

**Formation activities and Catholic seminarians: A practical theological study of their impact on subsequent perseverance in ministry**

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## **DECLARATION**

I declare that this thesis has been composed solely by myself and that it has not been submitted, in whole or in part, in any previous application for a degree, except for this one. Except where stated otherwise by reference or acknowledgment, the work presented is entirely my own.

## ABSTRACT

This thesis looks for evidence of a relationship between participation in several formation activities by Catholic diocesan seminarians in the United States and their perseverance in ministry after ordination. A review of theologies of priesthood, especially regarding the expected lifetime commitment, as well as expectations for seminary formation of the US Bishops, is included. This work concludes that perseverance in priestly ministry is a value that has been held throughout Catholic history. While different theological explanations have been offered for it, a consistent thread is the notion that priests remaining in ministry for life is something that is good for the People of God, the Christian faithful.

Theological and pastoral rationales for the programmes being studied are also considered: pastoral year internships, Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE), Jesus Caritas (and similar fraternal support programmes), Institute for Priestly Formation (IPF), spirituality or propaedeutic year, and pastoral language preparation programmes. This study includes a review of available documentation and questionnaires completed by professionals involved with some of the formation activities.

Empirical research involved effort to contact diocesan priests ordained in 2005 remaining in active ministry in 2016, and those ordained in 2003-2005 who have left active ministry, comparing the cohorts with regards to participation in these programmes. While there was too low a response rate to make comparisons between groups, responses to Likert scale questions provide information about the varying impact of the formation activity examined on different aspects of seminary formation, which appear to be connected to perseverance in ministry and to the purpose of each formation activity.

Results lead to a discussion about the impact of these programmes on perseverance and recommendations for future action. The application of the Net Promoter Score, from the marketing arena, results in the development of a Net Impact Score for each formation activity. IPF has the most positive Net Impact Score, on almost all measures, followed by pastoral year internships and the spirituality or propaedeutic year experience. CPE has the most negative Net Impact Score on almost all questions. Theological reflection on the results suggests that programmes that are closely aligned to the broader purposes of seminary formation and to the mission of the particular seminary are likely to be the most effective in promoting persevering and fruitful ministry after ordination. The more control an individual seminary or a body linked to Catholic seminaries has of a particular programme, the more likely it is to be effective, according to what is termed the “franchise effect.”

Recommendations are made for greater use of some of these formation activities, caution in the use of others, and for ways in which any of them could be used in the most effective way possible. All of these suggestions are made in view of the ongoing work to prepare for the sixth edition of the *Program of Priestly Formation* for the US.

**Key words:** Seminary formation, Catholic seminarians, perseverance in Catholic priesthood, ministry, practical theology

## Abbreviations, Initialisms, Acronyms, Symbols

ACPE	Association for Clinical Pastoral Education
CARA	Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate
CPE	Clinical Pastoral Education
IPF	Institute of Priestly Formation
NACTS	National Association of Catholic Theological Seminaries
<i>PPF</i>	<i>Program of Priestly Formation</i>
SFC	Seminary Formation Council
USCCB	United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
§	Section number, used in ecclesiastical documents divided into sections or paragraphs.

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My final word of gratitude is for those who were my first formators in the Christian life and who taught me all about perseverance in vocational commitment, my parents. To my father, Mr. Julio Luis Hernández, who died in 2006, and to my mother, Mrs. Loló Villa Hernández, I dedicate this thesis with love and gratitude for their example of joyful faithfulness.

As I was completing this thesis, reports of sexual abuse by clergy, most in the distant past, but some more recent, hit the news, in the US and around the world. The role of Bishops and of the Holy See in the handling of reports has been a particular aspect of the ensuing scandal. It is beyond the scope of my work to offer analysis of these events. They do, however, provide a backdrop for this study and make it even more urgent to consider what can be done in seminary formation to prepare seminarians to commit to faithful and committed ministry as priests, prepared to confront an ever-changing reality.

Father Alfredo I. Hernández

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# **1 Chapter one: Orientation, problem statement, and methodology**

## **1.1 Background and problem statement**

### **1.1.1 Background**

For a faculty member and administrator of a Catholic seminary in the United States, the preparation of candidates who will serve the people for whose care they are ordained, with faithfulness and dedicated love, is a central concern. In considering a subject for research, a fundamental question was whether it was possible to get a clear indication as to the effectiveness of programmes seminarians take part in, to help them persevere in ministry. As will be seen, there has been some research done on the kinds of activities that priests have found helpful after ordination in their ministry to the People of God, but none that specifically seeks to associate individual seminary formation activities with perseverance in ministry. After an examination of the theology of the priesthood and of a variety of different programmes in which seminarians participate, either required or optional, the present study was initiated to consider whether any of the formation activities being considered have made an impact on perseverance in ministry.

One key issue studied in this research is the basis in systematic theology for an understanding of priesthood that calls for a permanent commitment after ordination, given that this vision is the backdrop for the formation of seminarians preparing for the Catholic priesthood in the United States today. Another important element in this research is the practical theological context in which this study of specific formational activities occurs. In his text on the theology of the priesthood, Osborne (1988:190) examines the history and development of the Roman Catholic understanding of holy orders across two millennia. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, a growing focus on the reality of the presence of Christ in the Eucharist and the fact that the people no longer touch the consecrated bread come together to sacralise even more the person of the priest: “Priestly hands and priestly words were, therefore, most sacred, and a priestly life must be closer to that of angels than to other men and women” (Osborne, 1988:190). This shift, which led to an ever-greater focus on the person of the priest, itself resulted from reflection on the meaning of the priest’s actions (Osborne, 1988:203), and it is of central importance in understanding the development of the priesthood and the formation process as it now exists. In considering the full breadth of the history of the theology of the presbyterate, the study begins with some of the earliest texts demanding perseverance in ministry for presbyters. This research examines the requirement for permanence in ministry with primary interest in the good of the People of God, expressed in the permanent relationship with the Christian community, a relationship that is established at ordination (Gaillardetz, 2003:40; Augustine of Hippo, 1994:412).

Part of the background to the question of Catholic seminary formation is the very meaning of formation. In a discussion of different views of the rationale for theological education of future pastors, Nel (2005:456) argues that there needs to be clear purpose and unity in the work of theological formation of pastors, beyond academic information: “There should be more than just unity in content. The new situation asks for a teleological principle of unity.” This thesis seeks to offer a partial response, from Catholic voices, to the call for theological reflection about the meaning, content, and purpose of pastoral ministry for which Nel (2005:460) calls. In the Catholic tradition, theological education is not only about academic information that needs to be known, but also about a relationship with Christ and the Church that needs to grow and mature, in order to allow the candidate for the priesthood to appropriate the information learned and to use it for the good of the People of God: “The seminary and its programmes foster the formation of future priests by attending specifically to their human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral formation—the four pillars of priestly formation.... These pillars of formation and their finality give specificity to formation in seminaries as well as a sense of the integrated wholeness of the different dimensions of formation” (USCCB 2006:28). What happens in Catholic seminaries, according to this view, is not only about academic learning nor even practical training, but about forming the whole person, trusting in the work of the Holy Spirit and in the seminarian’s own efforts, to be ordained ministers at the service of the People of God.

Having in mind the need for “integrated wholeness” of all the aspects of seminary formation, an important element of this study is to do theological reflection about and an evaluation of the programmes in which seminarians take part, some of which rely heavily on theological reflection. Pattison and Woodward (2000:301-302) express the need for a practical theological consideration of “practical theological” programmes:

Pastoral theology, pastoral care and pastoral education have paid a good deal of attention to the need for theological reflection upon practice and experience. However, they seem to have been less willing to think about critical assessment of their own worth, effects and results. The implicit assumption often seems to be that these activities, buoyed up by habit, tradition and good intentions, must in and of themselves be helpful and beneficial to those who are affected by them.

Any discussion about formational activities in seminary formation needs to take these considerations into account. The present study examines what theological reflection has taken place about the specific programmes to be studied, before seeking to examine whether they are “helpful and beneficial to those who are affected by them,” recognizing that this group would include the seminarians themselves, as well as the people they will work with, should the seminarians be ordained to the priesthood. An observation Schilderman (2014:127) makes about quantitative methods in practical theology applies in this case, as it expresses the need to go

beyond conjecture and the presumption that programmes are helpful: “unless one is content with mere speculation, then the empirical and quantitative study of religious practice has theological significance.” Even though, as will be seen, the response rate to the survey introduced in this chapter resulted in an examination that is more qualitative than quantitative, the study itself seeks to be empirical for the reasons described by Schilderman.

### **1.1.2 Problem statement**

Catholic theological seminaries in the United States and around the world invest a great deal of resources, both the financial resources of the dioceses which send seminarians to them as well as the time and effort of the seminarians and the seminary staff, into a variety of programmes (Association for Theological Schools, 2016). All of these have as their aim to help seminarians to prepare to be, as priests, shepherds who can truly represent Jesus Christ. The *Programme for Priestly Formation (PPF)*, the guiding document for the formation of Catholic priests in the United States, states that priests are called to represent Christ for the members of the Church. The document expresses the conviction that grace is given at ordination, and at the same time, is clear about the need for the priest “to develop the knowledge and skills to teach and preach well, to celebrate the sacraments both properly and prayerfully, and to respond to people’s needs as well as to take initiatives in the community that holy leadership requires” (USCCB, 2006:77, §238). The *PPF* also indicates that seminarians, before ordination as transitional deacons, are to be prepared to make a “permanent commitment” to ordained ministry (USCCB, 2006:94, §285).

Grace and personal effort are in constant tension; seminary formation needs to assist seminarians to recognize that they need both God’s help and their own effort in order to become good and faithful priests. Dorothy Day (1945), writing in a different context, indicated that total faith in God and the hard work that the journey towards holiness requires should not be put in opposition to each other. Expressed in terms of the efforts to resolve the centuries-old debate between Lutherans and Catholics about the relationship between grace and human effort, the *Joint Declaration on Justification* between the Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation (1999:§20) states: “When Catholics say that persons ‘cooperate’ in preparing for and accepting justification by consenting to God’s justifying action, they see such personal consent as itself an effect of grace, not as an action arising from innate human abilities.” The present study supposes the aid of God’s grace but focuses on the various formational activities—both required and optional—undertaken by seminarians, hoping to determine whether they assist the priest, after ordination, to be faithful to his commitment.

An essential presupposition of this study is that lifelong perseverance in ordained ministry is a desired outcome. It is somewhat surprising that in the most important document of the Second Vatican Council dealing directly with the ordained priesthood, *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, the one

specific mention of perseverance in ministry is linked to perseverance in marriage for married clergy, specifically referring to married priests of the Eastern Churches: “This holy synod ... permanently exhorts all those who have received the priesthood and marriage to persevere in their holy vocation so that they may fully and generously continue to expend themselves for the sake of the flock commended to them” (Vatican Council II, 1965b:§16). The notion of permanence and excellence in ministry is affirmed, however, by *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, §12:

Hence, this holy council, to fulfil its pastoral desires of an internal renewal of the Church, of the spread of the Gospel in every land and of a dialogue with the world of today, strongly urges all priests that they strive always for that growth in holiness by which they will become consistently better instruments in the service of the whole People of God, using for this purpose those means which the Church has approved (Vatican Council II, 1965b).

As indicated, the process of seminary training implies that the grace of the sacrament does not operate in isolation from the personal growth and skill development of the seminarian, and after ordination, the priest. The very language of striving always implies that, while they are called to be priests forever, faithfulness to that call requires great effort. The training that in Catholic discourse is usually referred to as “formation” has as its aim the integrated development of four areas of the candidate’s life and skills: human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral (USCCB 2006:29). The *Program of Priestly Formation, fifth edition* (USCCB 2006:113), which is the binding document regulating priestly formation in the United States, expresses a need for continuing or “ongoing formation” of priests after ordination and throughout their ministry. The present study, however, focuses on formational activities taking place during the seminary years and their impact on the priest’s life and ministry after ordination. In order to help seminarians to grow in the skills they need for ministry, as well as to help them make this permanent commitment, seminaries or dioceses require or recommend various programmes. These include such activities as a propaedeutic year or spirituality year, pastoral year, the Institute for Priestly Formation (IPF), pastoral language (primarily Spanish) formation programmes, Emmaus or Jesus Caritas priestly fraternity groups, and Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE). While there are varying amounts of literature about these different programmes, there is little research on their effectiveness on the actual ministry of priests who once took part in them, nor on these priests’ likely perseverance in ministry. The intention of the present study is to investigate these programmes and then determine whether participation in them affects priests’ perseverance in ministry, and to offer recommendations for future practice, based on this research.

A risk in any research on priests and formation programmes is that this kind of research can always challenge the views of those in power, as Froehle (2011:21) argues. Church leadership has not always welcomed information that might be perceived as negative. Already in the 1950s

there was great concern about such research, and even after the Vatican II texts of *Christus Dominus* 17 and *Gaudium et spes* 62 specifically opened the door to the use of the “secular sciences,” hesitance has continued (Froehle, 2011:30–31).

The catalogue of one seminary in the United States indicates that tuition, room and board was over \$35,000 per year in 2015 (St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary, 2015:38). The Association of Theological Schools, the accrediting agency for schools of theology in the United States, presents in its annual data report the average expenditure of funds per student for Roman Catholic and Protestant institutions. For 2014–2015, their estimate for Catholic graduate theological seminarians in the U.S. was just over \$58,000 (Association of Theological Schools, 2002).

Seminary formation represents a significant financial cost for Catholic dioceses. Given also the time invested by seminarians in these various programmes—time that they and their bishops could look at as being taken from their time in ordained ministry—it is reasonable to ask about these programmes’ effectiveness in promoting what is perhaps the most evident “product” of seminaries, priests who remain in active ministry. An example of this dynamic and the need to provide a justification for formation activities is reported by Schuth (1999:204; 2002:143), who found that several seminaries had sought to implement the pastoral year as a requirement but faced resistance from bishops, precisely because they wanted to have the seminarians ordained as priests more quickly.

An important caveat that should be offered at this stage is that remaining in active ministry does not guarantee that a priest will serve the people well. Writing at the time of the clerical abuse scandal that so shook the Roman Catholic Church in the United States, Power (2003:88) noted that the crisis caused by sexual abuse among Catholic priests is only one example of the dangers of an overly sacralized view of the priesthood, where remaining in ministry is seen as the only essential result. Although it is beyond the scope of this research to determine the specific effect on the quality of priests’ ministry of each of the programmes to be studied, this study offers indications as to which would be the most helpful questions to ask in this regard in further studies and which programmes would assist in promoting effective priestly ministry.

In the closing chapter of *Why priests are happy*, Rossetti (2011:195) recommends to seminary formators that they work with seminarians particularly on their spiritual formation, since his study of priests indicated that the spiritual life is central to the happiness and success of the priest, and formation for this life must begin in seminary. There is also a strong recommendation for specific work to prepare seminarians for celibate living. Rossetti (2011:196) writes about his study: “These survey results suggest that direct training in celibacy will be one critical element of a seminarian’s spiritual formation.” Finally, he also cites healthy and supportive friendships as a key factor, one that seminary formators should promote (Rossetti, 2011:196).

In his article, “Research on Catholic priests in the United States, since the Council: modelling the dialogue between theology and social science,” Froehle (2011:22–30) looked at a significant number of studies of vocations and of enrolment in seminaries, including perseverance in seminary. He mentioned no studies that specifically considered the relationship between participating in particular seminary programmes and perseverance in ministry after ordination (Froehle, 2011:22–30). Furthermore, Froehle (2011:32–37) reviews a wide assortment of research into the lives of priests, some focusing on priestly morale, pastor-parochial vicar relationships, bishop-priest relationships, celibacy, alcoholism, and sexual abuse. None of the research specifically mentions any aspect of seminary formation as having an impact on perseverance or lack of perseverance in ministry.

One of the researchers mentioned by Froehle (2011:32–37), Hoge (2002:9–10), conducted an extensive study of priests ordained between 1995 and 2000, comparing their responses and experiences with those of priests, ordained after 1992, who had resigned from active ministry. There was a combination of surveys and interviews for this study (Hoge, 2002:9–10). While this study did not address specific seminary programmes, it did ask priests active in ministry and priests who left ministry within a few years of ordination (average was four years) to evaluate how well their theological seminaries had prepared them for priestly life and ministry. Those areas where there were noticeably different rankings by the priests who had resigned from active ministry (lower in all cases) all had to do with “preparing them for the celibate life and for coping with problems of loneliness” (Hoge, 2002:15). In a subsequent study, Hoge (2006:26–27) asked priests who had been recently ordained to evaluate elements of their seminary formation. The questions in the survey, however, focused on the priests’ evaluation of the programmes and activities of the seminary, and did not ask about whether they participated in or were required to participate in any specific activities (Hoge, 2006:26–27). In the in-person interviews and focus groups conducted with a selection of the priests in this latter study, some of the discussion related specifically to the pastoral year, but in an anecdotal manner (Hoge, 2006:27–37).

The 2006 Hoge study and the 2011 Rossetti study represent the most recent serious research that asked priests to look back on their seminary experiences. Neither of them took the step taken in the present study, to determine whether the participation in specific formation activities can be associated with perseverance in ministry after ordination.

Perhaps as relevant as the dearth of evidence on how effective these programmes are at ensuring that priests remain in active long-term ministry is the question of whether there has been serious reflection on the theological and pastoral rationale for implementing them. Of the programmes being considered in the present study, Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) has been in use by Catholic seminaries since the late 1960s (Thomas, 2006:33). In his doctoral dissertation at Princeton Theological Seminary, McCarron (1981) studied the factors that led to Catholic

participation in CPE. His contention, supported by a research survey that included questionnaires sent to all U.S. Catholic seminaries that were members of the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education (ACPE) at the time of his study, was that seminaries began requiring CPE not for educational or theological reasons, but to achieve purely practical goals: “The relative absence of a theological rationale and the shallowness of the educational rationale suggest that another rationale, namely, pragmatism, was a more important motive for CPE involvement by Roman Catholic seminaries” (McCarron, 1981:159). McCarron’s work, 35 years ago, offers one example of a lacuna in research for this study to address. This thesis first considers the content of CPE and the rationale for including it and other programmes in the seminary formation process, before moving forward to the collection of data.

### **1.1.3 Research question**

The research question can be summarized briefly:

What impact do the formation activities of Catholic seminarians have on their subsequent perseverance in ministry as ordained diocesan priests in the United States, and what specific changes in the choice of formation activities could increase the likelihood of lifelong perseverance?

The following questions were initially proposed to be addressed by this thesis:

1. How does a review of the development of the theologies of Catholic priesthood inherent in seminary formation in the United States clarify the theological problem and goal, thus permitting theological deductions to support the expectation that the ordained priest should persevere in ministry for life?
2. How does an inductive examination of the background and the rationales, particularly theological reflection on the purpose of each of the formation activities to be considered, explain and support the inclusion of each in the formation of Catholic seminarians?
3. How will the process of theological conceptualization (van der Ven, 1998:128) lead to the design of a survey to test the relationship of these formation activities with perseverance in priestly ministry which is “free from logical inconsistency, independent, sufficient and necessary” (van der Ven, 1998:129)?
4. If the process of testing, through the results of the survey, offers evidence that any of the formation activities being considered is positively or negatively associated with perseverance in ministry after ordination, what practical theological reasons does theological interpretation (van der Ven, 1998:152) of the data suggest for this association?
5. Having determined the effectiveness of formation activities in promoting perseverance in ministry after ordination to the priesthood, what practical theological strategy of action

could be offered to equip bishops, seminary administrators, vocations directors, and seminarians to make prudent decisions with regard to participation in these formational activities, leading to increased perseverance in ministry?

## **1.2 Research aims and objectives**

### **1.2.1 Aims**

The twofold aim of this research is thus to determine how the formation activities under consideration affect United States diocesan priests' perseverance in ministry and to propose changes in the choice of formation activities that could enhance lifelong perseverance.

### **1.2.2 Objectives**

The objectives of this study are:

1. to determine whether a review of the development of the theologies of Catholic priesthood, which are inherent in seminary formation in the United States, clarifies the theological problem and goal, as well as permitting theological deductions that support the expectation that the ordained priest should persevere in ministry for life;
2. to determine whether an inductive examination of and theological reflection on the background and the rationales, particularly the practical theological rationales, for each of the formation activities to be considered, explains and supports the inclusion of each in the formation of Catholic seminarians;
3. to determine whether theological conceptualization can assist in designing a survey which is "free from logical inconsistency, independent, sufficient and necessary" (van der Ven, 1998:129) to test the relationship of these formation activities with perseverance in priestly ministry;
4. to determine whether the testing conducted in the survey offers evidence that any of the formation activities being considered is positively or negatively associated with perseverance in ministry after ordination (the principal aim of the study) and suggests practical theological reasons for this association;
5. to determine whether a practical theological strategy could be devised in order to equip bishops, seminary administrators, vocation directors and seminarians in such a way that it could lead to perseverance in ministry.

### **1.2.3 Central theoretical argument**

The central theoretical argument is as follows: Formation activities experienced during the seminary experience of Catholic priests in the United States have an impact on their perseverance

in ministry, and changes in the choice of formation activities can maximize the likelihood of perseverance in ministry.

### **1.3 Method of investigation**

#### **1.3.1 Description of the methodology**

Among the various currents of practical theology Heitink (1999:173) presents, the present study fits most closely in what he calls the “empirical-analytical current.” The present research project aims to provide information about the actual relationship of certain programmes in seminary formation to perseverance in ministry. While Heitink (1999:168–169, 174) expresses concern about the power of this branch of practical theology to change what he calls “praxis 1” (“the mediation of Christian faith”), the effectiveness of ordained ministers is something that is key to this mediation. While the research itself may not change “praxis 1,” it provides information that can contribute to a deeper and more effective “mediation of the Christian faith.”

Ganzevoort (2004:6) describes the point of focus of practical theology, writing: “The intersection of theological and social-scientific approaches forms the primary locus of dialogue for practical theology. Practical theology may investigate ideas and texts as well (even canonical ideas and texts), but they are studied as elements of human praxis.” The study of the theologies of priesthood and the theologies undergirding the various formation activities to be considered in this thesis is be connected ultimately to their impact on the lived experience of men preparing for priesthood and on their success as priests, important for their own fulfilment and, as we will see, important to the entire community of faith as well.

Ballard and Pritchard (1996:74) recognize the roots of what they describe as the “pastoral cycle” in the “see-judge-act” methodology of Catholic Action in the mid-twentieth century, and even more in liberation theology. They describe the pastoral cycle in four steps: “experience” — the current reality, affected by outside forces; “exploration,” — the analysis of the current reality, using various means; “reflection” — theological consideration of the reality that has been analysed: “Perceptions, beliefs and values face the challenge of being in touch with contemporary realities;” “action” — specific proposals and efforts to effect change (Ballard & Pritchard, 1996:77–78). Osmer (2008: vii, 11) presents this same cycle as four “tasks” for practical theology: “descriptive-empirical,” “interpretative,” “normative,” and “pragmatic.” While the present study follows the methodology of Van der Ven (1998), Osmer’s (2008) descriptors for the phases or tasks of practical theology (and others’ similar descriptors) should be kept in mind. Together with the effort to describe the history and the status of Catholic theologies of the priesthood, as well as the formation activities for seminarians being studied, this study proposes an interpretation of

these theologies and programmes (including their normative elements), as well as of the data from the survey conducted, and this process leads to specific recommendations for change in practice.

An important element of this research project is the need to listen to the voice of systematic theology from the outset. Ballard and Pritchard (1996:80) argue that “practical theology is done from below,” which is true in the present study, in the sense that the actual experience of priests and the seminary formation activities in which they participated is examined, but this investigation does not take place in a vacuum. The nature of Catholic theological formation is such that it is important to consider carefully the purposes of that formation, as expressed in the tradition and in magisterial documents. In a sense, the “dialogue” which Ballard and Pritchard (1996:82–83) describe as part of their model has to include, in this case, dialogue with the tradition and with the magisterium, so that “practical theology draws on the tradition” (Ballard & Pritchard, 1996:84).

A key element of this research is the choice to conduct a quantitative survey. Schilderman (2014:126) argues that quantitative research is warranted “in all cases in which we aim for representative or comparative insights.” Although he acknowledges the criticisms levelled against quantitative methods, specifically of rationalism or positivism, he argues that “unless one is content with mere speculation, then the empirical and quantitative study of religious practice has theological significance” (Schilderman, 2014:127).

Like other practical theologians, Van der Ven describes four “phases of the experience cycle: perception, experimentation, examination, and assessment” (1998:112), but these have a particular empirical focus. He applies this concept to practical theology, as he articulates the steps of the “empirical-theological cycle”: “1. development of problem and goal, 2. induction, 3. deduction, 4. testing, and 5. evaluation” (van der Ven, 1998:114). He affirms the “complementarity of qualitative and quantitative empirical methodology” (van der Ven, 1998:106). Greater detail about his methodology will be seen below, as the method for this study is outlined.

Dillen and Mager (2014:324–325) offer five guidelines for methodology. They start with the importance of reflecting on the practice being studied as a prelude to any type of study. Very important to the work being considered here is the second: “Any practical theological study has to deal with two areas of meaning: one inherent to the practice or experience being examined, and one invoked by the researcher” (Dillen & Mager, 2014:324). The third is also key, to consider the relationship between the methodology of the study and the “goals of the research and its key theological question. The methodology should also be consistent with its theological framework and perspectives” (Dillen & Mager, 2014:324). It is also important to recognize and criticize the theological presuppositions that underlie the research. Finally, the aim of practical theology is not

only to study practice but to improve it: “Practice must benefit from a practical theological research, in terms of better knowledge and/or in terms of improved practice” (Dillen & Mager, 2014:325.)

The present study will follow van der Ven’s approach, given how well his methodology applies to quantitative research (1998:106) and his openness to dialogue with systematic theology (1998:106). At the same time, van der Ven’s approach fits within the four tasks considered as standard for practical theology: “descriptive-empirical,” “interpretative,” “normative,” and “pragmatic” (Osmer, 2008:vii, 11). Osmer (2008:11) himself describes what is usually referred to as the practical theological circle or cycle as a “spiral ... [that] constantly circles back like a spiral as insights emerge.” Thus, this thesis employs what Dingemans (1996:91) describes as a “coalescence of approaches and complementarity of methods,” using quantitative and qualitative methods, while recognizing that hermeneutics are essential. Pieterse (2017) describes how empirical and hermeneutic approaches have been brought together in South Africa, and this research brings these approaches together as well.

This methodology to be followed can be developed schematically, using van der Ven’s (1998:119–156) phases of the “Empirical-Theological Cycle,” which provides the architecture for the present study, even as it draws from other sources. Some of the key issues of the methodology will be discussed in place under each phase, with further discussion of the specific aspects of the methodology presented in the subsections below:

1. The “theological problem and goal” (van der Ven, 1998:119–120) have been developed and presented in the present chapter. This discussion continues in the second chapter. Essentially, this next stage involves deeper reflection on the basic premise for the study, that perseverance in ordained ministry is a value. This requires consideration of the development of the theology of presbyteral identity and ministry, from the early Church until the present. While this study cannot be exhaustive, it is essential, not only to understand the importance of perseverance in ministry, but also to have a sense of what kind of priest the Catholic Church is asking seminaries to prepare for ordination, especially in the United States. Van der Ven (1998:46) demonstrates the importance of establishing the link between current praxis and tradition, given that “hermeneutical work is always concerned with revealing the meanings of texts produced in the past.” This hermeneutical work considers the development of the theologies of the presbyterate, with particular attention to the evolution of concepts related to life-long ministry. The first stage of the literature review described in 1.3.2 takes place in this phase. The study of texts from the tradition and from modern theologians is an important element in setting the stage for the work in the subsequent chapters. This work helps to root the study in the tradition, recognizing that because of the significant overlap of practical and systematic

theology in this project, clarity about the key concepts is essential at the beginning, so that the study is not divorced from the Catholic understanding of priesthood (Ballard & Pritchard, 1996:84).

2. In chapter three, the second stage of the literature review described in 1.3.2 takes place. The process of “theological induction,” with the steps of “theological perception,” “theological reflection,” the (further) “formulation of the theological question,” and the “empirical-theological design” (van der Ven, 1998:120–128) is conducted through the analysis of the literature with regard to the formation activities being considered. We will consider the theological, canonical and pastoral rationales for each of these programmes.

In the case of some of these programmes, where there was insufficient documentation in the literature, the researcher sent a questionnaire to professionals who developed the programme or implemented it on a particular campus. These professionals were asked for information about the process that led to establishment of the programme or its implementation on their campus, the theological rationale for the decision to establish it or use it, any historical data they could offer about its development, any information they could offer about the effects of the programme on seminarians and on their ministry as priests (if ordained), and any other information they would like to provide. As the literature review for chapter three continued, the participants in this part of the study were selected by the researcher, on the basis of an awareness of their involvement in the field; four such requests for information were sent and four responses were received (Horn, 2017; Hubbard & Robbins, 2017; Muhr, 2017; Thermos, 2017).

With regard to ethical concerns, the participants were asked about matters that are part of their professional lives and for which they are well known in the seminary formation community. The only risk would be a risk to reputation, since their responses are not anonymous. Someone reading the present study might disagree with the statements of the participants when they are quoted and form an opinion about them. At the same time, there could be some direct benefits to the participants, in that it could help them to articulate the story of the programme in which they were involved, perhaps even leading to publication on their part. The participants are all involved in seminary formation in some way, and so they would consider the potential contributions of this study to the formation of future priests an important indirect benefit. The research questionnaire was non-invasive, in terms of the personal lives of the participants, and, on its own, presented little if any risk and no cost, other than the time to fill it out, to the participants. Participation was voluntary, so there was no coercion of any sort involved. As indicated, there was only a small number of participants, based on their specific involvement in

certain seminary formation activities. There was a consent form included in the survey expressing the participant's willingness to participate under these conditions. Further information about the ethical concerns can be found in 1.3.6 *Ethical aspects*.

This stage is important precisely because the purpose of the programmes matters. A particular programme might support perseverance in the priesthood, but if its purpose and design are inconsistent with a Catholic vision of Church and ministry, then it would be inappropriate to use it. Based on a qualitative review of the literature, there is a description of each programme. This process fulfils the need for "indirect perception" (van der Ven, 1998:123). The "theological reflection" (van der Ven, 1998:123–125) offers an initial process of theological dialogue, based on the theologies of the priesthood discussed in chapter two and the specific information gleaned in chapter three. The additional work on the theological question and design of the research (van der Ven 1998:125–128), taking into account that the major work on the design of the research has already been conducted, focuses on what specific questions regarding each particular programme should be included in the study and how these questions should best be phrased.

3. Chapter four discusses the concrete design of the study, as a result of the process of "theological deduction" (van der Ven 1998:128–139), which is an important element in assuring that the questionnaire to be used takes seriously its theological purpose. K. Popper's fundamental requirements for empirical research, as presented by van der Ven (1998:129) — "free[dom] from logical inconsistency, independent, sufficient and necessary" — have been borne in mind throughout the work of chapter four. Taking into consideration van der Ven's position (1998:130) that "theories without sufficient contextual specifications are not theories but speculations," this chapter seeks to ascertain that these conditions have been met in the survey which was proposed and implemented for the more properly empirical aspect of this study.
4. The conduct of the survey will then be described. Its specific intention is to determine whether there is evidence to support the contention that these programmes help seminarians who make the permanent commitment to priesthood to be faithful to that commitment. The intention was to send out a questionnaire to diocesan priests ordained in 2005 who were still in ministry in 2016 and diocesan priests ordained in 2003–2005 who appeared to have left active ministry. The process of investigation is described more fully below, at 1.3.4: Description of the empirical investigation, with additional information in the subsequent paragraphs. Based on the work in chapter three, some questions were added to those originally proposed, and, after some testing with some volunteers, additional changes were made in the survey design, as will be seen in 4.4.1.

5. Chapter four continues with the analysis of the data obtained. The steps of “empirical-theological testing” (van der Ven, 1998:140–151) will be described, as it was carried out by means of the collection of data from the empirical survey. The analysis of the data, in particular of correlations that are uncovered by the empirical research, takes place as part of this process.

Although the nature of the data made it seem unlikely, even at the time the Research Proposal was presented, that it would be capable of thorough statistical analysis, the original intention was that statistical tools would be used to the extent possible. The aim of the study was not to prove statistical correlations, but to point out apparent connections, which would provide information for analysis, recommendations for action, and suggestions for further study. Excel spreadsheets were used to calculate percentages and prepare charts and graphs, as needed. Excel’s *Analysis ToolPak* statistical tools were available, to determine the significance of differences measured, but the number of respondents was not sufficient to employ such statistical analysis. At the same time, as will be seen, some suggestive ways of looking at the data will be presented.

6. In chapter five, the “theological evaluation” (van der Ven, 1998:152–156) is presented, consisting of the three elements of “theological interpretation,” “theological reflection,” and “theological-methodological reflection.” These steps allow for “the results of the testing (to be) related back to the original problem and goals which formed the starting point for the empirical-theological research” (van der Ven 1998:152). This process is not only essential in answering the research questions as adequately as possible, but also to inform future research (van der Ven 1998:155–156). Although the pragmatic task is not clearly perceived in van der Ven’s schema, an important element of this chapter is to offer concrete recommendations for action, taking into account van der Ven’s caution that “the theologian is continuously called upon to critically review his own interpretations, views and insights and to incorporate them permanently into the ‘dialogue of relationships’” (1998:153–154). Schilderman’s observation regarding the practical nature of quantitative empirical-theological research is relevant: “If performed well, it not only describes religious reality and corrects false assumptions. It also offers new perspectives for the development of practical theology” (Schilderman 2014:130).
7. Chapter six examines the hermeneutical interaction among the findings of this study, suggests a new practical theological theory to support praxis, and offers a conclusion to the entire thesis.

Heitink (1999:232) expresses the caution that quantitative empirical research in practical theology has limits, because it does not “penetrate to deeper levels of consciousness.” In the case of the current study, however, the primary interest is to look for quantitative connections between certain seminary programmes and perseverance in ministry, without seeking to answer all the questions about the ways in which seminarians experience these activities and priests remember these experiences. Using Heitink’s terminology (1999:235), the purpose of this study is to deal with a “difficulty that needs to be addressed, which is then translated in the question regarding what knowledge is needed.” As indicated above, the specific applicability of van der Ven’s methodology to empirical research and to dialogue with systematic theology justifies its use in the present study (van der Ven 1998:119–156).

### **1.3.2 Literature review**

The first stage of the review of the literature examines more carefully texts relevant to the Catholic theology of the priesthood, considering especially that it is of necessity a permanent commitment. Although it is impossible to do a thorough treatise on holy orders, it is important to provide a stronger foundation for an important premise of this study, that it is a basic obligation of Catholic seminaries to ensure that they are forming men who are prepared to make a lifelong commitment to ordained ministry. The study includes texts analysing the theological and pastoral developments from the first Christian centuries to the present, with an awareness of the specific developments that transformed the theology of holy orders in the early second millennium, as well as the views of recent theologians and seminary formators, giving particular attention to the Second Vatican Council and the mandates of the *Program of Priestly Formation, fifth edition*. As indicated above at 1.3.1, the category of the relationship between presbyter and the People of God is essential in expressing the need for permanence and perseverance in ministry.

The latter stage of the literature review uncovers the theological and other rationales behind the formation activities being studied. As has been indicated, an aspect of the problem being treated is that it appears, anecdotally at least, that there has been limited reflection about the reasons for seminarians to take part in these various activities. The attempt was made to find as much information as possible about the history, theological background and specific connection to formation of propaedeutic-year or spirituality-year programmes, pastoral-year internships, pastoral-language (primarily Spanish) formation programmes, Emmaus or Jesus Caritas priestly-fraternity groups, the Institute of Priestly Formation, and CPE.

### **1.3.3 Databases and sources used**

The main databases which were consulted are the ATLA Catholic Periodical and Literature Index and the ATLA Religion Database. While it was not the purpose of this research project to provide

a complete analysis of each of the programmes being considered, it was important to seek enough information to conduct a serious theological discussion about each of them or, if such data was missing, to be able to recognize that lack and account for it. Thus, questionnaires and requests for information were sent to selected individuals who were involved in the development or implementation of some of the programmes being considered, to obtain more information about them and be able to put the available documentary information in context.

### **1.3.4 Description of the empirical investigation**

#### **1.3.4.1 General description**

The empirical research, described in detail below, consisted of a survey of men ordained as diocesan priests in the United States in 2005 and still in presbyteral ministry as of 2016, as well as of priests ordained in 2003, 2004 and 2005, but who had left ministry by 2016. The study's main focus was to ask whether these priests were required to take part in or voluntarily participated in any of the programmes being examined. The original design also called for open-ended questions, allowing the priests to share how they believe these programmes may or may not have helped them prepare for ministry and whether they have had any positive or negative impact on their perseverance in ministry. To allay privacy concerns, the participants were assured that they would not be identified, nor would their seminaries, dioceses or religious communities, in the presentation of the data or in its analysis. The intention was to examine the data, to determine what correlations could be found between any of the programmes and perseverance in ministry.

As indicated under point 2, at 1.3.1 above, there was also a need to contact persons involved in the establishment or implementation of certain of the formation activities being studied, asking them for information about their programme. The decision to determine which individuals to contact was made during the research for chapter three, depending on the amount of information available about each programme in the literature review. Each person was contacted by email, asking for a written response. No more than five such requests for information were foreseen, and four were in fact made.

#### **1.3.4.2 Design**

The original intent was for this study to follow a mixed quantitative/qualitative method, with a primary focus on the quantitative data. It has been seen already that van der Ven discusses the "complementarity of qualitative and quantitative empirical methodology" (van der Ven, 1998:106). To describe this study as following a mixed method is to say that the survey instrument to be used sought both data that could be analysed in a quantitative way, with the initial hope to subject it to statistical analysis, and also answers to open-ended questions that would assist in

theological reflection on the quantitative data. The basic design of the study could be described as a two-group design, in the sense that there would be a consideration of the relationship with perseverance in ministry among several possible interventions that seminaries may have implemented or seminarians may be taking part in, comparing those diocesan priests still in ministry of those ordained in 2005, and those who were ordained in 2003–2005 and are no longer in active ministry. It is not a pure example of this design, in that there is no random selection of participants, and the comparison is focusing on whether there are inputs that associate with belonging to one group or the other (Trochim, 2006). Only diocesan priests were studied, because while both diocesan priests and religious order priests are subject to the *PPF*, there are also significant differences between the formation of their candidates for ordination and their experience of priesthood (USCCB 2006:13–14). The purpose of including three classes of those who appear to have left active ministry was an attempt to get a larger sample, in order to make the comparison more likely to give useful results. Although an insufficient number of priests who have ceased ministry responded to allow for a statistically significant comparison between groups, this method was followed.

The request for information from certain seminary formation professionals, as part of the research into the seminary formation activities, had a very simple design. It was a qualitative study, asking for information from the participants about matters on which they can be considered experts.

#### **1.3.4.3** Method for obtaining results

The method for obtaining information was originally proposed as a survey of diocesan Catholic priests ordained in 2005, whose names were obtained from the 2006 edition of *The Official Catholic Directory* (P.J. Kenedy & Sons, 2006:1671–1995), and who are still listed as being in ministry in the 2016 edition of the same source (P.J. Kenedy & Sons, 2016:1739–2026), as well as of those priests listed in the 2006 edition who were ordained between 2003 and 2005, who are not listed as being in active ministry in the 2016 *Official Catholic Directory*. Their current contact information was obtained from the 2016 edition of this same source (P.J. Kenedy & Sons, 2016). For those in the 2006 *Directory* who do not appear in the 2016 *Directory*, intervening editions were searched to see if they appear as deceased in any year. If not, they were considered likely to have resigned from ministry, and surveys were mailed, care of their diocesan offices. Similar surveys were mailed to those ordained in 2003, 2004 and 2005, but who are listed as being “on leave,” or some similar notation, as this typically indicates that a priest is out of ministry and has not yet formally resigned from active ministry. Participants completed the surveys in their own time, at the location of their choice.

In the questionnaire, the priests were asked to indicate what seminary they attended, how many were in their ordination class, their ministerial status (in active ministry, retired, on leave or

resigned), which of the programmes being considered in this study they took part in, and whether this participation was required by the seminary, diocese, or whether it was elective. They were also asked narrative questions, to give overall impressions as to how the programmes they did take part in have affected their ministry positively or negatively and how they have positively or negatively had an impact on their commitment to their priestly ministry. Further development of the survey and of the means of getting it to respondents is presented in chapter four.

While the participants were assured of their anonymity and that of their dioceses and seminaries, they were told that the research results would contribute to the completion of the present doctoral dissertation and would eventually be made available to seminary rectors across the US, as well as to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Office for Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations, so that their responses could contribute to the good of the Church in the US. An online service, Survey Monkey, was used in order to simplify data entry and ensure greater accuracy.

The request for information as a part of the research in chapter three was conducted by an email to the participants, including a consent form, accompanied by the questions to be answered. The participants were asked for information about the process that led to establishment of the programme or its implementation on their campus, the theological rationale for the decision to establish it or use it, any historical data they could offer about its development, any information they could offer about the effects of the programme on seminarians and on their ministry as priests (if ordained), and any other information they would like to provide. All the respondents emailed their responses.

### **1.3.5 Participants**

Participants were priests ordained for service in the United States in 2005 who appeared to remain in active ministry in 2016, who received and responded to a questionnaire, as well as those ordained in 2003, 2004 and 2005 who appeared to be out of ministry in 2016 and received and responded to a questionnaire. The attempt was made to contact all these priests who are still living. Although no sampling occurred, the response rate is relevant for determining the weight the research will have. According to CARA (2016b), there were 431 priests ordained in 2005 (the majority being diocesan priests), so the potential pool was large enough to offer hope for a significant number of responses. At the same time, while only one year's ordination class (for those in ministry) and three years' classes (for those out of ministry) were studied and different factors could be at play year to year, there are no obvious factors that would lead one to think that a programme that seems to have been helpful or not so helpful in one year would receive a significantly different response, nationwide, in a different year. In chapter four, there is discussion about the response rate and its effect on the study.

For the questionnaire sent out to a selected number of professionals, the participants were individuals with specialized knowledge and experience, based on the specific seminary formation programmes being studied.

### **1.3.6 Ethical aspects**

Although the research methodology will be discussed in more detail in chapter four, it is important to consider the ethical aspects of the research at this juncture. The research questionnaire was non-invasive and, on its own, presented little if any risk and no cost, other than the time to fill it out, to the participants. In fact, there could be some benefit to the participants, in that the study could provide information that will help seminaries strengthen their programme of formation for the Catholic priesthood, which would be helpful, indirectly to the wider Church, including those already in ministry and those who have left ministry. Participation was voluntary, so there was no coercion of any sort involved. Since all in the groups being surveyed were invited to participate, no group was left out. As has been indicated, there was a consent form included in the survey expressing the participant's willingness to participate under these conditions.

In order to protect anonymity, all the files with identifying information were kept in password-protected files. Further, no data with identifying information has been shared with anyone nor will it be. All the questionnaires will be destroyed at the conclusion of the research, after the approval of the dissertation.

The participants in the special questionnaire for selected seminary formation professionals were asked about matters that are part of their public professional lives and for which they are well known in the seminary formation community. The only risk would be a risk to reputation, since their responses were not anonymous. Someone reading the present study might disagree with the statements of the participants when they are quoted and form an opinion about them. At the same time, there could be some direct benefits to the participants, in that they were offered the opportunity to articulate the story of the programme in which they were involved, perhaps even leading to publication on their part. The participants are all be involved in seminary formation in some way, and so they would consider the potential contributions of this study to the formation of future priests an important indirect benefit. The research questionnaire was non-invasive, in terms of the personal lives of the participants, and, on its own, presented little if any risk and no cost, other than the time to fill it out, to the participants. Participation was voluntary, so there was no coercion of any sort involved. There were only four participants, selected for their specific involvement in certain seminary formation activities. There was a consent form included in the survey expressing the participant's willingness to participate under these conditions.

**1.3.6.1** The maximum level of estimated risk for the adult human participants in both aspects of the study was determined to be medium risk. With regard to the primary study, the principal reason for this assessment is that any discussion of seminary formation can be considered to be sensitive, even if the questionnaire is confidential (North-West University, 2016:33). With regard to the questionnaire to select seminary formation professionals, the sensitivity of the topic as well as the personal investment of the participants in the data they will be sharing would lead to this same assessment (North-West University, 2016:33).

**1.3.6.2** Participants in the principal research study were asked to complete a survey, online or on paper. Two small groups, one of priests and another a practical theology class, were asked to complete a sample, to get a sense of how long it would take on average and to make recommendations for improvements. With their improvements, completing the basic questionnaire did not take a significant amount of time. Completing the narrative questions could take some more time, depending on the extent to which the respondent wished to do so.

The questionnaire for the small group of seminary professionals took significantly more time, depending on the desire and ability of the participant to respond to it. At the same time, the investment of time could be of help to these same professionals in their future work.

**1.3.6.3** The experience for the participants in the empirical study was non-intrusive and minimally impacting. For some participants, recalling seminary experiences might have offered them the opportunity to affirm the positive impact of some of these. For others, there might have been some negative memories brought to light. The experience for the professionals being asked to contribute took some of their time and could have brought back both positive and negative memories. It would be hoped that it afforded them the opportunity for some theological reflection on their own work.

**1.3.6.4** There were no physical, social, legal, economic, or community risks for the participants or researchers in the principal research study. The only possible foreseeable psychological or dignitary risks for the participants, as mentioned above, was that any negative memories could have been recalled by the survey, or that the results of the study could create any negative impressions about any seminary programmes the participants might have taken part in. These risks seemed minimal, and the language of

the consent form expressed the participant's willingness to complete it, with no compulsion whatsoever.

Similarly, in the case of the seminary professionals, the only psychological or dignitary risks that seemed likely would have to do with any negative memories or with the possible reaction of others to the publication of their thoughts on the subject at hand. These risks also seemed minimal, and were mentioned in the consent form, to alert them that their comments would not be anonymous. Again, the consent form made clear that there was no compulsion to take part.

