human development meetings and workshops take place at the St John Paul II centre unless otherwise stated.

## **Human Development Meetings and Counselling**

To support each seminarian's human development, monthly meetings with one of the Human Development Directors will be arranged. The purpose of these regular meetings is to offer support to the seminarian in their "*self-formation*"<sup>9</sup>. It is an opportunity for the seminarian to talk about issues and events that are currently affecting them and to explore how this relates to their human formation. Greater self-awareness cultivates positive human qualities<sup>10</sup> and helps to overcome barriers to building positive clear and brotherly relationships.<sup>11</sup> Seminarians take responsibility for their own self-directed personal development process both during and after their time in seminary. The monthly meetings with the Human Development Director are seen as a regular support in this process and a help to develop a regular habit of seeking pastoral accompaniment and support once ordained. The seminarian can expect to experience being in a confidential, non-judgmental, authentic and empathic relationship.

Some seminarians may experience periods when personal issues are becoming more difficult to manage and then the College can offer counselling support. Counselling sessions are an opportunity for seminarians to explore more deeply issues that are affecting them, exploring how personal values, emotions and life experiences are affecting an individual's sense of self-worth. Counselling "can furnish the candidate with a deeper knowledge of his personality, and can contribute

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<sup>9</sup> PDV,69.

<sup>10</sup> PDV,43.

<sup>11</sup> PDV,43.

to overcoming, or rendering less rigid, his psychic resistances to what his formation is proposing".<sup>12</sup>

Counselling sessions are generally held weekly in an accepting, non-judgmental relationship with a trained counsellor who "openly shares the Christian vision about the human person"<sup>13</sup> and who will actively listen and strive to understand the seminarian. The aim of counselling is always to facilitate self-awareness and autonomy in order to help see life choices more clearly.

**Group Workshops:** There will be a range of group workshops during the six-year programme ranging from introduction to human development to pastoral counselling skills. These are an opportunity to encounter each other in group settings and help to develop inter-relationship awareness.

**Rule of Life:** The first priority in a formation community is an agreed way of life on a human level to which all are called to adhere. Although far from being the main purpose of seminary life, such a requirement provides the minimum basis from which we can grow and mature in our vocation. With a secure human foundation, we can grow spiritually and intellectually and be able to develop pastoral skills. Life after seminary may well not be lived in community, but the experience, self-knowledge and skills that will be learnt here will form in us the human qualities that are essential for future ministry. Of course, priestly ministry demands some rule of life to ensure that each day the priest does those things, such as prayer, which are essential.

Within this context, time spent away from the seminary community, during holidays, is just as important as time spent at Oscott, both in terms of discernment of vocation and in preparation for priesthood. The style of life adopted by anyone when away from the seminary should be congruent with the rule of life considered appropriate when at the College, and forms a significant part of the formation process. For example, during the holidays a seminarian should be seeking to pray and attend Mass daily, and consider how and with whom he spends his time.

**Weekly Routine:** The first aspect of a common way of life is a commitment to certain activities each week at which we are all expected to be present. Failure to do so results in a breakdown of goodwill and mutual trust and destroys morale. These activities include:

- i. Daily Mass (which on Wednesday can be outside the college)
- ii. Daily Morning Prayer (except on Wednesday and Thursday)
- iii. Evening Prayer on Saturday and Sunday and Monday with House Groups
- iv. Lectures and all requirements of the Intellectual Programme
- v. Holy Hour on Thursday evening
- vi. House Talk on Friday
- vii. House Groups
- viii. Lunch (unless otherwise stated) and House celebrations
- ix. Rosary after lunch on Saturday

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<sup>12</sup> Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, *Guidelines for the use of Psychology in the Admission and Formation of Candidates for Priesthood*, 9.

<sup>13</sup> Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, *Guidelines for the use of Psychology in the Admission and Formation of Candidates for Priesthood*, 6.

- x. Chant Practice
- xi. Angelus and Meditation (first and second year are obliged to be in chapel for this. Others may choose to be elsewhere)
- xii. Liturgy Planning Groups

**Attendance:** Please see the Vice Rector if you wish to be excused from, or miss, any of these above events. If permission is given to miss a lecture, seminar or other commitment in the College, as a courtesy, let the staff member involved know that you will be absent.