**1.3.6.5** The potential direct benefit to participants in the main study was that completing the survey might help them to reflect on seminary experiences in a healthy way. The indirect benefit for them was that the information gathered could be of help to the Church and to those involved in seminary formation, in choosing programmes that will help seminarians and their formators to discern well before ordination, and to help prepare them for a lifelong commitment to the priesthood.

Participating in the questionnaire being sent to seminary professionals could help them to articulate the story of the programme in which they were involved, perhaps even leading to publication on their part. The participants were all involved in seminary formation in some way, and so they would consider the potential contributions of this study to the formation of future priests an important indirect benefit.

**1.3.6.6** The benefits clearly outweighed the risks in both empirical aspects of this study.

**1.3.6.7** The empirical study required a basic ability to handle the mechanical aspects of survey preparation and data input, as well as a basic statistical understanding. The questionnaire to professionals required the ability to handle the mechanical aspects as well as to understand and integrate the responses into the broader research project.

**1.3.6.8** The survey preparation and analysis took place on the campus of St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary in Boynton Beach, Florida, USA. It is a graduate school of theology, with the ability to maintain computer security and the safe maintenance of all survey information.

**1.3.6.9** There was no need to obtain any legal authorization.

**1.3.6.10** It was helpful to have conversations with seminary rectors about this project, though no permission was needed. There was informal consultation with the Seminary Formation Council, a new group dedicated to preparing a programme for the preparation of

seminary formation faculty, as well as with leaders of NACTS, the National Association of Catholic Theological Seminaries.

**1.3.6.11** The decision to choose the class of diocesan priests ordained in 2005 as the group of priests in active ministry to be studied and to look at three classes of priests who have left active ministry was based on a desire to look at the impact of seminary formation with some amount of time having passed. If any priest was missed because of errors in the information in the *Catholic Directory* or even because of a clerical error on the part of the researcher, it was most likely to be random, and there is no reason to believe that it could have affected the results of the study.

The choice of professionals to interview was based on the specific areas where there were lacunae in the literature about seminary formation, as well as on the background of these individuals.

**1.3.6.12** The questionnaires to seminary professionals went out in the early months of 2017. The main survey was sent to the respondents, initially by postal mail and then by email and other electronic means, in July 2017. It was appropriate to give two months for the surveys to come in before closing the door on new data, to allow time for those that would need to be forwarded to inactive priests. The recruitment invitation took the form of a letter accompanying the survey, asking their participation.

**1.3.6.13** There were informed consent forms for both surveys, sent together with the invitation to participate and the questionnaire, indicating the participant's freedom to take part or not in the survey and to answer the questions he desired to answer. The potential risks and the possible benefits for seminary formation were explained. The informed consent forms were sent by postal mail or email and collected in the researcher's locked office or password-protected computer.

**1.3.6.14** There was no remuneration, as the time needed to complete the survey was minimal, with little inconvenience and no actual costs.

**1.3.6.15** The participants were informed that, after the approval of the thesis, the research results will be made available to seminary rectors across the US, as well as to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Office for Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations, so that their responses can contribute to the good of the Church in the US. They were given an opportunity to provide an email address, if they would like to receive a summary of the results at the completion of the doctoral research. Furthermore, the seminary

professionals were offered the opportunity to receive the completed dissertation, once it is completed and approved by GST/NWU.

**1.3.6.16** Secure computers and a secure computer network were used at all times, with regard to the data received electronically. All hard copies of questionnaires will be kept in a secure cabinet and office, until the research is completed, to ensure privacy. No information has been reported in a way that individual priests responding to the principal survey could be identified, or their seminaries, dioceses or religious communities.

**1.3.6.17** As indicated in the previous section, all data will be in a secure computer network or in a locked cabinet in a locked office. Only the principal researcher has had access to the identifiable data. Following the conclusion of the project and the approval of the thesis, the hard copies of the surveys of priests will be shredded and the electronic data will be deleted from all drives.

**1.3.6.18** The researcher will be responsible to make sure that the procedures agreed to will be followed. He consulted with the promoter and co-promoter before altering the procedures at any point after the approval of the Research Proposal. Ensuring the ethical conduct of the research was the researcher's responsibility. There were no adverse events during the research.

**1.3.6.19** There was no need to mislead participants in any way.

**1.3.6.20** No previously collected data was used.

**1.3.6.21** No privileged data was used.

**1.3.6.22** As indicated, the number of respondents was such that there was not the opportunity or the need to conduct statistical tests.

**1.3.6.23** There were no vulnerable participants.

**1.3.6.24** There was no need for psychometric interpretation of the results.

### **1.3.7 Outcomes**

The original plan was to compare priests who have remained in active ministry and those who have resigned from ministry, based on their participation in the different programmes. The hoped-for outcome was to determine if there are any of the programmes being studied which are associated more or less with perseverance in ministry. Although this comparison was not able to be made as planned, the information gathered from the survey results offered the opportunity for

fruitful consideration of the effectiveness of the formation activities being studied. Dillen and Mager (2014:323) present a form of reasoning which was relevant to this project, “abductive” reasoning, which seeks to avoid simple description of the facts (inductive reasoning) or prescriptions for making things better (deductive reasoning), to focus on “what could be.” In looking for different possible ways of interpreting the facts, this approach to reasoning is marked by “multiple relations (multicorrelation) and the self-awareness/self-critique of too simplistic question-answer schedules and of contextual factors that influence the interpretation” (Dillen & Mager 2014:323). Given the specific nature of the study at hand, this approach assisted in drawing conclusions that offer assistance to those involved in seminary formation, as they continue the work of theologizing about practices, as well as developing practices that are more effective in promoting what their theology proposes. The humility of the abductive approach is well-suited for this research. The responses to the narrative questions were particularly helpful in providing context and offering qualitative information, which contributes to the power of the study.

One caveat that must be recognized from the beginning of the study is that there are many factors at play in the programmes of each of the priests and each of seminaries, dioceses and religious communities to be represented in this research project. This particular issue calls for caution in making generalizations.

#### **1.4 Structure of the thesis**

Thus, the aim of this research has been to determine whether any of the formation activities being considered have an impact in making perseverance in ministry for ordained diocesan priests in the United States either more or less likely. This work is presented in the following chapters:

##### **1.4.1 Chapter one: Introduction**

The present chapter introduces the questions being considered, theological and pastoral reasons why perseverance in ministry is a concern, a very basic description of the seminary programmes to be considered, a review of relevant research showing that this specific question has not been asked or answered, and a description of the process for gathering and examining data.

##### **1.4.2 Chapter two: Development of theology, clarification of the theological question: why does perseverance in priestly ministry matter?**

Chapter two studies the theology of priesthood, with a particular focus on the understanding of the concepts of permanence and sacramental character, as these have developed from post-apostolic times, including patristic sources, through the Middle Ages and Trent, and concluding with Vatican II and the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. The intention was to present support for the premise of the study, that perseverance in ministry is a *sine qua non* in evaluating

the success of seminary formation, while providing a rationale for this expectation that is relevant today.

#### **1.4.3 Chapter three: Formation activities: inductive examination**

The third chapter presents a more detailed consideration of the theological and/or pastoral rationale for each of the formation activities for seminarians being considered in the study.

#### **1.4.4 Chapter four: The empirical study: theological conceptualization, data, and analysis**

Chapter four presents the study which was conducted, together with the data obtained and an analysis of the data. This chapter provides answers to the question about the relationship between participation in each of the programmes to be studied and perseverance in ministry, not with the statistical correlations which had been hoped for, but in terms of the impact of the different activities on their participants, as they remember and experience that impact years later.

#### **1.4.5 Chapter five: Practical theological interpretation of the study results**

Chapter five consists of the theological evaluation, resulting in the development of concrete suggestions to assist bishops, seminary administrators, vocations directors, and seminarians to make prudent decisions with regard to participation in these formational activities. This chapter also offers recommendations for further research.

#### **1.4.6 Chapter six: Conclusion: Hermeneutical interaction between theory and praxis and practical theological perspectives on strategies of action for the future**

The final chapter examines the hermeneutical interaction among the findings of this study and suggests a new practical theological theory to support praxis and, lastly, offers a conclusion to the entire thesis.

## **2 Chapter two: Development of theology, clarification of the theological question: Why does perseverance in priestly ministry matter?**

### **2.1 Overview of the chapter**

The question to be considered in this chapter is: How does a review of the development of the theologies of Catholic priesthood inherent in seminary formation in the United States clarify the theological problem and goal and thus permit theological deductions that support the expectation that the ordained priest should persevere in ministry for life? As indicated in chapter one, the review of traditional and modern theological sources is essential in preparing the way for the work that will follow. This chapter roots this project in the tradition, while acknowledging the extensive links between practical and systematic theology in this research. The intention is to clarify concepts and ensure that the study will be linked to the Catholic understanding of priesthood (Ballard & Pritchard, 1996:84).

The work of this chapter will root the basic premise for the entire study in the history of the theology and practice of priesthood in the Catholic Church. One of the reasons for using the methodology of van der Ven (1998:114) is his openness to dialogue with systematic theology, a key part of the work of this chapter. Thus, the hermeneutical work on the tradition will look at many texts from the tradition related to the presbyterate, read through a Catholic lens, focusing particularly on their impact on the expectation and meaning of permanence in ministry. It would be possible to look only at recent texts that describe the Catholic Church's teaching and discipline about perseverance in ministry, such as the *Program of Priestly Formation, fifth edition* (USCCB, 2006:8–10) and the *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis* (Congregation for the Clergy, 2016:21, 34). The historical perspective on the development of theology, however, makes it possible for the discussion about perseverance in lifelong ministry to take place in an integral manner, recognizing its organic connection to the meaning of Catholic priesthood.

The conditions van der Ven (1998:122–125) finds necessary for theological reflection will be fulfilled in the review of the literature regarding the different formation programmes to be examined in this study (chapter three), as well as in the overview of the theology of priesthood and of perseverance in ministry in the present chapter. Although this reflection leads to further development of the “theological question,” its initial expression appears in the title of the thesis: “The impact of Catholic seminarians’ formation activities on perseverance in ministry: A practical theological study.”

Why does it matter whether an ordained presbyter remains in ministry? The present study makes no sense if it cannot be established that it is crucial that the man who has been ordained a Catholic

priest remains one forever. This chapter continues to develop the “theological problem and goal” (van der Ven 1998:119–120), introduced in chapter one. A principal object of this chapter is to demonstrate that Catholic theology and practice demand that all those charged with seminary formation value and promote perseverance in ordained ministry. This chapter will investigate the development of the theological understanding of presbyteral identity and ministry over the past 2,000 years.

This study will begin with the early Church, using selected texts from Scripture and the Apostolic Age, and then from the Fathers of the Church. After consideration of issues that arose at the close of the medieval era and in Scholasticism, this chapter will examine the theological and canonical issues related to priesthood that confronted the Catholic Church at the time of the Protestant Reformation. Succeeding sections will consider the development of the theology of priesthood at Trent and thereafter, at Vatican Council I and in the papacies of the twentieth century, leading up to Vatican Council II. Developments since Vatican II will focus on theological discourse, the ordination ritual, and the aforementioned documents of the United States episcopal conference and the Holy See.

The intent of chapter two, then, will be to present a diachronic review of the Catholic understanding of priesthood. Topics that touch on the meaning of permanence in ministry will be at the centre of the discussion. In this diverse tradition, common threads exist that can make the call to persevere in ordained ministry understandable and meaningful in the twenty-first century. Although it is not always interpreted in this favourable light, the fundamental reason for the Church’s insistence on permanence in ministry appears clearly across two millennia of tradition: the good of the People of God. The priest’s call to be faithful to his ministry, above all for the good of the people he is called to serve, will be a theme running through this chapter and the remainder of the thesis.

## **2.2 Apostolic and post-apostolic age**

### **2.2.1 Presbyterate in the Bible**

The Greek word *πρεσβύτερος* (*presbyteros*), usually translated as elder or old man or simply presbyter, appears 74 times, in various forms, in the New Testament. Of those uses, 19 appear to relate to those who played the role of leaders in the nascent community, and a further 12 uses, from Revelation, relate to the elders in heaven (Darton, 1976:402, 777). The question as to the meaning of this word and how it should be understood today is a controversial one. It is important to avoid both an anachronistic identification of the New Testament presbyter with the priest of the twenty-first-century Catholic Church and the denial of any connection between New

Testament ministry and the ministry of the Church today. The intent here is not to prove the accuracy of any particular view of the presbyterate, but to seek to understand the development of the prevailing view in the Catholic Church today, recognizing that there are other points of view within the Catholic Church and certainly in other Christian churches and communities.

Osborne (1988:47) points out that the original Jewish understanding of the presbyter as elder would have not have been understood as related to priestly work. Rensberger (2000:1091) indicates that the office of presbyter was established in the early Christian communities, drawing “from Jewish precedents and from the bodies of elders known in Greek and Egyptian societies.”

The early leaders of the Christian communities were given the title of presbyter, and not priest, with clear intentions. There is no mention of presbyters as playing a priestly role in the New Testament. It is difficult to distinguish, in the New Testament, between the roles played by presbyters and *ἐπίσκοποι* (*episkopoi* – usually translated as bishop, but Osborne chooses to leave this word untranslated to avoid anachronistically attaching a later understanding to the word used in the New Testament). The differences between the New Testament presbyter and *episkopos*, the relationship between these two and the apostles, and how closely these relate to the future ministry of presbyters and bishops in the Church, cannot be proven from the scriptural evidence (Osborne, 1988:49).

While he is cautious about reading the New Testament texts on ministry and Eucharist through the lens of later theology, Osborne (1988:80) comments: “It is not because the New Testament ministers have the power to celebrate the eucharist that they are ministers of the Christian community; rather, it is more the opposite: because they are the ministers of leadership over the Christian community do they have a presiding ministry in the eucharist.” Thus, leadership of the community and presiding at the Eucharist are related from the beginning, but the leadership role has precedence and expresses itself in the Eucharistic presidency.

Old Testament priests, according to O’Collins and Jones (2010:3), had primarily ritual roles but also had a teaching function. While priests were seen as mediators between God and man, sinful priests are also challenged by Old Testament prophets (O’Collins and Jones 2010:4). O’Collins and Jones (2010:6–8) look at similarities and dissimilarities between the Old Testament understanding of the priest’s role and that ascribed to Jesus in the Letter to the Hebrews. Key points of convergence include the centrality of sacrifice and the association, in at least some Old Testament cases, of the role of priest with those of prophet and king. Key differences include the fact that Jesus did not inherit the priesthood as well as the once-for-all, universal, and radically transforming nature of his sacrifice, which established “a new covenant” (Hebrews 9:15 NAB).

Ordained ministers always need to respect the universal invitation implicit in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ; their ordained ministry is to be a true sharing in Jesus' own ministry.

Another relevant biblical text is 1 Peter 2:9. In commenting on the First Letter of Peter, Power (2003:95–96) stresses what Christ has done for his followers by his death and resurrection, so that the description of Christians as a “chosen race,” “holy people” and “royal priesthood” (1 Pt 2:9) “as such has nothing to do with rites of worship or cult ... [but] about alliance and covenant, the alliance that God has forged with the baptized as a people by reason of their ransom from sin through the shedding of the blood of Christ.” Commenting on 1 Peter 2:5, Elliott (2000:420) has a different emphasis, arguing against seeing this passage as the basis for identifying the Christian faithful as a community of priests, and thus against the notion of the common priesthood of the faithful. He sees the discussion of the *hierateuma* or “priestly community” (his translation) as an expression of the “privileged status and the elect and holy character of God’s people” (Elliott, 2000:420). After mentioning that Tertullian, Luther, as well as many post-Reformation theologians have sought in this passage the basis for the common priesthood of all the faithful, Elliott (2000:420) writes: “In attempting to exploit this text for dealing with questions of authority and ecclesial order, they have distorted the collective sense of *hierateuma*, isolated it from its covenantal context, and ignored the function of this covenantal formulation as an emphasis on the election and holiness of the people of God.”

As he considers the meaning of 1 Peter 5:1–5a, Elliott (2000:814–815) notes that the author did not intend to describe a hierarchical structure but used the terminology common in various Mediterranean cultures, recognizing the special authority and responsibilities of elders in their households and in the community. He writes: “The elders do not occupy positions in a hierarchalized organizational structure, of which there is no hint in 1 Peter. It is thus inappropriate and anachronistic to speak of them as ‘officials’ or ‘office-holders.’” (Elliott, 2000:815).

Reviewing the evidence of the New Testament, O’Collins and Jones (2010:16) maintain that Jesus “was/is the Shepherd-Priest, the Good Shepherd who was/is the Good Priest.” In linking the roles of shepherd and priest, they are expressing the intimate unity between these aspects of Jesus’ identity and ministry. 1 Peter 5:1–4 presents this image powerfully, with the charge to presbyters, which clearly alludes to Jesus as Good Shepherd. The responsibility of presbyters is expressed in terms of their relationship with the people they are called to serve: “Tend the flock of God in your midst, [overseeing] not by constraint but willingly, as God would have it, not for shameful profit but eagerly. Do not lord it over those assigned to you, but be examples to the flock” (1 Peter 3:2 NAB).

While taking a much more cautious approach than just seen in O’Collins and Jones, Elliott (2000:826–841) discusses the exhortation of 1 Peter 5:1–5a within the context of Mediterranean society and the other uses of similar expressions in the New Testament:

The similarity of terminology and themes illustrates a developing tradition concerning community leadership in early Christianity and suggests for both Acts and 1 Peter a similar state of ecclesial development.... The evidence thus indicates that the status of Christian elders was a high and honourable one and that their role included instruction..., moral guidance, protection of the flock, leadership, and management (Elliott, 2000:826).

Even if it is anachronistic to compare the presbyters/elders of 1 Peter with presbyters of today, the injunction to the elders to exercise their ministry “willingly in accord with God, ... eagerly, ... being examples for the flock” (1 Pet. 5:2c–3; Elliott, 2001:827) is relevant to all who have a position of leadership in the Church, in any age. As Elliott (2001:833) writes about the third piece of the exhortation: “The Petrine instruction thus relativizes and limits the authority of elders/leaders. A domineering mode of leadership can be avoided only when leaders practice what they preach or, as is said today, when they not only ‘talk the talk’ but ‘walk the walk.’”

There is also something to be gleaned from 1 Peter about the response of the Christian faithful to the work of their ministers, without trying to read the ecclesial situation of today into a late first-century Christian writing. In 1 Peter 5:5a, the “younger persons” are called to “be subordinate to the elders,” but Elliott (2001:841) comments that “this urging of deference to authority is immediately relativized by the following injunction (v. 5b), calling for mutual humility of *all* members of the community. Thus, leaders as well as recent converts are constrained by a humility required of all the faithful.”

### **2.2.2 Letter to the Hebrews**

The Letter to the Hebrews deserves particular attention, in particular Vanhoye’s (2009a:29–46) discussion of this text’s references to the priesthood of Jesus Christ as it relates to the presbyterate. Vanhoye (2009:29) points out that Vatican II, in *Lumen Gentium* 28 and throughout *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, sees all Christian priesthood as sharing in the one priesthood of Christ. When commenting on the letter’s elements that distinguish it from those in the Pauline corpus, Vanhoye (2015:7) notes: “Paul never says that Christ is a ‘priest’ and ‘high priest,’ while the Letter to the Hebrews states it, repeats it, and centres the whole of its Christology around that statement.” Any discussion of the priesthood of the ordained minister must, according to Vanhoye, begin with a discussion of the priesthood of Jesus in the New Testament. For him, the most important New Testament source for discussing the priesthood of Jesus Christ is the Letter

to the Hebrews. If Hebrews 2:18 identifies Jesus as the “the high priest who is merciful and worthy of faith,”<sup>1</sup> the ordained priest needs to embody this merciful nature of Christ the priest (Vanhoye, 2009a:30–31). Vanhoye’s (2015:104–105) description of Jesus as the perfect high priest in Hebrews expresses how Christ’s attitude opened the door to human salvation:

By agreeing to be being made like his brothers, Christ was paradoxically ‘made perfect,’ which his brothers were not. The explanation of the paradox is to be sought in the motives for the assimilation: obedience toward God and fraternal love of humankind. These two generous dispositions take concrete form in assimilation to human misery, but they are factors of profound transformation.

Commenting on Hebrews 7:20–28, Vanhoye (2015:125) goes on to write: “Christ, for his part, has become a high priest ‘for ever’; his sacrifice of priestly consecration has introduced his human nature into the eternity of God, because that sacrifice was a victory over death, obtained through death itself (see 2:14).” Vanhoye (2015:125) notes that this is not a hereditary priesthood passed on to subsequent generations, but completed by Christ, and it continues by his intercession for us in heaven.

Vanhoye (2015:79–80) comments on Hebrews 2:17: “Therefore he had to be made like to his brothers in all things, so as to become a *merciful and trustworthy high priest* [cf. 3:1–5:10] with respect to relations with God, with a view to blotting out the sins of the people.” The purpose of the incarnation, passion, death and resurrection is the priestly act of restoring humanity’s relationship with God.

Vanhoye (2009a:35) points out that the author of Hebrews links the authority of ministers, an authority they receive from and share with Jesus, to their own faithfulness: “Consider the outcome of their way of life and *imitate their faith*.” (He. 13:7).<sup>2</sup> Vanhoye (2015:221, 223), in reflecting on Hebrews 13:7–19, considers the difficulty for the reader today of understanding Hebrews 13:7. Vanhoye (2015:223) sees a reference here to the early Christian leaders, who would be referred to in the other New Testament writings as presbyters/elders. While not clarifying the “outcome” (martyrdom?), the author “expresses the central point of it (the obedience of leaders), which is the person of ‘Jesus Christ’ (13:8)” (Vanhoye, 2015:223).

Vanhoye (2009a:37–38) expresses the extent to which ordained ministers share the authority of Jesus when he compares Jesus’ authority “over” the People of God with Hebrews 13:17: “Obey your leaders and *defer* (Vanhoye translates in Italian with the equivalent of “submit”) to them, for they keep watch over you and will have to give an account.” The authority of the ministerial priest participates in the authority of Jesus, so that he can care for the sheep and “give an account.”

The mercy of Jesus is, according to Vanhoye, what makes him worthy of faith. He writes: “Christ who is worthy of faith requires our total adhesion in faith; Christ who is merciful arouses our full confidence”<sup>3</sup> (Vanhoye, 2009a:39). Vanhoye also addresses the way in which ordained priests should link mercy and authority in their lives, since they are called both to exercise his authority and heal with his mercy, as “instruments”<sup>4</sup> (Vanhoye, 2009a:40).

Recognizing their own sinfulness and need for Jesus’ remarkable mercy, Vanhoye maintains that ordained ministers should aim “as much as possible to resemble Jesus, sinless high priest, full of mercy for sinners; they should therefore be forgiven sinners who no longer sin and thus have their hearts totally disposed for the pastoral charity of Christ”<sup>5</sup> (Vanhoye, 2009a:42). Jesus’ priestly offering, according to the Letter to the Hebrews, is a personal offering of himself. Vanhoye points out that the Letter to the Hebrews makes the link between the passion of Jesus and his priestly offering (Vanhoye, 2009a:42–44). It is noteworthy that Hebrews 5:6, the passage that announces Jesus as “priest forever,” immediately precedes the three verses most clearly linking his suffering on the cross to his offering to save humanity:

In the days when he was in the flesh, he offered prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered; and when he was made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him (He. 5:7–9).

Another reflection on the Letter to the Hebrews comes from Koester (2001:109–110), who indicates that there are some passages in Hebrews that speak of the priesthood of Jesus Christ as something that occurs as a result of his exaltation — his crucifixion and resurrection — but others point to an earthly priesthood, making it possible for him to offer himself as the perfect sacrifice. Koester (2001:109) writes: “On the Day of Atonement the high priest sacrificed the victims outside the sanctuary, then brought their blood into the inner sanctuary. By analogy, Christ’s self-offering on earth and his entry into heaven’s inner sanctuary would both be priestly acts.”

In describing the priestly acts of Jesus, as presented in Hebrews 2:17–18, Koester (2001:240–242) mentions atonement for the sins of the people, including “both expiation, which is the removal of sin, and propitiation, which is the averting of divine wrath” (Koester, 2001:241). Jesus as high priest also helps the people who are subject to trial: “Awareness of the help Christ offers by interceding with God would enable his followers to persevere” (Koester, 2001:242.) Commenting on the priesthood of Jesus in the Letter to the Hebrews, Koester (2001:299) writes: “Having learned obedience, Jesus was ‘made complete’ (5:9a) through exaltation to glory and appointment to high priesthood.”

Koester (2001:25) considers the development of the use of the term “priest” in the Christian community according to its use in the Letter to the Hebrews: “The origin of this practice cannot be attributed primarily to exegesis of Hebrews, but as the priestly understanding of Christian ministry evolved, exegesis and ecclesiastical practice were mutually reinforcing.”

O’Collins and Jones also consider the Letter to the Hebrews, as it pertains to the priesthood of Jesus Christ, and they write in a way that has particular resonance for the ministerial priesthood, as they recognize the unique nature of the sacrifice of Jesus: “By a single sacrifice Christ removed the burden of sin forever. Thus he put an end to any further sacrifice for sin” (O’Collins & Jones, 2010:47). While they later address the ways in which the priestly people and the ordained participate in this once-for-all sacrifice, the centrality of the one sacrifice is essential to maintain.

While it is impossible to repeat Jesus’ once-for-all offering, Vanhoye addresses this issue, maintaining: “Christian priests can, however, make it present sacramentally in the Eucharist, according to the command of Jesus”<sup>6</sup> (Vanhoye 2009a:44). Clearly, Vanhoye finds in the Letter to the Hebrews that both Jesus and the Christian priest who shares in his ministry are worthy of faith and merciful. An indication that this sharing and identification is meant to be permanent is found not only in Hebrews 5:6 (“You are a priest forever” — which is clearly addressed to Jesus himself) but in the way Vanhoye links the priest’s call to be “worthy of faith” and Jesus’ own: “To be ‘worthy of faith,’ the minister of Christ should himself be full of faith and docile to God”<sup>7</sup> (Vanhoye, 2009a:45). The kind of faith and docility that is being described here is not something that could be passing. Rather, it would seem to be permanent by definition.

### **2.2.3 Texts from the Pauline corpus**

Before leaving the New Testament, some texts from Paul’s Letter to the Philippians and the Second Letter to the Corinthians can shine some more light on the question of perseverance in ministry. These texts offer some indications about what St. Paul has to say to Christians of all time about the meaning of Christian service.

Although the Letter to the Philippians does not address questions of ministry directly, the focus on imitation of Christ in chapter two is relevant to this discussion. Thurston (2005:80) sees in Philippians 2:5 a call for the community “either to imitate Christ or to be what they already are in him (or both!).” Thurston (2005:90–91) offers a caution about the kenotic language and a response to that caution: “Much current feminist and liberation thought suggests that some populations in the Christian community have heard too much about ‘self-emptying’ and ‘self-giving’ and ‘setting self aside.’” Going on to affirm that Jesus was not forced to empty himself, but willingly offered all that he had, precisely who he was before the incarnation, Thurston

(2005:91) “finds no conflict between the *kenōsis* of Christ and feminist/liberation thought, which seeks to empower persons to claim the fullness of their identity.” Only those who, like Jesus, know fully who they are, can freely give themselves as gift, for the glory of God and for the good of their brothers and sisters.

Hamm (2013:95) considers the importance of understanding the exhortation in Ph 2:5: “Have among yourselves the same attitude that is also yours in Christ Jesus.” This verse connects the so-called Philippian hymn, which follows in verses 6–11, with the initial verses of chapter 2, which speak of the “Christian community’s growth in the Spirit” (Hamm, 2013:95). Though this passage does not specifically address the spirituality and way of life of Christian leaders, by addressing the conduct of the Church, it must be speaking to ministers as well. Thus, Hamm (2013:105–106) sees the first meaning of Ph 2:6–11 as the one St. Paul gives it in 2:5, that as a demonstration “of the mind-set he exhorts Christians to take on.”

If all Christians are called to this “conformity” to Christ, certainly those who, like Paul, have been set apart for service to the community, need to read the invitation to conform themselves to Christ’s humiliation with particular attention. To imitate Christ, to be “configured” to Christ, to use the word that will be used later in this chapter in the discussion of the *Ratio Fundamentalis*, means to share fully in the self-emptying described in the Philippian hymn (Thurston, 2005:91). Considering the threats to Christian life from pride and sin within the Church, as much present in the Church of the twenty-first century as in the Church of the first century, “Christ’s humility sets the example and provides the corrective to the Philippian church’s internal problem of divisiveness caused at least in part by self-assertion” (Thurston, 2005:91). For all Christians, Philippians 2:6–11 “explicates what it means to be ‘in Christ’” (Martin, 1997:92). If Jesus Christ is the model of humble self-emptying love for all Christians, he is even more so for priests and bishops. Again, if this is true for all the faithful, must it not also be true for ministers?

The Pastoral Letters (1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus) all address matters of life in the early Church. The Second Letter to Timothy offers some insights that offer particular assistance for the discussion about the permanence in ministry. In 2 Timothy 1:6, Paul calls Timothy to “stir into flame the gift of God that you have through the imposition of my hands.” Johnson (2001:344–345) translates this verse: “I remind you to revivify that special gift for service that God gave you through the laying on of my hands.” The very intense challenge Paul gives to Timothy here (Johnson argues for authentic Pauline authorship) can be applied to ordained ministers in the Church today. The power received at ordination is not given by the Bishop or by the institutional Church, it is given by God (cf. Johnson 2001:354). As the next verse says, “God did not give us a spirit of cowardice but rather of power and love and self-control” (2 Tm 1:7). The challenges of

ministry and of martyrdom, addressed throughout this letter, are all possible to meet, if Timothy “stirs into flame” or “revivifies” the gifts received by the laying on of hands. In discussing the permanence of priestly ministry, in a context where very often it can seem that the joy of the first days of ministry do not last for long, the charge to Timothy to remember the first days of faith and ministry and bring the gifts once received back to life, like someone bringing a smouldering fire back into flame, is a helpful image.

The second chapter of the Second Letter to Timothy offers specific examples for imitation, in order to share efficaciously in the sufferings of Christ, in a way that Johnson (2001:368–369) compares to the second chapter of Philippians. The willingness to suffer, like Paul, whether in imitation of a soldier or an athlete or a farmer, is essential for success in ministry (Johnson, 2001:371). This point resonates with the concern for perseverance in ministry being studied in this project.

This openness to suffering is not an abstract matter, but is linked specifically to the good of the people being served: “I bear with everything for the sake of those who are chosen, so that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, together with eternal glory” (2 Tm 2:10). Paul is encouraging Timothy to be faithful, in imitation of himself and, in the end, of Jesus, precisely because we can rely that we will share the resurrection if we share the cross (cf. 2 Tm 2:11). Johnson’s (2011:381) translation and interpretation of this verse gives it a particular meaning, in that he renders *pistos ho logos* as “the word of God is faithful,” not just that the saying that follows is trustworthy. To see the presbyter’s called to faithfulness, even and especially in the midst of suffering, as an expression of their commitment to the good of the people they serve and of their reliance on the faithfulness of God, offers a positive contribution to the discussion of the meaning of priestly perseverance.

#### **2.2.4 Post-apostolic age**

The second century brings much development in the understanding of Christian ministry. The titles for the different ministries were still developing and the ministers did not exercise a primarily liturgical role: “These *episkopoi* and *presbyteroi*, and also the *diakonoi*,<sup>8</sup> are, in this period’s documentation, described strongly in terms of presiding over the community; secondly there are also occasions when the qualities of Christian ministers are enumerated; in a third place we find mention of liturgical activity” (Osborne, 1988:90). Kasper (2003:50) makes a helpful point with regard to the development of institutionalized ministry in the Church. While recognizing that reflection on the meaning of these ministries only took place seriously in the second century, Kasper (2003:50) writes: “There was never any initial period without ministries:

these are as old as the church itself, and they have been conferred by the laying on of hands since the apostolic age.”

St. Clement of Rome (ca. 97, 1994:1)<sup>9</sup> insists on the divine origin of the call to ministry, referring in this place to *episkopoi* and *diakonoi*, although he does refer to the presbyters in the succeeding paragraphs. The schema he presents is that God sent Christ, Christ sent the apostles (he uses the word “appointment”), and the apostles sent “the first-fruits [of their labours], having first proved them by the Spirit, to be bishops and deacons of those who should afterwards believe” (Clement of Rome, ca. 97, 1994:16).

Clement of Rome presents the leader of the community as the one who presides over the Eucharist, rather than the later focus on the liturgical leader as secondarily having authority in other areas (Osborne, 1988:97). Clement also insists on the fixed nature of the ministry of the leader of the community: “For our sin will not be small, if we eject from the episcopate [oversight] those who have blamelessly and holily performed its duties [presented the offerings]” (Clement of Rome, ca. 97, 1994:17).<sup>10</sup>

As seen in the passage just cited, Clement makes a first reference to permanence of ministry in the Christian Church, when he indicates that it is unjust to remove from ministry those appointed by the apostles and their successors, and when he writes specifically about presbyters:

Blessed are those presbyters who, having finished their course before now, have obtained a fruitful and perfect departure [from this world]; for they have no fear lest anyone deprive them of the place now appointed them. But we see that ye have removed some men of excellent behaviour from the ministry, which they fulfilled blamelessly and with honour (Clement of Rome, ca. 97, 1994:17).

Clement’s reference to presbyters being “deprived” of their position and his concern about those worthy ministers who have been removed from ministry prepare the way for later theological reflection about the permanent nature of the presbyterate. Osborne (1988:97) comments on this passage: “Ministers seem to have been appointed for life; death seems to be the reason for the cessation of their ministry. Deposition is not an acceptable route.” From the time of St. Clement of Rome on, there is a discernible growth in the sacral understanding of these ministerial roles, what has been described as “sacerdotalizing” or “clericalization” (Rausch, 2003:56). The elements noted in this section begin to set the stage for the Catholic understanding of priesthood, the focus of this chapter.

Osborne (1988:102) summarizes the thought of Ignatius of Antioch, who wrote his letters on the way to his martyrdom around AD 107, “Jesus is the real minister... The *episkopos* is the presider over the community par excellence. Above all he is the Christian leader of the community. Because he is the leader over the community, he is also the leader over the liturgical worship... not attributed to an ‘ordination.’” Ignatius of Antioch (ca. 107, 1994a:51) himself expresses the importance of the unity of the presbyters with the bishop in beautiful terms, linking that unity to union with God: “It is profitable, therefore, that ye should live in an unblameable unity, that thus ye may always enjoy communion with God.” He wrote about the importance of unity in the Church, a unity that was linked essentially to “bishop and presbyters” (Ignatius of Antioch, ca. 107, 1994b:62). This unity between ministers is based on the oneness of Jesus Christ.

For the Christian community to be subject to bishop and presbyters, with the presbyters functioning as a kind of council for the bishop, is essential to the unity of the Church, according to Ignatius (ca. 107, 1994c:66–67): “It is therefore necessary that, as ye indeed do, so without the bishop ye should do nothing, but should also be subject to the presbytery, as to the apostle of Jesus Christ.” He goes on to affirm the importance of good behaviour among the deacons, “to avoid all grounds of accusation [against them], as they would do fire.” There is a key phrase in Ignatius that speaks to the essential nature of the threefold ministry: “Apart from these, there is no Church” (Ignatius of Antioch, ca. 107, 1994c:67).

It is striking that St. Polycarp, who was himself an *episkopos*, does not treat the role of the *episkopos* of Philippi, but that of the presbyters. He describes how the presbyters should treat the people and what qualities they should have (Polycarp, ca. 150, 1994:34). Thus, Osborne (1988:103) suggests that Philippi might have been led by a committee of presbyters. Writing in the early second century, Polycarp gave advice to presbyters, calling them to pastoral charity and concern for all, including those who have left the practice of the faith in some way, and showing particular preoccupation for the weakest, those on the peripheries. Polycarp also expresses the need for the presbyter to avoid sin, especially sins that would hurt the community directly. The community is called to obey presbyters and deacons, but with the expectation that the presbyters will live a holy life (Polycarp, ca. 150, 1994:34).

Cooke and Macy (2005:125–126) summarize some of this discussion, commenting on the development of the ministries of presbyter, *episkopos*, and *diakonos*. They note that these three types of ministry will be seen throughout Christian history:

Although this brief introduction gives the impression that presbyteral and episcopal forms of governance were quite separate and distinct organizing principals [sic] in different communities, in fact both forms of organization could, and did, exist in the same

community.... What was expected of both presbyters and *episcopos* [sic] was roughly the same, however. First and foremost, they were to be servants to their own communities: that is, they were to provide services for the community, rather than rule over them (Cooke & Macy, 2005:126).

In the early Christian communities, the term priest was never used for the ministers of the Church, since the common worship was the Eucharist, the re-enactment of Jesus Christ's unrepeatable sacrifice. "Once pagan priests and sacrifices slowly faded from the scene in those areas dominated by Christianity in the fifth and sixth centuries, the word priest changed its meaning and, somewhat ironically, came to become a common term for Christian ministers" (Cooke & Macy, 2005:128).

## **2.3 Patristic perspectives**

### **2.3.1 Before Nicaea**

Irenaeus of Lyons serves as a kind of bridge between the post-apostolic and the patristic periods. Writing at the end of the second century and the beginning of the third, he held that the roles of the *episkopos* and the presbyters in guaranteeing the apostolic continuity of the faith was a key element of their respective ministries (Osborne, 1988:110). In treating the challenge of heresy, Irenaeus considers those who deny the teaching of the Church to be denying the teaching of the apostles, since that teaching is transmitted via the presbyters by apostolic succession. The teaching role of the presbyter is clear here, and it is not clearly distinguished from that of the bishop: "when we refer them to that tradition which originates from the apostles, [and] which is preserved by means of the succession of presbyters in the Churches, they object to tradition, saying that they themselves are wiser not merely than the presbyters, but even than the apostles" (Irenaeus bet. 182–188, 1994:415).

Irenaeus (bet. 182–188, 1994:497) calls for the faithful "to obey the presbyters who are in the Church," who share with bishops the gift of apostolic succession and the ability to teach the truth. He leaves out presbyters who "depart from the apostolic succession," holding that they need to be looked on "in suspicion" and that they have "fallen from the truth" for a variety of possible reasons. Of those presbyters who act immorally or teach falsely, Irenaeus says that they will be condemned by God, and he encourages the Philippians to avoid them and "adhere to those who, as I have already observed, do hold the doctrine of the apostles, and who, together with the order of priesthood (*presbyterii ordine*),<sup>11</sup> display sound speech and conduct for the confirmation and correction of others" (bet. 182–188, 1994:497). While he does not address the question of whether unfaithful presbyters remain as presbyters — the question that would later be addressed by

Augustine — Irenaeus (bet. 182–188, 1994:497–498) speaks powerfully of both the authority and responsibility of the presbyter as teacher and promoter of unity.

Irenaeus repeatedly attributes his teaching to a particular unnamed presbyter, whom he calls a disciple of the apostles. We see this particularly in his presentation of the case against the Marcionite heresy: “That one God was the author of both Testaments, is confirmed by the authority of a presbyter who had been taught by the apostles” (Irenaeus, bet. 182–188, 1994:505). It is impossible to know who this presbyter was, but his presence in Irenaeus’ argument gives credence to the importance of the role of presbyter at this time, even if it is a role not clearly distinguished from the episcopacy.

In the ordination prayers reported in the *Apostolic Tradition* from the early third century, the *episkopos* is clearly set apart not only for leadership and service of the community, but also to preside at liturgy and forgive sins. Osborne (1988:123) states that the ordination of presbyters, on the other hand, does not mention a liturgical role or preaching. He also indicates that there is mention of the permanence of their ministry of service to the local community, in a college surrounding and counselling the *episkopos* (Osborne 1988:123). Osborne attributes the *Apostolic Tradition* to Hippolytus, but this attribution is not at all clear, according to Bradshaw *et al.* (2002:2–6). These authors compare various sources for the *Apostolic Tradition*, some of which (the Ethiopic and Apostolic versions), include teaching and guiding among the duties of presbyters and most of the versions they present include an ordination almost identical with that of a bishop (Bradshaw *et al.* 2002:2–6). The Ethiopic version specifically mentions this prayer for perseverance in ministry: “And now, Lord, give to this your servant that which does not perish, preserving for us the spirit of your grace” (Bradshaw *et al.*, 2002:56–57). An indication that the presbyter is understood to share in the priesthood of the bishop is seen in the instructions for the ordination of a deacon in most of the versions presented by Bradshaw *et al.* (2002:60–61, 65), where it stated specifically that only the bishop lays hands on the man to be ordained a deacon, and not the entire presbyterate, “because he is not ordained to the priesthood” (according to the Latin version). There is diversity among the textual sources about the description of the order of widows, and most of the versions specifically state that they are not ordained, but appointed. Bradshaw *et al.* (2002:71) comment: “That question would not have arisen if they had simply been regarded as poor people deserving charitable support. The strong insistence may be a sign that the *Apostolic Tradition* is attempting to reverse a trend that was already allowing women to function liturgically and trying to impose a new norm instead.”

Osborne (1988:128) indicates that by around AD 210, “Liturgy began to be the basis for Church leadership, rather than Church leadership being the basis for liturgical leadership.” In the early

third century, “all ministry is seen consistently as a call and commission from the Lord. Nowhere is there mention of self-appointment or even community appointment to ministry” (Osborne, 1988:128). This last point affirms the importance of perseverance in ministry, since it is God’s call, not the choice of the community or the minister himself.

In the first two centuries of Christianity, it would be anachronistic to attach modern Catholic ideas of the meaning of ordination and of priesthood to the diverse images of ministry presented. At the same time, the review of literature has shown that the three major ministerial positions in the ancient Church were *episkopos*, presbyter and *diakonos*. According to Rausch (2003:56), the firm establishment of the threefold pastoral leadership roles of bishop, presbyter and deacon by the end of the second century led to the reduction of the charismatic roles of leadership and to the “loss of openness to women in ministerial roles discernible in the earliest communities.”

As a way of expressing and guaranteeing apostolic succession in ministry, in addition to (and to support) the apostolic origin of the churches and faithfulness to apostolic teaching, the process of entrance into ministry becomes more and more formalized from the third century on (Osborne, 1988:138). Osborne expresses succinctly the developing relationship between the leadership and liturgical roles of the *episkopos*/bishop: “If, in the century before [the second century AD], one could say: ‘Because the *episkopos* was a leader of the Christian community, therefore he was also the leader at the liturgy,’ one would, in the second half of the third and from the fourth century onward, say: ‘Because the *episkopos* is the ordained liturgist, therefore he is also the leader of the ecclesial community” (Osborne, 1988:138)

In the West, thanks to Tertullian (before he adhered to the Montanist heresy), the term for the ritual by which a ministry was conferred became “ordination,” since the new ministers were received into an “ordo,” while in the East, the focus remained on the more scriptural image of the “laying on of hands” (Osborne, 1988:138). The understanding of the role of bishops grew dramatically in this time, with greater emphasis on their identity as “successors of the apostles” and of their collegial relationship with each other (Osborne, 1988:140–141).

### **2.3.2 From Nicaea to St. John Chrysostom**

Osborne (1988:146) points out that, even though there had been a distinction between the ministers and the people from the time of Clement of Rome, this distinction grew ever stronger in succeeding centuries, with distinctive clerical attire dating from the fifth century and with tonsure and celibacy becoming the norm (but not universal) from the sixth century (Osborne, 1988:146). Osborne (1988:147) makes clear that the Church had come to understand the presbyterate as a permanent state: “We find that certain councils, e.g. the Council of Saragosa

(381), the Council of Chalcedon (451), the Council of Angers (453), and the Council of Tours (461), declared that orders were irrevocable and forbade clerics to return to lay life... The irrevocability of order, based to some degree on Augustine's teaching, was another step in this process of clericalization."

Toups (2004:127–135) cites many of the texts mentioned above and other patristic sources for the permanence of a new identity conferred with presbyteral ordination. He concludes, "The early Fathers of the Church held that what priests possess within themselves by virtue of ordination was indeed something that transformed their inmost being and could not be repeated or erased. Even though at times this understanding was implicitly present, by the time of Augustine, this teaching becomes explicit" (Toups, 2004:135). The texts of Augustine reveal that he understood the presbyterate to be a permanent state.

In treating the validity of baptism celebrated by heretics, Augustine (ca. 400, 1994a:414) presents "the analogy of the military mark, which, though it can both be retained as by deserters, and, also be received by those who are not in the army, yet ought not to be either received or retained outside its ranks; and, at the same time, it is not changed or renewed when a man is enlisted or brought back to his service." The clear teaching is that someone who has been baptized and, by analogy, ordained, cannot receive this sacrament again.

Augustine's view that clerical ministry is permanent can be seen, analogously, in his teaching on marriage. As he affirms the goodness of marriage, even while declaring the greater dignity of celibacy, Augustine (ca. 401, 1994b:412) uses an image relating to ordination to defend the permanence of marriage, even a childless marriage. He was trying to demonstrate that though the purpose of marriage is the begetting of children, even when there are no children the marriage cannot be ended. Augustine's comparison goes as follows:

In like manner as if there were to take place an ordination of clergy in order to form a congregation of people, although the congregation of people follow not, yet there remains in the ordained the Sacrament of Ordination; and if, for any fault, any be removed from office, he will not be without the Sacrament of the Lord once for all set upon him, albeit continuing unto condemnation (Augustine of Hippo, ca. 401, 1994b:412).

Augustine's argument is that ordination indeed takes place for the good of the Christian people, but this good supposes that ordination imparts a permanent change. The very comparison with marriage leads to the conclusion that this permanent mark given to the ordained presbyter is a relational seal: the man is set in a permanent relationship with the People of God, for the good of the members of the Church. It may be a fruitful relationship or not (the question about whether

the people follow him), and he may be faithful or not (the possibility of removal from office), but he — like the husband who may or may not have children or who may or may not be faithful — is forever marked by his ordination. Augustine (ca. 401, 1994b:412) does not get into the specific difference between the cases, relating to the possibility of marriage after the death of a spouse and the ontological nature that later theology will apply to the character of orders, but the comparison is enlightening.

Osborne (1988:148–155) refers to several of the Fathers of the Church of the fourth and fifth century who promoted an increasingly elevated view of priesthood (without distinguishing necessarily between bishop and presbyter). While he acknowledges the developing roles of the different ministries, as well as the inclusion of other groups over time among the list of those “ordained,” Osborne (1988:153–154) maintains that the hierarchy of *episkopos*, presbyter and deacon is always maintained. Further, Osborne (1988:154) makes clear that the act of ordination is not a congregational act: “God does the calling and God does the empowering. The individual *episkopoi* and the community acknowledge his working of God’s grace in a solemn and liturgical way: ordination.”

Osborne devotes extended attention to Gregory of Nazianzus and John Chrysostom. Gregory of Nazianzus (Osborne, 1994:369), in his teaching on baptism, affirms the importance of receiving the sacraments without considering the qualities of the minister:

Do not ask for the credentials of the preacher or the baptizer. For another is his judge, and the examiner of what thou canst not see.... Look at it this way. One may be golden, another iron, but both are rings and have engraved on them the same royal image; and thus when they impress the wax, what difference is there between the seal of the one and that of the other? None. Detect the material in the wax, if thou art so very clever.

Clearly, in Gregory’s view, the image of a “seal” on the presbyter or bishop is something that is for the good of the people, not for his own good. The seal ensures that the people can trust that what the presbyter does in the name of Christ and the Church takes effect. While it would be anachronistic to use later language of validity and liceity, Gregory’s concern is that the people be able to be sure of the minister’s sacramental actions.

Pope Anastasius II, writing in 496, articulated the reason for the acceptance of the baptism and even the ordination of deacons and presbyters by a heretical bishop: “lest perchance the grace of the sacrament seem less powerful when conferred by an unjust [person]” (Hünerman, 2012:127, §356). This point is important, because it can sometimes seem that the discussion of a priestly character conferred with ordination is an honour pertaining to the ordained man, while Anastasius,

like Gregory Nazianzen before him, clearly sees that the good of the faithful is the reason that baptism and ordination cannot be repeated.

The translator of John Chrysostom's fourth-century work on the priesthood (John Chrysostom, ca. 377, 1994:29) notes that Chrysostom treats the priesthood in general, without clearly distinguishing between the presbyterate and the episcopate. Chrysostom (ca. 377, 1994:47–48) articulates the dignity of the priesthood in lofty language, linking the priest's dignity to the sacramental acts he can do, in particular the celebration of the Eucharist and the forgiveness of sins, both in baptism and in anointing of the sick (as we would refer to it today).

While John Chrysostom (ca. 377, 1994:48–50) writes eloquently of the dignity of the priesthood, he does so not as one who is looking for glory. He instead acknowledges his priestly responsibility for the good of the Christian people and expresses his conviction that he is unworthy of ordination. Citing 1 Timothy 3:1, he opines, "I have not said that it is a terrible thing to desire the work, but only the authority and power" (John Chrysostom, ca. 377, 1994:50). As he expressed reasons for being afraid of the episcopal/priestly office, Chrysostom (ca. 377, 1994:51–55) could be said to describe the qualities needed in a priest: "sober-minded and penetrating in discernment" (Chrysostom, ca. 377, 1994:51), avoidance of anger, "perpetual watchfulness concerning his manner of life, lest someone discovering an exposed and neglected spot should inflict a deadly wound" (Chrysostom c. 377, 1994:52), and ability to resist many temptations against humility. He went on to summarize the needed gift of the priest: "he ought to be dignified yet free from arrogance, formidable yet kind, apt to command yet sociable, impartial yet courteous, humble yet not servile, strong yet gentle" (Chrysostom, ca. 377, 1994:55). These qualities are reminiscent of the elements of a modern programme of formation, at least of human and pastoral formation.

Although John Chrysostom emphasises the bishop's priestly role representing Christ, the Incarnate Word, Power (2003:101) notes, "While the bishop has his distinctive role in the eucharistic celebration, all are one with him in making prayers and offering the great thanksgiving prayer. The differences that exist are to be compared to the differences between members in the one body, acting together for a common purpose and in a common drama." The relational aspect of ministerial priesthood receives an opening here.

### **2.3.3 Late patristic and early medieval developments**

Although for a time the *chor-episkopos* was ordained as a kind of rural bishop to take care of Christian communities away from the city centres, from about 400 on, especially in the West, the presbyter became the primary minister of the Sunday Eucharist and of preaching (Osborne, 1988:156). Considering the developing view of ministry in the fifth century, Osborne (1988:157)

writes: “This new role of the presbyter grew in importance, and in time it is the presbyter who is seen as the normal liturgical presider over almost all the sacraments, and he is the normal person who preaches at Sunday liturgies, and he is the normal parish minister for a given parish community.”

With regard to women’s roles in the third through fifth centuries, Osborne (1988:158) writes: “Widows, too, seemed to have been considered a special group or *ordo* in the Church. Their ministry was that of prayer and pastoral service. The deaconess, at least in the Eastern Churches, was more clearly a ministry. The ritual for a deaconess was similar to that of the deacon.” Osborne’s (1988:159) review of the literature leads him to the conclusion: “The material might be read differently, but it cannot be read from a dogmatic or *a priori* standpoint that ordination of women is in principle impossible.”

Osborne also reports that from the third through sixth centuries the development of the minor orders leads to an increasing clericalization of what had been considered lay tasks: “From 235 to 600 clerical ministry dominates over non-clerical ministry. The lay monk, however, rose to enormous prominence in this same period” (Osborne, 1988:159). Because the terms “ordination” and “ordo” are only added to the discussion of ministry in the third century (cf. Osborne, 1988:138), it seems to be prudent to focus this discussion not so much on who is included among the ordained, but on the developing understanding of the role of the presbyter.

Macy (2004:27) refers to studies from the 1950s looking at the development of terminology with regard to ordination, finding “that ordination in the first half of Christian history was a much broader and looser concept than it would come to be in later centuries.” Macy (2004:27) also cites the 1963 work of V. Fuchs, who determined that before the 1100s “there was a very close tie between ordination and the appointment to a particular congregation.... Only later would an ‘absolute ordination,’ granting spiritual power to be exercised anywhere, appear in western Christianity.” How to understand the relationship between the presbyter and the community he serves, as well as to a mission that has meaning for the universal Church, is a topic that still has relevance today.

Osborne (1988:160) summarizes the development of the understanding of the “priestly” identity of bishop and presbyter, using a schema he borrows from P.M. Gy. The first use of priestly language is attributed to Cyprian of Carthage, around 200, applied primarily to the *episkopos* and only “loosely” to the presbyter. “From 350 to 500 *sacerdos* normally refers to the *episkopos*. The diversification process in which the presbyter takes on some of the liturgical functions which the *episkopoi* had been doing only begins in earnest between 400 and 500” (Osborne, 1988:160). Subsequently, in the eighth through tenth centuries, *sacerdos* usually refers to the presbyter and

only infrequently to the bishop, but, from the eleventh century on, *sacerdos* almost always refers to the presbyter (Osborne, 1988:160).<sup>12</sup>

Commenting on developments from the time of Gregory the Great to the end of the first millennium, Osborne (1988:162) indicates that in this time period, “*praxis* preceded *theoria*,” for “the practical or actual development of Church structure eventually led to a way of theologizing on Church ministry.” With Isidore of Seville at the beginning of the seventh century, Western Christianity begins to place greater emphasis on the sacramental power of the bishop and presbyter (Power, 2003:103). The growing division between East and West could be seen around AD 1000, particularly in the roles of bishops and priests: “In the West, the presbyter is the main ‘priestly’ figure; the bishop will soon be theologially considered outside the sacrament of Order. In the East the *episkopos* remains the central priestly figure” (Osborne, 1988:163).

Reynolds (1983:311–312) observes that, in the theological debates about the relationship between the episcopate and the presbyterate, most scholars have focused on scriptural and early patristic sources and the later theological developments from the mid-twelfth century on, neglecting the late patristic and early medieval period. He considers the development of what he calls “patristic presbyterianism,” which becomes a key topic in the medieval treatment of holy orders (Reynolds, 1983:312). We see in Reynolds (1983:314) that “the tracts of both Jerome and Ambrosiaster attempted to dampen this power (of deacons) and quell their pride by emphasizing the equality of the bishop and presbyter and their common superiority to the deacon.”

In a similar vein, Osborne shows that one of the major changes affecting the presbyterate after 800, especially in the Frankish Kingdom, is that churches had become practically disconnected from the bishop, especially in rural areas, and the responsibility for providing for a presbyter/priest fell to the lord: “The tie of the local Church and its leader, the priest, was with the lord of the land, rather than with the bishop” (Osborne 1988:170). Problems would certainly spring from this system, as the priest served at the pleasure of his master, the secular lord. To use a modern expression, such a practice must have made speaking truth to power most difficult. This locally focused system led to variety in liturgy and theology, but it also placed the presbyter at the centre of the life of average European Christians (Osborne 1988:173).

In the Carolingian period, manuals for priests called for them to wear clerical attire, and the books and articles they were required to own focused on their liturgical role. Their holiness was also seen as important, as was the prayer of the Divine Office and daily celebration of Mass (Osborne, 1988:174). Some of the key developments in the latter part of the first millennium include the use of the pure white bread for consecration, ever rarer communion for the laity (to the point that councils and synods had to require communion at least on some occasions in the year),

communion given on the tongue; the elimination of communion with the Precious Blood for the lay faithful; the multiplication of Masses (to the point that a limit to the number of times a priest could celebrate Mass per day had to be imposed) (Osborne, 1988:189–190). All of these elements point to an increasing separation between clergy and laity — in life and in liturgy (Osborne, 1988:189–190).

In terms of the identity of the priest, the growing focus on the reality of the presence of Christ in the Eucharist and the fact that the people no longer could touch the consecrated bread came together to sacralise the person of the priest even more: “Priestly hands and priestly words were, therefore, most sacred, and a priestly life must be closer to that of angels than to other men and women” (Osborne, 1988:190). According to Power (2003:103), with the Carolingians, “priesthood was defined in terms of the power to consecrate and the power to offer sacrifice. Not only was this a working definition for the sacrament of orders, but it was applied also to Christ, in whose work therefore priesthood and kingship are more clearly distinguished.”

The importance of the presbyter/priest is clear in the scholastic understanding: “With this material, one has all the components for the scholastic theological synthesis on the sacrament of Holy Order: spiritually, the eucharist will dominate, but since the eucharist is the highest privilege and power of the presbyter, therefore the priest, not the bishop, is at the apex of priesthood” (Osborne, 1988:190). Osborne observes with regard to the scholastic reflection on the meaning of holy orders: “One might even speak, although this is clearly an anachronistic way of speaking, of a scholastic theorizing on the praxis of the Church of their day” (Osborne, 1988:203). His point is that the Church’s praxis regarding the priesthood had developed for many reasons, some theological and some very practical and mundane. The scholastics’ theological reflection was very much a reflection on the meaning of the existing praxis. Power (2003:104) makes a helpful observation about the situation of sinful priests and bishops at the end of the first millennium: “The resultant objections . . . to unworthy ministers and the doubts they cast on the truth of their sacramental ministry only helped to define priesthood more narrowly as the power to consecrate and offer sacrifice, divorced from any connection with the spiritual vigour of the ordained person.” Ironically, the perceived lack of holiness among priests made it more necessary to affirm their sacramental power, in order to assure the faithful of the efficaciousness of their sacramental ministry.

Greek Orthodox scholars, commenting on the ordination of women to the diaconate (permitted anew in their Church since 2004), indicate that “[t]hey are ordained into a separate ministry of service that does not include such ministry at the altar. It is significant that the Greek Orthodox scholars understand the tie between service at the altar and true ordination as a medieval Western

innovation. Unfortunately, they do not elaborate on this assertion” (Macy, 2008:18). The relationship among the orders, even of deacon, priest, and bishop, has not always been clear. Macy (2008:25) points out that this matter was not clarified until the 1000s; until then it was possible for a deacon to be ordained a bishop without being ordained to the presbyterate or for a man to be ordained a priest without having been ordained to the diaconate. In the scholastic period, we will see greater clarity about the meaning of holy orders, but at the price at times of a real grasp of the meaning of presbyteral service.

## **2.4 From 1000 AD to Trent**

### **2.4.1 Theological developments**

Medieval theologians, including Hugh of St. Victor, Gratian and Peter Lombard, adapted the Venerable Bede’s early eighth-century analysis of the distinction between priests and bishops, in which he compared the priests to the seventy-two (or seventy) disciples sent out by Jesus and the bishops to the twelve apostles, to describe that difference (Osborne, 1988:203). “Sikard, for instance, thought that in the administration of the Christian community, the bishop was above the priest, just as the apostles were above the seventy, but in the administration of the sacraments they were equal. . . . The bishop’s role was that of Church administration, the priest’s role was that of sacramental administration” (Osborne, 1988:203).

In the first centuries of the second millennium, the understanding of holy orders changed significantly: “That definition tended to condense ordination to the power given to priests to consecrate the bread and wine in the Eucharist” (Macy, 2008:28). Macy (2008:31) cites and translates a 1984 text by Yves Congar: “When the treatment of the sacrament of orders was developed in the second half of the twelfth century, then formulated in the works of the great scholastics of the thirteenth century, it was dominated by reference to the Eucharist, *potestas conficiendi* (power of confecting [the Eucharist]). This power was given by an indelible and personally possessed character.” Here Congar is expressing the theology of the power to consecrate as central to the meaning of priesthood, which was a significant change in Church history.

The Church adopted the term *ordinatio*, to be initiated into an *ordo*, from the secular world (where it could be used for being incorporated into a group of soldiers or of carpenters) to describe how sacred ministers entered into different ministries of service, of varying degree of significance to the Church (Cooke & Macy, 2005:132). The understanding of *ordo* and ordination certainly developed with time. Macy (2008:35) writes: “Clearly ordination served quite a different purpose in the early Middle Ages than it would come to serve from the later Middle Ages on. . . . First, the

term ‘ordination’ was used interchangeably with ‘consecration’ and ‘benediction,’ so ‘ordination’ was not the only term used for a ceremony whereby one took up a new ministry in the church.” Throughout this study it has been shown that the ministry in the Church has been seen, with some consistency, as involving a permanent commitment.

As Western Christianity came to understand ordination as connected to priesthood, the permanence of this ministry took on greater importance. While Hugh of St. Victor saw the bishop and priest as sharing in two degrees of the priesthood, Peter Lombard and most medieval theologians recognized in the episcopacy a dignity, but not a unique share in the sacrament of holy orders (Osborne, 1988:204). How the Church arrived at that point is understandable, given the practice of the Church in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, but the understanding of the presbyterate was narrowed. Not only were priests separated from the laity, but also from the episcopacy.

Peter Lombard defined the sacrament of holy orders as the sign by which “a spiritual power and office is given to the one ordained,” while other scholastics, like Sikard of Cremona, described the “spiritual sign, which remained with the ordained person throughout his life” (Osborne, 1988:205). “Finally, the ‘signalucum’ (sign) came to be seen theologically and technically as the ‘character’ of order” (Osborne, 1988:205), pointing to the permanence of ordination, not just in this life, but into eternity.

Osborne (1988:206–208) cites scholastic theologians, starting with Alexander of Hale, and continuing with Philip the Chancellor, Albert the Great, and Thomas Aquinas, whose views can be summed up in three elements: a focus on the Eucharist, the power of the priesthood, and the presbyterate as the highest form of priesthood (not the episcopacy). Regarding the Eucharistic focus, Osborne (1988:208) observes: “It is evident that one can hardly say that this is not a christocentric approach, since Jesus is truly present in the eucharist. But the christocentric base of an understanding of ordained ministry is somewhat narrowed by this approach, and Vatican II will officially widen this christological base.”

The Synod of Benevento, called by Pope Urban II in 1091, required that before being ordained a bishop a man had to live first in “holy orders,” defined as “the diaconate and the presbyterate” (Macy, 2008:89). This norm, which distinguished holy orders from the minor orders as well as the ministries exercised by women and did not consider the episcopacy as one of the holy orders, was accepted by Gratian into his “massive collection of church law known as the *Decretum*” (Macy, 2008:90). According to Macy (2008:90–91), the notion that “Jesus only founded two orders — that of deacon and of priest — was fairly widespread among influential canonists and

theologians by 1140. ... All other orders could, and eventually would, be seen as not truly orders at all, and their ordinations as not ordinations at all.”

Thomas Aquinas (ca. 1265–1274, 1948:2357) connects the character imparted by baptism, confirmation and holy orders to Christ and to the good of the Church. After noting that those who receive these sacraments are imparted with a seal for their own good, he remarks:

Secondly, each of the faithful is deputed to receive, or to bestow on others, things pertaining to the worship of God. And this, properly speaking, is the purpose of the sacramental character. Now the whole rite of the Christian religion is derived from Christ’s priesthood. Consequently, it is clear that the sacramental character is specifically the character of Christ, to whose character the faithful are likened by reason of the sacramental characters, which are nothing less than certain participations of Christ’s Priesthood, flowing from Christ Himself.

Aquinas (ca. 1265–1274, 1948:2359) also argues for the permanence of character, that it cannot be “blotted out from the soul.” Although some authors have argued that the medieval theologians maintained an insufficient christological connection in their view of priesthood, at the least, Aquinas clearly understands priestly character with reference to Christ’s own priesthood.

Toups (2004:142) summarizes the thought of Thomas Aquinas: “This character is a spiritual power which deutes the minister to make present the mysteries of Christ in Christian worship.” He offers a reason as to why the notion of character still matters today: “To the priest, it is a reminder of his permanent relationship with Christ the High Priest. The sacramental character makes the priest’s sacramental ministry a gift to the Church” (Toups, 2004:142). He goes on to add that the indelible mark guarantees the priest’s sacramental ministry regardless of his own worthiness (Toups, 2004:142). Once again, although the theological language concentrates on what happens to the priest, it also upholds the good of the Christian people. The people benefit from the theology of character, insofar as it guarantees the validity of the sacraments in which they take part.

The Fourth Lateran Council, in 1215, clearly linked priesthood to the celebration of the Eucharist, indicating that only the validly ordained priest can “perform this sacrament ... according to [the power of] the keys of the Church, which Jesus Christ himself conceded to the apostles and their successors.” (Hünemann, 2012:1215, §802). Macy (2008:46–47) maintains that the Fourth Lateran Council, in teaching about the essential link between valid ordination of a priest and valid celebration of the Eucharist (transubstantiation of the bread and the wine into the Body and Blood of Christ) was not merely repeating traditional teaching, but settling theological debates of the

twelfth century. “The decrees of Lateran IV spread with remarkable speed throughout Western Christianity, and the implementation of those decrees created a very different church from that which preceded the council” (Macy, 2008:46).

Pope Gregory IX, writing to the Archbishop of Bari in 1231 about repentant clerics who had for some reason been ordained illicitly but validly, indicated they “have without a doubt received the character, and having first imposed a suitable penance on them . . . you may allow them to minister in the orders received” (Hünemann, 2012:275, §825, p.). Similarly, in condemning the teachings of John Wycliffe in 1377, Pope Gregory XI affirmed the power of any validly ordained priest to celebrate the sacraments and forgive sins, opposing the teaching of Wycliffe that he lost his power when he was not obeying the law of Christ (Hünemann, 2012:317–318, §1135–1136). Pope Martin V in 1418 confirmed similar condemnations against Wycliffe and Hus by the Council of Constance (Hünemann, 2012:322, §1165).

The great scholastics defined holy orders in terms of the power to celebrate the Eucharist. Osborne (1988:215), however, writes: “[I]n the entire patristic period and to some degree in the first part of the Carolingian period, the referent was rarely to ‘order’ but rather to ‘priest.’ . . . The patristic discussion flowed from the understanding of priesthood and ministry; the scholastic discussion flowed from the understanding of order.” Keeping this distinction clear is important in moving forward to develop an understanding of priesthood and ministry as seminarians should be prepared to live these out in the twenty-first century.

#### **2.4.2 Canonical developments**

The transformation in the relationship between Church and state in the eleventh century has been called a revolution. Cushing (1998:15) argues that a sometimes exaggerated and polemical description of the negative elements of the papacy and the Church at the end of the first millennium prepared the way for a dramatic change. Cushing (1998:15) writes: “The flurry of polemical literature, the search for past authorities to vindicate positions, the canonical collections, but most especially, the awkwardness and inconsistencies found in all of these, reveal not only the suddenness of the conflict, but the determination to forge ahead.”

Pope St. Leo IX (Bishop of Rome 1049–1054) played a significant role in the reform of the relationship between Church and state. He promoted the development of an authoritative collection of the canons of the Church, given that some of the available collections “included what [Peter Damian] termed ‘pernicious fables’” (Cushing, 1998:23). Peter Damian realized that there was a need to discern the varying levels of historical accuracy and degrees of authority of canons of popes and bishops and councils, but he did not have the tools to do that discernment

consistently (Cushing, 1998:24). In Peter Damian's efforts to bring the Milanese Church into line with Roman edicts with regards to clerical practices, the major issue for him was not disobedience of the Milanese *per se*, but "the denial of Rome's right to overlordship implicit in that disobedience" (Cushing, 1998:26).

Gregory VII (Hildebrand) played a paramount role in the development of canon law, not so much because of his specific decrees (many were later dropped) or because of his knowledge of the sources (it appears he did not know much about canon law), but because of "the rigid, uncompromising, and unequivocal language with which apostolic prerogatives were enunciated, and papal decisions treated as canonical principles" (Cushing, 1998:39). According to Cushing (1998:69), "The *Collectio canonum* of Anselm of Lucca had pretensions to being a comprehensive work. It addressed itself to a variety of ecclesiastical concerns by means of appeal to a wide range of canonical sources." Anselm of Lucca focused his sources on "ideas he believed to be of crucial importance" (Cushing, 1998:72). Relying especially on texts by Augustine, Anselm affirmed the validity of sacraments celebrated by heretical or immoral priests and bishops, and rejected the possibility of a repetition of ordination, after the repentance of such a cleric (Cushing 1998:94). At the same time, he argued forcefully that the clergy needed to live lives consistent with the dignity of the priesthood. That moral imperative is important to bear in mind because discussion of a priest's holiness can sometimes be seen as though it were something automatic.

The great compiler of canonical texts, Gratian, relied in part on the work of Anselm of Lucca in preparing his *Decretum*, yet, "despite the fundamental importance of Gratian's *Decretum* in the middle ages and beyond, it was never formally promulgated by the Church" (Winroth, 2000, 9). Winroth (2000:2–9) discusses the development of this foundational twelfth-century canonical text and its subsequent redaction: "Any attempt at understanding the fundamental transformation of law that took place in the twelfth century is severely handicapped by the insecurity about what Gratian's work really contained" (Winroth, 2000:14).

Looking back at the focus on ordination as the source of the power to celebrate the sacraments, above all the Eucharist and Penance, Osborne (1988:208) points out that Vatican II does not deny the truth of the scholastic synthesis, but sees it as "too narrow, and to bring out the Church's full understanding of the priesthood, the council teaches that the priesthood must be seen in the light of the full mission of Jesus himself." The focus on "power" was also dangerous, as Osborne (1988:209) indicates:

[for though it can be defined as service,] it can, unfortunately, also be seen as domination, and the danger to move away from the humble service of Jesus to an 'arrogance of power'

remained a constant factor in the history of ordained ministry. Again, Vatican II, in its many documents, did not say the ‘power’ approach was erroneous, but it did attempt to place the theology and practice of ordained ministry on the basis of service, rather than on power.

In explaining the scholastic approach, Osborne (1988:209) states:

Service, *diakonia*, might be theologically a more biblically refined way to speak of ministry, but for the scholastic theologian *potestas* was the normal way of describing the essence of the sacrament of order ... focused essentially and principally on the eucharist, and it is from this eucharistic power that any and all other priestly powers derive.

Continued theological reflection is needed, so that seminarians may be formed to see their power as primarily a power to serve.

Cooke and Macy (2005:136) summarize some of the distinctive features of ecclesial structures in the Catholic Church of the thirteenth to sixteenth centuries: ordination only of men into the three orders of deacon, presbyter, and bishop; elimination of other “orders” from the list of the ordained; a widening gap between clergy and lay; the ontological change that was understood to take place at ordination to the priesthood; the impossibility of marriage for the clergy (at least *after* ordination). Cooke and Macy (2005:146) also make an astute observation about the meaning of ordination, regardless of the theological constructs used by particular Christian communities: “In each of these differing structures of service and authority, the temptation exists to abuse one’s position to amass power or wealth, or both. Yet, the proper use of power and authority can and has done great good in the world.”

In their chapter entitled “Rituals of service and ministry,” Cooke and Macy (2005:119–146) notably make no mention of permanence in ministry or a lifelong commitment, other than to mention the Roman Catholic understanding of an ontological change in the ordained minister, as that notion developed in the centuries before the Protestant Reformation: “Theologians began to speculate that those truly ordained were somehow metaphysically different from all the other members of the Christian community” (Cooke & Macy, 2005:136).

This discussion about canonical developments in the first centuries of the second millennium shows that there was a narrowing in the understanding of the priesthood, but the concern for the good of the members of the church is never lost. The need for the people to be certain of the validity of the sacraments they receive, especially Eucharist and Penance, is clear in this concern about power. It is an approach that needs to be broadened but has its own value, so long as the

temptation to personal power can be avoided and grace can be allowed to come to the forefront. To be sure, clergy have abused their power too often in Church history; however, the traditional theology of ordination as implying a sacred power does have a valid basis.

## **2.5 Protestant Reformation**

Although it is beyond the scope of the present study to provide a detailed analysis of the Reformers' attitudes towards priesthood and ministry, a brief overview will set the context for subsequent developments. The first great reformer, Luther (1521:234), used 1 Peter 2:9 to attack the Catholic understanding of the ordained priesthood as a particular sharing in the royal priesthood of Jesus Christ: "Since they [Catholics] boast and brag about a special, uncommon priesthood, and since all priesthood — spiritual, physical, whatever it may be or may be called — is ascribed to all Christians in St. Peter's words as the passage demands, it follows that this [Catholic] priestliness is a strange, un-Christian thing." We already see in this early text by Luther a denial of the teaching that would be expressed by Vatican II (1965; *Lumen Gentium*, 10), that the lay faithful and ordained ministers participate in the priesthood of Christ in different ways.

Referring in a derogatory way to the practice of tonsure with which men would begin the process of moving towards priesthood, Luther (1521:235) asks: "What good does such a tonsured crowd do us? They are neither spiritual nor physical priests. And why do we need them if we ourselves are all physical, spiritual and all other kinds of priests?" Defending the universal priesthood of the faithful as the only true Christian priesthood, he goes on to write, in a way that clearly would invalidate all of the discussion of the tradition of the Church in this chapter: "What good would it do if Emser (his opponent in this debate) quoted thousands of passages from the fathers all of which uniformly call his crowd priests? There would be no Scripture here, only the words of men who have erred — although they were not as stubborn as these tonsure-bearers" (Luther, 1521:237).

Luther (1523a:305) goes on to describe the essential marks of the Christian Church in very different ways than seen thus far, denying of order and Eucharist: "The sure mark by which the Christian congregation can be recognized is that the pure gospel is preached there." He goes on to deny the authority of councils and bishops, identifying them with "false prophets" (Luther, 1523a:307). He insists that it is the community of the faithful who should call preachers. While he acknowledges the counter-argument that Paul's First Letter to Timothy and the Letter to Titus charged bishops with calling priests, he attacks the bishops of his time as "wolves who neither want to teach the gospel nor suffer it to be taught." Furthermore, even if there were good "bishops who wanted to have the gospel and wanted to institute decent preachers, they still could not and

should not do so without the will, the election, and the call of the congregation” (Luther, 1523a:311–312).

In the same year Luther (1523b:9) argued for the removal from Bohemia of priests faithful to the pope, even preferring for the Christians to go without the Eucharist if that be the price: “For the Eucharist is not so necessary that salvation depends on it. The gospel and baptism are sufficient, since faith alone justifies and love alone lives rightly.” This argument, even if all the available priests were reprobates, goes against the entire tradition — motivated by the good of the people — that defended the validity of a priest’s acts.

Luther (1523b:11) also condemns absolute ordination, the idea that a priest is ordained permanently and to serve anywhere and everywhere a bishop may wish to send him, while expressing a willingness to tolerate this error “for a time.” He insists as well on the primacy of preaching in the work of the ordained minister: “The public ministry of the Word, I hold, by which the mysteries of God are made known, ought to be established by holy ordination as the highest and greatest of the functions of the church.” A last point that is relevant to our current discussion is the distinction Luther (1523b:12) drew between priests who preached and conducted parish ministry, whom he identified with the lowest and poorest of the clergy, and those who held themselves up as more important, leading him to scoff at the notion of “indelible character.”

Looking more briefly at the relevant teachings of Calvin, we note that he argues against the theology of the Eucharistic sacrifice, denying at the same time the priesthood of the ordained minister and the sacrificial nature of the Mass: “The more detestable, therefore, is the fiction of those who, not content with the priesthood of Christ, have dared to take it upon themselves to sacrifice him, a thing daily attempted in the Papacy, where the mass is represented as an immolation of Christ” (Calvin, 1559:310). He also denies all priestly authority other than Christ’s: “All the sacerdotal functions were transferred to Christ, and in him fulfilled and ended (He. 7:12). To him alone, therefore, all the rights and honours of the priesthood have been transferred” (Calvin, 1550:386). Finally, Calvin (1550:394–398) forcefully condemns the Catholic practice of confession to a priest. This brief review of some of Calvin’s attacks on the Catholic theology of priesthood makes clear that any discussion of priestly character and permanence in ministry in his teaching would be moot.

## **2.6 Trent to Vatican I**

The Council of Trent, responding to the challenges of the Protestant Reformation, sums up the teaching about the character and the permanence of orders:

“But since in the sacrament of order, as also in baptism and confirmation, a character is imprinted (*can. 4*) that can be neither erased nor taken away, the holy council justly condemns the opinion of those who say that priests of the New Testament have only a temporary power and that those who have been rightly ordained can again become lay persons if they do not exercise the ministry of the word of God (*can. 1*)” (Hünemann, 2012:423, §1767).

In this same section, Trent condemns the belief of a priesthood of all the faithful “without distinction.” While not clarifying the degree to which episcopal power is linked to ordination, Trent also affirmed the superiority of bishops over priests (Hünemann, 2012:424, §1777). Looking at the teaching on character in decrees of the Council of Trent, Toups (2004:146) concludes: “According to the reformers, nothing permanent occurs at ordination, therefore one could be a ‘priest’ for a period of time and not forever. Hence, the Tridentine fathers felt the need to proclaim the longest, most systematic teaching on the priesthood of its day.”

With regards to the separation of the episcopacy from the sacrament of orders, Osborne (1988:210) expresses the deleterious effects on collegiality, which would be taken up again in the Vatican II treatment of the sacrament of orders. With regards to collegiality, “A major step was taken, however, when the bishop was reinstated, as it were, into the ordained ministry, and the collegiality of the bishops was stressed” (Osborne, 1988:211).

The question of the character imposed by the sacrament of orders, as well as baptism and confirmation, is addressed forcefully by the Council of Trent: “By the use of the term sacramental character, the bishops of Trent stood firmly with the hard-won position that these sacraments were not to be repeated. There is no description, definition, discussion about ‘what’ this character might be” (Osborne, 1988:258). As to what the link between non-repetition and character was, Trent did not resolve that matter, “but they did indicate clearly that the sacramental character is indeed connected to the issue of the reiteration of the sacraments” (Osborne, 1988:259).

That a priest, once ordained, remains a priest forever, independent of whether he chooses to or is free to exercise his ministry, is related to the issue of character and non-repetition of ordination. The conclusion of Trent, following the position taken by councils more than 1,000 years earlier, at Saragossa, Chalcedon, Angers, and Tours, was that once an ordination to the priesthood is celebrated validly, the man remains a priest forever (Osborne 1988:259). This teaching of Trent is directly connected to the question being examined in this thesis, because the presupposition that perseverance in ministry matters is rooted in a theology that affirms the permanence of priesthood.

Among the canons of the Council of Trent, the one most clearly related to this issue is canon 4 from Session 23: “If anyone says that by sacred ordination the Holy Spirit is not given and that, therefore, the bishops say in vain: ‘Receive the Holy Spirit’; or if he says that no character is imprinted by ordination; or that he who has once been a priest can again become a layman, let him be anathema” (Hünemann, 2012:424, §1774). The logic for Trent’s insistence on the permanence and effectiveness of ordination, according to Osborne (1988:267) is christological and eucharistic: “If the ordination ritual, with its injunction to priests to offer sacrifice, is interpreted in a way which diminishes the complete efficacy of the work of Jesus, then an invocation of the Holy Spirit is, indeed, an unworthy prayer.” It is because the Holy Spirit’s invocation is effective that the priest can offer sacrifice and that he remains a priest forever.

Some of the disciplinary reforms of the Council of Trent, while not theological per se, expressed a developing theology of priesthood and helped to promote continuing reflection, in a sense preparing the way for Vatican II, as Osborne (1988:275–279) argues. One reform that directly touches on the present discussion is the greater focus on formation for the priesthood, in particular on discerning whether a man was intellectually prepared for ordination and whether there was a pastoral need to justify his ordination (Osborne, 1988:276). Significant drawbacks to the approach of Trent included an almost total silence on the priestly ministry of Christ himself and on the importance of preaching in priestly ministry (Osborne, 1988:277–278). Notably, Vatican II’s Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests lists “preaching the word” first among the responsibilities of priests as they exercise the “special grace to be ministers of Christ among the people” (Vatican II, 1965b:§2), a belated response to one of Luther’s (1523b:11) complaints about Catholic priesthood.

Thus, five centuries after the Reformation and Trent, the documents of the Catholic Church recognize the centrality of preaching. Writing about the proclamation of the Gospel in *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis (2013b) uses the word “evangelize” 49 times, “preaching” 43 times, and “homily” 27 times. He wrote about the importance of a positive homily:

It is not so much concerned with pointing out what shouldn’t be done, but with suggesting what we can do better. In any case, if it does draw attention to something negative, it will also attempt to point to a positive and attractive value, lest it remain mired in complaints, laments, criticisms and reproaches. Positive preaching always offers hope, points to the future, does not leave us trapped in negativity (Francis, 2013b:§159).

Some of the formation activities to be considered in the next chapter are designed to have a direct impact on the quality of homilies.

Robert Bellarmine was perhaps the most important Catholic theologian to reflect in depth on the priesthood in the period between Trent and Vatican II. He argued more from what he found in Scripture and the early tradition of the Church than from specific theologians or from the Council of Trent. A major contribution was his insistence on the sacramentality of the episcopate. He continued the focus on the powers of the priesthood, seeing the laying on of hands by the bishop as conferring the power to forgive sins and the handing on of the chalice and paten as giving the power to celebrate the Eucharist (Osborne, 1988:284–285).

Jean-Jacques Olier, the founder of the Sulpicians, a society of priests dedicated to the formation of priests, wrote on the priesthood in a way that anticipated to some extent the vision of Vatican II, but his successor Louis Tronson, on revising the texts for publication, presented a much more clerical picture. On the positive side, however, the teaching and the work of the Sulpicians helped to promote a priesthood that was truly centred on being the “sacrament of the universal salvation in Jesus Christ,” if in a more spiritualized way than the more apostolic Olier would have preferred (Osborne, 1988:287). This effort of the Sulpicians also helped to challenge the Jansenists, who denied priestly character, leading to Pius VI’s condemnation of their teaching that all baptized Christians could fulfil the tasks of priests (Toups, 2004:147).

Osborne (1988:290–291) comments on the effect of changes that Trent enacted through its newly mandated seminary system:

When one looks at the condition of the priesthood at the time of the Council of Trent, and compares that condition with the condition of the priesthood at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century, one can only be amazed at the enormous difference and quality of priest. Nonetheless, the training of priests during the entire period ... [was] fairly traditional, scholastic, apprehensive of current movements in the broader world.

## **2.7 Pius XI and Pius XII**

Pope Pius XI and Pope Pius XII, while they confronted the horrible challenges associated with the rise of Fascism, Nazism, and Communism, did not neglect to focus on the meaning of priesthood. They both upheld the tradition and offered new ways of looking at it. While both preconciliar popes are often perceived today as highly conservative, they prepared the way for the theological growth that would follow.

Pope Pius XI, in his encyclical *Ad catholici sacerdotii* from 1935, “widens the understanding of priesthood from that of merely power over the eucharist to that of power over the mystical body

of Christ as well” (Osborne, 1988:299), thus opening the door to a broader discussion on the meaning of priestly ministry, which would be taken up by Vatican II. He wrote eloquently of the marvels that priests perform in the sacraments, above all as they forgive sins. Their power and the character connected to ordination are focused on the good of the people, and priests are for that reason called to a deeper holiness. The language sounds odd and grandiose only 80 years later, but this text refers clearly to the priest’s particular identity as well as his responsibilities:

These august powers are conferred upon the priest in a special Sacrament designed to this end: they are not merely passing or temporary in the priest, but are stable and perpetual, united as they are with the indelible character imprinted on his soul whereby he becomes “a priest forever”; whereby he becomes like unto Him in whose eternal priesthood he has been made a sharer. Even the most lamentable downfall, which, through human frailty, is possible to a priest, can never blot out from his soul the priestly character. But along with this character and these powers, the priest through the Sacrament of Orders receives new and special grace with special helps. Thereby, if only he will loyally further, by his free and personal cooperation, the divinely powerful action of the grace itself, he will be able worthily to fulfil all the duties, however arduous, of his lofty calling. He will not be overborne, but will be able to bear the tremendous responsibilities inherent to his priestly duty; responsibilities which have made fearful even the stoutest champions of the Christian priesthood, men like St. John Chrysostom, St. Ambrose, St. Gregory the Great, St. Charles and many others (Pius XI, 1935:§22).

Pius XI is here linking the permanence of priesthood with his sacramental power, but also with his responsibility to the Church. He also insists on the importance of the priest as a proclaimer of the Word, which are for him both “a right which is inalienable ... [and] a duty which cannot be disallowed” (Pius XI, 1935:§23).

Pope Pius XI (1935:§70–73) also argued forcefully for the importance of seminary formation. At the same time as he desired to promote vocations to the priesthood, he was very clear about the importance of making sure that men were prepared well and that if they were in the seminary for the wrong reasons or if their vocation was not well-tested, they should not be ordained. His words may sound harsh but were meant to protect the Church (not just the institution, but what Vatican II would later call the People of God): “do not fear to seem harsh if, in virtue of your rights and fulfilling your duty, you require such positive proofs of worthiness before ordination; or if you defer an ordination in case of doubt” (Pius XI, 1935:§73). Thus, in Pius XI the clear notion of the permanence of ministry is present, but the importance of making sure that a man is well-prepared for the commitment before making it is also evident. He goes on to cite Thomas Aquinas:

“Holiness must come before holy orders ... hence the burden of orders should be placed only on walls seasoned with sanctity, freed of the damp of sins” (Pius XI, 1935:§73).

Pius XII’s 1947 apostolic constitution, *Sacramentum Ordinis*, was important for its determination that the laying on of hands by the bishop is the “matter” of the sacrament of holy orders — for deacons, priests and bishops. In this way he settled a lasting debate and made possible greater understanding between East and West (since Eastern Christians had never considered the handing on of the vessels as being necessary for validity) and also indicated clearly that the episcopate was part of holy orders (Pius XII, 1947a:§4; cf. Osborne, 1988:301).

Pius XII (1947b:§40), in his encyclical *Mediator Dei*, issued the same day as *Sacramentum Ordinis*, while affirming that the priest represents the community, insists that “[p]rior to acting as representative of the community before the throne of God, the priest is the ambassador of the divine Redeemer.” He is clearly opposing any congregational understanding of the priest’s ministry. He also uses very elevated language in describing the sacramental character conveyed by ordination, focusing on the role of the priest as celebrant of the liturgy (Pius XII, 1947b:§42). In *Mediator Dei*, Pius XII (1947b:§84–93) anticipated the teaching of Vatican II on the common priesthood of the faithful, while strongly affirming the difference between the laity and the ordained priests. Although he denied “any [difference between priests and people of] moral or spiritual perfection or excellence ... Pope Pius XII did clearly stress that there is an essential difference” (Toups 2004:148).

## **2.8 Vatican Council II**

Perhaps the most important words of the documents of the Second Vatican Council relating to the understanding of the Church and of ministry are found in *Lumen Gentium* §10, addressing the very point just mentioned from *Mediator Dei*:

Though they differ from one another in essence and not only in degree, the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood are nonetheless interrelated: each of them in its own special way is a participation in the one priesthood of Christ. The ministerial priest, by the sacred power he enjoys, teaches and rules the priestly people; acting in the person of Christ, he makes present the Eucharistic sacrifice, and offers it to God in the name of all the people. But the faithful, in virtue of their royal priesthood, join in the offering of the Eucharist. They likewise exercise that priesthood in receiving the sacraments, in prayer and thanksgiving, in the witness of a holy life, and by self-denial and active charity (Vatican II, 1964:§10).

While subsequent magisterial documents and theologians would parse this passage, especially the expression “differ from one another in essence and not only in degree”, it set the stage for a renewed appreciation of the dignity of the whole Christian people as a priestly people, and at the same time called for reflection on the meaning of the ministerial priesthood in relationship to this holy people.

Dulles (1997:11) comments about the Vatican II distinction between the common priesthood of the faithful and that of the ordained ministers. His profound observations contribute to the present discussion greatly:

The council refuses to attribute a higher grade or degree to the ministerial, as though the common priesthood ranked lower than it on the same scale. Instead, it situates the two kinds of priesthood in different categories, like oranges and apples. The ministerial priesthood involves a public representational function rather than a personal giftedness. If anything, the common priesthood is more exalted, for the ministers are ordained for the sake of service toward the whole people of God.

Dulles’s observations help to put into context the entire discussion of the meaning of ordained ministry and in particular the presbyterate. What is special and particular about this ministry has to be seen in reference to a service to the Church.

A major change in the view of ministry in the documents of Vatican II is the use of the three *munera*, or offices, of Christ to formulate the basis of the priesthood of all believers and the particular offices and ministries of priests. Although there were patristic sources for the description of Christ (and the Christian, as well as the priest) as priest, prophet and king, and Bonaventure used this image as well, it was John Calvin (1550:305–310) who developed it most extensively, leading to the avoidance of this language by Catholics until the late 1700s and early 1800s (Osborne, 1988:311–312). Osborne (1988:312–313) comments:

Vatican II, however, not only mentioned this threefold office of Jesus and a corresponding threefold office of Church ministry, but the council has made it the very structure for its theology of ministry.... [I]n its very use of this threefold schema as part of the ordinary magisterium, Vatican II departs from the traditional understanding of priesthood, namely a theology of priesthood defined or centralized by the eucharist.

Osborne (1988:315) points out that the very title chosen by Vatican II for *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, “Decree on the ministry and life of presbyters” (the official translation equivocally offers “priests” as the translation in the title), indicates that the mission of priests takes priority over their status.

He quotes F. Wulf: “The office of the priest is to be viewed first and foremost in terms of its function and not its status” (Osborne, 1988:315). While mention of the ministry of Jesus was almost non-existent in Catholic writing about the priesthood since the scholastics, “Vatican II ... instructs us to see in the very mission and ministry of Jesus the foundation for all definitions, descriptions, spiritualities of each and every Church ministry” (Osborne, 1988:317).

Vatican Council II (1964b:§2) states in *Presbyterorum Ordinis* that “priests, by the anointing of the Holy Spirit, are signed with a special character and are conformed to Christ the Priest in such a way that they can act in the person of Christ the Head.” With regard to the choice of the Council Fathers at Vatican II to use the expression “*in persona Christi capitis*” (“in the person of Christ the head”), Toups (2004:151–152) comments that adding “*capitis* emphasizes that every member of the Church is a member of the Body of Christ, but that in a particular way, the priest represents Christ who is the Head of the Body (cf. Eph 1:23).” That configuration of the priest to Christ as Head of the Body opens up the door to a deeper reflection on the priest’s spousal relationship with the Church at the core of his being, especially in light of the teaching of Ephesians 5 comparing marriage to the Christ-Church relationship.

The notion of permanence and excellence in ministry is also affirmed by *Presbyterorum Ordinis*:

Hence, this holy council, to fulfil its pastoral desires of an internal renewal of the Church, of the spread of the Gospel in every land and of a dialogue with the world of today, strongly urges all priests that they strive always for that growth in holiness by which they will become consistently better instruments in the service of the whole People of God, using for this purpose those means which the Church has approved” (Vatican II, 1965b:§12).

Clearly this call to perseverance and to holiness is linked to the service priests are called to offer to the Church. The Council calls for priests to do what might be called theological reflection with regard to all of their tasks in ministry, something that should certainly be learned in seminary formation: “In order to measure and verify this coordination of life in a concrete way, let priests examine all their works and projects to see what is the will of God — namely, to see how their endeavours compare with the goals of the Gospel mission of the Church” (Vatican II, 1965b:§14). In considering the various formation activities to be studied in the present research, we will see that an implicit or explicit intention of several of them is to assist in this examination and discernment.

The Council Fathers, in the conclusion to *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, recalled the challenges facing priests and encouraged them to trust in God and support each other: “Having before our eyes the

joys of the priestly life, this holy synod cannot at the same time overlook the difficulties which priests experience in the circumstances of contemporary life” (Vatican II, 1965b:§22). Over 50 years ago, Vatican II saw the challenges that faced priests and faithful living in a world where they would have to be countercultural. In formation for the priesthood, seminaries certainly seek to prepare seminarians for these challenges, and some of the programmes the seminarians might resist, such as CPE, have as one of their purposes to prepare seminarians to meet the very real challenges of “the circumstances of contemporary life.”

The Second Vatican Council was interested in defending the sacramentality of the ordination of bishops, as well as the participation of the lay faithful in the threefold offices of Christ, “even while holding to a distinction between order and baptism” (Power, 2003:91). While the Vatican II discussion about collegiality centres on the episcopate, its sacramentality, and its relationship to the primacy of the Pope, the aspect that concerns this present study more directly is the Council’s stress on the “the collegiality of priests which Vatican II called the *presbyterium*. ... The pattern for the presbyters corresponds to that ... for the bishops. The call and commission is from the Lord himself; it is not delegated to a priest through the bishop” (Osborne, 1988:331). “Theologically speaking ... it is not in accord with the teaching of Vatican II to say that priests are ministers of the Church. Rather, they act in the name of the Church, but they are really ministers of Christ himself” (Osborne, 1988:331).