If you wish, for any reason, to be excused overnight, please seek permission from the Vice Rector. You should not expect to be allowed to leave the College for a holiday until the College holiday has begun; you should always return on time to the College at the end of a holiday. Permission for an early departure for a holiday or a late return from one, will only be given by the Vice Rector for exceptional reasons. You are unable to stay in College outside of term times without the Vice-Rector's permission.

Should you miss any of the weekly routine apologise promptly to your Formation Tutor or, in his absence, the Vice Rector. Should you miss an event because you are unwell, please inform both your Formation Tutor and the Vice Rector.

How a priest spends his day in the parish is largely at his discretion but should be focused on the mission of the Gospel. In this light, our consideration of whether we should seek permission to miss an aspect of life at the College is significant, as we learn not to put ourselves first nor value anything before the task our bishop has given us: to be in formation at seminary.

**Silence:** In a House of Formation we need to be “concerned about the keeping of external silence, without which there is no interior silence of soul and which is needed for thought and for the work and the repose alike of the whole community”.<sup>14</sup>

Therefore:

- i. All should observe quiet in the sacristies and in the immediate vicinity of both Chapels;
- ii. All should respect the privacy of each other's rooms and the right each person has to peace and quiet for study and prayer. No one should cause a nuisance to his neighbours by making noise. Radios and other audio equipment should not be played so loudly that they disturb others;
- iii. Each evening after 10:00 p.m. until breakfast the following day, the house should be quiet and restraint should be exercised on corridors.
- iv. On Days of Recollection and during Retreats, all should refrain from texting, the use of the internet and any distractions. Telephones should only be used in the case of emergency.

**Library:** The rules laid down by the Librarian should be observed. Please do not remove any books except under the conditions laid down. It is important for the good of all that reserved or recommended books should not be removed from the library.

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<sup>14</sup> Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, *Basic Norms for Priestly Formation*, 1985 (=BNPF), 57

**Domestic Arrangements:** Other issues concerning the good order of the house

- i. Seminarians may have a guest stay for one night, at a time, if they have received permission from the Vice Rector, who will choose the room the guest stays in. If the guest is attending a meal, please remember to sign them in.
- ii. If you wish to invite guests to Sunday Lunch, please ask the Vice Rector's permission at least five days before.
- iii. If for some reason you are not able to be in College for a meal, sandwiches can be ordered by signing in the meals book on the previous day. They can then be collected from the fridges area;
- iv. Apart from collecting sandwiches, no food, drink or utensils should be taken from the refectory or kitchen except by the Infirmary.
- v. Access to the kitchen area is reserved to the Domestic Staff and the duty Refectorian. Trolleys are to be collected and returned to the fire door outside the top refectory door.
- vi. Any requests about food in general should be made to the Vice Rector by the Refectorian.
- vii. Every respect and consideration is to be given to the Domestic and Grounds staff. Some parts of the College are reserved for their use, especially their common room areas.
- viii. No smoking is allowed within the building. The No Smoking Policy can be found in the Oscott Health and Safety Manual.

**Personal Responsibility:** All of the above will have no significance unless everyone takes responsibility for his own formation and development, whether it be ultimately as a priest or not. Oscott is not just a place of work; it is our home. It is here that we build relationships, develop friendships and extend our cultural interests. It is here that we learn to integrate the various elements of our life; the spiritual, the intellectual, the pastoral, and the cultural, - prayer, work and leisure. Experience has shown that there are some areas of personal responsibility that are essential not only for a healthy lifestyle in seminary but also for the future as diocesan priests:

- i. Everyone has a responsibility to contribute to the common good of the house through the various house jobs and common room jobs. It is also important that every seminarian contributes his own ideas and initiatives to the House Groups and any other house meetings in order to participate fully in the life of the house.
- ii. Everyone is expected to look after the room in which he lives; to keep it clean and tidy. The room is entrusted to him during his time here but it is also for the service of the Church and will be needed for priests' retreats, other events during the summer months and other seminarians after he has moved on.
- iii. Everyone is expected to look after his own health, to keep fit and to use moderation and discernment in what he eats.
- iv. Everyone is expected to show moderation in regard to alcoholic drink and be aware of the danger of addiction both for himself and others. We should always exercise due discretion especially in licensed premises near to the College.
- v. In preparation for a life-long commitment to celibacy it is essential that we encourage each other to have chaste and wholesome relationships with those around us both within and outside the seminary.
- vi. It is the responsibility of each member of the house to abide by the Guidelines on Safeguarding for the Archdiocese of Birmingham and to ensure the

protection of any children or vulnerable adults who visit the premises.  
<http://www.csas.uk.net/>

- vii. Text messaging, e-mail and other on-line social communication, allow the possibility of almost unlimited communication. It is essential, therefore, for each individual to establish prudent boundaries in order to ensure the quality of his personal relationships and his commitment to celibacy.
- viii. When a seminarian accesses the internet, he needs to be aware that he does not do so as a private person, but as a representative of the College, of the Church and therefore of Christ. Whilst the internet can and should be used as a powerful tool of Evangelisation and Catechesis, it can, with inappropriate use, lead to scandal. It is important to be aware of the addictive nature of the internet and to be prudent about the amount of time spent on line. All internet sites containing narratives or images of racism, gratuitous violence or pornography are inappropriate and need to be avoided at all times. A seminarian needs to reflect on when and where he accesses the internet so as to avoid situations when he is feeling vulnerable through tiredness or stress.
- ix. Everyone has a responsibility to maintain and uphold the good name of Oscott College and the reputable standing of seminarians and staff and all who live and work here. Appropriate discretion should be used when discussing community matters outside the College. This is particularly important when communicating on the internet. Great care should be given concerning the use of 'blogs' and membership of chat rooms and web based communities. When publishing any information on the internet about other members of the community, whether it is a photograph, video clip, or piece of written text, permission must be sought from those individuals beforehand. (Refer to Acceptable Internet Usage Policy)

**Behaviour towards others:** Oscott College strives to be a place where all staff, seminarians, employees and visitors are welcomed and made to feel comfortable and appreciated. The diversity of cultural backgrounds, life experiences and abundance of skills present within the college provide a rich canvas on which all can contribute to, as well as draw from as a source of guidance and support. As such, behaviour towards others, regardless of their status and position within the college, which is perceived to be disrespectful, offensive and contrary to Christ's teaching is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

**Deportment:** How we present ourselves to others matters. It is significant that we learn to dress appropriately for different occasions. When formal dress is required at a House event, jackets should be worn unless the Vice Rector has given permission for them to be removed at the request of the Dean. Clericals are the norm at formal events after a seminarian has been made a Candidate for Holy Orders. Before then, they are to be normally only worn with a superior's permission.

**Obedience:** Keeping the Rule of Life at College is possible because of respect and obedience. The entire seminary community – Formation Staff and seminarians – live under obedience of the Rector, who represents our bishops. In different ways, he shares this responsibility with the Formation Staff. Obedience can be difficult because it makes demands upon our will. Respect can be very difficult when we dislike a decision; however, it is much easier when we accept that decisions are being made in our best interests and those of the community. To embrace an

attitude of respect and obedience in the seminary is how we prepare to live well the promise that we shall make to our bishop when we are ordained.

## Hospitality

Oscott College recognises the virtue of hospitality as an integral part of the Gospel message, and so strives to welcome visitors and guests as Christ would receive them. At the same time, it must be attentive to its character as a seminary. It is with this in mind that we welcome visitors to Oscott College according to the following guidelines:

## Definitions

**The Policy:** This policy applies to individual, overnight guests of staff, of seminarians and of the College itself. It does not apply to day visitors.

**The Guest:** There are two categories of guest:

- i. Guests of staff or seminarians.
- ii. Guests of the College.

**The Staff Guest Master:** The member of staff nominated by the Rector with overall responsibility for matters to which this policy refers.

**The Seminarian Guest Master:** The seminarian whose nominated House Job as Guest Master involves certain responsibilities relevant to this policy, as well as other duties relating to guests which fall outside the scope of this policy.

**The Host:** The College cannot welcome guests who are not hosted. In the case of guests of staff and seminarians, the staff member or seminarian who has invited the guest to stay will be the host of that guest. In the case of guests of the College, the person inviting that guest in liaison with the Staff Guest Master will agree the host.