A key aspect of Vatican II’s teaching on priesthood that is relevant to the question of priestly life today is the concept of collegiality and the *presbyterium*. Osborne writes: “[Priests] belong to a regional *presbyterium*, under the leadership of a very definite, regional bishop” (Osborne, 1988:333). The concreteness of that connection to the bishop and his fellow priests is one of the issues that seminary formation must prepare seminarians to confront.

As we have seen, Vatican II does not deny the traditional importance of the holiness of the priest, but connects it to his ministry as one “configured to Christ the priest. ... In this sense, there is no distinct holiness for the ordained minister which the unordained does not share in. However, as a public person in the Church, the ordained minister has committed himself to be a public holy person in the holy Church” (Osborne, 1988:334). In the teaching of Vatican II and the subsequent teaching of Pope Paul VI, celibacy is clearly presented as a matter of Church law. Paul VI specifically took discussion of celibacy off the conciliar agenda, but the conciliar texts foresaw that the law remain unchanged (Osborne, 1988:336–337).<sup>13</sup>

In the Decree on Priestly Training, *Optatam totius*, the Council discusses the need to prepare seminarians in a very realistic way for the challenges they will face as priests:

The students are to be made clearly aware of the burdens they will be undertaking, and no problem of the priestly life is to be concealed from them. This is to be done, however, not that they should be almost solely concerned with the notion of danger in their future labours, but rather that they might be more readily conformed to a spiritual life that more than in any other way is actually strengthened by the very pastoral work they do (Vatican II, 1965a:§10).

This realistic approach, meant not to frighten seminarians, but to prepare them for the future ministry, is an essential element of all successful and effective formation activities for seminarians.

Vatican II (1965a:§12) specifically recommends a period of adaptation to the spiritual life, and suggests as well the possibility of a break in the academic work with an eye to intensive pastoral work:

In order that the spiritual training rest upon a more solid basis and that the students embrace their vocation with a fully deliberate choice, it will be the prerogative of the bishops to establish a fitting period of time for a more intense introduction to the spiritual life. It will also be their charge to determine the opportuneness of providing for a certain interruption in the studies or of establishing a suitable introduction to pastoral work, in order that they may more satisfactorily test the fitness of candidates for the priesthood.

These two points support the rationale for several of the programmes treated in this study. *Optatum totius* mentions the benefit of pastoral work, so that seminarians may learn “the art of exercising the apostolate not only theoretically but also practically, and to be able to act both on their own responsibility and in harmonious conjunction with others” (Vatican II, 1965a:§20). Pastoral-year internships and CPE both aim to offer future priests this kind of preparation.

Emphasising the need for further study to deepen the teaching of Vatican II, Osborne (1988:340) writes about the priestly dimension of Christ and of priests, having considered the meaning of Christ’s priesthood in Hebrews: “The connection of the priestliness of Jesus with his death on the cross might be far too narrow. Even a ‘heavenly priesthood’ might be too one-sided. Rather, the content of Jesus’ priestly life, priestly death and priestly resurrection needs to be more profoundly studied, and only then will this office of priest (sanctifier) be clarified.” Power (2003:91) makes a similar point, expressing concern over the lack of specificity in Vatican II’s description of the priesthood of Jesus Christ: “Apart from associating it with the Church’s sacramental ministry, the council offered no precise definition of Christ’s own priesthood, but seemed to take this as a

given.” Serious attention to Vanhoye’s work on the Letter to the Hebrews could be of assistance in helping the ordained priest to understand more deeply his configuration to Christ the priest.

## **2.9 Developments since Vatican II**

### **2.9.1 Theological reflection on the priesthood since Vatican II**

Power (2003:88), writing at the peak of the clergy sexual-abuse scandal, argues against the sacralised view of ordained ministry. He suggests rooting the call to ministry not in a personally sensed vocation, but in the call by and judgment of the community they serve. He writes that the idea of “priesthood applied to the Church, by way of relation to that of Christ, is about the body of the Church and about all the baptized, and only secondarily about the ordained” (Power, 2003:89). He acknowledges that the statement of Vatican II about the priesthood of the faithful and the priesthood of the ordained differing “in essence and not only in degree” is in contradiction to his perspective, but maintains: “Inasmuch, however, as it supports a hierarchical system, in theory and in practice, it can readily give foundations to what is insupportable in the life of the Church and its internal relations. In any case, it refers to one particular notion of priesthood, which has cultic rather than evangelistic moorings” (Power, 2003:89). Without accepting Power’s critique of Vatican II fully, it is possible to see in his argument an opening to the importance of recognizing that the priesthood of the ordained — and their need for faithful perseverance — must be seen first and foremost from the point of view of their relationship to the priestly People of God.

Herranz Casado (1995),<sup>14</sup> giving an address marking the thirtieth anniversary of the conciliar decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, considered the link between the theology of the priesthood of the faithful and of ordained ministers:

In effect, the Church, thanks to the Council, has reached a new and deeper horizon of comprehension of the priestly mystery, consistent with her essence. This new understanding developed along with a consciousness, itself also renewed, of the proper condition of a priestly people, destined in Christ for the service of a salvific mission, which actualizes in time the mission of the Lord.

According to Herranz Casado (1995), at the centre of the Council’s vision of priesthood was “a strong desire for theological, spiritual and disciplinary renewal of the ministry and life of priests, in order to propel them and assist them to perform their great and indispensable mission in the present time.” He points out that the theology of communion, which has been described as the

heart of the teaching of Vatican II, is an essential element in the Council's approach to all aspects of the Church's life, including priesthood (Herranz Casado, 1995).

Herranz Casado (1995) cites Álvaro del Portillo's discussion of the work of the preparatory commission for *Presbyterorum Ordinis*:

During the conciliar debates on this Decree — reports Monsignor del Portillo — two positions were presented which, considered separately, could have appeared opposed or quite contradictory: on the one hand, the announcement of the message of Christ to all men was insisted upon; on the other hand, emphasis was placed on the worship and adoration of God as ends toward which everything must tend in the ministry and life of priests. Some effort was required to synthesize and reconcile these positions, and the Commission worked, sparing no endeavour, to harmonize the two conceptions, which are neither opposed nor mutually exclusive. In effect, the two different doctrinal positions on the priesthood acquire their full emphasis and significance when both are inserted into a more comprehensive synthesis, in which it becomes apparent that they are absolutely inseparable and complementary aspects which give definition to each other: the ministry for the sake of men is only understood as a service offered to God, while the glorification of God demands that the Priest feel an anxiety to be united to that praise which is proper to all men.... In this way, one has a dynamic image of the priestly ministry, which by announcing the Gospel produces faith in those who do not yet believe, so that they may belong to the People of God and unite their sacrifice to that of Christ, forming a single Body with Him.

This integrated view, linking what would later be called the servant-leader and cultic models, is very helpful in developing a complete theology of priesthood. The priest's missionary vocation and his call to celebrate the sacraments are not opposed to each other, but intimately related, according to Herranz Casado (1995):

Vatican II wished to recall and to reaffirm the cultic or ritual dimension of the priesthood, in continuity with the tradition of the Council of Trent, but at the same time Vatican II wished to underline strongly the priesthood's missionary dimension, not as two distinct moments, but as two simultaneous aspects of the same exigency for evangelization.

Herranz Casado (1995) goes on to summarise three key aspects of the mission of the priest:

The priest is a member of the People of God, chosen from among other members with a particular call (*vocation*), in order to be consecrated by a special sacrament (*consecration*)

and sent (*mission*) to perform specific functions in service to the People of God and to all humanity. A man chosen, a man consecrated, a man sent.

Vatican II was able to refer to the priest as representing both Christ and the Church because of the unity of the Head and the Body (Herranz Casado, 1995). This view is founded on the belief that the priest is configured to Christ ontologically by the character received in ordination (Herranz Casado, 1995).

Herranz Casado (1995) also finds in *Presbyterorum Ordinis* a call for a deep “unity of life” for priests, an inner consistency that undergirds all they do. It is this unity of life that would seem to be key to promoting a clear sense of the importance of perseverance in ministry. He considers the importance of the relationship of the priest with Christ and writes: “Impersonating [in the sense of acting in the person of] Christ in virtue of the sacrament of orders, the priest must be and must manifest a sacramental actualization of the presence of Christ, the centre of history” (Herranz Casado 1995). Such a sacramental representation of Christ, for the good of the Church, must of necessity be forever. Otherwise, the Christian faithful, on seeing a priest act, could not be certain of the efficacy of his actions.

Kasper (2003:45) comments on the challenges facing the Church in Western Europe: fewer seminarians and priests, large numbers leaving ministry, and the negative effects of the heavy workload. Some have wondered if the language of the Council, with its focus on the Church as the People of God and a communion, led to a loss of what was proper to the priesthood; others have seen the tendency to judge the Church according to the standards of democracy and the cultural shifts of the last half century, without serious reflection on how to apply these ideas to the life of the Church, as a cause of the problems confronting priests in Europe (Kasper, 2003:46–47). Kasper (2003:47–48) maintains that it is not enough to consider pastoral solutions to the problems of priesthood but argues that it is necessary to take part in a serious theological discussion about the development of “a new epochal form of our church as it enters the third millennium of its history.” Whether one agrees with Kasper’s view of what that “epochal form of our church” should look like, the need for a clear vision of the Church and of priesthood within the Church is an essential condition for a discussion of the best methods for priestly formation.

The unity between the mission and the identity of the minister is, as Kasper indicates, founded in that perfect coherence with the person of Jesus Christ, who “is in person that which he proclaims” (Kasper, 2003:51). Rather than a separation between a functional and an ontological vision of priesthood in the teaching of Vatican II, Toups (2004:154) sees an integrated image: “The sacerdotal character provides the priest the power to do that which he is called to do, namely, perform his priestly functions and respond to the universal call to holiness. The vision of the

Council was that there must be an integration of life, ministry, and prayer within the priest.” That coherence and unity is key to the view of the priesthood that needs to be promoted in seminary formation today and needs to be supported by formation programmes.

Kasper (2003:54) goes further in describing the representation of Jesus that occurs in the apostolic ministry: “Jesus Christ is salvifically present in and through the apostolic ministries.” He supports this position with the Gospels’ missionary texts, such as Luke 10:16: “He who hears you hears me.” And commenting on the perception that Vatican II’s theology of the People of God weakened the priest’s role, Kasper (2003:56) argues that “the fact that responsibility is shared does not mean that everyone in the church can do everything, or that all together can do everything.”

Reflecting on the conciliar theology of the priest as the representative of Christ as head of the Church, Kasper (2003:59) comments: “The ecclesial ministry attests that the church draws its life not from its own self, but from Jesus Christ.” Although all Christians make Christ present in the world by their baptism, the priest has the unique role of making him present precisely as the loving head of the Church. This incarnational understanding of vocation offers a powerful challenge to every Christian and every priest.

The role of the priest is not just one of representation of Christ the Head to the Church, but also representing the Church before God, so that “the ministry represents the church and acts on its behalf” (Kasper, 2003:61). That headship of the priest does not mean that the priest’s role vis-à-vis the Church is one ruling a pliant community. Theologians have always recognized that priests must listen to the laity; Kasper (2003:60) mentions Leo the Great, Cyprian and Pius XI as examples of those who made this point, in ways appropriate to their historical situations. He points out that as the Church in the past used means that came from the social milieu, it is possible and necessary to “take up some democratic structural elements and procedures today, in a manner both critical and creative, in order to express in the forms appropriate to human law its own constitution” (Kasper, 2003:63).

Kasper (2003:64–68) also seeks to overcome the purely functional understanding of the priest as leader, and links it to the threefold office of priest, prophet, and king as presented by the Second Vatican Council: “The priest attests his identification with Jesus Christ, not only through his ministerial activity, but through his whole existence.... [He is] in his innermost being the source of the community’s identity” (Kasper, 2003:66). Thus, while calling for openness to different models of living out the presbyterate and for organizing the Church, Kasper is clear on the unchanging meaning of priesthood in the life of the presbyter.

Toups (2004:23) focused his doctoral dissertation on the question of the character imparted at ordination. His starting point is what he identifies as a crisis in the self-understanding of priests and the laity's view of priests, regarding the meaning of priestly character. He argues: "Solid seminary formation is foundational for the candidate to integrate the life-long commitment made at ordination" (Toups, 2004:49).

A clear understanding of the meaning of "sacramental character" is important for a seminarian's (and a priest's) appropriation of the meaning of the permanent commitment he is called to make (or has made), maintains Toups (2004:50). At the same time, Toups (2004:50), who is now rector of a large theologate in the United States, argues in his dissertation that the understanding of permanence in ministry founded on a theological grasp of the meaning of priestly character has to be lived out in self-giving love, for the good of the priest himself and for the good of the people he is called to serve, once again expressing a link between the traditional language of ontology and the language of relationship.

In considering whether or not particular formation activities are effective in promoting perseverance in ministry after ordination, this passage is relevant: "Balance is needed in the life of the priest: the priestly life is about being and doing. It appears that those who have left failed to make a 'presumption for perseverance and permanence' which is the proper response to the sacerdotal character received at ordination" (Toups, 2004:51). One danger that can be seen in some priests who may affirm the value of permanence in ministry is that their focus is so much on what they do that they lose sight of who they are. This functionalism is a concern in considering the value of perseverance (Toups, 2004:91).

Soon after the Council, in 1972, Yves Congar had already begun to reflect on the impact of Vatican II's teaching on the theology of the presbyterate. Recognizing the limits of the triple offices of Christ, exercised by the lay faithful and the ordained, Congar saw in these the dignity of all Christians as well as the ordained, and their apostolic mission, too (Congar, 1972:173–174). Congar's view of the role of the ordained priest or bishop focuses on his relationship to the People of God, representing Christ the Head — an expression he attributes to Pope Pius XII as well as Vatican II. He wrote that the "presidency of the community" is a key role of the presbyter brought out by the Council and immediate post-Conciliar theology (Congar, 1972:174).

Congar (1972:176) offered a correction for an ecclesiological text he had written in 1953, and wrote: "As to terminology, it is worth noting that the decisive coupling is not 'priesthood/laity,' as I used it in *Jalons* (the 1953 text), but rather 'ministries/modes of community service.'" Congar (1972:177–178) also called for a view of ordained ministry and lay ministry (his view of ministry

was very broad) starting not from the hierarchy called to build the community, but starting from the community, from which ministers are called.

Commenting on the ancient practice of the calling of a priest or bishop by the community, sometimes against his will, Congar (1972:179) wrote: “Today the inverse holds true: one is careful to respect the liberty of the consecrated minister and leaves the community unconsulted.” While Congar does not argue for the abandonment of the freedom of the minister, he does call for more consideration of “the exact nature of vocation to the ministry, (involving) the link between ministry and community” (Congar, 1972:179). It is in this context that Congar (1972:180) advocates for a renewal of the understanding of ordination, linking it not to the acquisition of a power, as happened from the twelfth century on, but to a process that begins with election and ends with taking “up a certain place, or better a certain function, *ordo* in the community and at its service.”

A different view of the permanence of priesthood can be seen in the writing of Gaillardetz (2003:38–39), who comments on the work of J. Zizioulas and J. Puglisi and argues that the focus of ordained ministry should be neither the power to celebrate the sacraments (especially the Eucharist), as in the scholastic vision, nor the reception of the power to act from the congregation, as in the Protestant understanding. Rather, he holds that “ordination brings the one being ordained into a fundamentally new ecclesial relationship, beyond that established by Christian initiation.” Going back to the preaching of St. Augustine on his relationship with the people he was ordained to serve and also to ordination rituals of the early Western Church, Gaillardetz sees that new and enduring relationships are established by ordination. He argues that, rather than abandoning the ontological notion that underlies the discussion of the permanent character associated with baptism, confirmation and holy orders, the task for today is to “shift to a ‘relational ontology’ in which attention is drawn not to the isolated individual, but to the person-in-relation” (Gaillardetz, 2003:40). He supports permanence in ordained ministry, without falling into the rigid use of scholastic terms. Affirming the ontological effects on the person in ordination (as well as baptism and confirmation), he writes that “any such ‘ontological change’ is grounded not in the conferral of powers on an individual but on the reconfiguration of the person into a new ecclesial relation” (Gaillardetz, 2003:40)

We see here not a denial of the powers of the priest, but an understanding that his powers are rooted in his relationship with the Church (Gaillardetz, 2003:40–41). He expresses these relationships in Trinitarian language, acknowledging that it is by the power of the Holy Spirit that the Church is the Body of Christ and that her members can exercise their gifts at the service of the community. Gaillardetz (2003:41) also offers a more positive understanding of “power,”

seeing that the power to preach and live out the Gospel is the fundamental power given to all Christians by baptism, and that this vision needs to illuminate a discussion of the powers given to the ordained. He writes: “Any new empowerment, beyond that oriented toward our communion discipleship, must be strictly a function of our entrance into some new ecclesial relationship. Power cannot be considered apart from a concrete ecclesial relationship” (Gaillardetz, 2003:41).

Downey also looks at the ordained ministry through the lens of relationships. In looking at tensions between lay ministers and ordained ministers, he points out that both groups tend to focus more on what they do than on who they are, in looking for what distinguishes them, putting theology and spirituality to the side in both cases: “In my view this position is untenable and its consequences, both remote and immediate, are disastrous” (Downey, 2003:9). Commenting on the servant-leader model of priesthood (and of lay ministry), Downey (2003:11) sees that this model, taken by itself, can lead to the priest becoming a “doer unto death.” He writes: “For our purposes, the priest of the future might best be understood as a Servant Leader who is at one and the same time Tender of the Word” (a term he borrows from D. Cozzens).

Downey (2003:13) argues that, rather than begin with what is distinct among the different ministries, the most important thing is to begin with the common roots in baptism of all Christian identity and ministry, in Word, liturgy and ecclesial communion. Seeing that all ministerial identity finds its basis in baptism, he finds the specificity of the minister’s identity in relationships that reflect the Trinity: “Ministerial identity may be discerned within the context of relationships: with the Body of Christ, the Church; with Christ himself through the gift of the Holy Spirit; with other ministers; with the bishop. It is an identity grounded in relationships with others, more than in what the minister does” (Downey, 2003:20). The formation programmes being considered in this study, some perhaps more than others, seek to support this foundation in relationships as the central element in ordained ministry.

Rausch (2003:59–60) comments on two Vatican documents from the 1990s treating the relationship of clergy and laity: the 1997 instruction from several dicasteries, entitled “Some questions regarding collaboration of nonordained faithful in priests’ sacred ministry,” and the 1999 letter from the Congregation for the Clergy, entitled “The priest: teacher of the word, minister of the sacraments, leader of the community.” Regarding the former, he comments that “the instruction betrays the familiar tendency to see the Church as the realm of the clergy and the world as that of the laity.” In the latter he finds no clear indication as to how ordained ministers are to “serve the priesthood of all the faithful.” He argues for a foundational identity of the ordained minister to undergird his work. Like Gaillardetz (2003), he applies the traditional language of sacramental character to the priest’s “new relation” with the Church that is established

by ordination, so that “[h]enceforth in exercising a sacramental ministry the priest is able to act in the name of the Church, and thus in the person of Christ” (Rausch, 2003:63–64).

In considering a theology of the identity of the presbyter, focused on parish ministry, Wood (2003:175–177) does not deny the importance of the priest’s role as a sacramental ministry. Rather, she argues:

The point is that presbyteral identity is broader than priestly identity, even though the two terms are often used interchangeably. Priestly identity is concerned with the ability to offer sacrifice, to represent Christ and the Church... Presbyteral identity, on the other hand, requires attention to the kingly/shepherding and prophetic offices which are regularly exercised within the parochial life of the Church, even if exceptions and exemptions exist.

In particular, Wood (2003:177) calls for deeper reflection on the relationship of presbyters to their bishops, as well as on a theology of parish. Recognizing that not all bishops are diocesan bishops and not all priests are diocesan or have parish assignments, Wood (2003:178) recognizes that looking at the relationship between priest and parish will not speak to the reality of all presbyters, and yet “it does begin to fill out what was missing in Vatican II, that is, a theology of ordained ministry that corresponds to a level of ecclesiality.” Although Vatican II stresses the importance of the local Church, gathered around the bishop, the real-life experience of most Catholics focuses on parish life. Thus, according to Wood (2003:180), it is essential to place the theological understanding of presbyters in the context of their relationship with the bishop and the parish.

Like Rausch and Gaillardetz, Wood (2003:181) maintains that sacramental ministry, while central to the life of the presbyter, cannot be the centre of his identity, but rather relationship. In particular, since so much of sacramental ministry is shared by the bishop, she argues, it is his relationship to the bishop and to the portion of the local Church he serves that identifies the presbyter. Rather than focusing on the ways the priest is less than a bishop, considering the meaning of his relationship to the parish allows a more positive view of his identity (Wood 2003:182).

Wood (2003:186) writes: “A presbyter’s mission to his parish is to enable that parish to be apostolic, not only in the sense that it professes apostolic faith, but also in the sense that the parish is sent to bear witness to Christ in charity. A parish priest’s identity flows from his mission to his parish community.” She connects all of this to the parish’s identity as a baptismal as well as eucharistic community. Certainly, Wood’s argument calls for great focus in seminary formation on preparing seminarians to enter into these relationships after ordination.

In an article examining the identity of the priest as expressed in the teaching of Pope John Paul II, Ferraro (2006:777–787) links the work of the Holy Spirit in the Eucharist to the work of the Holy Spirit in the ordination of a priest, going back to the teaching of Trent, to see its significance for the Church of the twenty-first century. Ferraro (2006:778–781) reviews the teaching of the Council of Trent and of Pope Paul VI on the meaning of transubstantiation that transforms the Eucharistic species of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ and writes:

Every theological explanation that seeks a certain understanding of this mystery, to be in accord with Catholic faith, must firmly hold that in the objective reality, independently from our own mind, the bread and the wine have ceased to exist after the consecration, so that from that moment they are the adorable Body and Blood of the Lord, in order to truly present before us under the sacramental species of bread and wine, as the Lord has willed, in order to give himself to us as nourishment (Ferraro, 2006:781).<sup>15</sup>

There is an analogy here with what happens in ordination. Ferraro (2006:782) does not pretend that the newly ordained priest's substance is changed, as occurs in the Eucharistic consecration. However, there is what he refers to as “not a weak analogy to the Eucharistic consecration; it is in fact also a mystery” (Ferraro, 2006:782).<sup>16</sup> He goes on to describe the essential changes that occur in the priest: sanctifying grace, sacramental character and the power to exercise his ministry. This epicletic view of the meaning of ordination could be helpful for theological reflection on the meaning of priesthood today.

With regard to priestly character, Dulles (1997:12) takes a position similar to that which Gaillardetz would later express with regard to the presbyter's life in relationship, as he refers to both the functional and ontological dimensions of the sacramental seal. Ordination changes the new priest internally but also establishes him in a new relationship of service to the community of the faithful. He writes: “Ordination imparts a new relationship not only to Christ but also to other members of the body of Christ.” He goes on to address directly the question of whether ordination is “absolute or relative.” Dulles (1997:13) takes the position that both descriptions contain elements of truth. Ordination is relative, insofar as it establishes the new presbyter in a relationship to the Church. At the same time, a priest is a priest even if circumstances call for him to be moved to a different diocese or placement, which would make ordination absolute. Here again Dulles sees the relationship between priest and people as key to understanding his very identity.

A key element in Dulles' view of the presbyterate is the priest as a disciple of Christ. In describing the discipleship of priests, he writes:

Priestly ministry as we find it in the gospels is not just a job, a profession requiring a limited number of hours on duty, with a steady salary and assured periods of rest and recreation. Although time must be made for prayer and silence, the vocation is a total one, so that the priest is always in some sense on duty (Dulles, 1997:63).

We see in Dulles a definition of the priesthood which is helpful for our discussion, coming from Archbishop D. Pilarczyk's intervention at the 1990 Synod of Bishops:

The priest [i.e., presbyter] is a member of the Christian faithful who has been permanently configured by Christ through holy orders to serve the Church, in collaboration with the local bishop, as representative and agent of Christ, the head of the Church, and therefore as representative and agent of the Church community before God and the world (Dulles, 1997:14).

As Dulles notes, we see here the connection between priestly identity, the permanent nature of the presbyterate (priestly character), and the priest's relationship to Christ and to his fellow Christians. Although the grace needed to fulfil his responsibilities comes with ordination, a priest cannot be successful in reaching holiness without his own efforts. Dulles (1997:65) expresses this paradoxical truth succinctly: "Priestly office is both a gift and a task. If we neglect the task, the gift will not profit us."

In addition to the theological work since Vatican II, there have also been many studies conducted of the attitudes of priests. In a study conducted in 2001–2002, Hoge and Wenger (2003:2–3) replicated and updated studies of the attitudes of diocesan and religious priests in the US which had been done in 1970, 1981 and 1985. Looking at these studies together allows for analysis of trends across three decades. They also considered data from a study of US priests published by the *Los Angeles Times* in the midst of the sexual abuse crisis in 2002.

Hoge and Wenger (2003:10–11) describe the shift from a "cultic" model to a "servant-leader" model of priesthood in the wake of Vatican II. "A priest's distinctiveness now came from his spiritual and institutional leadership within the community, not just as a matter of ontological difference from holy orders" (Hoge & Wenger, 2003:11). In describing the beginning of the apparent swing back to the cultic model in the 1980s, they point out that "we must clarify that the documents of Vatican II were not uniform or decisive in preferring the servant-leader model. Support for both models is clear in the conciliar documents" (Hoge & Wenger, 2003:13)

Hoge and Wenger (2003:23) considered areas where priests of different ages criticized their seminary formation. It is noteworthy that younger priests in 2001 were much less likely than older

priests to fault their seminaries for not helping them know how to work with people. Even though in other responses they seemed to have a more cultic view of priesthood, younger priests seemed to feel well prepared by their seminaries for the core activities of the servant-leader model.

Palacios Alcántara (2016:9) writes with concern about the problem of priests and consecrated men and women leaving the priesthood and religious life after ordination or final vows. He defines “vocational fidelity”<sup>17</sup> as linked first to a commitment that has been made and “humanly and freely accepted.”<sup>18</sup> (Palacios Alcántara, 2016:33.) He goes on to indicate that the person making this commitment needs to be capable of an honest commitment and needs to have the capacity to make that commitment (Palacios Alcántara, 2016:33). Furthermore, the perseverance in priesthood or religious life needs to be lifelong and total: “Vocational fidelity implies with total clarity faithfulness until death ... including also a sense of living intensity to commitments stably acquired”<sup>19</sup> (Palacios Alcántara, 2016:33–34.)

Although his text is focused primarily on formation for religious life in Europe and Latin America and does not deal specifically with the seminary formation activities being considered in the present text, Palacios Alcántara (2016:200) offers suggestions for the qualities that a novice or a seminarian needs in order to make a lifelong commitment: “In order to fulfil the perpetual fundamental option in religious profession or in ordination, the consecrated person and the priest must be psychologically and spiritually mature.”<sup>20</sup> After considering the different dimensions of this maturity, he adds: “The best guarantee of the firmness and stability of the option is that it has been taken with all due seriousness and responsibility after a process of human and supernatural maturation”<sup>21</sup> (Palacios Alcántara 2016:200.)

### **2.9.2 Ordination liturgy**

Before considering some of the ways in which the theology of priesthood being considered is expressed in the guiding document for seminaries and dioceses in the United States, the fifth edition of the *Program of Priestly Formation*, it appears worthwhile to look at the way the ordination liturgy of the Roman Church presents the meaning of this sacrament today. “The rite of ordination does not simply suggest that a man has now received new functions in the Church; rather, it manifests a man whose life has been changed and transformed” (O’Keefe, 1999:7). The premise of O’Keefe’s 1999 text is a theological reflection on the meaning of the priesthood based on the prayers and gestures of the Catholic ordination rite. In this work, which itself could be considered practical and theological, he looks at the words and actions of the rite in terms of what they say about the priesthood.

The Catholic rite of ordination has at its centre the laying on of hands by the ordaining bishop, but also includes rites that give the man being ordained a new identity, especially as he lies prostrate during the Litany of the Saints, and as he is vested with a stole and chasuble, and as his hands are anointed with Chrism and he is welcomed into the brotherhood of the presbyterate with the sign of peace. “He has a new identity, a new focused purpose to his life, a new being” (O’Keefe, 1999:8).

As O’Keefe (1999:49) reflects on the priest’s promise of obedience to his bishop and his successors, he points out that this obedience is connected to who the priest is because of ordination, to his “own fundamental identity, his relationship with his bishop, and his freely chosen subordination of his own plans to the needs of the Church in fulfilment of its evangelizing and unifying mission.” The concepts of identity and free choice of the priest to submit himself to the Church’s needs connect to the idea of the permanence of ministry and to the need for the ordained minister to be committed for life, because his identity has been marked by holy orders.

The presbyterate welcomes the new priest into its midst in a number of moments during the ordination rite: in the examination of the candidate before ordination, in the laying on of hands by all of the priests present (after the bishop), in the vesting with stole and chasuble by a fellow priest, and in the sign of peace (O’Keefe, 1999:52–53). Several of the programmes being considered in this study, especially priestly support groups and pastoral year, have as their purpose to build bonds of fraternity which support the permanent incorporation into this fraternity of priests.

O’Keefe, who was rector of a large US seminary when he wrote his book, comments that a concern expressed frequently by bishops is the lack of participation in the life of the presbyterate by the newly ordained (O’Keefe, 1999:53). He also mentions Jesus Caritas and other support groups as instruments that successful priests have found helpful in their ministry, in response to the specific call of Vatican II for priests to help each other as brothers (O’Keefe, 1999:60).

O’Keefe insists on the intimate relationship between ordained ministry and the priesthood of all the faithful. “Ordained service to the People of God, therefore, must begin with a profound sense of respect for the people we serve through our pastoral leadership” (O’Keefe, 1999:66). The relationship between priest and people is powerfully expressed in the fourth question in the interrogation of the candidate for ordination, which asks him if he is prepared to “consecrate” his “life to God for the salvation of his people” (O’Keefe, 1999:64). Here there is evidence in the rite of the total gift of himself which the Catholic priest is called to make, linked specifically to the spiritual welfare of the Christian people. The present study intends to examine whether

programmes required or encouraged by Catholic seminaries help priests to be faithful to that commitment.

The first and last promises made by the man being ordained a priest speak of exercising his office “without fail” and of consecrating his “life to God” — both notions that connect to the permanence of the commitment being made (O’Keefe, 1999:89). Furthermore, the prayer of ordination twice asks for those being ordained to receive the gift of faithfulness to their call (O’Keefe, 1999:91). Similarly, the prayer that accompanies the anointing with Chrism asks God to “preserve” the newly ordained in the ministry (O’Keefe, 1999:92).

As men are ordained to the presbyterate, the ritual of ordination expresses clearly the total commitment they are making and implores God’s help for them to be faithful to it for their whole lives. Ordination puts the new priest in a unique relationship with the bishop, with his fellow presbyters and deacons and with the entire priestly people. O’Keefe’s study of the liturgy provides us with additional material to assist in our reflection on the meaning of the priesthood for which US seminaries are preparing men, which we will continue after reviewing the *Program of Priestly Formation, fifth edition*.

### **2.9.3 Program of Priestly Formation**

The most complete magisterial text relating to the presbyterate in the years since the Council was certainly *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, John Paul II’s 1992 apostolic exhortation. Since it forms the basis of the *Program of Priestly Formation, fifth edition (PPF)*, two specific passages of John Paul will be considered, before moving on to the document of the US Bishops Conference. Pope John Paul II (1992:§70) expresses the concept of the permanence of priestly ministry in relation to the priest’s configuration to Jesus: “The priest is marked permanently and indelibly in his inner being as a minister of Jesus and of the Church. He comes to share in a permanent and irreversible way of life and is entrusted with a pastoral ministry which, because it is rooted in his being and involves his entire life, is itself permanent.”

Here can be seen the argument for permanence in ministry, from the perspective of the priest’s relationship both with Christ and with the Church. “The priest’s fundamental relationship,” writes John Paul II (1992:§16), “is to Jesus Christ, Head and Shepherd. Indeed, the priest participates in a specific and authoritative way in the ‘consecration/anointing’ and in the ‘mission’ of Christ (cf. Luke 4:18–19).” But he goes on: “The priest’s relation to the Church is inscribed in the very relation which the priest has to Christ, such that the ‘sacramental representation’ to Christ serves as the basis and inspiration for the relation of the priest to the Church” (John Paul II, 1992:§16).

The theology of priesthood undergirding the US Bishops' norms for priestly formation can be found in a chapter entitled "The nature and mission of ministerial priesthood" (USCCB, 2006:8). The first three sections of this chapter present the Trinitarian, Christological, and ecclesiological "foundations" for priesthood and priestly formation (USCCB, 2006:8–10). The mission of the priest is presented in such a way that he is called by the Father, in the Son, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to bring the love of God to the world. In that Trinitarian configuration, the priest lives out his mission in the world (USCCB, 2006:8). The Bishops' text (2006:9) also treats the priest's configuration to Christ: "Configured to Christ, Head and Shepherd of the Church, and intimately united as co-workers of the bishops, priests are commissioned in a unique way to continue Christ's mission as prophet, priest, and king." Finally, the priest's nuptial relationship to the Church is presented as rooted in his relationship with Christ, and expressed not only with regard to the local Church but to the Church universal as well (USCCB, 2006:9).

After presenting these foundational concepts, the USCCB (2006:10) points out that priesthood is not lived in isolation, but in relationship with the bishop and with the local presbyterate — even if these relationships have some differences for diocesan and religious priests. The text powerfully expresses the importance of relationships with brother priests: "This 'communitarian form' also means that priests ought to develop and foster bonds of fraternity and cooperation among themselves, so that the reality of the presbyterate may take hold of their lives" (USCCB, 2006:10).

The *PPF* (USCCB, 2006:12) addresses the way of life of the priest, connecting his call to holiness to his relationship to Christ and to the good of the Church: "Priestly life lived in configuration to Jesus Christ, Head and Shepherd, must necessarily manifest and give witness to the radicalism of the Gospel. In other words, priests are called to a way of life that gives evident and transparent witness to the power of the Gospel at work in their lives." The *PPF* goes on to articulate this way of life, by expressing the need for attention to the three *munera* (priest, prophet, king), prayer and commitment to the liturgy, union with Christ, obedience, communion with bishop and fellow priests (and religious community when appropriate), celibacy well lived as "reflection of the virginal love of Christ for the Church," thanksgiving for God's gifts manifested in generosity towards others, a missionary attitude, and a concern for vocations (USCCB, 2006:12–13).

The norms established by the *PPF* for the admission of candidates to seminary, while they vary depending on whether the candidate is applying for undergraduate (philosophy) or graduate (theology) seminary, speak to the basic conditions needed in a man, in order to be able to take on, freely and capably, the responsibilities of the priesthood. Some of these include basic human maturity and the ability to be in healthy relationships, a demonstrated capacity for chaste celibacy, no evidence of criminal sexual behaviour, the absence of serious pathologies, the tools to handle

money responsibly, and a physical exam (USCCB, 2006:24–27). While there are many other conditions required of a candidate, these give a flavour for the basic moral, emotional and spiritual health required of a candidate and point to the need to have the basic human material before real formation for the priesthood can take place.

As the *PPF* prepares to describe the specific norms for the four areas of formation, there is a succinct description of these four dimensions:

The goal is the development not just of a well-rounded person, a prayerful person, or an experienced pastoral practitioner but rather one who understands his spiritual development within the context of his call to service in the Church, his human development within the greater context of his call to advance the mission of the Church, his intellectual development as the appropriation of the Church's teaching and tradition, and his pastoral formation as participation in the active ministry of the Church (USCCB, 2006:29).

The whole formation programme of seminaries today should be organized in an integrated fashion, to assist in the development of human maturity, spiritual depth, intellectual acumen, and pastoral expertise. Together, appropriate growth in all of these dimensions (with evidence of that growth being available to the seminary staff and bishop) is expected to help the man preparing for priesthood to be able to accept the call to orders with confidence, to exercise his ministry with and for the People of God joyfully and lovingly, to share his priestly life with his bishop and fellow priests, and to be faithful for life to the commitments made at ordination.

While it is beyond the scope of the present chapter to examine in detail the norms for the ongoing formation of priests, it is worthy of note that the *PPF* (USCCB, 2006:113) calls for seminaries to prepare future priests for a life of continuing formation: “The theologate ought to lay the foundations for the ongoing formation of priests across a lifetime of ministry.” Specific recommendations are made by the *PPF* (USCCB, 2006:114–115):

A newly ordained priest who begins his first pastoral assignment and the process of ongoing formation should expect to find the following elements: Formal and informal welcoming by the diocesan bishop and presbyterate; a first pastor who is sensitive to the needs of the newly ordained and able and willing to offer advice and direction; a spiritual director; some group interaction with peers to reflect on the process of transition and the development of priestly identity and sources of support, a mentor, as considered appropriate or necessary, with whom the newly ordained can reflect on ministry and life as a priest.

While this investigation focuses on the impact on perseverance in ministry of programmes and activities which take place during the seminarian's studies or immediately before or after them, any of these elements of ongoing formation could have great impact as well.

Schuth (2016:27–32) studied the various editions of the *PPF*, and she found that, as time has passed, each successive edition has relied less directly on the documents of Vatican II, and fewer of the members of the committees writing each successive edition have taken part or even have had a recollection of the Council. She writes:

The teachings of the council were meant to expand the vision of the church's self-understanding in how it proclaims the Gospel and engages the world in its own transformation.... Clerical leadership is singular in its power to shape the life of the Christian community and to engage the wisdom and commitment of lay ecclesial ministers and parishioners (Schuth, 2016:32).

In looking at each programme being considered, it will be important to see it in relationship with the specific norms of the *PPF*, but also in terms of the mission given to seminaries by Vatican II. While these are not and should not be mutually exclusive, the different points of emphasis will be seen to be reflected differently in different programmes.

#### **2.9.4 2016 Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis**

In December 2016 a new *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis* was published by the Holy See, updating the previous document guiding the formation of priests around the world, and in particular, the development of national norms and guidelines for seminary formation. This document, *The Gift of the Priestly Vocation* (Congregation for the Clergy, 2016:1) is a complete revision of the previously published *Ratio Fundamentalis*, published in 1985, which itself was only an updating of the original post-conciliar document published in 1970.

The Congregation for the Clergy (2016:3) presents priestly formation as an integrated whole, “which takes account of the four dimensions of formation proposed by *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (human, spiritual, intellectual, pastoral). Together, these dimensions give shape and structure to the identity of the seminarian and the priest, and make him capable of that ‘gift of self to the Church’, which is the essence of pastoral charity.”

The Congregation for the Clergy (2016:4) considers in the initial pages of its document on priestly formation the importance of formation for the priesthood and ongoing formation after ordination. In terms of the preparation for priesthood before ordination, *The Gift of the Priestly Vocation* (Congregation for the Clergy, 2016:4–5) is novel in dividing the preparation process into stages,

including a new preparatory “propaedeutic stage” — which is presented as required — as well as new descriptions for the time of study of philosophy and theology (“discipleship” and “configuration” stages) and a new “pastoral” stage, or the “stage of vocational synthesis,” which is presented as occurring “between the end of formation in the Seminary and priestly ordination, with the purpose of helping the candidate to acquire the necessary understanding in preparation for it.”

A significant observation of the Congregation for the Clergy (2016:15) with regards to the vocational discernment of converts to Catholicism is relevant to the preparation of such candidates to making a permanent commitment to priesthood: “It is necessary to assess carefully the interval between Baptism or Christian conversion and entry into the Seminary, since it is not unusual to encounter confusion between the *sequela Christi*<sup>22</sup> and the call to ministerial priesthood.” Another issue that is important to consider carefully, according to *The Gift of the Priestly Vocation* (Congregation for the Clergy, 2016:16), is the case of seminarians from other countries seeking to be formed for the priesthood in another country, a common phenomenon in the United States: “It is important to pay attention to their personal history and to the background from which they have come, and to assess carefully the motivations for their vocational choice, establishing a dialogue with their Church of origin whenever possible.”

The Congregation for the Clergy (2016:18) addresses the question of the distinction between the priesthood of all the faithful and the ministerial priesthood:

The entire People of God ... participates in the saving work of Christ.... The unity and dignity of the baptismal vocation precede any differentiation in ministry.... The ministerial priesthood, therefore, is understood, both in its own specific nature and in its biblical and theological foundations, as a service to the glory of God and to the brothers and sisters in their baptismal priesthood.

The text here puts in first place what the priest shares with his brothers and sisters in Christ before what distinguishes him, an important clarification.

The Congregation for the Clergy (2016:19) expresses the relationship between grace and the actions of formators and of the man himself, as he prepares for ordination and then lives out the priesthood:

The priestly vocation begins with the gift of divine grace, which is then sealed in sacramental ordination. This gift is expressed over time through the mediation of the Church, which calls and sends in the name of God. At the same time, the personal

response develops through a process, which begins with an awareness of the gift received, and matures gradually with the help of priestly spirituality, until it becomes a stable way of life, with its own obligations and rights, and a specific mission accepted by the one ordained.

While saying little specifically about the permanence of the commitment made at priestly ordination, the Congregation for the Clergy (2016:21) insists on the absolute nature of Christ's self-giving on behalf of humanity and the priest's conformation to him: "The priest is therefore called to form himself so that his heart and his life are conformed to the Lord Jesus, in this way becoming a sign of the love God has for each person."

National and regional conferences of bishops are the bodies that have the direct responsibility to establish binding norms for seminaries in their territory. It will be necessary for national or regional conferences of bishops to prepare updated versions of their own national norms for priestly formation (in the United States, the *Program or priestly formation*), to ensure that they are in accord with the *Ratio Fundamentalis* (Congregation for the Clergy, 2016:7–9). In considering some of the specific elements of continuity and change in the Vatican document, it is important to bear this in mind, since the US Bishops are in the process of preparing the updated *PPF*, which will implement the *Ratio Fundamentalis* in this country.

In describing the newly required propaedeutic stage of formation for the priesthood, which is to last between one and two years, the Congregation for the Clergy (2016:28) writes: "Its principal objective is to provide a solid basis for the spiritual life and to mature a greater self-awareness for personal growth." After listing some of the activities of this experience, the Congregation for the Clergy (2016:29) indicates that each national conference can adapt this stage, depending on the "culture and experiences of the local Church." It is noteworthy that the document of the Congregation makes no mention of differentiation of this propaedeutic experience depending on the age or the previous studies of the seminarian. One of the formation activities to be considered is the use of a "spiritual year," which in chapter three will be described as an attempt to accomplish what will now be required in the propaedeutic stage of all formation programmes. This study seeks to provide helpful information for those working on the revision of the *PPF* for the United States, offering some insight into the "experiences of the local Church" (Congregation for the Clergy, 2016:29).

While some of the language describing the phases of philosophy and theology is new ("discipleship" and "configuration"), the basic description of what needs to happen remains rather unchanged from previous norms (Congregation for the Clergy, 2016:29–33). The *Ratio* clearly describes expectations of the man and of the Church as a seminarian moves from philosophy to

theology, linked by the document with admission to candidacy for Holy Orders: “Since it presupposes a responsible decision on the part of the seminarian, admission among the candidates for Orders is an invitation for him to continue with his formation, in configuring himself to Christ the Shepherd, through a formal recognition on the part of the Church” (Congregation for the Clergy, 2016:31).

Another novelty in the new document is the description of the “Pastoral Stage (or Vocational Synthesis)” (Congregation for the Clergy, 2016:33–35). The document presumes that this “vocational synthesis” takes place after ordination to the diaconate but before priestly ordination, but there is an understanding that each episcopal conference should “determine the formative programmes in preparation for diaconal and priestly ordination” (Congregation for the Clergy 2016:34). The evidence in this investigation, in particular as it pertains to the experience of the pastoral internship year and to CPE, will hopefully aid those who will develop the US Bishops’ new norms for priestly formation.

The Congregation for the Clergy (2016:34) describes clearly the permanent commitment required of the man to be ordained a priest: “the candidate is asked to declare freely, consciously and *definitively* [emphasis mine] his intention to be a priest, having received diaconal ordination.” In describing the recommendation of a seminarian for ordination to the transitional diaconate, the Congregation for the Clergy (2016:85–86) indicates that the candidate must be considered suitable for priesthood: “It is fundamental to recall that an assessment for conferral of the transitional diaconate implies potentially a judgment about suitability for priesthood: no one is to be admitted to the diaconate *ad experimentum*.” However, if the pastoral stage/vocational synthesis called for by the Congregation for the Clergy (2016:33–35) is normally taking place after departure from the seminary, it remains unclear how information about the seminarian’s pastoral aptitude and effectiveness, as well as his adaptation to life in a parish, is foreseen as feeding into the discernment process (for the candidate and for the Church) before ordination to the transitional diaconate or subsequent ordination to the priesthood. Again, it is hoped that this study’s examination of some current programmes’ effectiveness might illuminate the decision-making process of those charged with drawing up specific norms for the United States.

## **2.10 Conclusion and perspectives**

### **2.10.1 Conclusion**

In this chapter we have reviewed many strands of theological understanding of the presbyterate in the Catholic Church, beginning with scriptural foundations, tracing a number of early Church and patristic sources, followed by a consideration of theologians across many centuries and the

magisterium of popes and councils. The development of positions that relate directly to the meaning of ordination and the permanence of presbyteral ministry has featured prominently. The language used to describe this permanence has varied over time, but the concept that a man is ordained a priest forever has endured from the earliest times.

Various images have been considered which seek to describe the permanence of the priestly commitment. Vanhoye (2009a:45), in describing the faithfulness of Jesus as presented in the Letter to the Hebrews, is clear that it is by definition permanent and eternal, which opens the door to seeing its imitation in the ordained clergy as being called to permanence as well. The images used by Paul in the Letter to the Philippians and the Second Letter to Timothy also offer important insights about the importance of being conformed to Christ's humble acceptance of suffering, as the way of sharing also in his glory, about the meaning of sacrificing for the good of the community the minister is serving, and being faithful precisely because God is faithful.

Clement of Rome (ca. 97, 1994:17), before the end of the first century, wrote against unjustly removing a presbyter or *episkopos* from office, already offering evidence of the understanding that the commitment and the responsibility of the one who leads and serves in the Church is binding forever. While many early councils and patristic sources refer to the enduring nature of the call to the episcopate and presbyterate, Augustine of Hippo (ca. 400, 1994a:414; c. 401, 1994b:412) takes this position to a deeper level, offering comparisons to military orders and to marriage for the perpetual mark placed upon the bishop and presbyter, and clearly indicating that this mark is for the good of the faithful, so that they can be sure of the effectiveness of the sacramental actions of the ministers. Already, with Augustine's awareness that this mark is for the good of the people and with his use of the image of matrimony, there is an indication that this enduring mark which characterizes the priest has a relational value, establishing him in a permanent relationship with the Church as Body of Christ and Bride of Christ.

As the understanding of the permanence of the priestly commitment continued to develop, the view of the priesthood as being a vocation specifically from God and not just the community developed as well. Gregory of Nazianzus (381, 1994:369) and Pope Anastasius II (Hünemann, 2012:127, §356) are two fourth-century Fathers of the Church who held that the reason for the unrepeatability of ordination is for the good of the people, so that they would not doubt the validity of the sacraments, even when celebrated by priests and bishops of doubtful sanctity or orthodoxy. While the term "ordination" develops in meaning over time and even whether presbyters and bishops share differently in the priestly identity, the particularity of the presbyterate and episcopate was a common point of teaching.

The lofty language used by John Chrysostom (1994:47–48) to describe the priesthood was aimed not so much to elevate the priest, but to put before the one considering the priesthood — in this case, Chrysostom was speaking of himself — how serious the responsibility is. This point has a definite bearing on formation for the priesthood today.

In subsequent centuries, there was a gradual focusing of the word *sacerdos* on the presbyter, as well as a narrowing of ordination to include the minor orders, seen as stepping stones to the priesthood, and the major orders of diaconate and presbyterate. We have seen that the question as to whether the episcopate is an order of its own would not be resolved until Vatican II. A salient aspect of the late medieval and scholastic treatment of the priesthood is the identification of the priesthood with the power to celebrate the sacraments, especially the Eucharist and penance (Power, 2003:103; Osborne, 1988:190).

It was really only with Wycliffe and Hus and then with the Protestant Reformation that there was any particular need to address those who formally denied the permanence of priestly ordination; this situation led to formal declarations of the perpetual nature of the sacramental character in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (cf. Hünemann, 2012:317–318, §1135–1136), culminating with the Council of Trent’s affirmation of the permanence of ordained ministry (Hünemann, 2012:423, §1767.)

In considering developments after Trent, it could be said that, while Catholic theology did not progress much in the succeeding centuries, because of the defensive posture the Church found herself in, there was great effort made to improve seminary formation, helping those preparing for priesthood and priests themselves to take more seriously the obligations connected to the high view of the meaning of holy orders which official teaching espoused. Popes Pius XI and Pius XII, at the same time as they reiterated traditional teaching about the priesthood, challenged priests to live their commitment coherently, and Pius XII, in particular, began to place the ministerial priesthood in a clearer relationship to the priesthood of all the faithful, if in a still tentative way (cf. Pius XI, 1935:§22; 1947b:§84–93).

The Second Vatican Council focused more on the meaning of the priesthood of the faithful and of the episcopacy than on what is proper to the presbyterate, but these very teachings served to express the meaning of the priesthood in relationship to the rest of the Church: to the priestly people, to the bishops, and to other members of the diocesan presbyterate. The Council does not deny the priest’s sacramental power, but focuses on the priest giving himself in self-giving love to the people he is called to serve (cf. Osborne 1988:209).

Several key ideas have emerged from this chapter's partial review of the history of ordination, which focused particularly on issues related to the permanence of the priestly commitment. While some recent theologians have argued for a less sacred view of the priesthood (such as Power, 2003:88), most of the writers cited have sought to apply the traditional categories in an appropriate way for the twenty-first century. While accepting the need for seminarians and priests to appropriate the sacerdotal character, Toups (2004:50–51) maintains that character has meaning insofar as it disposes the priest to serve the People of God faithfully and forever. With O'Collins and Jones (2010:276–277, 285) and Dulles (1997:11–14), it can be argued that the priesthood of the ordained is always at the service of the priesthood of all of the faithful, which bears a certain priority. At the same time, ministerial priesthood is a call from God, affirmed and confirmed by the Church: "Once a priest, always a priest" (O'Collins & Jones, 2010:287).

The language of relationship, which has been considered by a number of the theologians cited in this chapter, offers the best hope of integrating the ancient teaching, as the permanence of ordained ministry is linked to the good of the Church. Gaillardetz (2003:40–41) places the power of the priest in the context of his relationship of service to the People of God. Pope Francis (2013b:§104) expresses the way power should be exercised in the Church in a way that is relevant to this discussion:

Its key and axis is not power understood as domination, but the power to administer the sacrament of the Eucharist; this is the origin of its authority, which is always a service to God's people. This presents a great challenge for pastors and theologians, who are in a position to recognize more fully what this entails with regard to the possible role of women in decision-making in different areas of the Church's life.

According to the *PPF*, so firmly rooted in the teaching of John Paul II, the seminarian is a man preparing for lifelong ministry as a priest forever, precisely as he enters into a unique and permanent relationship with the Church — with the People of God, with his bishop, with his fellow priests. Going back to Augustine's image comparing the bond of marriage with that of the priesthood (ca. 401, 1994b:412), the priest's sharing in the eternal spousal relationship of Christ with the Church could be seen as the foundation for his character — the eternal seal that has changed him — not simply because of powers he has been granted by ordination, but because of a new and eternal relationship he has entered with the Church. Our consideration of the ordination rite also helps to put in focus not only the sacerdotal mission of the priest, but also its link to the Church he will serve, the bishop to whom he commits himself, and the presbyterate with whom he will share his priestly ministry. The epicletic nature of the ordination to the presbyterate — seen in the laying on of hands by the ordaining bishop and by the entire presbyterate — is a

reminder that, as proposed by Ferraro (2006:777–787), the Holy Spirit is the one who acts in the priest, both at his ordination and throughout his life of service, analogously to the work of the Spirit called forth to transform the bread and the wine in the Eucharist.

*The Gift of the Priestly Vocation: Ratio Fundamentalibus Institutiones Sacerdotalis* (Congregation for the Clergy, 2016:1–87) presents new ideas about the formation of men for the priesthood and about their continuing formation after ordination. The Congregation for the Clergy (2016:4) writes:

The fundamental idea is that Seminaries should form missionary disciples who are ‘in love’ with the Master, shepherds with ‘the smell of the sheep’, who live in their midst to bring the mercy of God to them. Hence, every priest should feel that he is a disciple on a journey, constantly needing an integrated formation, understood as a continuous configuration to Christ.

This chapter’s review of this new document has shown the potential this study offers for informing the decisions about how to apply the universal norms in the local churches. Indeed, “once a priest always a priest” (O’Collins & Jones 2010:287), but future priests must be prepared to appropriate the meaning of this permanent commitment, not simply as a power given to them — although they are given awesome power — but as a relationship of love and service into which they are initiated. At the same time as the priest is, by grace, put in relationship to Christ and the Church by ordination, he still needs to give himself to this mission if his ministry is to be successful. Once again, Dulles (1997:65) presents this truth beautifully: “Priestly office is both a gift and a task. If we neglect the task, the gift will not profit us.”

A word of caution from Pope Francis (2013b:§107) is helpful in preparing the way for the discussion of specific formation activities in the next chapter, as he stresses the importance of determining as soon as possible whether seminarians will be able to grasp this gift and fulfil the task:

On the other hand, despite the scarcity of vocations, today we are increasingly aware of the need for a better process of selecting candidates to the priesthood. Seminaries cannot accept candidates on the basis of any motivation whatsoever, especially if those motivations have to do with affective insecurity or the pursuit of power, human glory or economic well-being.

Determining the motivation of seminarians is essential to determining their preparation for lifelong, self-giving service to God and to the Church.

## 2.10.2 Perspectives

This chapter sought to clarify the theological problem and goal of this thesis, through a review of the development of Catholic theologies of priesthood across Christian history. This review has also aimed to make theological deductions, supporting the expectation that the ordained priest should persevere in ministry for life. The discussion in this chapter has clarified the theological problem by presenting a rationale for the permanence of priesthood, using language that can help seminarians prepare to make this commitment at ordination and can assist priests to remain faithful to it. The Catholic understanding of perseverance in ministry has been shown to make sense in view of the good of the People of God; the priest's commitment to God and to them is permanent, as he lives out a "continuous configuration to Christ" (Congregation for the Clergy, 2016:4).

As the next chapter investigates the specific formation activities to be considered in the present study, a further question to ask about each one is whether they prepare seminarians for this spousal relationship with the Church, the specific way in which they will as priests share in the priesthood of Jesus Christ. This question can be asked of the programmes as we consider the rationale for each one, and it can be asked again from a practical point of view as we review the data of the empirical research to be done. The programmes to be examined in the next chapter will make sense for the formation of priests to the extent that they help the seminarian to prepare, as a priest, to fulfil what Dulles describes as the "task," so that the "gift" might bear fruit.

Some words of Pope Francis illustrate how timely this emphasis on permanence of the priestly commitment is. He has repeatedly addressed the issue of permanent commitments in speaking to young people. In an address to seminarians and novices at World Youth Day in Brazil, Pope Francis (2013a) said:

I heard a seminarian, a good seminarian, who said that he wanted to serve Christ for 10 years, and then he would think about starting a different life.... This is dangerous! However, listen carefully: we are all, even the older people among us, we too, are under pressure from this 'culture of the temporary;' and this is dangerous because one does not put one's stakes on life once and for all. I marry as long as love lasts; I become a woman religious, but only for 'a little while,' 'a short time' and then I shall see; I become a seminarian in order to become a priest, but I don't know how the story will end. This is not right with Jesus! I am not reproaching you, I reproach this culture of the temporary, which hits us all, since it does us no good: because it is very hard today to made a definitive decision.

Francis' call away from the "culture of the temporary" aptly concludes this reflection on the permanence of the priestly call and helps to prepare for the review of formation activities that follows in the next chapter.

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<sup>1</sup> "sommo sacerdote misericordioso e degno di fede."

<sup>2</sup> "Considerando attentamente l'esito finale della loro vita, *imitatene la fede*."

<sup>3</sup> "Cristo degno di fede richiede la nostra adesione totale; Cristo misericordioso suscita la nostra piena fiducia."

<sup>4</sup> "Strumenti."

<sup>5</sup> "Nondimeno il loro ideale deve essere quello di somigliare il più possibile a Cristo, sommo sacerdote senza peccato, pieno di misericordia per in peccatori; deve essere quello di essere peccatori perdonati che non peccano più e hanno così il cuore completamente disponibile per la carità pastorale di Cristo."

<sup>6</sup> "I sacerdoti cristiani la debbono però rendere presente sacramentalmente nell'eucaristia, secondo il precetto de Gesù."

<sup>7</sup> "Per essere 'degnò di fede', il ministro di Cristo deve essere lui stesso pieno di fede e docile a Dio."

<sup>8</sup> Osborne uses the Greek name deliberately, in order to avoid an anachronistic identification with the modern orders of bishop, priest and deacon.

<sup>9</sup> In citing patristic and other ancient texts, an approximate date for the text will be noted, bef. (before), bet. (between) or ca. (circa), followed by the date of the modern translation being used. The dating for the original text will be that suggested by the translation being used.

<sup>10</sup> The bracketed phrases are presented in a footnote as more literal translations of the expressions used.

<sup>11</sup> It would seem that "order of presbyters" would be a better translation.

<sup>12</sup> Osborne here writes: "In the Carolingian period *sacerdos* refers as much to priest as to bishop, but most frequently to priest. In the eleventh century, *sacerdos* refers normally to priest." In paraphrasing, I have used presbyter instead of priest, to avoid the tautology.

<sup>13</sup> Since the time of Blessed Paul VI, there has been greater openness to married ministers from other ecclesial communities to enter the priesthood while remaining with their wives, either under the Pastoral Provision for former Anglican or Episcopalian clergy, and more recently Methodists and Presbyterians, established by Saint John Paul II in 1980, but which had precedents from the 1950s, for Lutherans, or under the norms of Pope Benedict XVI's establishment in 2009 of personal ordinariates for former Anglicans and Episcopalians (Filteau, 2012). Pope Francis has also made it easier for married priests of the Eastern Churches to serve in Western countries (Ieraci, 2014).

<sup>14</sup> As indicated in the Bibliography, this citation is from the Vatican Web Site and does not provide page numbers or section numbers.

<sup>15</sup> "Ogni spiegazione teologica che ricerchi una qualche intelligenza di questo mistero, per essere in accordo con la fede cattolica, deve ritenere fermemente che nella realtà oggettiva indipendentemente dalla nostra mente, il pane e il vino hanno cessato di esistere dopo la consacrazione, così che da quel momento sono il Corpo e il Sangue adorabili del Signore ad essere realmente presenti davanti a noi sotto le specie sacramentali del pane e del vino, come il Signore ha voluto per donarsi a noi in nutrimento."

<sup>16</sup> "non debole analogia alla trasustanziazione eucaristica, è anch'essa un mistero."

<sup>17</sup> "fidelidad vocacional"

<sup>18</sup> "compromiso contraído, humana y libremente aceptado"

<sup>19</sup> "la fidelidad vocacional implica con toda claridad una fidelidad hasta la muerte... incluye también un sentido de intensidad vivencial de los compromisos establemente adquiridos."

<sup>20</sup> “Para realizar la opción fundamental en la profesión y en la ordenación, la persona consagrada y el sacerdote han de estar psicológica y espiritualmente maduros.”

<sup>21</sup> “La mayor garantía de la firmeza y la estabilidad de la opción es que esta se haya tomado con la debida seriedad y responsabilidad después de un proceso de maduración humana y sobrenatural.”

<sup>22</sup> “following of Christ”

### **3 Chapter three: Formation activities: Inductive examination**

#### **3.1 Overview of the chapter**

The preceding chapter's historical overview of the theology of priestly ministry has set the foundation for the second of the research questions proposed at 1.1.3, which could be rephrased in this way: To what extent does an inductive examination — especially including theological reflection — of the background and rationale of six common formation activities justify their inclusion in seminary programmes? Here the second stage of the literature review described in 1.3.2 will take place. As indicated in chapter one, the process of “theological induction,” with the steps of “theological perception,” “theological reflection,” the (further) “formulation of the theological question,” and the “empirical-theological design” (van der Ven, 1998:120–128) will be conducted through the analysis of the literature that discusses the seven formation activities under consideration. The theological, canonical and pastoral rationale for each of these programmes will be examined. The description of each programme, based on available information, will fall in the category of “indirect perception” (van der Ven, 1998:123), based on what the qualitative review of the literature reveals about it. The “theological reflection” (van der Ven, 1998:123–125) at this stage will offer an initial process of theological dialogue, based on the theologies of the priesthood discussed in chapter two and the specific information gleaned in chapter three. This dialogue will further inform the theological question and research design (van der Ven, 1998:125–128), by adding questions unique to each activity in the study.

Chapter three of this study examines six different formation activities: Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE), spirituality or propaedeutic year, pastoral-year internships, priestly-fraternity groups (such as Emmaus or Jesus Caritas), Institute of Priestly Formation (IPF), and pastoral language immersion experiences. For each activity, this chapter will discuss its history, offer a basic description, and present its theological rationale and practical purpose. When available, applicable research on each formation activity will also be considered. The discussion of each formation activity will follow a similar structure as far as possible; the variety of available information about each activity will necessitate some differences in approach. A theological reflection on the use of each formation activity in seminary formation will follow, and the chapter will conclude by using the information gleaned from this inductive examination to add some narrative questions to the survey of priests in and out of ministry.

#### **3.2 Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE)**

Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) is a formation activity for ministers, with its roots in the work of Boisen (Powell, 2005:317). Powell (2005:17–321) presents a digest of Boisen's 1926

manifesto, which is recognized as the founding document for CPE. Boisen established the first hospital-based training programme in 1924, and he wanted to get support from seminary administrators, to require “a year of required clinical experience as the means of revitalizing their entire academic programmes” (Powell, 2005:17). Boisen (in Powell, 2005:18–319) was originally interested in enabling seminarians (originally all Protestant) to have the experience of working in mental hospitals, because of his conviction that mental illness needed as much attention from ministers as from doctors.

Boisen (cited by Powell, 2005:19) writes: “With few exceptions it is still possible for a student to go through the theological seminary and receive the stamp of approval without ever having studied the human personality either in health or in sickness, or the social forces that affect it.” Powell’s (2005:21) purpose in republishing a digest of Boisen’s article was to encourage its translation into more languages and to promote the acceptance of CPE in an expanded number of religious formation programmes around the world.

Hemenway (2005:23) offers a definition for CPE:

... an educational methodology that combines knowledge of psychology (who we are) with knowledge of theology (what we believe) with process education (how we learn) in order to prepare seminarians, clergy, and qualified lay people to provide effective interfaith spiritual care among the religious and social complexities of the modern world.

Some of the elements of CPE training include weekly didactic sessions and the presentation of cases by students; small groups meet to process the experiences once or twice per week (Hemenway, 2005:23). Hemenway (2005:23) describes the model as “action-reflection.” The purpose of the small group experience is not only to help students to develop their clinical skills, but also “to understand organizational and systems dynamics in an increasingly complex world” (Hemenway, 2005:23). CPE emphasizes forming ministers who can work in interfaith and cross-cultural situations (Hemenway, 2005:332).

A positive evaluation of a CPE experience is offered by Breathnach (2008:228) in a first-person article reflection. The author writes: “Nowhere more than in my experiences in the clinical environment of a major teaching hospital have my longing and searching for meaning and encounter with God been more challenged” (Breathnach, 2008:228.) While Breathnach is not a Catholic seminarian, she articulates well the importance of the process of theological reflection that seeks to find the real meaning of pastoral work and spirituality.

This search for meaning forms a crucial part of the CPE experience (Breathnach, 2008:228-229). While some patients have denied faith in God, Breathnach (2008:229) writes: “The search and the thirst for love and meaning in each patient’s suffering is universal.” Breathnach (2008:230) also discusses learning how to offer words to respond to patients’ needs when silent presence is not enough. Furthermore, participants in CPE learn how to respond to the rejection of those who do not want ministry, since offers of ministry can often be rejected, something for which seminarians and all future ministers need to be prepared (Breathnach, 2008:231).

Since the 1960s, CPE programmes have been common in Catholic seminaries. Schuth (2016:113, 175) reports that CPE, a programme that was once required by almost all Catholic seminaries in the United States, has declined in popularity among these institutions. Nine seminaries (out of 39 US theological seminaries) require a summer CPE experience as of 2016, and seven others offer it as an elective option (Schuth, 2016:113, 175). As recently as 2000, 24 seminaries required CPE for all seminarians in theology; since then the CPE requirement has often been replaced by other hospital ministry programmes, without the ecumenical component and without the same level of supervision (Schuth, 2016:31, 113). Schuth (2016:xix, 31) also indicates that the various editions of the *Program of Priestly Formation* hint at this diminishing reliance on CPE: although the first edition (1971) mentions CPE and the next three editions encourage it (1976, 1981, 1992), the current edition only includes CPE as one of many pastoral opportunities in use. The current *PPF* offers the following relevant guidance: “Seminaries have initiated students into pastoral experiences and reflection on them in a variety of ways: concurrent field placements, pastoral quarters or internships, clinical pastoral education, and diaconate internships. Whatever the setting, it is necessary that it facilitate learning” (USCCB, 2006:79).

One example of a replacement programme is the Spiritual Pastoral Ministry summer experience at St. Paul Seminary in Minnesota. The manual for the programme describes its purpose, as it relates to the healthcare aspects:

The goal of this programme is to help seminarians grow in their ministerial identity so as to become instruments of God’s healing in ministry to the sick and suffering. The seminarian develops pastoral skills in visiting the sick, integrating theological concepts with ministry and developing listening skills, viewed from a Catholic theological and formational perspective (St. Paul Seminary School of Divinity, Department of Pastoral Formation, 2013:7).

Another seminary offers a choice between CPE and a summer hospital immersion programme under the supervision of its pastoral department; those in charge of pastoral formation at this seminary report that they find increased maturity in participants after CPE (Clarke, 2011b:34).

One concern expressed about CPE programmes is the uneven formation of supervisors. In their 2009 study of the training of CPE supervisors, Ragsdale *et al.* (2009:1) found only three studies in 20 years that had attempted to study the preparation of these professionals who play a key role in the preparation of ministers. They (Ragsdale *et al.*, 2009:13) observe: “At this point ACPE (Association for Clinical Pastoral Education) lacks any kind of formal holding environment to help CPE supervisors doing supervisory education reflect on their own process of self-awareness, supervisory skill development, theoretical development, and on-going integration.”

Little (2010:1) studies the CPE model, comparing it to models of professional training and seeking ways to improve CPE “in the areas of entry, curriculum and competence assessment.” Little (2010:2) defines the result of professional education: “a person who has competently mastered the necessary propositional and practical knowledge has formed a professional identity including the integration of the values of public service and autonomy and can be trusted to practice with integrity.” While all these elements are essential for ministerial priesthood, the future priest’s development of an identity as a minister would seem to be the most directly connected to perseverance in ministry.

The timing of CPE — usually early in theological formation — may limit its benefits, as noted by Little (2010:3), who contends that CPE’s formative value differs at different points in the seminary curriculum. A deeper concern raised by Little (2010:3) is the inherent unfairness for all participants when some group members have very limited theological and pastoral preparation and others have a great deal of preparation and experience.

According to Little (2010:4), the “action/reflection method” used by CPE “is excellent for understanding the pastoral interaction but does not necessarily facilitate the further development of the propositional knowledge base.” He argues that much of the information shared during group supervisions sessions comes from the experiences of the participants themselves, so how much other participants learn depends on presenting participants’ knowledge and depth of reflection.

The validity of evaluations written by CPE supervisors is also a matter of concern: “These evaluations reflect the values of the supervisor and are not standard across supervisors or the various centres. Lacking standardization, there is no professionally acceptable common standard of competence” (Little, 2010:6.) Little (2010:7) suggests three ways to strengthen supervisors’ preparation and improve pastoral care: changing admission procedures and content in CPE programmes, clarifying standards, and increasing direct collaboration between CPE programmes and schools of theology. The *PPF* (USCCB, 2006:84) specifically mandates that supervisors receive proper formation: “Onsite supervisors should be carefully selected with an eye to their

dedication to the Church and respect for the priesthood. They should be taught the skills of pastoral supervision and evaluation.”

The *PPF* (USCCB, 2006:83) also calls for formation programmes not based in a seminary setting to be vetted, to ensure that they support formation to the Catholic priesthood. This document (USCCB, 2006:83) establishes norms that will help in determining the validity of objections raised against Catholic seminarians participating in CPE that will be relevant to some of the critiques of the use of CPE in Catholic seminary formation:

Seminaries and dioceses that make provision for onsite experiences are also responsible for ensuring that these experiences help seminarians develop skills and attitudes that will enhance their future priestly ministry and that, when ecumenical in nature, for example, CPE, are respectful of the Catholic teaching, especially on moral or ethical issues. It is the responsibility of the diocesan bishop, religious ordinary, and the rectors to ensure that the Catholic, sacramental dimension of pastoral care is integral to all such programmes in which seminarians participate.

Garrido (2010:30–34) examines several documents from the Holy See and USCCB to describe the role of theological field education. Some of the purposes of field ministry mentioned relate to the rationale for CPE and for the pastoral internship, as well as suggesting some concerns for both. The importance of good supervision can be an argument in favour or against CPE and the pastoral year internship, depending on the skills of the supervisor. Garrido (2010:32) also finds that “field education needs reflection,” which “is never considered optional in the documents but is a firm expectation.” The quality and true theological nature of the reflection done is something that can be better or worse depending on the site and the skills of the supervisor and the seminarian.

In his doctoral dissertation at Princeton Theological Seminary, McCarron (1981) studied the factors that led to Catholic participation in CPE. After conducting a study that included sending questionnaires to all US Catholic seminaries that were then members of the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education (ACPE), he concluded that the reasons for the use of CPE were not truly educational and certainly not theological, but primarily pragmatic: “The relative absence of a theological rationale and the shallowness of the educational rationale suggest that another rationale, namely, pragmatism, was a more important motive for CPE involvement by Roman Catholic seminaries” (McCarron, 1981:159.) Relying on the thinking of W. James and F.C.S. Schiller, McCarron (1981:160) defines pragmatism as “If something works do it” and comments:

To a great extent the kind of pragmatism that I am talking about has to be described in negative terms. It is described in terms of what it lacks — a theoretical basis and the use of given means in a manner that is more than expedient. In a more positive vein pragmatism can also be viewed as one of the strengths of American Roman Catholicism. It indicates a willingness to innovate and to take risks even when it is not completely clear what the results will be (McCarron, 1981:162–163).

McCarron (1981:169) mentions a variety of ways that there could be deeper reflection on the Catholic seminaries' purposes for using CPE. He asks a question still relevant more than three decades later: “How will ‘Catholic issues’ — celibacy, sacramentality, particularly the sacramentality of the priesthood — be integrated into CPE programmes?”<sup>1</sup> The vision of priests as not only celebrating the sacraments, but also of being representatives of Christ, is at stake here. McCarron also calls for “bridging the gap between theory and practice” in the Catholic use of CPE (1981:169).

McCarron (1981:8) was looking for affirmative reasons to participate in CPE. Even though his study is over 35 years old, the apparent uniqueness of his research makes McCarron's (1981:8) argument relevant for this study, as he examines the motivation for having seminarians take part in CPE. When the faculty of one seminary in Florida recently discussed CPE's formative value, proponents immediately cited its ecumenical element without any significant discussion of the underlying theory behind it (St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary, 2014:2). As the rest of this chapter will show, this question about the rationale for participating in a given programme remains pertinent today.

Another seminary describes CPE in this way:

Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) is a proven programme for developing the important skills for working with the sick, the hospitalized, and the grieving. Additionally, it offers the seminarian a focused, supervised opportunity for introspection and theological reflection; it is therefore highly recommended for all theology students.<sup>2</sup> Seminarians usually complete one basic unit of CPE after the second or third year of theology (Mount Angel Seminary, 2015:45.)

Although this catalogue describes CPE as a “proven programme”, an indication of the paucity of information about the effectiveness, by any measure, of CPE for Catholic seminarians, can be found in the results of a web search using the terms *Catholic, seminarian, CPE*. In such a search in early 2017, eight of the first ten choices were articles or blogs highly critical of the CPE experience for Catholic seminarians (Google, 2017).

Powell (2009), a Dominican priest currently on the faculty of a large seminary in the US, describes his experience in CPE in the early 2000s in this way on his blog:

Clinical Pastoral Education is nothing more than a systematic ‘weeding out’ of orthodox seminarians through a process of enforced radical leftist indoctrination. I survived [because] I was 37 years old and had years of working in mental health institutions under my belt. I was able to manipulate the system using the rhetoric and strategy of victimization that seemed to garner the attention of the administration.

He offers advice to seminarians entering CPE programmes, advice that assumes the CPE experience will be negative:

Can you learn something from CPE? You better believe it! I did. But I learned in spite of [what] passed for Catholic pastoral care at [the hospital where he participated in CPE]. I learned from the patients and their families. I learned from the nurses and doctors. I also learned from the chaplains.... I learned exactly how NOT to be a Catholic minister (Powell, 2009).

One comment in response to Powell (2009), identified as coming from Fr. Cory Sticha, spoke positively of some of the aspects of CPE, while criticizing others:

I had the “opportunity” to spend a summer in CPE. The hospital was a faithful Catholic hospital, the chaplain I worked with was a faithful Catholic, and I learned a lot from my shifts in the hospital. The CPE classes themselves were pretty much worthless. At best, they were a rehashing of everything that I had covered through 7 years of seminary formation. At worst, they were a complete waste of time.

This commentator does not explain his opinions further. Another commentator on Powell’s (2009) blog post, identified only as “Chicago priest,” saw benefits to the CPE experience, attributing some of these to the learning from the negative aspects and some to the personal growth that a seminarian can experience:

So all the group processing was a way of preparing for the inevitable conflicts and abuse you’re going to find among your flock and your staff. What better way than to be inoculated during CPE, so that you can see the disease in the future? And you know what? You’ll also learn something about yourself, if you dare to recognize — and acknowledge — that you too are a man in need of the Grace of Jesus Christ, just like everyone else.

Powell (2009) later added a comment to his post: “I still maintain that our American bishops need to re-evaluate and reform the CPE process for Catholic seminarians so that the unique character of the priestly charism is honored and developed.” He goes on to explain:

Though CPE programmes have tempered their more abusive practices in recent years, the focus is still too narrowly placed on the therapeutic restructuring of the student’s fundamental belief system to accord with mainstream-liberal Protestant norms for [what] counts as ministry to the sick. [In other words], too often Catholic seminarians are pressured to hold and practice an essentially anti-sacramental view of ministry to the sick and dying (Powell, 2009).

Chapter two showed that ordination definitively relates the presbyter both to God and to the People of God, two relationships that give the permanence of priesthood its theological foundation and thus explain why presbyters ought to persevere in ministry. The material available about CPE programmes suggests that they could be of service in helping a seminarian know himself better and thus be better able to give himself fully in priesthood. At the same time, Catholic seminarians and priests who participated in CPE have expressed serious concerns about the experience. While these remarks are anecdotal in nature, they reflect the concern that had already been raised in the *PPF* (USCCB, 2006:83):

Seminaries and dioceses that make provision for onsite experiences are also responsible for ensuring that these experiences help seminarians develop skills and attitudes that will enhance their future priestly ministry and that, when ecumenical in nature, for example, CPE, are respectful of the Catholic teaching, especially on moral or ethical issues.

The *PPF* (USCCB, 2006:83) continues with an observation that speaks specifically to the sacramental aspect of priestly ministry: “It is the responsibility of the diocesan bishop, religious ordinary, and the rectors to ensure that the Catholic, sacramental dimension of pastoral care is integral to all such programmes in which seminarians participate.” The questions that have been raised about the quality of supervision in certain CPE programmes are important as well.

Another important element of the sacramental priesthood described in chapter two was that of the Holy Spirit’s role in the life of the priest. As Ferraro (2006:777–787) suggested, the Holy Spirit is always making a priest’s whole life the fruit of an epiclesis. A useful question would ask whether it would be possible for seminaries that wish their seminarians to take part in CPE programmes, without compromising the integrity of these programmes, to collaborate more with them to ensure that the Catholic understanding of sacramental ministry and the role of the Holy Spirit will be respected. Unless supervisors recognize that the Holy Spirit is the primary actor in

the ministerial life of the future priest, pastoral experiences will fail to promote a clear sense of ministerial identity as rooted in baptism but destined to blossom in a permanent commitment to priestly service.

### **3.3 Spirituality or propaedeutic year**

As indicated in chapter two, the Congregation for the Clergy's new *Ratio Fundamentalis* has changed the discussion regarding this second formation activity to be considered. The Congregation for the Clergy (2016:28) describes what it calls the "propaedeutic stage": "Its principal objective is to provide a solid basis for the spiritual life and to mature a greater self-awareness for personal growth." After listing some of the activities that should mark this experience, the Congregation for the Clergy (2016:29) indicates that each national conference can adapt this stage, depending on the reality of the Church in a particular country and diocese.

Even before this Vatican document, Hoge (2006:6), as a result of his extensive research on recently ordained priests, specifically recommended an improvement in spiritual formation. Furthermore, Rossetti (2011:195) concludes his book, *Why priests are happy*, with a series of recommendations, including this one: "During the formative years, work intensely with seminarians on their spiritual formation, fostering a direct, personal relationship with God." His study indicates that the spiritual life is central to the happiness and success of the priest, and formation for this life must begin in seminary (Rossetti, 2011:195). The activities being considered in this section, as well as the Institute for Priestly Formation, to be examined in section 3.6, aim for the fostering of the "direct, personal relationship with God," as a precondition for the rest of seminary formation and for effective priestly ministry.

Only two seminaries in the United States have intentionally adopted programmes which aim to fulfil what the Holy See describes as a propaedeutic stage, using the term "spirituality year," although these activities treat subjects other than spirituality. Some of the recommendations and concerns revealed in extensive research of recently ordained priests, according to Schuth (2002:142), included a need for deeper prayer life in seminary. In response to such concerns, the *Spiritual Year Formation Booklet* (St. John Vianney Theological Seminary, 2016:4) indicates that its purpose is to afford seminarians the opportunity to strengthen their spiritual life by giving an entire year to this effort. In describing the rationale for the Spirituality Year at the Denver seminary, Thermos (2017) cites the call of *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (John Paul II, 1992:§62) for significant preparation before priesthood candidates enter seminary. In making this call, John Paul II (1992:§62) asked for a period of experimentation, to which these programmes being considered seek to respond. John Paul II (1992:§62) did not attempt to say exactly what form this preparation should take:

While there is increasing consensus regarding the need for preparation prior to the major seminary, there are different ideas as to what such preparation should contain and what its characteristics should be: Should it be directed mainly to spiritual formation to discern the vocation or to intellectual and cultural formation?

A secular news story at the time of Pope Francis' pastoral visit to the United States describes the spirituality year programme at a seminary in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, as experienced by the seminarians. The article describes this programme at St. Charles Borromeo Seminary in this way: "It's a dedicated time spent apart — free of tests, grades and outside tensions — to go deep, focus on prayer and develop their personal relationships with God" (Ravitz, 2015.) Another article about this seminary's formation programme says that the spirituality year allows the "seminarians to devote a full year to discernment and the spiritual life," indicating that Archbishop Chaput had initiated this aspect of the programme of formation at St. John Vianney Theological Seminary when he was Archbishop of Denver (Catholic News Agency, 2013).

The horarium for the spirituality year in Philadelphia includes prayer several times during the day, study of topics including the Bible, the basics of the Catholic faith and spiritual texts from the tradition, as well as conferences on topics important to priesthood and ministry. Seminarians are required to go on a "media fast — no cell phones, TV, computers." They also devote time for work in their common house as well as sports and exercise (Ravitz, 2015).

At St. John Vianney Theological Seminary in Denver, Colorado, the spirituality year follows a similar schedule. As at St. Charles Borromeo, seminarians observe a media fast six days a week, excluding Saturdays. Seminarians go to local parishes on Sundays to assist in pastoral work and watch a movie together in the evening from a selected group of inspirational films (St. John Vianney Theological Seminary, 2016:16–17).

The full version of the Spirituality Year [at St. John Vianney Theological Seminary] was established in August 1998 at the direction of Archbishop Charles Chaput, OFM Cap. Immediately prior to its beginning, priests from the Archdiocese of Denver travelled to St. Charles Borromeo Seminary in Philadelphia to observe the Spirituality Year that was already in place. [Note: The Philadelphia programme was later stopped and restarted when Archbishop Chaput was transferred there as Archbishop.] We drew a good deal from their programme and their wisdom" (Thermos, 2017.)

When the programme was first established, the spirituality year seminarians shared residence hall facilities with the other seminarians, but in 2009 the spirituality year programme was moved into a newly constructed facility (Thermos, 2017). While no indication is given of what factors led to

the closure of the Philadelphia programme, it is clear that Archbishop Chaput's conviction about its effectiveness led to the establishment of the programme in Denver and its reestablishment in Philadelphia.

Other attempts have been made to ensure the preparation of candidates for seminary. Some of the same intentions can be found in other programmes, which may not require a full year before entering the regular seminary programme but call for extensive periods of spiritual focus. St. John Seminary in Camarillo requires several intense experiences on the seminary grounds (Clarke, 2011b:32–33). There are two four-week intensive spiritual formation activities over two summers “similar to a diocesan novitiate, focusing on prayer, spirituality, silent retreat and reflection on personal issues for greater self-understanding and healing” (Clarke, 2011b:3.3) These two summers of intensive spiritual experiences, before II Theology and before III Theology (after the pastoral year internship), seek, during the first experience, to link spiritual formation with human formation, and in the second, to link spiritual formation with pastoral formation (Clarke, 2011a: 30–31). The purpose is “a greater integration and understanding of the connectedness and health of their body, mind, and spirit in ministry” (Clarke, 2011a:31). Although this seminary does not currently have a spirituality or propaedeutic year, the aims of the Camarillo programme are similar to those of the propaedeutic or spirituality year model.

What are such programmes trying to accomplish? Rafferty (2011:36) touches on the need that they are trying to address: the importance of seminarians' experiencing true communion with Christ before asking to be ordained to act in the name of Christ. He writes: “All the components of spiritual formation promote the seminarian's falling deeper in love with the Trinity, because he opens himself in daily prayer to receive the infinite love of God for him uniquely” (Rafferty, 2011:36.)

Romano Gómez (2006:869–870), who was Rector of the Seminary of Guadalajara in Mexico, insists on the importance of forming seminarians so that they will have a clear sense of their identity, which precedes all of their activity. In considering seminary formation activities, those that give precedence to developing the identity of the seminarian as a future priest seek to respond to his challenge. The importance of spirituality in the development of a priestly identity can also be seen in the development of IPF, which seeks to link the identity of the seminarian as a child of God with the growth of a priestly heart, with spirituality seen as the “governing factor” for all formation (Horn, 2017:2). Although Romano Gómez does not specifically call for a programme such as a propaedeutic or spirituality year, his call for serious formation for asceticism is certainly one of the motivations behind such programmes (2006:875–877), arguing that “if there is no

asceticism, there will not be the necessary training to be a good shepherd”<sup>3</sup> (Romano Gómez, 2006:877.)

In writing about the role of seminaries in continuing formation activities for priests, Camelli (2008:17) discusses the importance of perseverance in ministry. He writes with concern about priests’ leaving active ministry and strongly urges seminarians to commit to pursuing ongoing formation after their ordination. Programmes such as a spirituality year or the pastoral year, in different ways, seek to make the link between learning and the life of seminarians and priests. A specific suggestion regarding spiritual formation is that seminaries should encourage seminarians to long for continuous spiritual growth. A desire for “a continuous conversion of heart” needs to be at the centre of seminary spiritual formation (Camelli, 2008:21). Promoting this desire is part of the rationale of the spirituality or propaedeutic year.

How effective are these programmes in preparing men for seminary and in promoting perseverance in those who are ordained priests? Thermos (2017) indicates that they have no statistical data to report that would assist in answering this question. He writes the following, however:

Consistently we observe the seminarians coming to a much greater degree of self-knowledge, self-acceptance, affective maturity, freedom, healthy image of God, greater understanding of the priestly vocation, deeper prayer life (relating in a personal way to each of the Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity and to Our Blessed Mother), growth in moral character, embrace of poverty, chastity and obedience, understanding of the faith, love for the Church, desire to serve Christ in the poor and share in His mission. Consequently, they begin to understand and respond to the invitation presented to them in their vocational call with greater clarity, freedom and zeal (Thermos, 2017).

With regard to the impending requirement of a propaedeutic stage for all seminarians, the Congregation for the Clergy (2016:5) states, “Following the experimentation and trial period, begun by the Synod of Bishops of 1990 (VIII General Assembly), the ‘propaedeutic stage’, with its specific identity and formative purpose, is now presented as necessary and mandatory.” The Congregation for the Clergy (2016:28, n93) offers suggestions made as early as 1980 for this period of preparation before seminary and presents the new requirement in this way: “The experience of recent decades has revealed the need to dedicate a period of time to preparation of an introductory nature, in view of the priestly formation to follow or, alternatively, of a decision to follow a different path in life.” Calling for this period to last one or two years, the document goes on: “The propaedeutic stage is an indispensable phase of formation... Its principal objective

is to provide a solid base for the spiritual life and to nurture a greater self-awareness for personal growth” (Congregation for the Clergy, 2016:28.)

The exact design expected of such programmes is not clear in the Vatican document. The Congregation for the Clergy (2016:29) expresses the need to establish programmes that are adapted to the needs of each country, while calling for the propaedeutic stage to be distinct from the succeeding stages of seminary formation.<sup>4</sup> The very small number of seminaries currently requiring such programmes in the United States makes it difficult to assess how effective they have been in preparing candidates for seminary and subsequent ministry, but the present study seeks to offer at least some initial data, assist in that evaluation and offer insight in the design of propaedeutic programmes for the future.

### **3.4 Pastoral-year internship**

The idea of an extended pastoral experience, whether before or after ordination to the diaconate, has been around since the 1960s. Before the close of Vatican II, Geany (1965:479) defined pastoral activity “not as an appendage to the priestly ministry, but as indivisible from its essence.” A solution that was attempted at the time of the Council was to have seminarians do a fifth year in “so-called pastoral theology,” the study of which the 1956 Apostolic Constitution *Sedes Sapientiae* had already required for seminarians preparing for ordination as religious priests (Geany, 1965:489). Observing that there was a danger that the seminary would still leave the life of the future priest and pastoral problems disconnected from each other, Geany writes: “Thus in a pastorally-thrusted seminary, there must exist the unified duality of scholarly theology and the living dialogue with the areas of life to be affected by and infused with this theology” (Geany, 1965:489.)

Bishop G. Huyghe of Arras, France, in 1964 required a diaconal year in a parish before ordination to the priesthood and invited the laity to share in the preparation of men to the priesthood, in a way that would connect with their future work in parishes (Geany, 1965:489). Geany (1965:490) argued, though, that the reflection on the bond between Gospel and action must take place not just at the end of seminary formation, but throughout the seminary experience:

In the past, seminaries have been trapped into adding courses for every new cause currently being pleaded, without respect to the fact that one of the greatest needs of seminarians consists in less course work and more freedom and time to utilize the world as a laboratory for a pastorally oriented preparation for ministry (Geany, 1965:492).

Experience of working in a seminary confirms that Geany's concern remains valid over 50 years later.

Hubbard and Rollins (2017) describe the pastoral internship at St. John's Seminary in Camarillo, California, as a two-semester experience in a parish, taking place between the second and third years of theology. During this time, the seminarians work in parishes, under the supervision of experienced pastors, while remaining in contact with the seminary's field education staff and with other interns for online discussions of "theological reflection, homily review and administrative and pastoral case studies" (Hubbard & Rollins, 2017). These sessions not only assist in providing concrete information and formation to the seminarians, but also help them to keep their internship work in context, keeping the seminarians in communication with the seminary, since they receive graduate credit for the experience and have to respond to the seminary for their performance (Hubbard & Rollins, 2017). The pastoral-year programme at St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary in Boynton Beach, Florida, requires two week-long workshops on the seminary campus (one per semester), as well as two online courses, in which material in the courses is related to the work the interns are doing, one course in catechesis and evangelization and the other in parish administration (St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary, 2016:22). After an extensive study of priests ordained between five and nine years, Hoge (2006:6) recommended that seminaries offer more opportunities for pastoral formation, specifically endorsing the pastoral year model.

Hubbard and Rollins (2017) clearly articulate the purposes of this year: learning about pastoral ministry, deepening discernment about the call to priesthood, and discerning the seminarian's pastoral gifts. They comment further:

(The interns) are not ordained workers but learners, observers, and ministers testing out as many aspects of parish life as possible within their competencies. When they return for third and fourth theology they engage the theology classes pastorally, with an eye to the real experiences from the parish. This year is also seen as a watershed discernment year. Does being immersed in the parish solidify further the priestly vocation or call it further into question? (Hubbard & Rollins, 2017).

Since discernment is done not only by seminarians, but also by those charged with their formation and with recommending them to their bishops for ordination, it is important that the seminary receive feedback that can inform that process of ecclesial discernment. Thus, evaluation is a key element of any formation activity. Hubbard and Rollins (2017) consider the importance of preparing supervisors to provide appropriate supervision and offer evaluations helpful to the formation process. They describe ways in which the evaluations of the programme by the interns themselves helped to improve their programme. At St. Vincent de Paul in Florida, a rubric with

21 criteria is used for pastoral-year supervisors to complete for each intern, in addition to an interim evaluation in the first semester, regular phone calls to interns and supervisors, and visits by seminary staff to each site at least once during the year (St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary, 2017:1–11).

The formation faculty at St. John's in Camarillo find that the pastoral-year internship is an essential part of formation. The seminary has found that seminarians "return ... with greater self-confidence; they are more grounded and secure in their vocational discernment.... As a result of their pastoral immersion experience, we notice a greater commitment to the final two years of theological studies" (Clarke, 2011b:33). These areas of growth, especially vocational discernment and greater dedication to their studies after the pastoral internship, are clearly essential for the successful completion of seminary and for future success in priesthood.

Reporting on a study comparing parish adjustment among graduates of a Catholic and an interdenominational survey, Connors (1985:37) indicated that the tension between the expectations of their congregations and their own was the greatest source of stress for both Catholic and Protestant clergy. This study found that the greatest predictor of differences between expectations and reality after ordination is when that same divergence is present in seminary formation (Connors, 1985:38). This finding specifically led him to call for seminary pastoral formation programmes not only to teach how to do things, but to afford seminarians the opportunity to reflect on their pastoral experiences, in order to manage differing expectations (Connors, 1985:39). This research provides support for the methods of the pastoral-year internship, as well as CPE. It is worthy of note that this same researcher also called for greater supervision of newly ordained clergy, as well as for greater care in the selection of their first assignment (Connors 1985:39).

An important value in field education, according to Garrido (2010:32-33), is the development of "priestly identity and authority," which longer-term pastoral assignments afford the time to develop. This value would argue forcefully, although not mentioned by Garrido, for a longer-term pastoral internship. The importance of field education for assessment is also mentioned by Garrido (2010:33–34). Assessment is important so that the pastoral internship is not something that is done merely to fulfil a requirement, but will really allow those in charge of the seminarian's formation and the seminarian himself to know his strengths and areas of needed growth in ministry, and whether a particular seminarian may not be suited for priestly ministry. This assessment provides essential information for the seminarians and for the Church.

Webb (1999:42) argued for the importance of seminarians' having the full experience of priestly life, so that they experience the joys and sorrows of priesthood while being prepared for the real

challenges they will face in priesthood, should they be ordained. Although the specific purpose of practical theology is not preparing candidates for ordained ministry, assuring that seminarians are prepared for ministry is important for the good of the People of God: “Significant experience with the people who will be parishioners is essential before ordination” (Webb, 1999:42).