## Procedures

**Comportment:** All guests are expected to respect the good order of the House, and to comport themselves in a manner that is consonant with the mission of the College.

**Order of preference for guests:**

- i. Bishops and vocations directors
- ii. Family members, colleagues and friends of the resident staff
- iii. Staff from other seminaries
- iv. Family members of seminarians
- v. Guests of seminarians
- vi. Seminarians from other seminaries
- vii. Others as approved by the Vice Rector

**Responsibilities of the Host:** With regard to all guests the initial point of contact is the Vice Rector. The person inviting the guest should fill out the proforma seeking permission from the Vice Rector. If permission is given, the proforma will be handed to the Hospitality Manager, who will liaise with the Seminarian Guest Master. The responsibilities of the host are then as follows:

- i. To ensure that the guest understands how to gain access to the grounds and the building and to be available to meet and welcome them when they arrive.
- ii. To show the guest to their rooms and ensure that they have what they need.
- iii. To explain the daily schedule and all fire, security and safety procedures.
- iv. To sign the guest in for all meals required and note any dietary requirements.
- v. To host the guest during the entire period of their stay.
- vi. To explain to the guest, the areas reserved for staff or seminary use, (including the Staff and Seminary Common Room areas).
- vii. To be available at the time of departure of the guest and inform the Seminarian Guest Master that they have left.

**PLEASE NOTE THAT IT IS NOT THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE DOMESTIC OR ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF TO MEET OR ADMIT GUESTS TO THE BUILDING.**

In the case of guests of the College, (category 2), the responsibilities of the host may be shared by more than one person, including the Seminarian Guest Master. This will be established, as far as possible, at the initial meeting with the Vice Rector.

**Notification:** A list of guests staying in the College will be posted on the notice board near the Refectory. This list will detail the names of the guests, the dates of their stay, and the allocated room.

**Cooking:** 'Louis' diner' should not be used by guests for the preparation of food.

**Costs:** Guests may wish to make a donation towards their stay. Donation envelopes can be found in guest rooms and must be placed in the Guest Donation box situated by the main front entrance.

**Blackout Dates:** Seminarians are welcome to have guests any night for one night with permission of the Vice Rector. There are certain times in the year, however, when seminarians may not have guests. These include:

- i. Start of the year orientation
- ii. Christmas and summer study and examination block
- iii. Days of recollection and retreats
- iv. Pre-seminary discernment weekends
- v. Holidays

**Liturgy and Prayer:** Guests are most welcome to join the community for liturgy or to use the Main Chapel or St. Thomas's Chapel for private prayer.

**Holiday Periods:** During holiday periods the procedures remain the same for staff and college guests. The initial contact is still the Vice Rector. In his absence, the first point of contact is the Hospitality Manager, who will liaise with the domestic staff and make the necessary arrangements.

**Personal Liability:** The host should remind the guest that Oscott College cannot be held responsible for them or their property whilst they are a guest here.

## Section Three: Spiritual Formation

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The Spiritual Formation Programme at Oscott is based on *Pastores Dabo Vobis* 45-50.

### Core of formation

Spiritual formation is at the core of formation for the priesthood and is central to the future priest's identity and mission. Because it is chiefly the work of the Holy Spirit in cooperation with human freedom, the responsibility for spiritual growth and formation lies principally with the seminarian. The aim of the Spiritual Formation Programme is thus to help the seminarian learn the life-long habit of living in intimate union with Jesus Christ, constantly seeking his friendship. This involves:

- i. Learning the genuine meaning of Christian prayer and prayerful reflection upon the Word of God, as put forward in the Church's Scriptures and Tradition, so as to become a man of God and one who can help others turn to God.
- ii. Learning how to participate lovingly and actively in the sacred mysteries, above all in daily Mass, the "summit and source"<sup>15</sup> of the sacraments and the Church's life; how to cultivate the virtue and discipline of the Sacrament of Penance; how to recite the Liturgy of the Hours so as to become inserted in a living way into the Paschal Mystery.
- iii. Developing a spirit of humble and disinterested service of others, especially the poor, with a love that is both strong and tender, in imitation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, so as to become a man of charity living in obedience, celibacy and self-denial.