Romano Gómez (2006:887), considering a Mexican seminary formation model in which times of pastoral activity are much more limited than in the United States, affirms that pastoral formation has as its purpose not only to determine whether the seminarian is prepared for ministry but also to give him the opportunity to experience himself in the ministry, and allow that experience to assist him in his final steps of discernment (Romano Gómez, 2006:887–888). This last is one of the specific reasons for the pastoral internship programme in most seminaries that require it.

Davies (1999:47), who at the time of the writing of this article was Dean of St. Augustine’s Seminary in Toronto, describes the pastoral internship in some detail. He comments that his seminary’s pastoral year (a “supervised pastoral internship,” taking place after the second of four years of theological study) “is always a watershed in [seminarians’] growth.” Among the areas of growth that Davies (1999:52) indicates as typical during the internship year are seminarians knowing what they are and are not capable of doing, appreciating the ups and downs of rectory life, connecting the spiritual and pastoral aspects of priestly ministry, recognizing the need for taking care of themselves physically, being aware of the need for “responsible celebration as part of the clerical life ... engaging freely yet prudently in the food and alcohol provided,” internalizing the commitment to pray the Liturgy of the Hours, developing a sense of responsibility, overcoming procrastination, and accepting the call to diocesan priesthood (as opposed to religious life). All these areas link up well with the hope expressed by the other authors considered in this section, that seminaries will find a way to help seminarians taste priestly life, to help them and the seminary discern their call more deeply and to provide them with tools to succeed in ministry.

Another study of seminary formation called for more practical pastoral formation in the Catholic seminary experience, because of the evidence of limited preparation of seminarians and young priests for pastoral leadership and administration (Clements, 2000:26–31). While this study supports the need for the pastoral internship, it is an experience that needs to be integrated into the whole of seminary formation; few seminaries provided serious preparation for the skills that priests need in order to be ready to lead parishes, outside of the pastoral-year internship and one or two classes in this area (Clements, 2000:30). Clements (2000:30) noted no indication, at that time, that pastoral-year experiences were followed up by significant opportunities to develop seminarians’ own parish leadership skills. Clements (2000:31) recommended a “no-holds-

barred' evaluation and debriefing following a seminarian's pastoral internship" to help the seminarian grow from the internship into a better spiritual and pastoral leader. While Clements' observations about the need for more training in administrative and leadership skills may go beyond the scope of the present study, it is very important to recognize the pastoral internship as a locus where there is some exposure to these essential aspects of priestly ministry.<sup>5</sup>

The evaluation process had previously been considered by Bradesca (1997:61–101), discussing methods of evaluation in the late 1990s: "The Pastoral Internship has proven itself to be an interactive learning experience in which local Church membership, the seminary, and the student are mutually engaged in the preparation of the intern, and has contributed to vocational discernment" (Bradesca, 1997:61). At the same time, experience without evaluation is not enough; evaluation is an essential part of a good pastoral internship programme (Bradesca, 1997:61).

Citing the language used by her own institution, St. Mary Seminary in Cleveland, Ohio, Bradesca (1997:62) expresses the purposes of such internships, the most typical of which is now the pastoral year:

Through this learning focused on the exercise of parish ministry, an intern will be better able to discern both his gifts and his growth needs. He will experience first-hand the needs of the people and the parish, will test his ability to relate to the people and minister to their needs, and will gain some understanding of the spiritual stamina he needs to sustain himself in ministry.

The evaluation process itself is, according to Bradesca (1997:64), an important part of the formation and discernment of the seminarian, as the man in formation and the seminary staff both see the growth in him and the areas where he needs further growth, through the eyes of a variety of evaluators. The rite of ordination includes a question from the ordaining bishop, usually answered by the vocations director or the rector of the seminary, about the worthiness of the candidate for orders. The pastoral year is a way to allow the one giving witness to be able to do so with conviction. Bradesca stated: "No programme or process accomplishes it all, but when the local Church engages in a man's preparation for priestly ministry, it seems safe to assume that it is better equipped to 'testify that he is worthy'" (1997:65).

The importance of thorough preparation for priestly life and ministry, as the pastoral internship seeks to do, is also expressed by McCrabb (2007:20–22), who examines how seminaries should respond to the needs of recently ordained priests, specifically with regard to preparing future priests for adaptive leadership. He notes that, rather than seminaries being either academic or

pastoral, as the distinction is usually cast, “our seminaries may have to focus their efforts at becoming a ‘professional school’ that lays the foundation — similar to a medical school for physicians — for pastors” (McCrabb, 2007:22). The pastoral year or pastoral internship, in addition to some of the other programmes in this study, seeks to respond to this need, at least in part. “If pastoring is indeed an art [citing St. Gregory the Great] and if seminarians are initiated to it as an art, then it begs for further development, growth, and unfolding” (Camelli, 2008:21). The rationale of the pastoral internship is certainly to promote this kind of initiation into the art of shepherding the People of God. As Pope Francis stated at his first Chrism Mass and has said on multiple occasions since, priests need to have “the odour of their sheep” (Francis, 2013).

Some of the recommendations and concerns revealed in extensive research of recently ordained priests, according to Schuth (2002:142), included, as noted already, a need for deeper prayer life in seminary, as well as more opportunities to work with women, more preparation for parish administration, and more openness about issues of sexuality — in particular celibacy and homosexuality. With regards to the need for more preparation for parish administration, she found: “It is conceivable that seminarians could spend more time in parishes during studies and be assigned to an internship year with careful supervision. However, bishops, eager to have men ordained more quickly, are not always keen on another year of preparation” (Schuth, 2002:143). While she also makes other suggestions for things that could be done after ordination, these concerns and Schuth’s observations about the reticence of bishops to give more time (and money) on formation are clearly relevant to the present study.

Over 20 years ago, Schuth (1996:188) already acknowledged the difficulty of trying to do all the things different constituencies wanted seminaries to do. She mentioned the pastoral year, having CPE and field education during summers, and adding courses. She commented on her findings: “Inserting a pastoral year has been helpful for some students, who return to school with renewed interest and understanding of how and what to study in light of ministerial demands. In other cases, the break in the academic programme has proved detrimental to serious study” (Schuth, 1996:188). While some consider it an argument against these internships that many students do not return after the pastoral year, defenders of the programme argue that the departure of seminarians during the pastoral year is a sign of its success, since it is better to leave during or after the pastoral year than after ordination (Schuth, 1996:188). Two decades later, Schuth (2016:113) reports that only seven of the 38 theological seminaries she studied require the pastoral year. She also indicates that eight seminaries have optional pastoral-year programmes.

One of the motivations for the present study is precisely the recognition that it is impossible for a seminary to respond at the same time to all the needs of formation and to the desire for seminarians

to be ready for ordination as quickly and inexpensively as possible. Choices need to be made (Schuth 1996:188). Precisely as more requirements are being called for (Congregation for the Clergy, 2016:28–29, 33–35), recognising whether anecdotal accounts of the value of some programmes over others are accurate acquires ever greater importance. The present researcher has much positive experience of the effectiveness of the pastoral-year internship, but testing anecdotal experiences will help determine how theory and praxis are linked in this case. If evidence can be given of the effectiveness of programmes, there will be less temptation to eliminate them or dispense with them, as it has been noted that when important requirements are made optional, both seminarians and the Church often end up suffering (Webb, 1999:42).

The pastoral-year internship, as has been seen, seeks to provide an opportunity for a seminarian to put his pastoral skills into use as well as to learn more skills, and to experience parish and rectory life. It is meant to allow an opportunity for deepened discernment on the part of the seminarian, as well as to provide evaluative feedback from supervisors and from parishioners. One of the most important questions that can be answered in the pastoral-year internship is the penultimate question asked of the supervisor (usually the pastor) in the final evaluation at one seminary: “Would you like to have the seminarian assigned to you as a priest one day? Why or why not?” (St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary, 2017:11).

Given these purposes, an important question is whether the pastoral year internship experience truly does promote that serious discernment that it purports to offer, and whether it effectively helps seminarians acquire the skills they need for ministry or to help them and their bishops discern that priestly ministry is not for them.

### **3.5 Priestly fraternity groups**

Romano Gómez (2006:867) comments about the importance of building friendships in seminary: “Now, to the extent that a seminarian feels himself loved, by his formators and his companions, he will have better affective resources to confront his ministerial responsibilities, because he will be able to rely on sufficient elements to develop a mature and integrated personality.”<sup>6</sup> A formation activity that seeks to help seminarians grow in the ability to give and receive support in their seminary lives, as well as in their future priestly ministry, is the use of support groups such as Jesus Caritas or Emmaus. “Friendship is not the whole of the moral life, but there can be no moral and spiritual life without it” (Wadell, 1995:19). This argument about the importance of friendship in the moral and spiritual growth of seminarians promotes the notion that such programmes will help seminarians in the preparation for the priesthood, precisely as they help build bonds among men in formation.

Wadell (1995:23) describes some of the key factors necessary for friendship: “To be capable of friendship, a person must be marked by a spirit of generosity, which is the opposite of egocentrism, selfishness, and narcissism.” Friendships of character or virtue friendships (Aristotle’s highest category of friendship) help seminarians to put others first, help to give projects and tasks their proper importance, and are essential to be able to grow to become truly virtuous (Wadell, 1995:26–27). Two decades ago, Wadell (1995:28–29) was encouraging seminaries to promote among seminarians the “spiritual friendship” described by Aelred of Rievaulx, in which “two or more persons come together to pursue a life of seeking God in Christ.”

The Jesus Caritas Fraternity of Priests, based on the spirituality of Blessed Charles de Foucauld, seeks to offer diocesan priests a “middle way between the ‘lone ranger’ mentality and the religious community” (Euteneuer, 2000:42, 44). The particular aspects of priesthood affirmed by Jesus Caritas have been reported to support the member priests as spiritual fathers, encouraging them in their sacrificial self-giving, helping them in their joint effort to be holy, and offering them the mutual love of brothers (Euteneuer, 2000:42–43). Seminaries that require or encourage Jesus Caritas or similar support groups are seeking to help seminarians value these gifts and prepare them to offer them to others, recognizing the importance of maintaining this type of support in priesthood.

The key elements of the Jesus Caritas movement, as it has been implemented at Mount St. Mary’s Seminary in Emmitsburg, Maryland, are “call to holiness, mutual spiritual assistance, better service to God and His People, meditation on the Scripture and poverty of spirit” (Lavorgna, 2004:1). Many alumni of this seminary who participated in Jesus Caritas as seminarians formed or joined such fraternities as priests, and one seminarian states: “I have found the support and prayers of the group very helpful in my growth as a seminarian, and I would like to continue my involvement once I leave the seminary and begin my priestly ministry” (Lavorgna, 2004:4).

A similar programme, based on the spirituality of Jesus Caritas, but not tied directly to the movement, is the Emmaus group format used at St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary in Boynton Beach, Florida. Muhr (2013:48) describes the development process behind the formation of Emmaus groups. The predecessor to the current system was called “formation nights,” during which groups of seminarians would discuss different topics related to formation in a highly structured way. As Muhr (2013:48) himself experienced it, “the sessions seemed contrived and artificial.” He goes on: “Formation Night seemed like a chore rather than an opportunity to encounter one another and the grace of God in our lives and ministry” (Muhr, 2013:48).

Muhr thus experimented with modelling the session on the review of life practiced in Jesus Caritas priestly fraternities (2013:48). This experiment, attempted first with a group of deacons

approaching ordination to the priesthood, was extremely successful from the first attempt. The change from the theoretical to the experiential in the sessions was very positive. Muhr (2013:49) comments on seminarians' experience of these Emmaus Groups (the new name given to these formation nights): "The students participating in these groups are available to God's handiwork because they are prayerfully reflective, vulnerable and trusting."

The Emmaus Group structure involves six to eight seminarians and a faculty moderator, most of whom have been spiritual directors. Though the Emmaus Group does not occur in the internal forum (the almost absolutely confidential relationship between spiritual director and directee or the inviolable relationship between confessor and penitent), these groups maintain a high level of confidentiality. The meetings occur once per month, beginning with a prayer to the Holy Spirit and followed by an opportunity for each group member to share particular graces or challenges of the previous month. The others listen and do not volunteer advice or counsel to the speaker. At the end of each person's sharing, the group spends some time in silent prayer. At the end of the sharing, all are invited to offer a word or phrase that has moved them, from the sharings that have taken place (Muhr, 2013:49). Muhr (2017) describes the rationale for the development of the Emmaus Group format:

The theological rationale for the groups is grounded in Scripture, especially the story of Jesus and the disciples on the road to Emmaus — how together the two disciples shared their experiences of the passion of Jesus and how Jesus shared with them his interpretation of the scriptures and the meaning of the Resurrection. This conversation on the journey to Emmaus is symbolic for the types of sharing that deepen faith.... I also found a rationale in the *Programme for Priestly Formation ...* which emphasizes over and over again the need for integration, how academics, pastoral experiences, human formation and spiritual formation are meant to be integrated into a person's life. How seminary formation should foundationally affect the way seminarian thinks, what he believes and how he acts.

Another example of a fraternal support group that invites seminarians to initiate a life of sharing with fellow seminarians and priests in the final stage of seminary formation is the Companions of Christ, an association of diocesan priests and seminarians currently present in the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis (Minnesota) and the Archdiocese of Denver. "[T]he Companions are not a religious order. Sharing common life as religious do, as well as developing strong relationships and holding each other accountable, helps alleviate the problem of isolation some diocesan priests face" (Klemond, 2013). The website of the St. Paul and Minneapolis chapter describes the particularities of the life and ministry of the Companions of Christ:

Together with their fellow diocesan clergy, members of the Companions of Christ make a promise of obedience to the diocesan bishop and are assigned by him in the typical manner to serve in parishes or other diocesan institutions. The diocesan bishop in turn and as far as possible assigns members of the Companions of Christ to locations which permit them to live as fraternities of at least three members in rectories or other households (St. Paul and Minneapolis Companions of Christ, 2017).

The Companions of Christ describe the purpose of their shared life to be support for each other in “living the priestly vocation with clarity and joy” and to “call each other on toward this priestly holiness which we all seek” (St. Paul and Minneapolis Companions of Christ, 2017). The Denver group describes what is distinct about the group:

The Companions have events and ways of relating that help to form a particular culture among this group of friends. Celebrating the Lord’s Day on Saturday nights, praying and eating together during the week, committing to a common vision for priestly excellence, vacationing together, and gathering to share our spiritual joys and struggles in a bi-weekly fraternal group are some of the more important ways that we help each other to follow our baptismal call to holiness and our priestly call to service. You could say that our friendship has an express purpose: to help each other to become saints” (Denver Companions of Christ, 2017).

A clear advantage of the Companions of Christ is that seminarians who join already belong to a group after ordination. A reported benefit of the Emmaus Group format has been a readiness of many of the recently ordained to join priestly fraternity groups after ordination (Muhr, 2013:49), similar to the experience at Mount St. Mary’s (Lavorgna, 2004:1). However, other than this anecdotal evidence that priests who took part in such fraternal programmes in seminary are likely to join such groups as priests, no published documentation has been found about the long-term effectiveness of such programmes. This research effort, seeking to find a link between participation in fraternal support programmes and perseverance and effectiveness in ministry, will provide some insights into the effectiveness of such activities.

### **3.6 Institute for Priestly Formation**

Kelly (2015) describes the Institute for Priestly Formation’s (IPF) programme for diocesan seminarians in this way:

For 10 weeks diocesan seminarians are given the time and the invitation to deepen their baptismal identity as adopted sons of God and as disciples called to the diocesan

priesthood. They do this by entering into a kind of spiritual boot camp, a formation programme that is designed to help them to focus on developing a deep and personal relationship to the God who has called them to follow Jesus as a diocesan priest.

IPF's programme for seminarians finds its roots in the efforts of two Jesuit priests, one diocesan priest and one consecrated virgin, who in the early 1990s joined to create a programme to help in the preparation of diocesan seminarians for priesthood and in continuing formation for diocesan priests (Kelly, 2015). The first summer session took place in 1995 (Kelly, 2015). This programme depends heavily on the spirituality of St. Ignatius of Loyola and starts with an eight-day retreat, which has as its purpose "to reclaim their true core identity as adopted sons in baptism, and to respond to the One who has called them into a loving relationship as disciples and future priests" (Kelly, 2015).

IPF's summer experience of spiritual and intellectual formation for diocesan seminarians is based at Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska (Dwyer & Hogan, 2008:40). On its website, IPF (2016) describes the Summer Programme for Diocesan Seminarians as "focusing on the heartfelt experience of God," including the following elements:

... growth in holiness through daily prayer, weekly one-on-one spiritual direction and an individually directed silent retreat, interplay between theology and practical faith, integration of sexuality with celibacy as a generative gift from God, discernment for pastoral leadership, summary of growth and blessings, apostolic service, appreciation of the unique identity of diocesan priests, contemplative leisure.

IPF describes its vision as "to be a center of renewal and resource for the Roman Catholic Church inviting all priests to deeper intimacy with God and lives of ministry flowing from God's abiding presence" (IPF, 2014:9). Of these specific areas of focus, several of them directly relate to the hope that seminarians persevere in ministry if they are ordained: an integrated sexuality, discernment, and the specific characteristics of diocesan priesthood (IPF, 2016).

Following the six seminarians who participated in the inaugural IPF session, over 2,250 seminarians have taken part from over 70% of Catholic Dioceses in the US (IPF, 2014:16, 18). The programme not only serves seminarians, but also helps to prepare spiritual directors and others working in seminary formation and offers support to priests after ordination (IPF, 2014:16–17).

One of the founders of IPF describes the process that led to its creation as "one that gives major emphasis to what the Trinity's desires can accomplish through ordinary people who discover the

beauty of what God delights in accomplishing through littleness and poverty of spirit” (Horn, 2017:1). In 1990, a diocesan priest, a Jesuit, and a consecrated laywoman (Richard Gabuzda, John Horn, and Kathy Kanavy) met for a retreat at Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska. After a series of meetings and discussions, they felt a “call within a call ... to serve diocesan priests and seminarians in cultivating the interior life of Trinitarian intimacy through teaching Ignatian Spirituality.... [They] imagined a miniature novitiate for diocesan seminarians set apart from regular seminary life” (Horn, 2017:2).

One of the factors that inspired the three founders of IPF was their perception that seminaries in the early 1990s were healthy in terms of the external aspects of teaching, pastoral preparation and community life but lacked an opportunity to go deeper into the spiritual life (Horn, 2017:2–3). The theological rationale for this programme can be found in John Paul’s II’s call in *Pastores Dabo Vobis* for priests to have a deep spiritual life so that they may help people approach God themselves; furthermore, the founders found that receiving God is the most important thing any person can do, something they “came to believe was true for every Christian, most especially for the future priest, so that he could lead his parish with a gentle merciful spiritual authority rooted in ‘wisdom from on high’ in day-to-day life” (Horn, 2017:3–4).

IPF has a rationale similar to that of propaedeutic year programmes. A key element in the vision of IPF is that of the identity of the Christian in general and the priest in particular as a child of God. Turek (2015:50–51), drawing from the theology of von Balthasar, links the service of priests to the Church to their own internal assimilation of a union to Christ, which is seen in their public life of self-giving to the Church. The kenotic aspect of the priesthood of Christ and of the ordained minister, drawing from the grace of the Sacred Heart, calls the priest “to surrender what is most intimate and personal for the benefit of the community” (Turek, 2015:55). In Christ, contemplation and mission are united by nature; for the Christian, and especially for the priest, contemplation and mission need to be united by grace. Turek (2015:58) maintains that the spiritual life must take precedence, in order to support the mission, but insists that it not be a self-serving interiority, but rather one “ordered toward caritas, love of another.”

Like all Christians, priests are children of God. What Williamson (2015:25) suggests is unique to priestly spirituality in that priests have a mission to enable other Christians to recognize and fulfil their own call as sons and daughters of God. While all Christians share in this mission by baptism, priests need to be marked by “a deep experiential understanding of their identity as God’s sons that will enable them to lead the faithful into the same knowledge and experience.” Seminarians need to prepare themselves for that role, with spirituality marking every aspect of seminary

formation, but knowing one's identity in Christ and living out that filial identity with the Father is a lifelong task (2015:26–28).

IPF conducted a study of the impact of its programme on participants, specifically asking “whether seminary spiritual formation such as this can produce measurable changes in thinking and behavior” (Dwyer & Hogan, 2008:37). The programme is specific and clear about its objectives, which include growth in holiness, solid devotion to Jesus and Mary, healthy celibate sexuality, a desire for continued studies grounded in the Scriptures, a deeper sense of what it means to be diocesan priests, and a sense of brotherhood among upcoming cohorts of priests (Dwyer & Hogan, 2008:37). A key purpose is “to awaken heartfelt discernment for future priestly ministry as a spiritual physician and spiritual father” (Dwyer & Hogan, 2008:37). The study showed significant growth in almost all areas measured, as indicated by the seminarian participants' evaluation of their spiritual situation and abilities before and after the summer experience (Dwyer & Hogan, 2008:39–41).

IPF has borne other fruits. Many priests and seminary formation staff members from the US and other English-speaking countries have taken part in its programmes. IPF has also published many books. The Catholic Psychological Association and the Seminary Formation Council are two organizations that have their roots in IPF. The current study is the first one, though, that seeks to ask whether IPF has an impact on perseverance in ministry after ordination (Horn, 2017:5–6).

### **3.7 Language Immersion Programmes**

Many seminaries in the United States require seminarians to learn a pastoral language (i.e., a language that will help them in pastoral ministry to a particular language group). Spanish is the most common, because of the size of the Hispanic population in the American Catholic Church (Ospino *et al.*, 2014:21). Learning a new language can include immersion experiences, which can help seminarians improve their language skills as well as better understand other cultures. One seminary that expects those seminarians whose native language is not Spanish to take part in a six-week immersion programme in La Antigua Guatemala, Guatemala, describes the main reason for this activity: “to assist the seminarian in acquiring a pastoral facility in the Spanish language and practical pastoral experience with Hispanic Catholics” (St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary Pastoral Language Department, 2017:1). The rationale presents an integrated image of language study, a shared life with host families, opportunities for pastoral ministry, and spiritual activities. The mission statement concludes: “By participating in Mass with the Guatemalan people as well as sharing in local activities and participating in pastoral ministries, the seminarian will gain invaluable experience to help in his future parish ministries with Hispanic Catholics in

Florida and beyond” (St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary Pastoral Language Department, 2017:1).

In the United States, the study of languages necessary for pastoral ministry, especially Spanish, has been recommended as part of the education of seminarians for many years, in each stage of formation (USCCB, 2006:62, 65, 67, 69, 75). Another example is St. John Seminary in Camarillo, California, which requires an intensive language immersion programme, depending on the particular needs of the student. Among the advantages of this programme, according to Clarke (2011b:34) is that “not only do the students have the opportunity to learn a new language and experience a different culture first hand, but they are placed into a situation where they have a chance to face their anxieties and feelings of powerlessness while serving a new and unfamiliar setting.” The hope is that these experiences help seminarians to deepen their sense of the universality of the Church while becoming more open to immigrants. Another seminary’s immersion experience in the Dominican Republic was found to have changed the seminarians’ understanding of cultural differences and their way of looking at the poor (Martinez, 2010:122).

The growth of the Hispanic population in the Roman Catholic Church of the United States has been dramatic in recent decades. Studies conducted in the 1980s found that about 25% of all US Catholics were Hispanic, and about 15% of all parishes in the US served them in some specific way. The most complete study of ministry to Hispanic Catholics in recent years found that approximately 17% of the US population and 40% of Catholics in the United States are Hispanic. This same study reports that about 25% of parishes are working deliberately to serve Hispanics (Ospino *et al.*, 2014:5, 7). The US Catholic Church has a great need for Spanish-speaking priests; 66% of the pastors in Hispanic communities are non-Hispanic whites (Ospino *et al.*, 2014:21). These pastors have received a variety of preparation, but only 13% indicate that they received dedicated formation in seminary to prepare them for Hispanic ministry (Ospino *et al.*, 2014:21).

Davis and Menocal (2005:30–31) argue that a precondition for ordination to the priesthood in the United States should be openness to Hispanics: “Although in a particularly diverse diocese it might be impossible to prepare all priests for every language and culture present, Spanish and Hispanic cultures are so prevalent and so extensive that they must constitute an exception to that rule” (Davis & Menocal, 2005:31). This argument supports the requirement of seminaries that seminarians undergo a Spanish immersion experience, to strengthen their knowledge of Spanish and also to make them more comfortable in Hispanic cultures (Davis & Menocal, 2005:31).

Making reference to the canonical requirements for ordination that speak of the importance of priests being prepared to serve their people, Davis and Menocal (2005:34) insist that it should be an absolute requirement that men ordained to the priesthood in the United States be competent in

Spanish, because of demographic trends that indicate that a majority of Catholics in the United States will be Hispanic within a few years. They claim that “only such men guarantee the basic right of the faithful to receive from their pastors ... the spiritual goods of the Church” (Davis & Menocal, 2005:35). It has been argued in chapter two that perseverance in ministry matters for the good of the People of God; the pastoral language ability of ordained ministers is essential for the same reason.

Figueroa Deck (2010:35–42) writes about the importance of intercultural skills for seminarians and priests, above all to serve the people they are called to serve. After commenting on the growing diversity among seminarians and presbyterates, he observes: “There is an urgent need among priests and seminarians to develop the capacity for effective and appropriate intercultural relations if presbyterates are to be sources of strength, unity and mutual support for bishops and priests” (Figueroa Deck, 2010:37). Reviewing different aspects of growing diversity in the Catholic population of the US, as well as among the priesthood, Figueroa Deck comments that it is important to consider not only the challenges of having to care for those who speak a different language but also to recognize the gift that they are to the Church (Figueroa Deck, 2010:38). While Figueroa Deck’s 2010 article focuses more on skills that have to do with understanding and working with different cultural groups rather than specifically targeting acquisition of language abilities, his argument supports the purpose of immersion experiences, which not only teach language skills, but also place seminarians into a different culture and give them an opportunity to grow in respect for those who are different.

Recognizing the many gifts that priests currently serving Hispanic parishes bring, Ospino *et al.* (2014:30) comment: “Dioceses need to plan carefully to make sure that the next generation of priests and pastors is ready to meet the needs and demands of the Hispanic and culturally diverse communities where they will be serving.” It is important that they recognize the need to prepare priests to serve in the languages of other immigrant groups, which may be more prominent in different areas of the country.

In an academic address to her seminary community, Martinez (2015) addressed the importance of communicating well in both English and Spanish for the sake of pastoral mission of the Church in the United States. Martinez (2015) stated: “Besides English, knowledge of Spanish as well as additional languages is definitely considered an asset in serving the people of God. They are our ‘pastoral’ languages for this reason.” Immersion programmes have also been shown to be more helpful than classes for adults seeking to learn a language (Georgetown University Medical Center, 2012).

Besides helping seminarians learn Spanish, immersion experiences can increase their concern for people of that culture. It would be useful to know if priests who have been ordained for some time have a sense that their participation in an immersion experience had such an impact on them. Furthermore, evidence of whether language immersions prepare seminarians to persevere in lifelong priestly service would also help bishops and formation personnel develop appropriate priorities for priestly training.

### **3.8 Theological reflection**

The previous sections have offered a brief overview of each formation activity under consideration in this study. In each case, the intention was to provide as accurate a description as possible, as well as offer arguments that have been presented in favour of the use of the programme or against it. This chapter now concludes by offering a theological reflection of each activity in the light of the theologies of priesthood that have been considered in chapter two. This theological reflection will allow for a reasoned evaluation of these formation activities as well as lead to further questions for the empirical study.

In chapter two, relationship was seen to be the most promising model for linking the traditional language of permanence of priestly ministry with a new relationship of service to the Church, expressed especially by Gaillardetz (2003:40–41). The formation activities that have been considered in this chapter aim in different ways to help seminarians prepare for effective ministry as future priests. But do these activities promote precisely this kind of relationship with the People of God? The theological discussion in this section will thus focus on the extent to which the evidence supports the theory that these activities promote this relationship. In a text already considered at the close of the last chapter, the Congregation for the Clergy (2016:4) expresses the meaning of this relationship, founded on a relationship with Christ: “The fundamental idea is that Seminaries should form missionary disciples who are ‘in love’ with the Master, shepherds with ‘the smell of the sheep’, who live in their midst to bring the mercy of God to them.” In interpreting this notion of a relationship with the Church, rooted in the love of Christ, the present researcher is interpreting it as a permanent, nuptial encounter between the priest and the Church — precisely in the way the *Lumen Gentium* describes her: “the People of God, the Body of the Lord and the Temple of the Holy Spirit” (Vatican II, 1964:§17).

CPE, which has been used in seminary formation for the longest time of the six treated in this chapter, has been subject to many critiques. Does participation in CPE truly help Catholic seminarians know themselves better as ministers? If it does, then it could prepare them to enter a new and permanent relationship with the Church, because if CPE helps to develop skills necessary for ministry, it would also serve that relationship. At the same time, if any of the criticisms of

CPE are valid (in particular those that indicate that it fails to respect the Catholic understanding of sacramental ministry and Catholic moral teaching), CPE would be unlikely to promote a healthy relationship between the minister and the Church. Furthermore, the fact that seminaries cannot predict and have no control over the kind of supervision at a given CPE site offers additional reason for concern, especially since the *PPF* mentions the quality of supervision as paramount (USCCB, 2006:84).

The argument presented by McCarron (1981:162–163), calling for real theological reflection on the reasons for using CPE in Catholic seminaries, still holds true today. In fact, the work of this chapter shows that little theological reflection has taken place about the reasons for employing most of these programmes, with the exception of priestly support groups and IPF. This study thus encourages those responsible for seminary formation to consider carefully the purposes and theological rationale of their various activities. The information this research offers about the correlation of participation in these programmes with perseverance in ministry will be very important, but calling seminaries to theological reflection about the programmes themselves is at least as important.

If the spirituality year or propaedeutic year truly fulfils the intention of Holy See, to provide “a solid base for the spiritual life and to nurture a greater self-awareness for personal growth” (Congregation for the Clergy, 2016:28), then it would help seminarians enter into a permanent relationship with Christ and with the Church. The adage “One cannot give what one does not have” applies here. At the same time, although the limited documentation about these programmes makes it difficult to evaluate them, one must ask whether the model of “spiritual life” and of “self-awareness for personal growth” that these programmes promote matches the needs of the Church today. Does the kind of detachment that these programmes demand, even if only for a time, truly support the need for priests to “smell like their sheep” (Francis, 2013; Congregation for the Clergy, 2016:4)?

If a principal purpose of pastoral formation is to help to determine whether the seminarian is prepared for ministry and allow him to experience that ministry as much as possible so that this experience can inform the final stages of discernment (Romano Gómez, 2006:887–888), then the pastoral-year internship is tailored to support these tasks. In view of a theology of the relationship of the priest to the People of God, seen as a spousal relationship, the internship experience resembles an engagement period, where both parties (seminarian and Church) receive appropriate accompaniment (which will include supervision and evaluation) to see if this relationship is meant to be. It is important in practice, however, to recognize how much of the effectiveness of the

supervision and evaluation on the part of the pastor and others assisting the pastor in working with the seminarian will affect the effectiveness of a given internship experience.

The priestly-support groups which have been considered — Jesus Caritas, Emmaus, Companions of Christ — all have similar purposes: “call to holiness, mutual spiritual assistance, better service to God and His People, meditation on the Scripture and poverty of spirit” (Lavorgna, 2004:1). An important question to ask about these activities, as well as about propaedeutic programmes, is whether these movements’ models of fraternal life and sharing meet the needs of priestly life and ministry today. At the same time, if the relationship with the Church prizes friendships with brother priests, programmes that help priests form bonds within the presbyterate would seem to strengthen their union with the whole Church.

The IPF programme for seminarians, as noted above, seeks to help seminarians deepen their spiritual life, in order to be able to help people approach God themselves — to know God, in order to be able to share God’s love with others. Here the relationship with God’s people is clearly linked to the future priest’s relationship with God. Logically, the reasoning follows. The question, as with other programmes, is whether the model of spirituality IPF presents prepares seminarians well for priestly ministry. Also, it would be helpful to see, with this formation activity, as with several of the others which purport to provide a good framework for discernment, how the data received bears out this claim.

Language immersion programmes appear to be, of all these formation activities, the ones least connected to preparing the priest for a permanent spousal relationship with the Church. The purpose of these programmes, however, is precisely to help the seminarian better know the community he will be serving as a priest, particularly those who will most need his special care since they do not speak English. Immersion experiences respond to the call to “go into the peripheries,” an oft-repeated theme in the current pontificate, as they teach US seminarians a language they will need to serve the marginalized in the United States (Akin, 2013; Congregation for the Clergy, 2016:43). Whether having this knowledge and the concomitant growth in language skills assists the priest in remaining committed to the bond established at ordination is an important question asked by this research.

This brief theological reflection has examined the six formation activities in terms of how they prepare seminarians to persevere in ministry. This treatment builds on the different ways of considering the notion of the priest’s relationship with the Church discussed in chapter two. This chapter has also speculated on the possible benefits and drawbacks of each activity. Although many other theological aspects could be analysed for each activity, those selected have linked the work of this chapter with the rationale for perseverance in ministry proposed in chapter two, thus

preparing the way for the empirical research. Before moving on to that empirical work, however, the revisions to the survey questions which this chapter's work has suggested will be presented.

The discussion to date has not treated the issue of celibacy directly, although it is clearly of great importance for Latin-rite Catholic priests in the United States. The *PPF* (USCCB, 2006:26, 39–41, 54, 76–78, 83, 90–96, 110, 202, 269) and the *Ratio Fundamentalis* (Congregation for the Clergy, 2016:17, 37, 47–48, 79) both call in multiple places for seminaries to prepare candidates for the free acceptance of the commitment to celibacy: “In order for celibacy to be a truly free choice, seminarians must be led to understand, by the light of faith, the evangelical power of such a gift,” while understanding and appreciating the true meaning of marriage (Congregation for the Clergy, 2016:48). Although remaining unmarried is not an absolute requirement for Catholic priesthood, as can be seen by the differing practice in the Eastern Churches and the exceptions given in the Western Church under rare circumstances, this study needs to address this important point.

### **3.9 Considerations for the design of the empirical study**

Taking into consideration the data gathered in this chapter and theological reflection conducted in the previous section, further narrative questions were added to the questionnaire. Although each question flowed from observations about one or more of the formation activities being studied, the questions chosen were added to the questionnaire for each activity in which the respondent acknowledged having participated, so that they may not appear to be leading questions. As will be seen, these questions were altered somewhat during the final design of the survey instrument, asking for the same information using Likert scales. At this stage of the research, they were proposed in this manner:

1. In response to whether CPE respects the sacramental nature of the priesthood and of priestly ministry as well as the interest CPE has in helping the participants to know themselves as ministers, “Describe how participating in each formation activity affected your understanding of your future identity as a priest.”
2. Considering the basic intention of spirituality or propaedeutic year programmes (and IPF as well), “Describe ways in which participating in each formation activity helped to provide a solid base for your spiritual life and to nurture a greater self-awareness for personal growth.”
3. Given the importance of growing in pastoral skills in the pastoral-year internship experience, “Describe how participating in each formation activity helped you to develop pastoral skills which have been useful in making you a competent minister.”

4. Given the importance of discernment on the part of the seminarian himself and on the part of those charged with his formation, based on the quality of the pastoral-year internship and its evaluations, “Describe how participation in each formation activity affected your discernment of your call to priesthood and the seminary formation team’s perception of your call.” The focus on discernment in IPF also suggested the advisability of this question.
5. Because of the dearth of information about the long-term effects of participation in fraternal support groups during seminary formation, such as *Jesus Caritas* and Emmaus, which have been considered in this chapter, “Describe how participation in each formation activity affected your attitude towards seeking the support of other priests and your participation in fraternal support groups after ordination.”
6. Because IPF focuses on growth in elements of the spiritual life and because it would be useful to know whether participation in this programme or the others promotes the relationship with God and growth in spiritual maturity, “Describe how participation in each formation activity affected your attitude toward the spiritual life and your maturity in the faith.”
7. On the basis of the rationale for language immersion experiences, “Describe how participation in each activity affected your attitude towards and your ability to serve diverse communities in your priestly ministry.”
8. Because Latin-rite Catholic priests in the United States commit to live their lives in the celibate state, “Describe how participation in each formation activity affected your attitude toward the commitment to celibacy you would take on at ordination.”

### **3.10 Practical theological conclusions**

The formation activities being considered in this study have different purposes. Some, such as CPE, the pastoral-year internship, and language immersion programmes, have the express intention of promoting the ministerial skills of the seminarian. Others, such as the propaedeutic programmes, IPF, and pastoral year, focus specifically on the seminarian’s identity and vocational discernment. Propaedeutic experiences and IPF pay particular attention to the spiritual life, and fraternal groups seek to build bonds among future priests, encouraging them to work intentionally on strengthening those bonds after ordination. Several of these activities, but the internship experiences especially, provide important information for those responsible for working with seminarians and making recommendations to their bishops.

Although none of these formation activities makes a specific claim that it helps priests remain in ministry, the work each seeks to do in preparing seminarians for effective ministry would seem

to be most relevant if each programme also promoted perseverance in ministry after ordination. This chapter has prepared the way for the empirical research to be conducted by introducing the programmes to be examined. It has also helped to clarify the research questions, by suggesting further questions to be asked in the narrative portion of the survey. These further questions are expected to provide helpful information for the current research and for future research in this area.

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<sup>1</sup> The sacramentality of the priesthood is expressed in *Presbyterorum ordinis* 1: “Wherefore the priesthood, while indeed it presupposes the sacraments of Christian initiation, is conferred by that special sacrament; through it priests, by the anointing of the Holy Spirit, are signed with a special character and are conformed to Christ the Priest in such a way that they can act in the person of Christ the Head.”

<sup>2</sup> The use of the term “theology students” in this seminary’s catalogue in this case is referring to seminarians, even though this same seminary admits lay students to study theology (Mount Angel Seminary, 2015:13).

<sup>3</sup> “Si no hay ascética, no habrá el entrenamiento necesario para ser un buen pastor.”

<sup>4</sup> Thus, this section of this chapter, considering such programs already being conducted in the United States, and this entire study, evaluating whether such programs have had an impact on perseverance in ministry, where they have been running long enough to measure, is particularly timely.

<sup>5</sup> As noted above, St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary in Florida and St. John’s Seminary in California both indicate that parish administration is an important element in their pastoral year internships.

<sup>6</sup> “Ahora, en la medida que el seminarista se sienta amado, por sus formadores y sus compañeros, entonces podrá tener mejores recursos afectivos para afrontar las cargas ministeriales, pues contará con los elementos suficientes para desarrollar una personalidad madura e integrada”.

## **4 Chapter four: The Empirical study: Theological conceptualization, data, and analysis**

### **4.1 Overview of the chapter**

This chapter addresses two principal questions: First, it will describe how the process of theological conceptualization (van der Ven, 1998:128) contributed to the design of a survey to test the relationship of the six formation activities considered in the previous chapter (CPE, spirituality or propaedeutic year, pastoral-year internship, priestly fraternity groups, Institute for Priestly Formation, language immersion programmes) with perseverance in priestly ministry, in a way which is “free from logical inconsistency, independent, sufficient and necessary” (van der Ven, 1998:129). This chapter will describe the process of developing the survey, in light of van der Ven’s process of theological deduction (van der Ven, 1998:128–139). Second, this chapter will describe the empirical-theological testing phase (van der Ven, 1998:140–151) and discuss the process by which the mailing list was developed. It will also address further development of the questionnaire, describe the data collection process and present the data obtained. An initial analysis of the data will begin the process of theological interpretation, itself the first dimension of the theological evaluation phase. The intention here is to place the results of the study “in the context of the goal of the theological study” (van der Ven, 1998:152), preparing the way for theological reflection and theological-methodological reflection, which will take place in chapter five.

When this research project began, the goal was to identify correlations between each of the six activities and perseverance. However, since an insufficient number of respondents who have left active ministry returned their surveys in order to meaningfully compare them to priests still actively serving, a statistical conclusion is impossible. At the same time, however, the inclusion of Likert scales about the impact of the six activities on the respondents’ seminary formation and future ministry allowed this research to obtain helpful and important data. The data will show that some of the six activities are evaluated more positively than others. These highly rated activities had a markedly more positive impact than others on different aspects of ministerial life, aspects that likely connect with perseverance in ministry. This initial discussion will set the stage for concrete recommendations in the next chapter.

### **4.2 Theological conceptualization**

Several theological concepts relate to this chapter. These are inherent in the principal questions included in the survey described below. The concepts include, above all, perseverance in priestly

ministry. Other concepts flow from the connection between the questions suggested in section 3.9 above and perseverance in ministry. They include understanding of priestly identity, developing a solid base for the spiritual life, self-awareness for personal growth, development of pastoral skills, vocational discernment on the part of the individual and on the part of those charged with formation to the priesthood (called the formation team at most Catholic seminaries), fraternal support of other seminarians and priests, attitudes about the spiritual life and maturity in the faith, openness to and ability to serve diverse communities, and commitment to celibacy.

Although it would take a much more extensive study to prove the connection of each of these nine concepts with perseverance in ministry, intuitively they seem relevant to the broader concern of this project. The data examined in this chapter appears to bear this out, to the extent that priests look back on the impact of the various formation activities being examined. Each of these concepts is worthy of further study on its own.

### **4.3 Development of the mailing list**

The first step in determining the population selected to receive the questionnaire for this study was a review of the *Catholic Directory* (P.J. Kenedy & Sons, 2016:1739–2026), in which diocesan priests of Latin Rite dioceses ordained in 2005 were selected, and their names and assignments noted. Later, the address of their placements as of the date of this listing was located in the section for each diocese (P.J. Kenedy & Sons, 2016:1–1540). While this search already found some of these priests listed as being on leave or otherwise out of ministry, the population of the priests out of ministry for the ordination classes 2003, 2004, and 2005 was determined by comparing the listing of all priests ordained in those years, from the 2006 and 2016 editions of the *Catholic Directory* (P.J. Kenedy & Sons, 2006:1671–1995; 2016:1739–2026). Lastly, the names of the priests who appeared to be out of ministry, with no assignment and no explanation for the lack of assignment, were sorted and compared with the necrology for each of the intervening years (P.J. Kenedy & Sons, 2007:2041–2047; 2008:2062–2068; 2009:2063–2069; 2010:2057–2064; 2011:2054–2060; 2012:2049–2055; 2013:2039–2045; 2014:2054–2061; 2015:2054–2060).

Through this process, 365 priests were found who appeared to have been ordained for US dioceses and to remain in active full-time ministry. An additional eight priests were listed as retired, but were considered to be in active ministry for the purposes of this study, as they appear to have persevered to retirement. 156 priests from the three classes appear to be out of ministry, with a variety of listings, such as leave of absence, absent, unassigned, or — most commonly — not appearing at all. The review of the necrologies revealed that 15 priests from these three ordination cohorts had died in the intervening years. The effort to compare the lists helped to avoid creating

unnecessary hurt for diocesan staff who might otherwise have received mail addressed to their deceased co-workers.

#### **4.4 Further development of the questionnaire**

##### **4.4.1 Description of the process**

A survey document was prepared, in accord with the description in section 1.3 above and further clarified in 3.9 above. In preparing the questions for use in SurveyMonkey, which were to be a combination of Likert scales and a series of open-ended questions in each section, it became clear that, rather than offering the option of a paper copy and an online copy, it would be best to give all participants the link to the SurveyMonkey questionnaire and use only that method of data collection. One reason for this procedural decision was the need to use logic in deciding which sections of the questionnaire to complete. A paper survey would have required much more effort on the part of participants to determine which sections needed to be completed, depending on the formation activities in which they had participated in and on their ministerial status. That amount of effort seemed unreasonable to expect.

Once the basic design of the questionnaire was completed, a few persons were asked to complete a test version, to determine how long it would take to complete and to ask for feedback on it. Several priests ordained more recently than the cohort being studied, including one who has left ministry, were asked to complete the survey. Additionally, students in a course on research methodology at Loyola University Chicago took the survey, pretending to have participated in certain programmes and to be in or out of active ministry. The data for these responses has been destroyed, but the contribution of these test subjects was significant.

The major finding from these test subjects was that the original instrument was too long, with too many open-ended questions. Some indicated that they took as long as an hour to complete the survey, an effort that seemed unrealistic to expect from priests who had no reason to do a great favour to the researcher. Furthermore, the data clearly appeared as if it would be unwieldy to manage. Thus, the open-ended questions suggested in 3.9 above were changed into scaled questions for each section. For example, the question on the effect of each activity “on your understanding of your future identity as a priest” was asked as a scaled question for each activity in which the respondent took part and phrased as follows: “Please indicate the impact [the activity in question] had on your understanding of priestly identity.” (See Annexure 1 for the full survey.) Additionally, respondents were asked to respond to an evaluation question for each activity in which they took part and were asked this general question as well: “Please indicate the impact [the activity in question] had on the totality of your seminary formation experience.”

Although this survey promised to be much easier for respondents to complete and to provide data that would be more readily useful, there was a downside to this revision. This approach risked losing the opportunity for respondents to provide narrative answers, which might provide rich material. To allow for this input without making the questionnaire unwieldy, a narrative question was added to the end of each section: “Please add any comments you would like to share about [the activity in question] and its impact on you, in particular related to your decision to remain in or to leave active priestly ministry.” General questions, asking whether the respondent had anything to add, especially about the impact of seminary formation on perseverance or departure from ministry, were added to the final sections of the survey, with different versions of these questions asked of persevering and non-persevering respondents. (See Annexure 1: Seminary formation activities survey.)

#### **4.4.2 Practical theological discussion of the questionnaire**

Following van der Ven’s model, which has served as a guide throughout the process of this study, this work connects with the theological-conceptual model (1998:131–134) and theological operationalization (1998:134–139). The three necessary elements in the theological-conceptual model are “concepts or variables, relationships between the concepts or variables, and the research units” (van der Ven, 1998:131). In this case, the variables being considered are, on the one hand, perseverance or lack of perseverance in ministry, and on the other, participation or non-participation in the various seminary formation activities being studied. The expectation was that the study would be able to determine whether there was a relationship between the first variable and any of the other set of variables. The research units are the priests ordained in 2005 who still appeared in ministry in 2016, as well as priests ordained in 2003–2005 who appeared to be out of ministry in 2016.

The decision to ask a combination of open-ended questions and Likert scale questions is in accord with van der Ven’s suggestion that most often “it will be desirable to try out a combination of open and closed questions” (1998:136). This comment arises in van der Ven’s treatment of religious attitudes, which are like, but not exactly the same as, the evaluations requested of the respondents about the formation activities in which they participated. The statement van der Ven (1998:137) makes to summarize the discussion about attitudes relates well to this study: “In our definition of the concept of attitude we leave aside the behavioural aspect and select an intermediate position according to which attitude is characterized by a cognitive as well as an affective-evaluative dimension.”

As to the cognitive dimension, the questions asked were about areas in which the respondents had specific experience. Although the statements are not simply true or false statements, they are all

evaluations of the impact of specific activities on some aspect of the respondent's own life and ministry. The questions meet the criteria described by van der Ven (1998:137): that the questions "be simple and precisely formulated ... value-neutral and correspond to the experience, knowledge and cultural level of the respondent." In terms of the last aspect of the development of the scales, the "affective-evaluative dimension" (van der Ven, 1998:137), Likert scales were in fact used, with an eleven-point scale (zero to ten), with answers ranging from "most negative" to "most positive," with the middle position (value of five) being labelled "neutral."

Van der Ven (1988:138) discusses the concepts of validity and reliability. Validity can be affirmed, in this case, in that the questions were developed through a process that flowed directly from the purposes of each of the activities being studied. The reliability of the questionnaires is not capable of being examined, because of the small sample size; there were not enough responses to make statistical inferences about the data itself. Van der Ven (1988:139) indicates that reliability is an area of empirical theology that needs significant further development.

The final step of the process of operationalization, as described by van der Ven (1988:139), is the development of the questionnaire. After discussing the importance of preparing a questionnaire to meet the needs of respondents, keeping them engaged psychologically, he writes:

The success or failure of this stage can be determined during the try-out phase, in which the focus is on the suitability of the individual questions and blocks of questions, and on the relations between the blocks.... During the try-out it is important to ask the respondents explicitly about the difficulties and problems encountered while answering the individual items (Van der Ven, 1988:139).

The two test groups helped to make the questionnaire more useful.

## **4.5 Data collection**

### **4.5.1 The process**

The empirical-theological testing phase followed, beginning with data collection (van der Ven, 1988:140). In July 2017 the request to participate in the study, including the consent form (see Annexure 2), was sent by US Mail to the identified individuals, with a self-addressed stamped return envelope. A total of 525 invitations were sent out. From this mailing, 17 individuals responded, submitting consent forms and apparently completing the survey.

Through notification from the diocesan offices or other priests, or through subsequent internet searches, it was determined that 14 individuals who had been invited to participate were deceased.

There were six individuals who were duplicates, receiving two forms, either because of error or because they were listed under different names in different editions of the *Catholic Directory*, something which happened in the case of some Hispanic priests who were listed with two family names in one edition and with only one in another. There were 14 priests who had appeared to be diocesan priests in the original review of the directory information, but who were actually religious-order priests. An additional seven priests appear to have been formed outside the United States in seminaries in their home countries and so should not have been part of the population for this study. The potential pool of respondents was thus reduced to 484. Furthermore, envelopes addressed to seven individuals were returned as undeliverable. Since no good address or contact information could be found by the means described in the next paragraph, the potential population fell to 477.

Given that some envelopes were being returned because the person had moved or because the dioceses were not able to or were unwilling to forward them, especially to inactive priests, the next step was to try to use the internet to find better physical addresses or to use an electronic means to find these individuals as well as increase the likelihood of obtaining responses from other subjects. By means of parish and personal email addresses found online, parish or institutional message systems, *Facebook* and *LinkedIn* invitations, 330 additional attempts at contacting members of the selected group were made. Of these, 25 individuals completed the questionnaire.

A total of 43 individuals have completed the questionnaire. Out of a potential population of 477, and recognizing that it is most likely that a significant number of this population never received the request to participate, the response rate is close to 9%. Van der Ven (1998:142) suggests that response rates of 20–25% are sometimes the best that a researcher may be able to achieve, meaning that the present response rate is very low. Although the total number of respondents is low and the results of this research will have to be considered as qualitative rather than quantitative, this study has still yielded much helpful information.

#### **4.5.2 Concern about the sample size and number of responses**

Even in treating this study as qualitative research, whether the number of responses is sufficient for making generalized conclusions remains an important question. According to the principle of saturation, in qualitative research, it is possible to reach a point at which sufficient data has been obtained, because it is unlikely that further questionnaires, interviews, or other forms of obtaining data will lead to different results (Tay, 2014). This source cites several studies that indicate that between ten and twelve interviews are sufficient for data saturation. Review of the responses received seems to indicate that the respondents are similar to other priests ordained in that time

period. At the same time, Tay (2014) argues that saturation is not a sufficient criterion for determining that sufficient research has been conducted: “Rather than requiring researchers to make the highly challengeable claim that data has been or will be collected until saturated, evaluators should instead require researchers to be transparent and detail why he/she/they stopped or will stop collecting data including making known the limitations and constraints faced or anticipated.”

Fusch and Ness (2014:1410) discuss data saturation: “One of the challenges in addressing data saturation is about the use of a personal *lens* primarily because novice researchers (such as students) assume that they have no bias in their data collection and may not recognize when the data is indeed saturated.” One means that is suggested for determining saturation is triangulation, or obtaining results from different methods and sources (Fusch & Ness, 2014:1411). In this case, while the data came from one groups of individuals, they represent a number of seminaries and dioceses, and they responded to both Likert scale and open-ended questions, perhaps achieving triangulation. As will be seen, the data obtained from the open-ended questions and the Likert scale questions point in similar directions, which argues for the reliability of this study.

At the same time, rather than claim that data saturation has been reached, this researcher prefers to offer the results of this study on their merits. Although a larger response rate would have been desired, to have expanded the sample group or devised new surveys for a different population would have meant conducting a different research study altogether. Without making any claims for saturation, this study makes an honest and transparent effort to obtain the best information possible under the circumstances and to offer insights about the impact of the six activities on perseverance in ministry.

### **4.5.3 Consent form**

Of these 43 respondents, a total of 36 returned the consent form by a mailed hard copy or by emailing a scanned copy. The link for the survey was contained in the invitation to participate and consent form, so it is unlikely that any respondent took part in the project without having received and at least looked at the consent form (see Annexure 2). In the questionnaire itself, the question was asked whether the participant had completed the questionnaire, and only five indicated that they did not complete the questionnaire. Given the safeguards employed and that the participant had to make a free choice to complete the survey, it seems that making attempts to identify the answers of those who completed the survey without submitting the consent form would be more likely to unmask their identity than simply including their data.

#### 4.6 Empirical-theological data analysis

The most immediately striking aspect of the collected data was that only four of the respondents indicated that they are currently out of ministry. That low number, despite the effort to contact a significant number of priests out of ministry, means that there is clearly insufficient data to make any kind of meaningful comparison between the participation in the formation activities being considered among persevering and non-persevering priests. **Error! Reference source not found.** indicates the responses to question 100: “What is your current ministerial status?” For reasons that are unclear, nine respondents did not respond to this question or the other questions asking for demographic data, but there is no indication from the responses, especially the narrative comments, that there are any more than four respondents not in active ministry.

Table 4.1

Status in Ministry	Number	Percentage
Active ministry	30	88.24%
Resigned from ministry	2	5.88%
On leave	1	2.94%
Left to get married, considers self-suspended rather than having resigned	1	2.94%

The study asked for some demographic data, while promising that the respondents themselves, their seminaries, and their dioceses would not be identified. 27 of the respondents who indicated year of ordination were ordained in 2005, with two of the others being ordained in 2003 and four in 2004. Although the intention in the study design was that only priests who appeared to be out of ministry from the classes of 2003 and 2004 would be sent a request to participate, some in fact were in ministry when it seemed they were not, and others may have been ordained in a different year than the source document indicated.

The respondents represent 21 seminaries and 30 dioceses. The mean age at ordination of this group was 35, while the median age was 34. Their ethnic distribution is shown in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2

Ethnic group	Number	Percentage
Caucasian/European American/White	28	82.35%
Hispanic/Latino	4	11.76%
Asian/Pacific Islander/Hawaiian	1	2.94%
African/African American/Black	1	2.94%

For purposes of comparison, the survey of priests ordained in 2005 (Hoge, 2005:2) reported that 67% of diocesan priests ordained that year were European American, 10% Hispanic, 12% Asian or Pacific Islander, 4% African or African American.<sup>1</sup> The same study found that the mean age of diocesan priests ordained in 2005 was 36.9, just two years higher than the mean for this sample (Hoge, 2005:2). The intervening death of a handful of the priests ordained in 2005 could account for part of the difference in the mean age. Thus, the group in this sample seems similar to the population of those ordained in 2005, if a little younger at ordination and a little less diverse in terms of ethnic background.

Of the 43 respondents, a total of 30 reported taking part in at least one of the six activities treated in this study. **Error! Reference source not found.** indicates the programmes in which they participated.

Table 4.3

Activity	Participants
Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE)	19
Fraternal Support Group	8
Institute for Priestly Formation (IPF)	10
Language Immersion Programme	12
Pastoral Internship	15
Spirituality or Propaedeutic Year	8
Participated in at least one activity	30

The most useful data points are the Likert scale assessments made by the respondents of each of the programmes they participated in as well as their comments about these formation activities for the open-ended questions. The narrative remarks will be considered at the end of the chapter, leading into a further analysis of the data in chapter five. The responses to the individual Likert scale questions will appear first, distributed according to the different sets of questions.

#### **4.6.1 Overall evaluation of the formation activities**

The following tables present the responses to the questions in which the respondents were asked to provide an overall evaluation of the formation activities in which they participated while in seminary. While statistical tests of this data will not be attempted, given the small sample in each group, the scales themselves, together with the analysis of the data which will be done, added to the comments about the programmes which will be considered, present valuable information.

**Error! Reference source not found.** to **Error! Reference source not found.** present the data regarding the overall evaluation of each of the programmes. The most positive overall evaluation is for IPF, with a weighted average score of 8.89 and with none of the participants offering an overall evaluation of less than 8.00. The second-highest weighted average evaluation is for the pastoral-year internship with a weighted average of 8.18, the only other formation activity with an average evaluation above 8.00. It is noteworthy that six of the fifteen participants in a pastoral-year internship gave the highest possible score on this item, and four scored it as neutral, which already points to an interesting dynamic that will appear also in the participants' comments, that the pastoral-year internships and the other experiences, while they share many common elements, were different from diocese to diocese and seminary to seminary. IPF was the one general exception; it alone is uniform for all participants, regardless of diocese or seminary.

The lowest overall evaluation was given to CPE, with a weighted average of 6.26, with the nearest activity having an average score of 7.08, the language immersion experience. A wide variety of responses in both cases is noteworthy.

Table 4.4

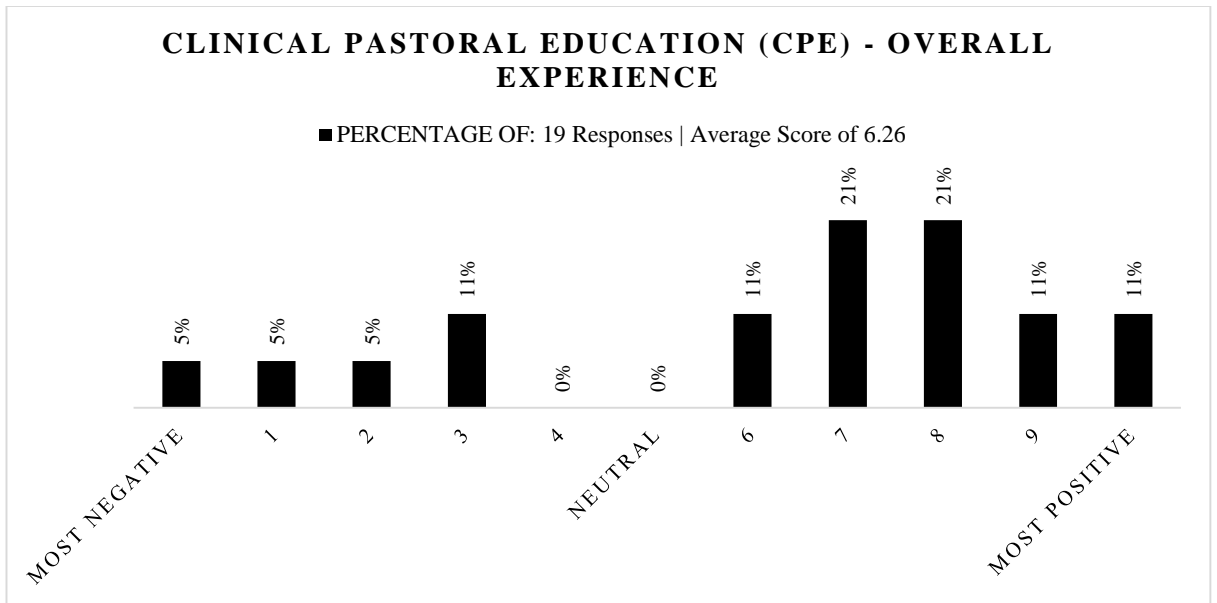


Table 4.5

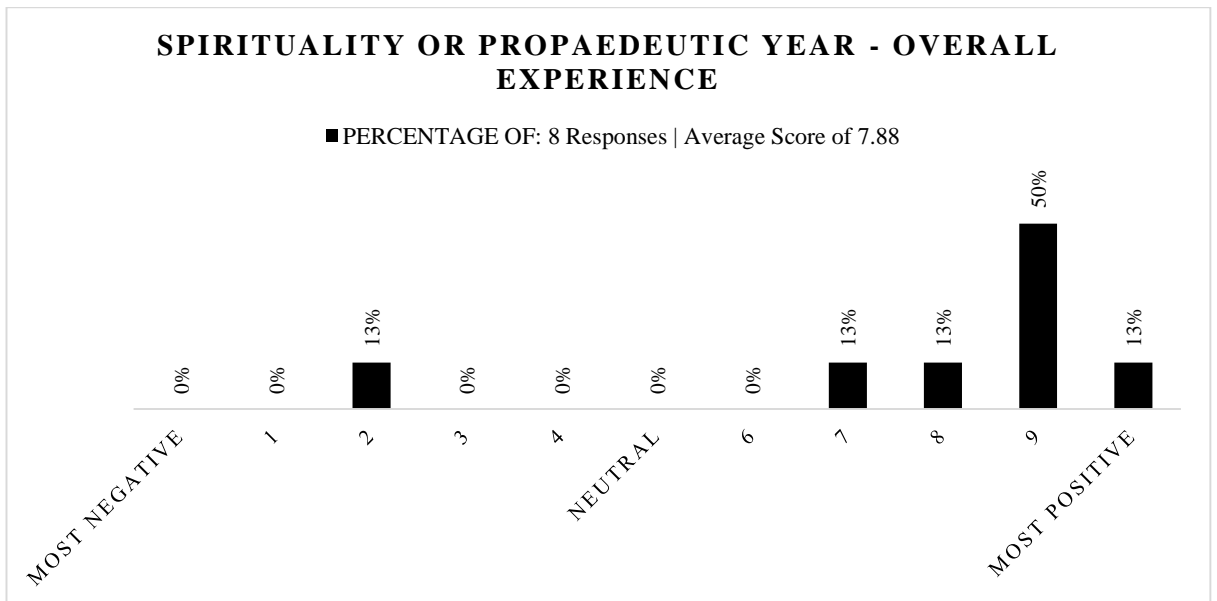


Table 4.6

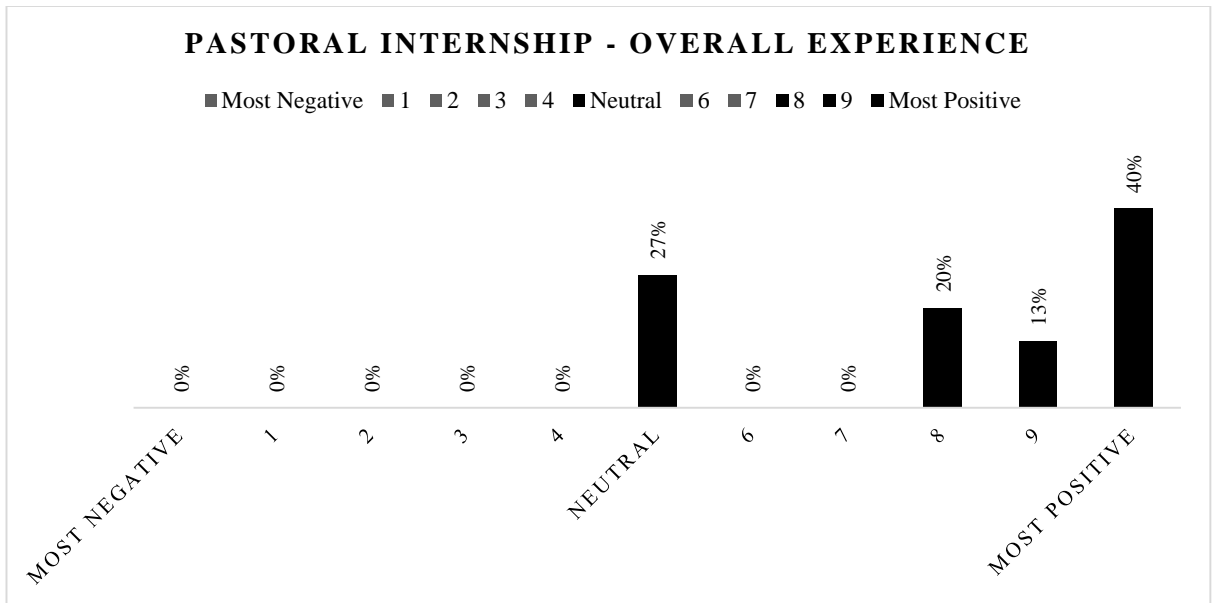


Table 4.7

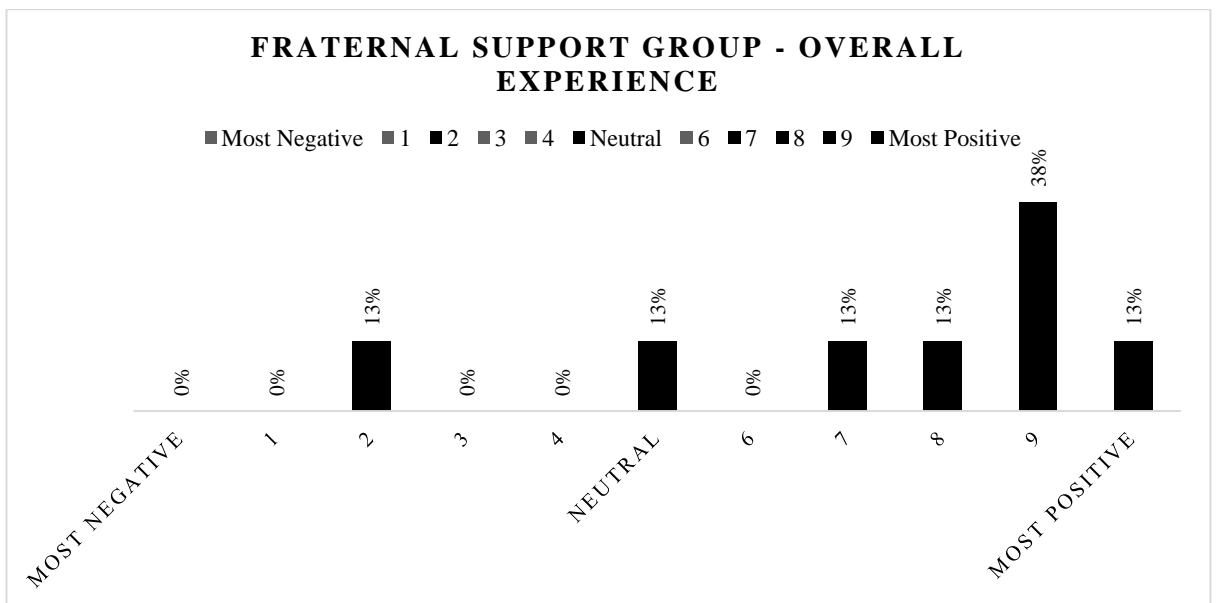


Table 4.8

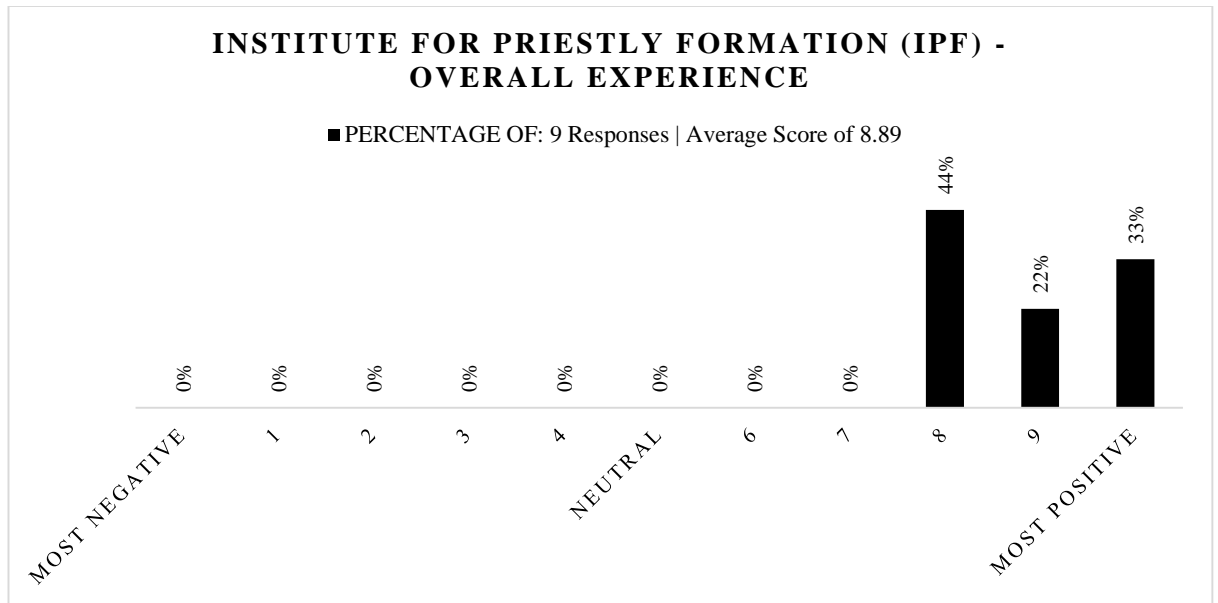
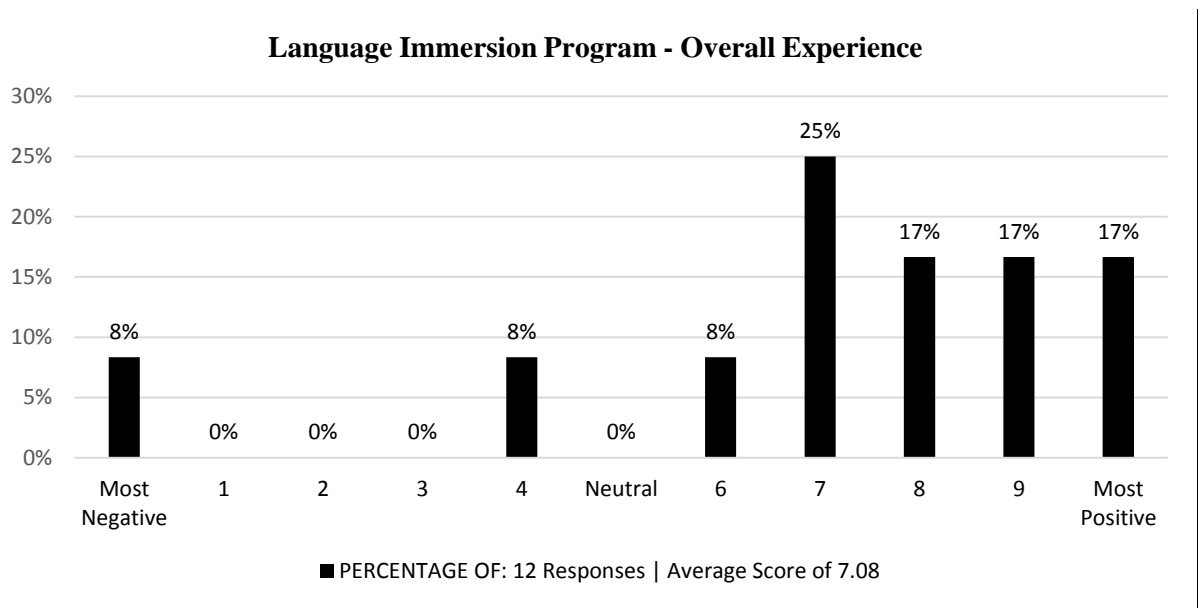


Table 4.9



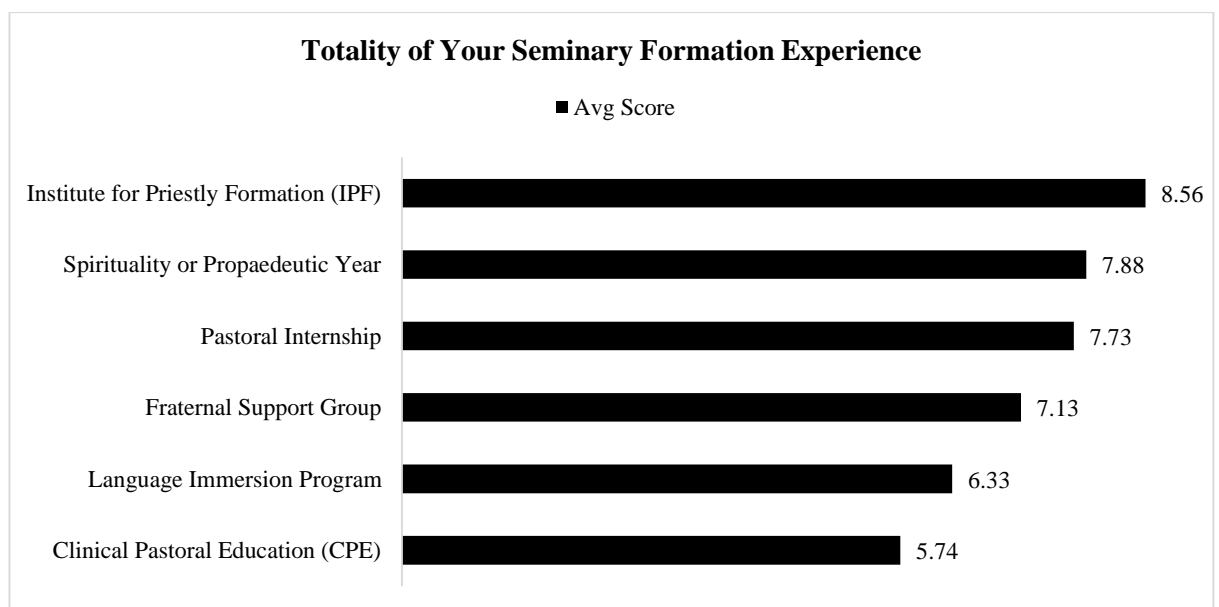
#### 4.6.2 Impact of the formation activities on the totality of seminary experience

Similar data could be presented for each of the Likert scale questions. **Error! Reference source not found.** presents the average responses to the question about the impact of each formation activity on the totality of the respondent's seminary experience. Once again, IPF scored the

highest from the ten respondents who participated in it, with a weighted average of 8.56. Participating in a spirituality or propaedeutic year received the second-highest average score on this question, from the eight respondents who took part in some form of this activity, with a weighted average of 7.88. The fifteen participants in a pastoral-year internship gave this activity the third highest weighted average on this question, 7.73. The presence of some low outliers affected these averages, as on the previous question.

The most negative average evaluation again was for the nineteen participants who took part in CPE, who gave this experience an average score of 5.74 in terms of “the impact CPE had on the totality of their seminary experience.” Again, the immersion experience received the second-lowest average score from twelve respondents, of 6.33.

Table 4.10

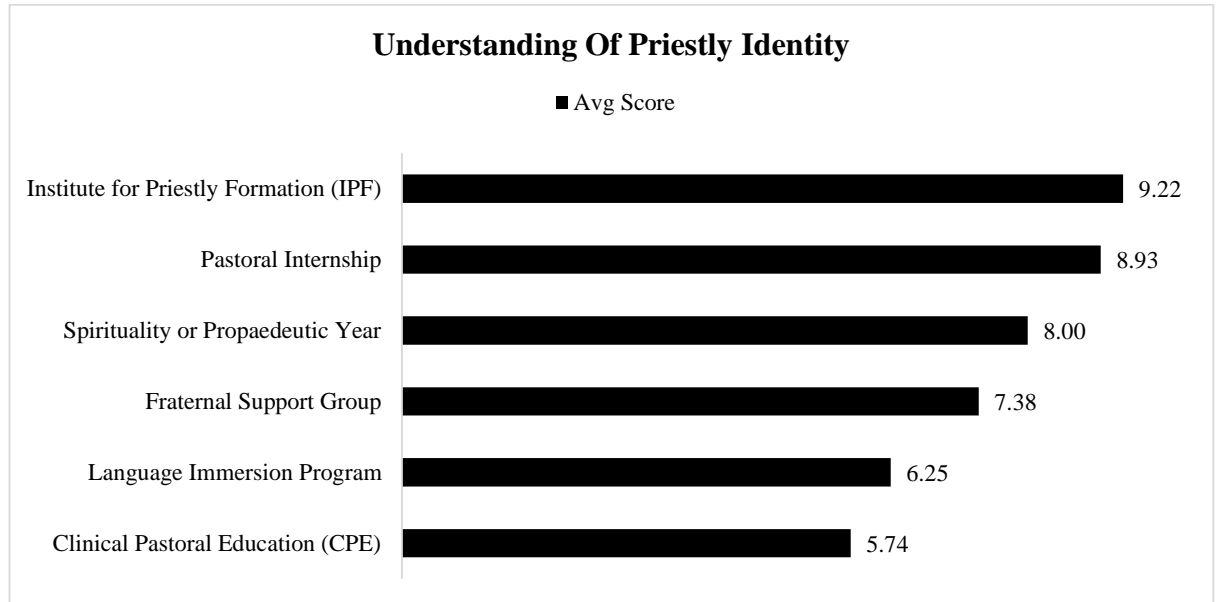


#### 4.6.3 Impact of the formation activities on understanding of priestly identity

The respondents’ evaluation of the impact of the formation activities on their understanding of priestly identity appears in **Error! Reference source not found.** In this case, the highest reported average response was among the respondents taking part in IPF, 9.22, with the second highest average score for the pastoral-year internship, 8.93. Participation in a spirituality or propaedeutic experience ranked third, with an average score of 8.00. CPE once again is the lowest ranked formation activity, with an average score of 5.74, with language immersion programmes being second lowest, with an average score of 6.25. It is worth noting even before further analysis that language immersion programmes would not be expected to have an impact on the understanding

of a seminarian’s future priestly identity, while CPE would be expected to assist in the development of that ministerial identity. In fact, this question was included specifically because CPE’s purposes suggested it.<sup>2</sup>

Table 4.11



The strength of the positive evaluation of IPF and the pastoral-year internship on this variable can be seen in the following tables (**Error! Reference source not found.** and **Error! Reference source not found.**). It is worthy of note that the largest number of respondents rating the programme at the highest level is for pastoral year, but the fact that there are some outliers rating the pastoral year less positively makes its mean score lower than IPF.

Table 4.12

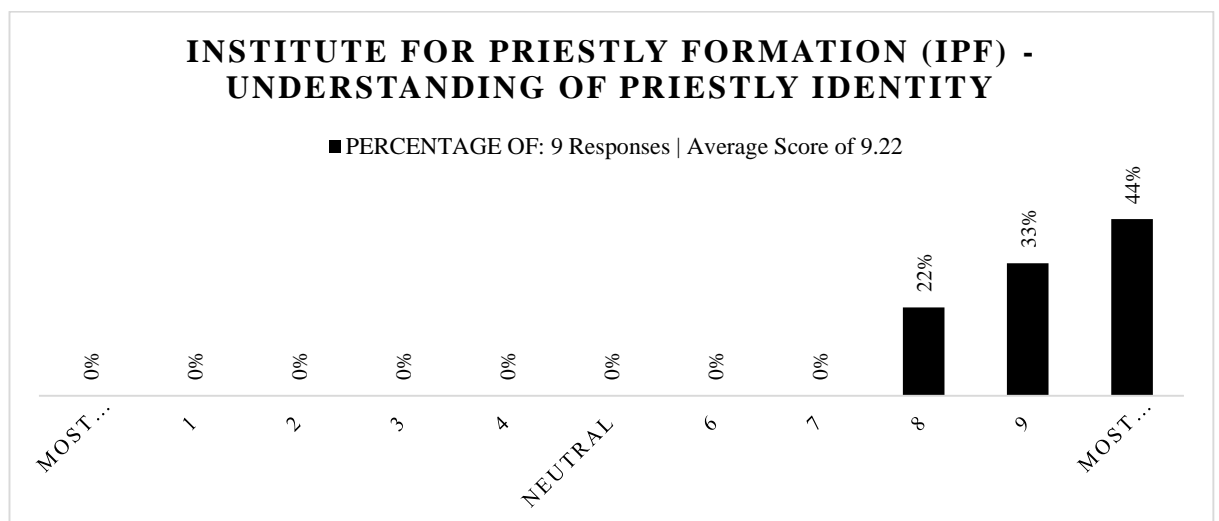
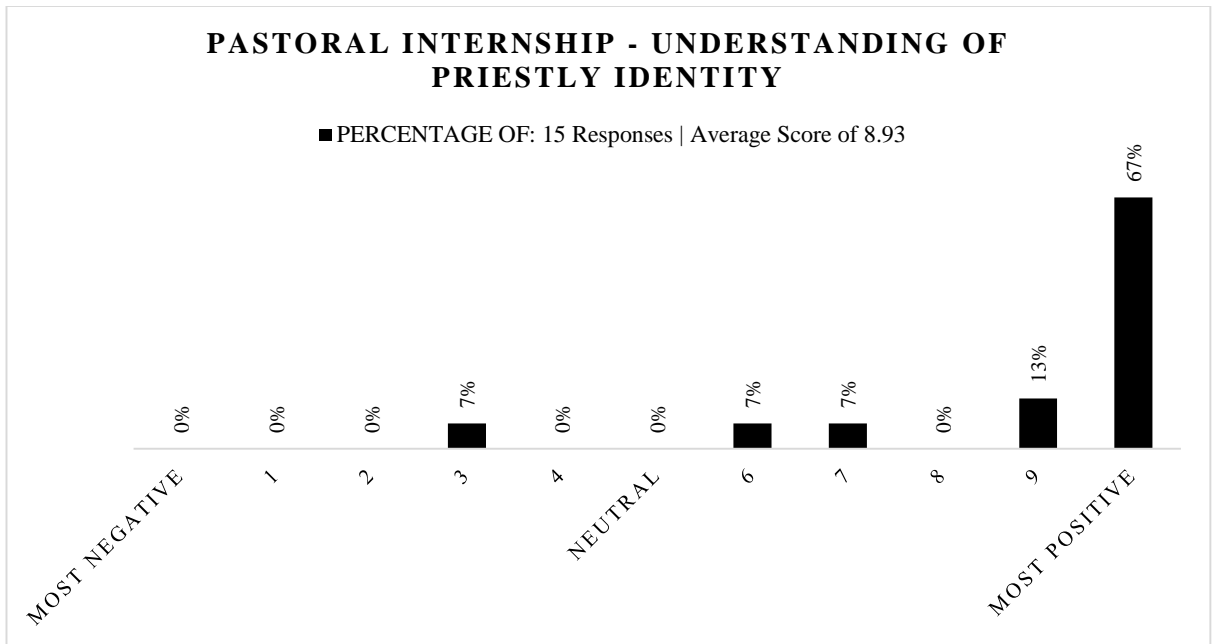
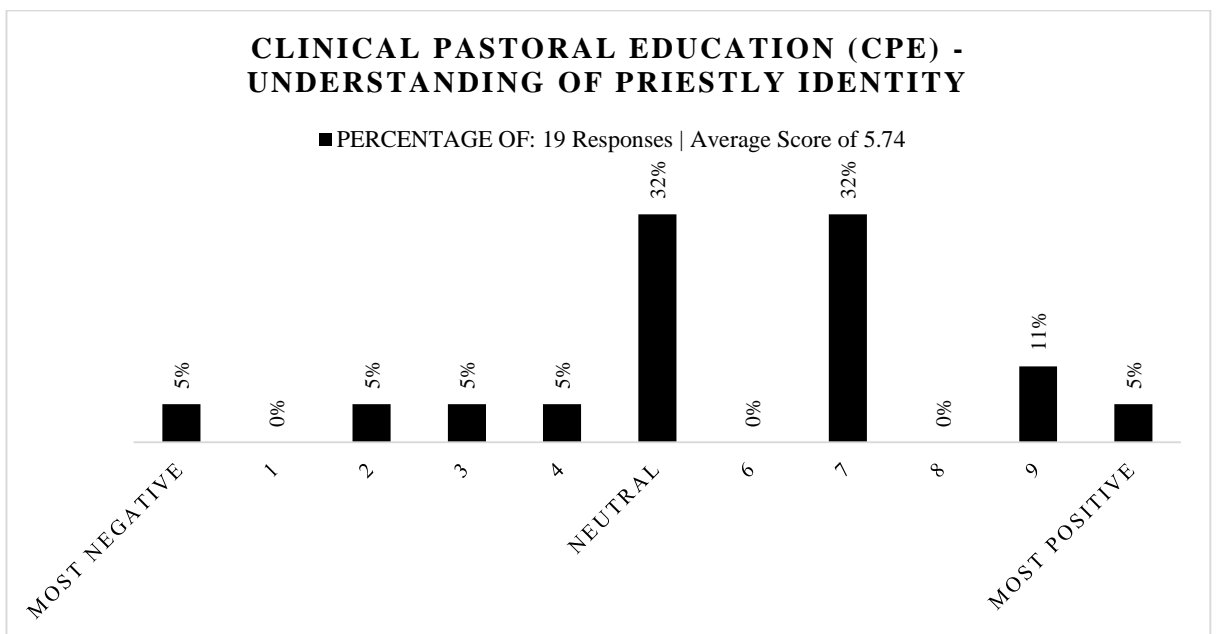


Table 4.13



The negative evaluation of CPE on this metric can be seen more clearly in **Error! Reference source not found.**, which presents the individual scores respondents gave to CPE’s impact on an understanding of priestly identity. Most of the respondents scored it at neutral or below.

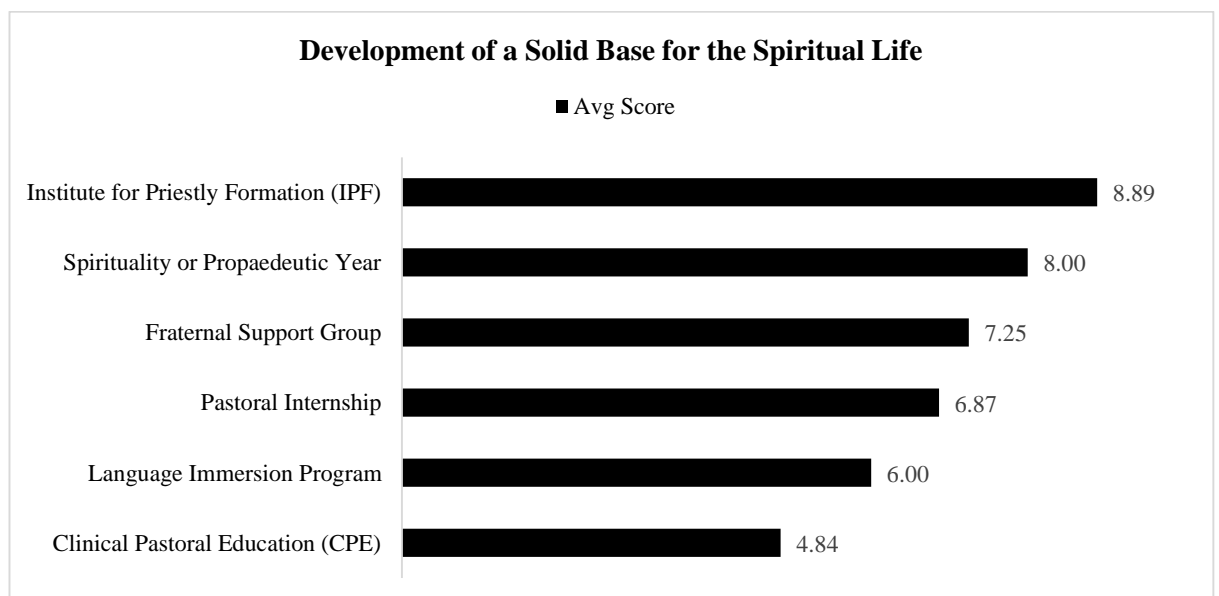
Table 4.14



#### 4.6.4 Impact of the formation activities on developing a solid base for the spiritual life

The responses to the question “Please indicate the impact [the formation activity] had on the development of a solid base for your spiritual life” appear in **Error! Reference source not found.** Again, they show the highest average score being for IPF. The weighted average score for IPF was 8.89, with the second-highest and the only other score at 8.0 or higher being for the spirituality or propaedeutic year experience, 8.00. The high score for the spirituality or propaedeutic year is relevant, given that this question was added in consideration of the purposes of this kind of programme. Once again, the lowest average score was for CPE, 4.84, and the second lowest for language immersion programmes, 6.0.

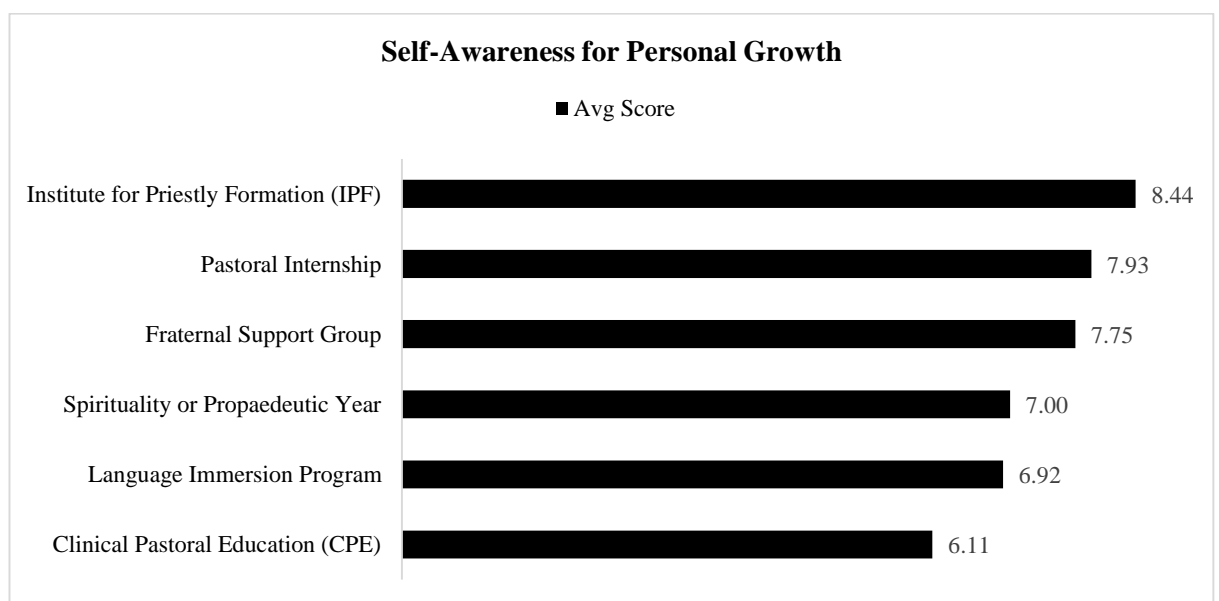
Table 4.15



#### 4.6.5 Impact of the formation activities on your self-awareness for personal growth

IPF once again ranked highest on this scale, presented in **Error! Reference source not found.**, with a median score of 8.44. The pastoral-year internship ranked second, with an average score of 7.93, and fraternal support groups ranked third with an average score of 7.75. The two top-ranking activities were in fact the reason why this question was included.<sup>3</sup> CPE ranked lowest on this scale, with an average score of 6.11, and language immersion programmes second lowest, at 6.92. The comment made above at 4.6.3 about the different purposes of CPE and language immersion activities applies to this point as well. Language immersion would not be expected to affect significantly a seminarian's understanding of his future priestly identity, while CPE would seem to assist in the promotion of self-awareness for personal growth.