Spiritual formation will also pay particular attention to preparing the future priest to know, appreciate, love and live celibacy out of genuine evangelical, spiritual and pastoral motives and in accordance with its true nature and purpose.

### Various Elements

The Spiritual Formation Programme at Oscott is not the sole responsibility of the College's Spiritual Directors but is blended with the other dimensions of formation. Its specific elements include:

- i. Daily preparation for, and celebration of Mass, the centre of College life.
- ii. Regular exposition and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, with the possibility of private prayer before the Blessed Sacrament.

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<sup>15</sup> *Lumen Gentium*, (=LG),11.

- iii. The celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours. Where this celebration does not form part of the public timetable of the College, commitment to the recitation of the Divine Office in private remains a priority.
- iv. Frequent opportunities to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- v. The cultivation of daily private prayer, meditation alone and with others, self-discipline and spiritual reading, especially Scripture, *lectio divina* and the classics.
- vi. Devotion to Mary and the saints, including the recitation of the rosary.
- vii. A weekly House Talk and Spiritual Conference.
- viii. The provision of annual College retreats and occasional days of recollection, as well as retreats in connection with ministries, plus an annual pilgrimage.
- ix. Year-specific courses on spirituality and Christian living.
- x. Opportunities for more informal styles of communal prayer, such as in groups, together with the development of the ability to offer extempore prayer.
- xi. Personal self-denial and fasting in accordance with the liturgical season or need;
- xii. Appreciation of and familiarity with traditional Catholic devotions as well as new movements and ways of prayer.
- xiii. The cultivation of a virtuous, morally converted life as the Gospel requires.

### **Spiritual Direction**

In addition, each seminarian is required to select a Spiritual Director. Spiritual Direction in the Oscott context seeks to support, advise and direct the seminarian in his personal development towards the overall goal of the formation programme in its four dimensions. It helps him to discern further his priestly vocation and to become better formed for service as a diocesan priest with a clear sense of priestly identity and mission within contemporary culture. Styles of spiritual direction will vary, but:

- i. It is the responsibility of the seminarian to ensure regular meetings, that is, about once a month, with his Spiritual Director.
- ii. In Year One, the seminarian's director will be one of the College Spiritual Directors, but after Year One seminarians are free to select a director from the approved list. Seminarians should inform the Rector of their choice and of any subsequent change. Frequent change of directors is discouraged.
- iii. Spiritual direction will include preparation for the annual scrutinies that form part of the Oscott Scrutiny Programme together with the establishment of any subsequent goals.
- iv. In the annual and other scrutinies, the comment or vote of the seminarian's Spiritual Director is never sought.
- v. Whilst seminarians are free to approach any confessor outside the seminary, Oscott will normally provide the opportunity for the seminarian to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- vi. The effectiveness of spiritual direction is determined by the openness, honesty and trust with which a seminarian approaches his director.
- vii. Spiritual direction should include some attention to and supervision of the seminarian's spiritual reading.
- viii. Matters raised in spiritual direction by the seminarian will always be treated as absolutely confidential except where there is a mandatory requirement of disclosure in case of:

- notification to do harm to self or another;
  - the paramountcy principle;<sup>16</sup>
  - illegal behaviour by self or others;
- ix. The seminarian or director may suggest referral to professional counselling services on particular issues of human development.
  - x. Matters raised within the Sacrament of Reconciliation are in the internal forum and bound by the seal of confession.

### **Seminarian Responsibility**

It is the responsibility of the seminarian at the start of each level of the Formation Programme and after each scrutiny-period to discuss and work out with his Spiritual Director a personal programme of spiritual formation for the year ahead. The aim will be to develop the virtuous habits of prayer and spiritual development. The specifics of this will vary considerably according to need. Each programme will include at least the following common features:

- i. Mass each day;
- ii. Public celebration of Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer according to the timetable and recitation of the Divine Office in private at other times;
- iii. Attendance at the Holy Hour on Thursday;
- iv. Recitation of the Rosary on Saturday;
- v. For the First and Second Year, meditation is expected to take place each morning before Morning Prayer during the formal time allotted for meditation. Of course, daily meditation should be no less a priority for the rest of the house.

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<sup>16</sup> "The paramountcy principle is the principle that the welfare of the child is the paramount consideration in proceedings concerning children "Working Together under the Children Act, Appendix V:9

## Section Four: Intellectual Formation

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It should be self-evident that the purpose of intellectual formation is not merely functional; it is not simply a training programme to enable a man to operate effectively as a priest. As *Pastores dabo vobis* puts it succinctly, the purpose of intellectual formation, properly integrated with spiritual formation, is understood as bringing about, “that intelligence of heart which knows how ‘to look beyond’ and then is in a position to communicate the mystery of God to the people”.<sup>17</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, in his Letter to Seminarians (2010) emphasised this further: “The point is not simply to learn evidently useful things, but to understand and appreciate the internal structure of the faith as a whole, so that it can become a response to people’s questions, which on the surface change from one generation to another yet ultimately remain the same. For this reason, it is important to move beyond the changing questions of the moment in order to grasp the real questions, and so to understand how the answers are real answers”.

Yet intellectual formation goes beyond even about understanding how the faith relates to life. Pope Benedict XVI again:

“Be transformed by the renewal of your mind” (Romans 12,2). Two very important words: “to transform”, from the Greek *metamorphon*, and “to renew”, in Greek *anakainosis*. Transforming ourselves, letting ourselves be transformed by the Lord into the form of the image of God, transforming ourselves every day anew, through his reality into the truth of our being. And “renewal”; this is the true novelty which does not subject us to opinions, to appearances, but to the Grace of God, to his revelation. Let us permit ourselves to be formed, to be moulded, so that the image of God really appears in the human being. “By the renewal”, St Paul says, in a way I find surprising, “of your mind”. Therefore, this renewal, this transformation, begins with the renewal of thought. ... Our entire way of reasoning, reason itself must be renewed. Renewed, not according to the usual categories but to renew means truly allowing ourselves to be illuminated by the Truth that speaks to us in the Word of God... “The renewal of your mind”; every day is a task proper to the process of studying theology, of preparing for the priesthood. Studying theology well, spiritually, thinking about it deeply, meditating on Scripture every day; this way of studying theology, listening to God himself who speaks to us is the way to the renewal of thought, to the transformation of our being and of the world.<sup>18</sup>

The purpose of intellectual formation, therefore, is nothing less than complete personal transformation; in the words of St Paul, it is the “renewal of your mind”. All

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<sup>17</sup> *Pastores dabo vobis*, 51

<sup>18</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, *Lectio Divina* with the Pontifical Roman Major Seminary, Wednesday, 15th February 2012

of us involved in this work must take on a new way of thinking, “to permit ourselves to be formed” in order to renew ourselves, leading to “the transformation of our being and of the world”.<sup>19</sup>

Intellectual formation is not separate from pastoral, human and spiritual formation. On the contrary, it both draws upon those elements and feeds them in its turn. Intellectual growth is integral to priestly formation, and equips seminarians with appropriate knowledge and understanding that enables them to function effectively as priests in contemporary society.

The intellectual task calls for the development of knowledge, understanding, a capacity for critical reflection and the exercise of judgement, all of which feed into personal transformation and action in ministry. This vision requires both effective teaching and effective learning, by means of which seminarians are encouraged to engage fully with their studies and develop their own personal theological and pastoral integration. The seminary has the dual task of conveying a body of teaching, as expressed by the Church, whilst expecting a high level of integration and consequent personal transformation. A body of knowledge is absorbed by the teachers and passed on, but if it stops there, the seminarian simply re-presents what they have just been told.

Knowledge, and the capacity to reproduce it, is not enough. It needs to be put to work, so that the seminarian, by the end of the formation programme, sees and understands the world differently, and behaves differently towards it, in a wise and expert way. In other words, he needs to be transformed. To fulfil his vocation, he must not only gain the appropriate knowledge and understanding, but be able to communicate it effectively in all spheres of society.

Teaching and learning activities are designed to avoid passive listening and memorising, and to enable seminarians to develop confidence in articulating what they have learned and understood. This reflects a growing consensus in higher education towards “enquiry-based learning”, meaning that, in order to learn in a deep way, to fully understand concepts, seminarians need to be cognitively engaged, by thinking, reasoning, analysing and problem-solving. This provides a contrast to more passive forms of learning, in which seminarians ‘soak up’ or try to memorise knowledge and regurgitate it at exam time.<sup>20</sup> Intellectual formation is about much more than learning a body of information and being able to reproduce it verbally or in writing. It must endow the seminarian with a serious interest in, and commitment to, the study of the things of God, an appreciation of its lifelong value in priesthood and an enthusiasm for communicating it to others.

The six-year programme of priestly formation at Oscott carefully combines the academic rigour of the British academic system with the Holy See’s requirements of philosophical and theological study to prepare for ordination.

The first three years of the programme are validated by the University of Birmingham for a BA in Fundamental Catholic Theology. The overall programme of theological studies leads to an STB, awarded under affiliation with the Catholic University of Louvain. All seminarians completing the full six-year programme will normally follow

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<sup>19</sup> Cfr Romans 12, 1-2

<sup>20</sup> University of Birmingham, *Enquiry-Based Learning: from Theory into Practice*, 2010

the full intellectual programme, with academic support as needed. These two qualifications equip the seminarian for further study either in the civic university system or in the Pontifical system.

There is a natural progression from mainly philosophical study in years one and two, to the study of theological disciplines in later years, with an increasing focus on courses of specific relevance to priestly ministry in the final two years. All modules within the programme are designed to enable the fullest possible development of the individual seminarian, integrated with pastoral experience, human maturity and spiritual authenticity over the six years. For this reason, all modules are normally compulsory, although account may be taken of prior study or formation.

All full-time resident seminarians are expected to participate in all elements of the intellectual programme and to complete the forms of scrutiny as required, as outlined in the Academic Handbook. Discussion of academic progress will form part of the conversation with the individual's Formation Tutor, as well as with the Academic Tutor. These meetings are also the means in which the integration of intellectual formation with the other dimensions is discussed.

A variety of forms of scrutiny are used throughout the programme, in order to enable teachers to be confident of the range and level of understanding achieved, and to challenge the seminarian to articulate and express his knowledge and understanding. By the end of year six, an essay of 12000 words will be produced on a personally chosen theological subject, as part of the STB final examination.

From what has been said, it will nevertheless be clear that the main purpose of the intellectual program is not the achievement of externally-validated qualifications or the acquisition of skills, but the interior transformation of which such qualifications are only a part.

## Expectations

The following is expected from all seminarians:

- **Attendance at all classes:** If a seminarian needs to miss a class, for whatever reason, he must seek the permission of the Vice Rector. Illness, of course, is an exception to this. However, the ill seminarian must make every attempt to communicate his absence to a class-mate who can then inform the lecturer, as well as the Vice Rector and his Formation Tutor.
- **Study outside class:** All seminarians are expected to spend **between 2 and 3 hours every week** on any given subject taught that week. This might include homework, or assigned reading.
- **Obligation to do the STB:** It is expected that all seminarians will do the STB, including the essay and the final exam. Exceptions can of course be made, but the decision rests with the seminarian's Bishop and the Rector, in communication with the Dean of Studies and the seminarian concerned.
- **Appropriate use of the Academic Tutor:** Seminarians are encouraged to seek out the Academic Tutor if specific help is required relating to an essay or piece of homework. In certain cases, the Dean of Studies will make specific

recommendations that a seminarian meet the Academic Tutor for help. Please see the Academic Handbook for further information.

- **Essay drafts:** Please note that teachers and Formation Tutors are not obliged to look at drafts of essays.
  - **Essay extensions:** An extension to the submission date may, in exceptional circumstances, be given by the Dean of Studies. This will only be given in cases of severe illness or serious personal circumstances. It will only be permitted before the submission date and will not be given beyond the start of reading week. All work must be handed in by the last teaching day before reading week starts.
  - **Plagiarism:** Plagiarism is a serious offence. The norms in the Academic Guide will be followed if plagiarism is suspected. Please familiarise yourself with the norms.
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## Section Five: Pastoral Formation

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The parish is the place where most Catholics engage with the Church. This provides wonderful opportunities, tremendous variety and inevitable challenges for priests who work in parishes, in other words the significant majority of priests. This is the life of priestly ministry and pastoral service for which St Mary's College aims to prepare seminarians. Pastoral Formation at Oscott is based on the principles laid down for the Church by Saint John Paul II in his Encyclical *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (I will give you shepherds). We read in *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, "The whole formation imparted to candidates for the priesthood aims at preparing them to enter into communion with the charity of Christ the good shepherd. Hence their formation in all its different aspects must have a fundamentally pastoral character."<sup>21</sup> Seminarians are encouraged to experience a variety of practical pastoral activities and to reflect on them critically and theologically. As such pastoral formation cannot, and does not, exist in isolation from the human, intellectual and spiritual formation, it provides the locus for all four dimensions to find their practical expression.

Saint John Paul II in his Encyclical *Christifideles Laici* describes the parish as "The Church living in the midst of the homes of her sons and daughters,"<sup>22</sup> words Pope Francis repeats in his Encyclical *Evangelii Gaudium*. The parish is therefore of prime importance and PDV states that, "when it comes to choosing places and services in which candidates can obtain their pastoral experience the parish should be given particular importance."<sup>23</sup> To ensure this seminarians are grouped together into House Pastoral Groups which have one local parish as their principal focus for pastoral activity, reflection and prayer.

The aim of the various pastoral courses provided is to assist seminarians in becoming confident and competent pastors. The first year course explores the theological foundations of ministry and helps the participants to see how they can better live out their baptismal vocation. Subsequent courses build on this and help the seminarians to see how they will exercise the new ministries they will receive. In Pastoral Theology, the seminarians are encouraged to engage in theological reflection; they will grow in their understanding of how to reflect on a particular situation, to explore the various pastoral approaches available and to evaluate their outcomes critically so as to be able to improve their own pastoral practice. Without this ability pastoral formation is reduced to a mere apprenticeship, which PDV cautions us to guard against; after all, "the life unexamined is not worth living for a human being!"<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> *Pastores Dabo Vobis* 57

<sup>22</sup> *Christifideles Laici* 26

<sup>23</sup> *Pastores Dabo Vobis* 58

<sup>24</sup> Plato *Apology* 38a

Seminarians gain practical experience by engaging in a range of activities which include Social Outreach Projects, Chaplaincy in Primary, Secondary and Special Schools, Hospitals and Prisons, RCIA and Adult Catechesis. At first they go in pairs or groups of three but as their experience and confidence increase they are often sent out alone. It is impossible to give every seminarian experience of every pastoral activity but we hope these placements will give them the opportunity to learn a variety of skills which they can then use in any pastoral encounter.

In January of each year the seminarians undertake a pastoral placement in a parish in their own diocese. These are arranged by the seminarian's own Vocations Director in collaboration with his bishop. This places the pastoral placement at the heart of the seminary year and is a good time to see parishes at a busy time.

The most significant pastoral placement takes place in the first semester of the Fourth Year. This Extended Pastoral Placement (EPP) lasts for almost five months and is an in depth exposure to the realities of parish and presbytery life. It offers an opportunity to engage in a parish at a deeper level than the January placement. It is of crucial importance to the seminarian's own discernment of whether he is truly called to the priestly ministry. During the EPP, the seminarians return regularly to Oscott to reflect on their experiences.

Following ordination to the diaconate, the newly ordained will exercise their ministry in the seminary and on weekend placements in a local parish.

Seminarians are expected to demonstrate growth in confidence and in pastoral competence as they progress through the formation programme by undertaking increasing levels of challenge and responsibility. Reflecting on their experiences in the light of the Gospel and the challenge to conform their lives to the model of Christ the good shepherd, we hope that they will become a credible witness to the love of God revealed in Jesus.

At the completion of each placement the person who has been supervising the placement is asked to submit a report on the seminarian's engagement with the placement. This contributes to the yearly Pastoral Report which is a major part of the annual scrutiny process. At the end of each academic year the seminarians present, within a pastoral seminar, a written theological reflection on that year's pastoral engagement. This seminar is assessed, marked and contributes to the degree programmes at Oscott. Our long-term aim is that, as priests, they will continue to reflect theologically on pastoral experiences, a skill they began to learn at St Mary's College.