Table 4.16

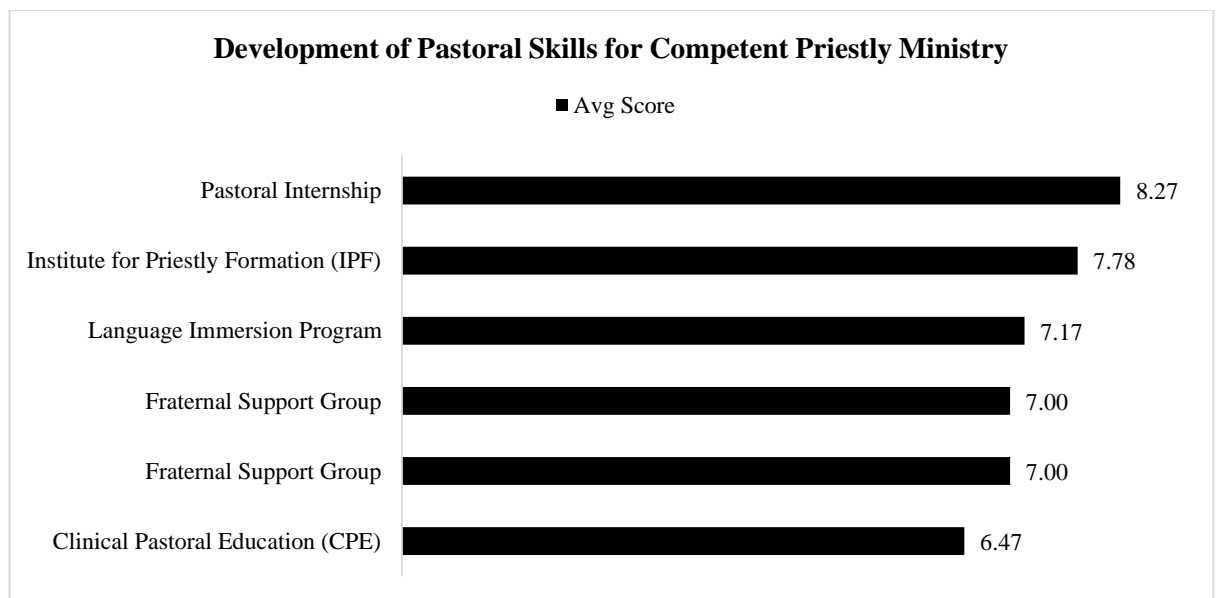


#### 4.6.6 Impact of the formation activities on development of pastoral skills for competent priestly ministry

With regard to the development of pastoral skills for competent pastoral ministry (**Error! Reference source not found.**), the highest score was for the pastoral-year internship, with a weighted average of 8.27. This question was placed in the questionnaire specifically to consider the purposes of the pastoral-year internship, which makes this result valuable.<sup>4</sup> IPF ranks second on this scale, with an average response of 7.78.

The lowest average score on this scale, once again, was for the CPE experience, 6.47. Given the focus on pastoral ministry in CPE, this result is telling. The second-lowest score was for the spirituality or propaedeutic year and for fraternal support groups, both at 7.00.

Table 4.17



#### 4.6.7 Impact of the formation activities on discernment

The next question in each category is "Please indicate the impact [the formation activity] had on your discernment and the formation team's discernment of your call to priesthood." The responses are shown in **Error! Reference source not found.**. The two highest scores on this scale are for IPF and the pastoral-year internship with weighted averages of 8.56 and 8.40, respectively. This question, like the previous one, was suggested by the purposes of the pastoral-year internship, so that this high response provides useful information.<sup>5</sup>

It may be helpful to look at the actual results for IPF and the pastoral internship (**Error! Reference source not found.** and **Error! Reference source not found.**). While the mean score for IPF is higher, a larger percentage of scores at the highest level are for the pastoral internship. That some individuals had less than positive experiences in the pastoral year, while most had very positive experiences, most likely plays a role here.

The lowest scores on this scale were for CPE, with an average of 4.84, and language immersion programmes, with an average of 6.08. Again, there would be no expected relationship between language immersion and discernment, but CPE, with its focus on participants understanding their emotional lives, would be expected to have a more positive impact on discernment.

Table 4.18

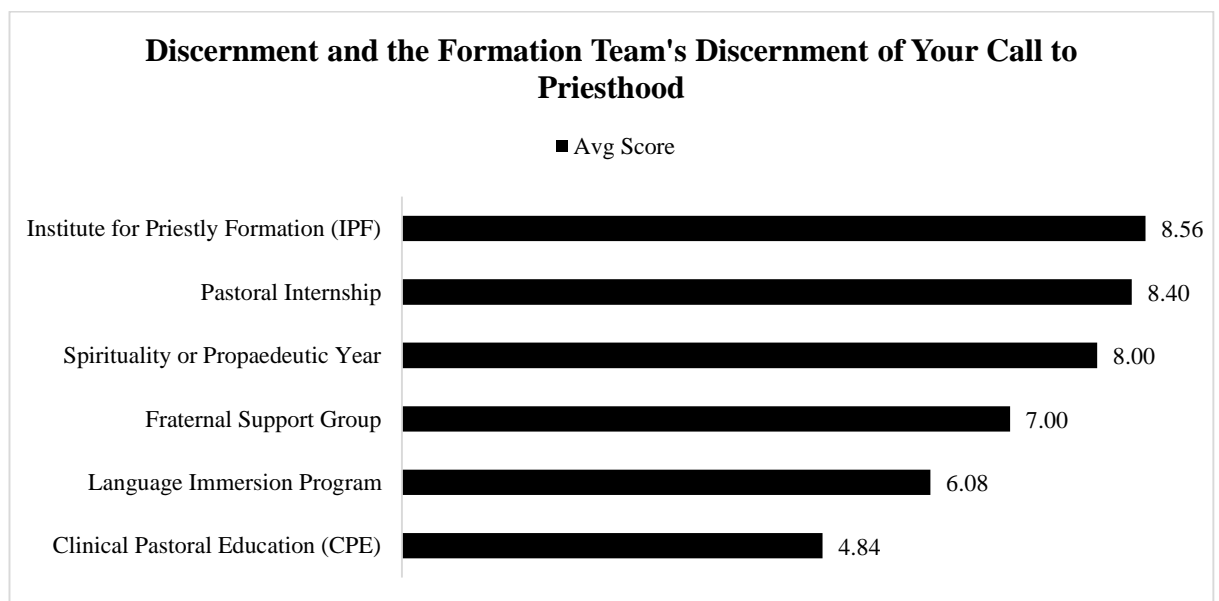


Table 4.19

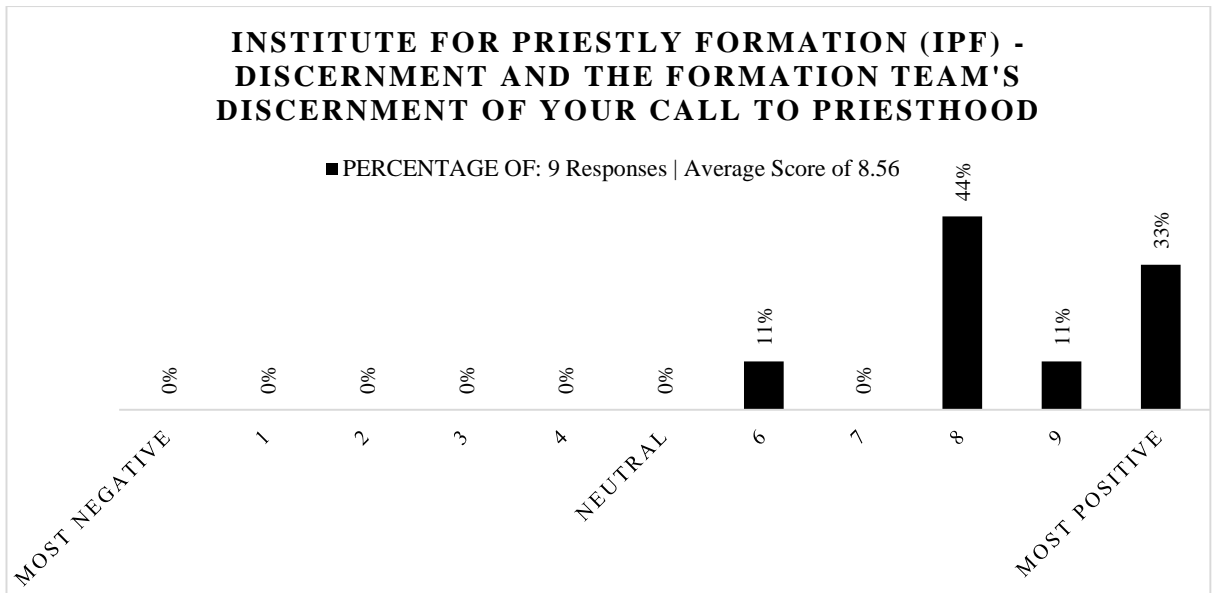
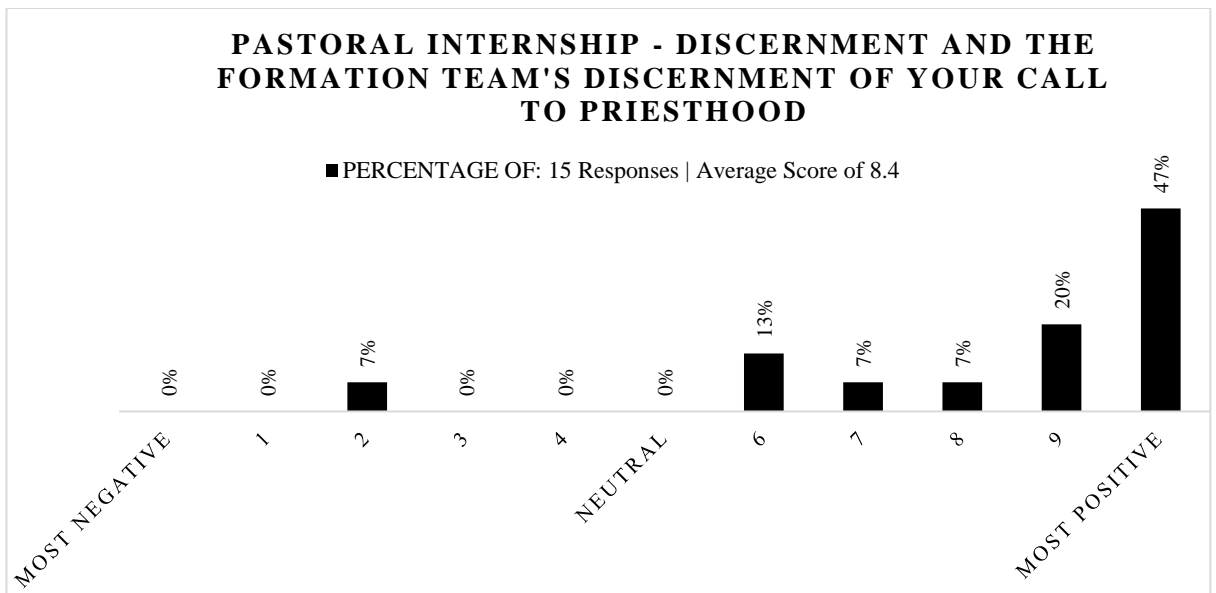


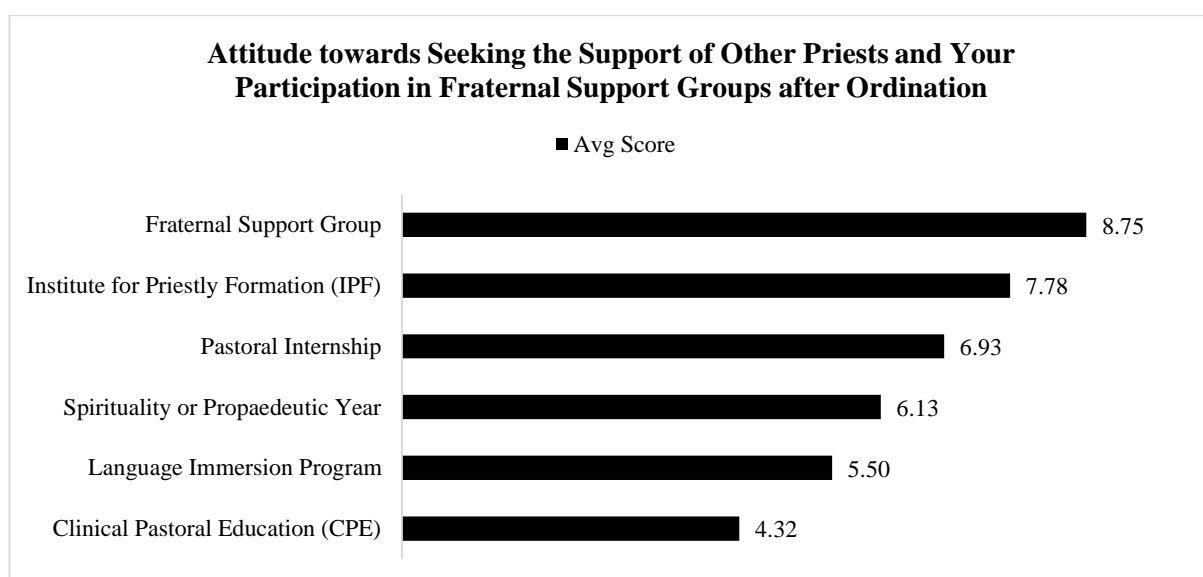
Table 4.20



#### 4.6.8 Impact of the formation activities on attitude towards seeking fraternal support and participation in fraternal support groups

The relative ranking of the responses to questions regarding the impact of each formation activity on “attitudes towards seeking the support of other priests and ... participation in fraternal support groups after ordination” appears in **Error! Reference source not found.** This question was added with the specific intention of determining whether participation in such groups in seminary affected the likelihood of priests to join such groups in their first years of ministry.<sup>6</sup>

Table 4.21



It is not surprising that this is the one item on which the highest score was for fraternal support groups, with an average response of 8.75. The second-highest response was for IPF, with an average score of 7.73. The lowest scores were for CPE and for language immersion programmes, with average weighted scores of 4.32 and 5.50, respectively.

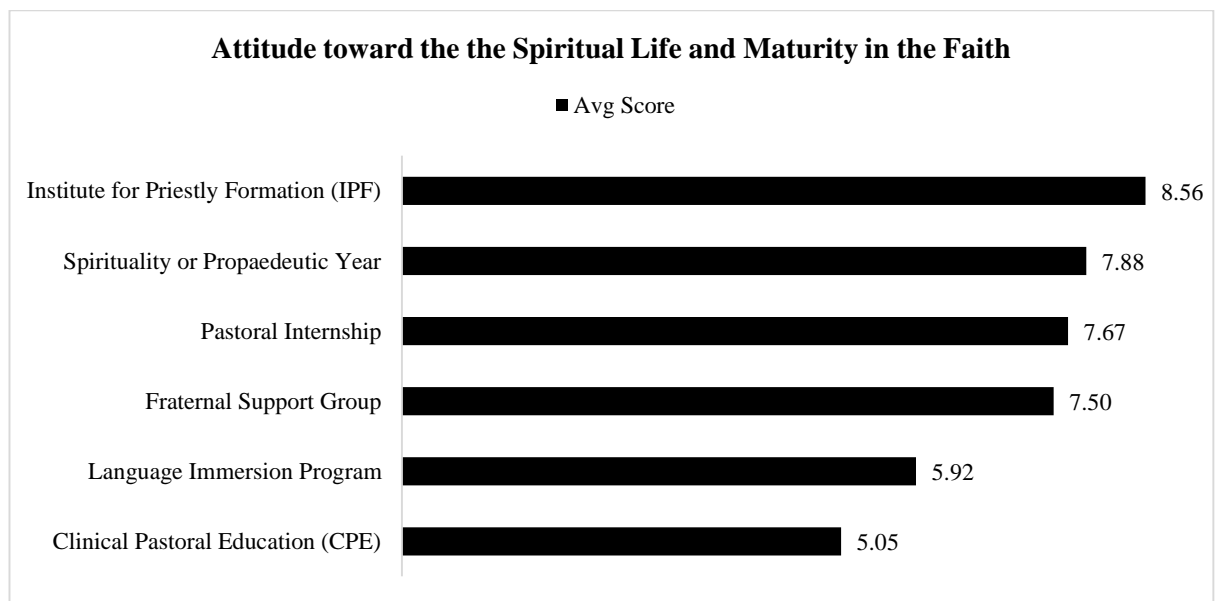
Commenting on a study of the first five years of priesthood, Crespin (2002:108) writes: “One of the most important options for the newly ordained priest is participation in a priests’ support group.... There are very few settings for serious and confidential discussion to take place about the challenges of being an effective priestly minister on a day-to-day basis. A support group provides this context.” In the study itself, Hoge (2005:101) found that one of the key recommendations made by priests, both active and out of ministry, was for the establishment of

“support groups that discuss real issues, not just exchange courtesies.” Even though fraternal support groups do not score highly on the other questions in the study, the importance of these groups later in ministry makes the high score in promoting participation in them after ordination particularly meaningful.

#### 4.6.9 Impact of the formation activities on attitude toward the spiritual life and maturity in the faith

The reason for including this question (**Error! Reference source not found.**) in the survey was the importance of spiritual formation in IPF.<sup>7</sup> It is not surprising, then, that the highest response here is for IPF, already ranked highly in all the other questions, with a weighted average of 8.56. The next three activities ranked very close to each other: spirituality or propaedeutic year (7.88), pastoral-year internship (7.67), and fraternal support groups (7.50). The lowest scores were for CPE, with a weighted average of 5.05, and language immersion, with a weighted average of 5.92.

Table 4.22

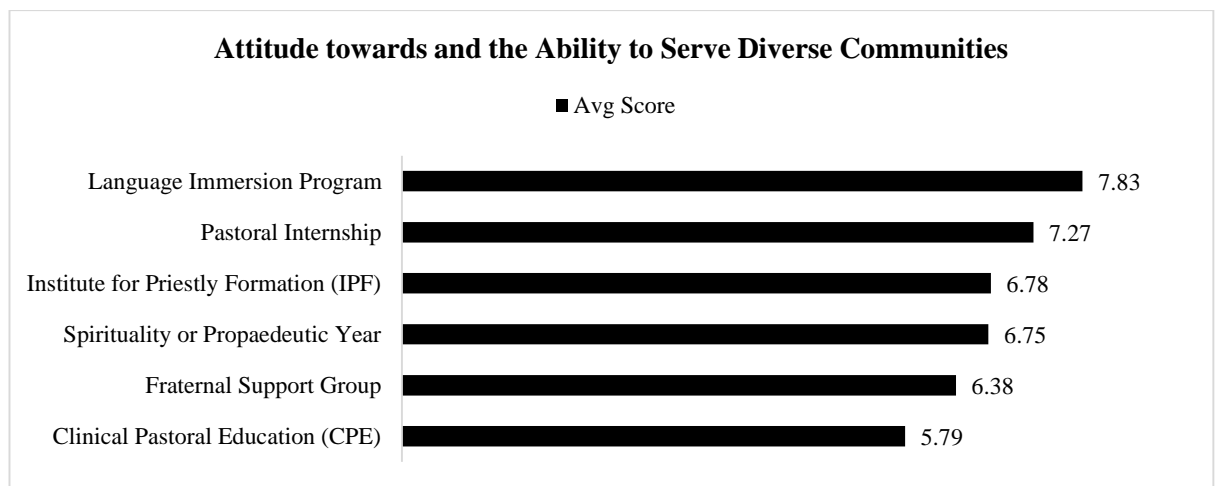


#### 4.6.10 Impact of the formation activities on attitude towards and your ability to serve diverse communities

Clearly, the purpose of language immersion programmes is to prepare seminarians to have skills for serving in culturally and linguistically diverse communities and to be open to such ministry. In the responses to the question as to respondents’ attitude towards and ability to serve diverse communities (**Error! Reference source not found.**), the highest score was for these programmes,

with a weighted average of 7.83. Those who participated in pastoral year internships gave these programmes the second-highest score of 7.27. Again, CPE is ranked lowest, at 5.79.

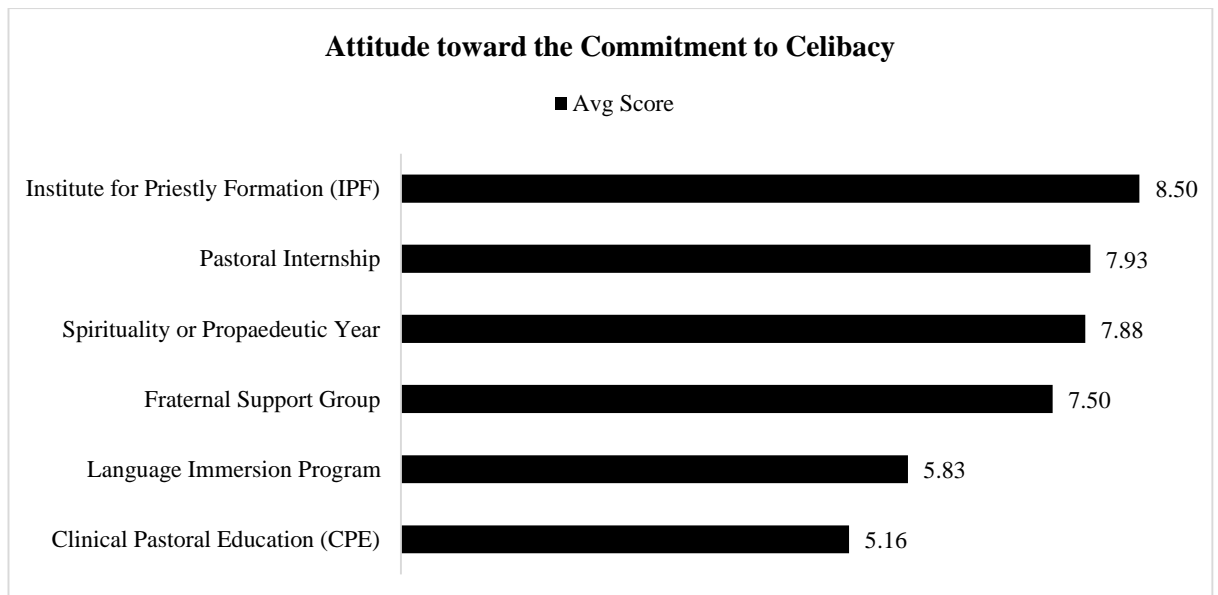
Table 4.23



#### 4.6.11 Impact of the formation activities on attitude toward the commitment to celibacy

The response to the final Likert scale question appears in **Error! Reference source not found.** The commitment to celibacy is of great importance in the Roman Catholic priesthood, and this question sought to measure the impact of these formation activities on the participants' attitude toward this commitment. IPF received the highest average score on this scale once more, 8.50. The second-highest ranking activities are the pastoral-year internship, with a 7.93, and the spirituality or propaedeutic year, with a 7.88. The lowest scores on this scale were a weighted average of 5.16 for CPE and 5.83 for language immersion programmes.

Table 4.24



#### 4.7 Another way to visualize results: Net Impact Score

An approach that has been used in recent years, especially in marketing research, could potentially be a useful way to visualize the results described in this chapter. The Net Promoter Score is a means of analysing the results of a very specific question: “What is the likelihood that you would recommend Company X to a friend or colleague?” (Bain & Company, 2017). The purpose of this system, which looks at the difference between the percentage of those who give this question an answer of 9 or 10 on a 0–10 scale and those who give a score of 6 or below, is to measure the likelihood of a customer encouraging others to use the service. The top group is called “promoters,” the lower group is called “detractors,” and those who score at 7 or 8 are called “passives.” The “Net Promoter Score is simply the percentage of promoters minus the percentage of detractors” (Bain & Company 2017).

While the Net Promoter Score was designed for a business purpose, it is currently used in Catholic research, specifically in the Disciple Maker Index, a survey of parish effectiveness used by the Catholic Leadership Institute (Zlock, 2017; CLI, 2017). In this use of the system, parishes are rated according to a variety of themes, such as spirituality, financial transparency and faith formation. Comparison with results from other parishes helps parishes to determine areas for improvement (Zlock, 2017).

In the present case, given that the scales being used in the present study are essentially evaluations of satisfaction with how different formation activities affected different aspects of priestly ministry, it seems advisable to attempt to use the Net Promoter Score method for each of the questions that could be compared across different formation activities. Given that what is being

examined here is not the likelihood of the participants in these formation activities recommending the programmes, but the relative impact of each activity on each area of formation, the scale will be renamed the Net Impact Score for the purposes of this study. This score represents the difference between the percentage who ranked the specific programme with a 9 or 10 on the impact area and the percentage who ranked the programme with a score between 0 and 6. This attempt reveals a chart that does not present data significantly different than that seen in the charts in 4.6, but shows the same data in a dramatic way.

In the following tables, the data from this analysis can be seen. **Error! Reference source not found.** offers a key for the following chart, which presents the Net Impact Score for each programme and each impact category. This data is presented in **Error! Reference source not found...** On this table, the darker shading in green indicates a higher positive Net Impact Score, and the darker shading in red indicates a higher negative Net Impact Score. **Error! Reference source not found.** offers a summary, indicating the highest and lowest Net Impact Score for each impact category.

Table 4.25

Category ID	Impact Category
1	overall experience
2	totality of your seminary formation experience
3	understanding of priestly identity
4	development of a solid base for your spiritual life
5	self-awareness for personal growth
6	development of pastoral skills
7	discernment of call to priesthood
8	attitude towards and participation in support groups
9	attitude towards the spiritual life and maturity in the faith
10	attitude towards and ability to serve diverse communities
11	attitude towards the commitment to celibacy

Table 4.26

Category ID	CPE	Support	IPF	Language	Internship	Prop.	Total
1	-5	25	56	17	27	50	23
2	-26	0	56	-25	20	38	04
3	-37	25	78	-33	73	50	18
4	-53	0	67	-33	7	50	-4
5	-11	13	44	0	33	0	11

6	-5	0	22	17	53	25	18
7	-68	-13	44	-33	60	50	-1
8	-79	63	33	-50	-7	-13	-21
9	-42	13	44	-25	40	38	4
10	-16	-25	-22	33	7	0	-3
11	-68	25	50	-42	27	25	-7
<b>Total</b>	<b>-37</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>-16</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>4</b>

Table 4.27

Category ID	Most Favourable	Net Impact	Least Favourable	Net Impact
1	IPF	56	CPE	-5
2	IPF	56	CPE	-26
3	IPF	78	CPE	-37
4	IPF	67	CPE	-53
5	IPF	44	CPE	-11
6	Internship	53	CPE	-5
7	Internship	60	CPE	-68
8	Support	63	CPE	-79
9	IPF	44	CPE	-42
10	Language	33	Support group	-25
11	IPF	50	CPE	-68

**Error! Reference source not found.** helps to point out the activities with the highest positive and negative effects. The blocks shaded in green show positive Net Impact Scores (the darker green, the more positive the score), while the blocks shaded in red show negative Net Impact Scores (the darker red, the more negative the score). IPF has the highest total Net Impact Score, 43, while the pastoral-year internship experience and a propaedeutic or spirituality year experience are in second and third place, with total Net Impact Score of 31 and 28, respectively. The only programmes with a negative Net Impact Score are CPE and language immersion programmes, with CPE having a much higher negative net impact, -37.

**Error! Reference source not found.** presents the most favourable and most negative Net Impact Score for each area of impact. The negative scores are the most dramatic, as CPE ranks lowest in

every area, except the ability to serve diverse communities, where fraternal support groups are ranked lowest. As already noted, but shown here in a graph, IPF had the highest net impact in most areas. It is noteworthy that the areas where IPF is not ranked highest, the highest ranking programme is specifically related to the area of impact: the pastoral-year internship for development of pastoral skills and discernment of call to priesthood, fraternal support groups for attitude towards and participation in support groups, and language immersion programmes for attitude towards and ability to serve diverse communities.

An additional piece of data that this method points out is which areas of impact show a negative total Net Impact Score, when all the programmes are looked at together. Even though few candidates would take part in all the programmes, the impact areas with negative total Net Impact Score are key areas: attitude towards and participation in support groups (-21), attitude towards the commitment to celibacy (-7), development of a solid base for the spiritual life (-4), attitude towards and ability to serve diverse communities (-3), and discernment of call (-1). Given how important these areas are for perseverance in ministry, these results indicate the importance of looking at the activities with negative Net Impact Score for these areas of impact, especially those where a positive correlation would be expected.

#### **4.8 Narrative responses**

The respondents' answers to the open-ended questions about each programme also provide helpful information. This section offers a selection of comments for each formation activity.

##### **4.8.1 CPE**

One of the twenty respondents who took part in CPE responded very negatively in describing the CPE experience: "The environment was hostile to sacramental and liturgical theological framework. It was entirely materialistic and psychology-based. The Catholic chaplain at the hospital was off-putting, self-righteous, haughty, and offered no support for the seminarians." Another very negative response, from another priest who is still in ministry, indicated, "CPE was the single worst part of my seven years in seminary. My supervisor was a deeply racist, anti-Catholic woman with severe emotional problems which she inflicted upon me, in particular. If anything, I came out of the programme less mature than when I went into it. In short, I hated CPE and everything associated with it." A third response was very negative, from a priest who has left ministry:

Until now, I really hadn't thought of CPE since that miserable summer. In retrospect, it seemed an enormous hurdle to surmount, rather than a process with which to collaborate.

The CPE coordinators were untrustworthy and ignorant of Catholic theology to such a gross extent that cooperation was practically impossible. If anything, I would say that it forcibly repressed a healthy prayer life and discernment experience, simply to ‘power through’ and finish the programme.

Another stated the following: “CPE is a Protestant Programme and should be eliminated in favor of a specifically Catholic programme.”

More positive statements came from several respondents, such as one who indicated: “CPE was invaluable in developing a pastoral identity, forming a ministry of presence, and overcoming fears of difficult situations.” Another stated: “CPE for me was a wonderful learning and growing experience. I was able to minister in a hospital setting to the sick and suffering.... Since our CPE group was of diverse Christian denominations, I was able to learn and appreciate their perspective of walking with the sick and dying.” A third wrote the following: “Overall it was a challenging and yet a positive experience.”

One comment that offers some insight into the diversity of responses can be seen in a brief response: “I had a great supervisor. I think it makes all the difference.” Clearly, CPE experiences vary greatly, depending on location and staff. In describing their programmes, the respondents describe very different situations, with regard to the make-up of cohorts, the attitude of supervisors and cohort members toward Catholic theology and pastoral practice, and the qualification of supervisors. This very variety is an important element in discussing the diversity in responses about the efficacy of CPE programmes. Seminaries and dioceses have little if any control over the CPE programmes they use, which means that relying on this programme for the formation of seminarians would be a risky exercise.

#### **4.8.2 Spirituality or Propaedeutic Year**

The responses to the open-ended questions regarding this kind of programme, both describing the activity in which the respondent participated and offering additional commentary, reveal that the eight persons who said they took part in a spirituality or propaedeutic year participated in very different kinds of programmes. The question asked: “During your seminary formation, did you participate in a spirituality year or propaedeutic year (an entire year dedicated to spirituality and preparation for full immersion into seminary life)?” Despite the question seeming clear, one participant described a religious novitiate as his spirituality year, another a year in parish, another a summer experience, and another a mentorship with an older priest. Knowing this is important in assessing the comments about the experience and the evaluation made by participants.

There were few comments about the experience from the participants. One respondent who has resigned from ministry wrote, “The programme that I was in consisted of activities such as listening to new age music, praying to the four winds, and making pottery. It was an absolute joke and an enormous waste of time.” One affirmed the great value of having a priest mentor, while another, who had a monastic experience, described it as a very fulfilling experience: “At the end of the monastic year, I would have stayed as a monk. It was the hardest and yet most rewarding spiritual experience I’d ever had.”

### **4.8.3 Pastoral-year internship**

The fourteen respondents who took part in a pastoral-year internship described these as ranging from seven to thirteen months. They describe their activities as covering the gamut of parish life, including parish committee, preaching, visitation of the sick, catechesis, working with staff and rectory living. Different seminaries had different ways of relating to seminarians on internship, from having little contact to having staff make visits to the placement sites and having the seminarians visit the seminary for workshops.

The only two respondents who give a negative assessment of their pastoral internship experiences in their written comments have both left active ministry. One writes: “It just didn’t have any community life at all. The rich liturgical life of the seminary was exchanged for truly mediocre parish liturgies. No community with the Pastor or the Associate. Long drive to my family’s home. Again, felt as a hurdle to overcome — I felt very under-supported and under-utilized.” Another comments that there was not much opportunity to develop skills during the internship and adds the following: “Many of my classmates left the seminary after their pastoral year. In hindsight, I should have as well.”

Among the other respondents, several indicate that the pastoral internship was a key moment of formation for them. One indicates that it helped in developing “in self-confidence, the ability to persevere in the priestly lifestyle, and in developing healthy relationships with the laity.” Two others say that the internship was important in confirming their discernment of the priesthood, with one writing: “It helped me to make my final decision towards the priesthood.”

One response speaks to the importance of the internship presenting a realistic picture of priestly life: “I was assigned to a parish where the previous pastoral year seminarian left formation a week before priestly ordination and where there were several victims of clerical sexual abuse. While this was challenging it was a stern reminder to respond as honestly and freely as possible to the call.” Another response expresses a very positive view of the whole experience: “It was one of the most valuable experiences in my nine years of formation.”

#### **4.8.4 Priestly fraternity groups**

The eight respondents who taking part in fraternal group while in seminary described these groups under different titles: Jesus Caritas, Emmaus Maranatha, Companions of Christ, and the Neocatechumenal Way. One describes his group (Maranatha) as follows: “While attendance was compulsory, the size of each group and its membership were generally organic. The meetings were an hour long and were a fairly standard faith sharing group. There were no faculty supervisors nor were any questions or conversation direction aids provided.” One who participated in Emmaus raised a concern: “It was always confusing if it was internal or external forum, so guys shared as they understood things at that moment.”

As to the groups’ impact on discernment, one respondent found that the participation in community reflection and mutual support was crucial, while another indicated that the fraternal support group was neutral in his discernment. Another respondent writes: “Our leaders greatly influenced how the group developed. I always found that mandatory fraternity is synthetic but the one that is chosen freely is the best one. The groups always emphasized how fraternity would be important post-ordination. That part was helpful. After pastoral year we knew we had limited time and we maximized it.”

#### **4.8.5 Institute for Priestly Formation (IPF)**

It is noteworthy that all nine respondents who indicated that they participated in IPF are still in active ministry. Of the five who offered responses to the open-ended question, one affirmed the quality of the programme, but wrote, “I felt it was geared towards earlier stages in formation.” At the same time, another participant found that going through IPF immediately after his pastoral internship “provided an optimal time of discernment for the priesthood.” One respondent states that the thirty-day retreat that IPF offers was of immense importance to him. A high level of appreciation for the programme is expressed in this response: “Highly recommend IPF and if I were vocations director would probably require all seminarians to attend.”

#### **4.8.6 Language immersion experiences**

The responses for this area indicate, as with several of the other activities, that the diversity among different programmes affects the responses greatly. Two of the twelve respondents who indicated having taken part in an immersion programme described their experience learning Italian in preparation for study in Rome rather than an immersion experience focused on pastoral outreach, the topic this series of questions was intended to address. Two of the other respondents

participated in activities where there was an intention to learn Spanish, but no real immersion experience.

Of the five respondents who offer further comments about the impact of the language immersion programme, one states, “I regret that I did not attend a full immersion experience, although I did gain great pastoral experience in another language.” Though the experiences in Italy are not directly related to a pastoral language in the United States, one of those respondents writes, “The skills I acquired in learning Italian helped me to transition to Spanish very easily and thus serving our Hispanic Community was less stressful since I had a facility with the language.” One who took part in an immersion experience in the United States finds that it really was not “immersive,” despite being billed as such. One participant in a programme in which he lived in a religious house found the example of the priests and nuns in residence of great help in his spiritual life.

#### **4.9 Theological interpretation**

In van der Ven’s method, the final phase of his process is theological evaluation, in which “the results of the testing are related back to the original problem and goals which formed the starting point for the empirical-theological research” (van der Ven, 1998:152). At the close of this chapter, this phase can begin, with the process of theological interpretation. This process seeks to interpret the results in the light of the theological questions being considered in the study, of the goals of this study, and of the theological conceptualization which resulted in the development of the specific questions in the questionnaire which was used (van der Ven, 1998:152).

The hope expressed in the research proposal was that this chapter would provide the answer to the question about the relationship between participation in each of the programmes to be studied and perseverance in ministry. While the number of respondents and specifically the number of respondents out of ministry is too low to answer this question directly, the data collected does point to the impact of some of the programmes being considered on some key areas of attitudes and skills for success in ministry, in some cases positive and others negative.

As has been shown in section 4.6.1 above and mentioned several times, the most positive overall evaluation is of IPF and pastoral-year internships. Clearly, the most negative overall evaluation is for CPE. Similar results were obtained for the question about the impact of the various formation activities on the totality of the seminary experience (section 4.5.2) and on the understanding of priestly identity (section 4.6.3), with IPF being ranked highest, with the difference that the spirituality or propaedeutic year is ranked second highest in the first case with the pastoral internship in third place, and the results being reversed for priestly identity. These

questions relate to essential parts of seminary formation, so the positive and negative evaluations of the impact of individual formation activities are important to note.

One area where the pastoral internship does not rank among the highest scores is developing a solid spiritual life (section 4.6.4), where IPF ranks highest and the spirituality or propaedeutic year is in second place. The internship's low score on this item (6.87) calls for consideration of how the pastoral internship can be structured so that it successfully promotes the spiritual life. IPF, pastoral year internships, and the fraternal support groups all ranked high for self-awareness for personal growth, very important for the seminarian to be open to formation (section 4.6.5).

Section 4.6.6 reveals the unsurprising result that the pastoral-year internship is evaluated as most effective for the development of pastoral skills. The very high ranking for the pastoral-year internship, with IPF in second place, is of great importance in considering the importance of these programmes, since without the skills for competent ministry, frustration will result. One of the recommendations made by recently ordained priests is for more "practical hands-on training during seminary" (Hoge, 2002:93). No experience is more hands-on than the pastoral internship. It appears ironic that CPE, which focuses very much on skills for hospital ministry, ranks lowest on this scale as on most of the others.

Discernment of a true vocation is clearly an essential aspect of making a permanent commitment. Thus, the ranking of IPF and the pastoral-year internship as the activities receiving the highest average response to the question about the impact on discernment, by both the seminarian and the seminary formation team, is important (section 4.5.7). CPE's very low rating (4.84), as has been noted, stands out since CPE would be expected to help participants to know themselves better, a key aspect of discernment.

The one impact question where fraternal support groups ranked highest is attitude towards seeking the support of other priests in such groups after ordination (section 4.6.8). Skipping to the final area of impact, it is similarly noteworthy that the language immersion programmes are ranked highest for the attitude towards and ability to serve diverse communities (section 4.6.10). In both of these areas, the activity most associated with these hoped-for results indeed appears to be effective in producing them. It will be important to look at the other results for these programmes, in making suggestions as to how to best use them, so that they will be effective and integrated parts of the formation process.

The last of the questions to consider, the attitude towards the spiritual life and maturity in the faith (section 4.5.9), is again one in which IPF received the highest evaluation, with the spirituality or propaedeutic year and the pastoral internship ranking second and third, respectively. Fraternal

support groups also received a strong evaluation here. Once again, CPE was ranked lowest. It is interesting to note, given the connection between the spiritual life and the capacity for chaste celibacy, that the scores for the final impact area, commitment to celibacy (section 4.6.11), are very similar. The recommendations Hoge (2002:96–98) presents from priests both in and out of ministry begin specifically with the need to be more open about sexuality, including celibacy and sexual orientation, in seminary formation. If these programmes help to accomplish this in a positive and effective way, then they are certainly helpful.

The Net Impact Score, presented as a way of looking at the data in a clear and striking manner, is discussed in section 4.7. Looking at the difference between the percentage of respondents who score at the highest two levels (9 and 10) and those who score between 0 and 6, while omitting the so-called passives, who scored at 7 or 8, presents similar information to what has already been discussed, but in a graphical way that begs for discussion. The high positive total Net Impact Scores for IPF, pastoral year internship and propaedeutic or spirituality year experiences speak well of these programmes' overall effect on seminary formation. The marginal overall scores of support groups (slightly positive) and language immersion programmes (slightly negative), activities that have been shown to rank highly in key areas of impact, again point out the importance of considering how best to implement these programmes. Finally, the only programme to reveal a negative Net Impact Score in every area of impact is CPE. This data point will be very important in the recommendations in chapter five.

An important element to consider in reflecting on the data is whether the evaluations made of the programmes are true evaluations of the programmes or rather of the specific presenters or supervisors who were responsible for the different activities at the time when they took part in them. It is noteworthy that, with the exception of the question asking for a general evaluation of the programme, the other questions focus on the impact of the activity on the participant, either while in seminary or on the attitudes and abilities that would affect his priesthood. As will be discussed in the rest of this section, a valid interpretation of the data requires recognition of the differences among the different versions of the six activities, which certainly include the personnel responsible for them. At the same time, it is useful to consider that there are factors other than the design and purpose of a programme that influence its effectiveness. While there is no way to control these factors, it is important to acknowledge their presence.

To summarize, the very positive impact of IPF and the relatively positive impact of pastoral internship and spirituality or propaedeutic year programmes stand out, in looking at all the data discussed in this chapter. While further analysis will take place in the next chapter, something striking is that IPF is one programme in one location, easily able to maintain quality control.

While some ranked their experience of the pastoral internship or a spirituality year very high, these programmes differ highly in each location, which makes comparison difficult across different experiences, even if the basic purposes are similar. If this holds true for the activities with positive overall impact scores, the data for other activities have the same limitation: not only are there different perceptions from participants in the same programme, but the elements and quality of the programme may vary significantly from place to place.

An analogy may help to illustrate the differences. There may be a very good restaurant that consistently gets rave reviews, so that people come from all over to eat there. There may be another good restaurant that gets rave reviews and opens up franchises in different towns. Even though they plan on serving the same menu, the franchisees have a great deal of freedom, which means the quality is significantly different from one location to another. Some may be better than the original, while others may be worse. Finally, there is another restaurant that is very good, and others try to imitate it in other towns, but there is no specific connection to the original restaurant, so that there is very little resemblance sometimes to the original.

What could be called a “franchise effect” may be one factor in the differing degrees of impact measured among these programmes. Although no assessment of statistical significance can be made, this data, considered as qualitative data, is certainly suggestive. Another question is whether the basic purpose of an activity fits Catholic formation. The responses offered in this study about CPE, the activity in which twenty respondents participated — the largest number of any of the formation activities — received the most negative comments and the lowest scores, both in the scaled responses and in the open-ended questions. A relevant question, looking at the data presented in this chapter and looking at the discussion about CPE in chapter three, is whether it should have a place in Catholic seminary formation today. Holding off on offering a response to the question until after conducting a more thorough theological reflection and theological-methodological reflection in the next chapter (van der Ven, 1998:152–156), the analogy of the restaurant could be extended to ask whether the food offered at this particular restaurant, regardless of which franchise one goes to, is something that these customers want.

In chapter five, the theological evaluation of this data will proceed, leading to concrete suggestions to assist bishops, seminary administrators, vocations directors, and seminarians make prudent decisions about participation in these formational activities. This chapter will also offer recommendations for further research. While this study cannot say that any of these programmes specifically promote perseverance in ministry, the respondents’ responses about different formation activities will help to carry the theological conversation forward.

#### **4.10 Practical-theological perspectives**

Before moving on to the analysis of the data that has been indicated will take place in chapter five, it is helpful to offer theological perspectives that this work already suggests for the task of practical theology. One question that the low response rate suggests is whether more could have been done to promote participation. It is fairly certain that the vast majority of the priests currently in ministry received the invitation to participate in the survey, either by US mail or through email or other social media. It is unknown how many of the priests out of ministry actually received the invitation. Suggesting motivations for not responding would be conjecture, but this would be something to investigate in further studies (van der Ven, 1998:142–143). Since the principal research questions have yet to be answered, such as offering definitive evidence that participating in one or more of the formation activities being studied has a direct impact on perseverance in ministry, it would be useful for researchers to consider ways to reach a broader sample of the population or to find alternative means to determine whether priests in and out of ministry took part in these or other formation activities.

One element of caution this study suggests is the danger of focusing so much on the formation of ordained ministers that it could appear that the researcher was harkening back to the days of practical theology as the domain of pastoral practice by the ordained. Here, it is important to recall the work of chapter two, where it was shown that the expectation of a lifelong commitment to priestly service exists primarily for the good of the Christian people. Thus, the present study is not a return to a narrow clerical view of practical theology, but has to do with the formation of seminarians to ensure that priests will be able to serve the People of God effectively and permanently.

Another theological perspective suggested by the data itself is what differentiates the formation activities with the more positive evaluations from those with the lowest rankings. While this will be considered more expressly in chapter five, it is worthy of note that IPF, the pastoral-year internship, and the spirituality or propaedeutic year experiences all have the formation of priests for successful ministry as their primary purpose. Fraternal support groups, ranked next in order, are run in different ways in different seminaries (cf. the franchise effect noted earlier), but its purpose is also clear. Language immersion programmes and CPE are used by seminaries and dioceses for their seminarians for narrower purposes, but they, as a whole, do not have the formation of Catholic clergy as a significant goal. Intentionality matters. To use an analogy, if the carpenter did not specifically intend to make a chair, it is unlikely a chair will be built.

These intuitions, suggested by the study itself and the data, will be brought to bear on the further examination of the data in chapter five. To continue with the analogy, the hope will be to offer

suggestions, so that the carpenters of the Church, those charged with making the chair of priestly formation, will have information that will help them to build chairs that will last.

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<sup>1</sup> This same source indicates that the percentages in the column from which these are taken should add up to 100%, while these add to 91%. There is no explanation in the text or the data for this divergence.

<sup>2</sup> See 3.9 above, point 1.

<sup>3</sup> See 3.9 above, point 2. This question was divided into two parts in the final survey.

<sup>4</sup> See 3.9 above, point 3.

<sup>5</sup> See 3.9 above, point 4.

<sup>6</sup> See 3.9 above, point 5.

<sup>7</sup> See 3.9 above, point 6.

## 5 Chapter five: Practical theological evaluation of the study results

### 5.1 Overview of the chapter

This chapter will present the process of “theological evaluation” (van der Ven, 1998:152–156), with its three stages of “theological interpretation,” “theological reflection” and “theological-methodological reflection.” Before entering into this theological evaluation, there will be a discussion of the methodological underpinnings of this study, including consideration of the applicability of some of van der Ven’s (1998:102–112) key concepts and how the present research fits into the tasks of practical theology.

With this support for the remaining work of the chapter, the data that has been discussed in chapter four will be connected back to the original questions asked in chapter one, the questions that gave rise to this research (van der Ven, 1998:152). In this process of theological interpretation, which began in the final pages of the previous chapter, there will be a discussion of each of the six activities, in terms of the data reported in chapter four. There will also be a discussion of each activity’s purposes, to consider their suitability for seminary formation. Finally, there will be consideration of the impact of what chapter four described as the “franchise effect,” the impact of different locations, formats and presenters on the success of different iterations of the same activity.

Taking the process of theological reflection seriously will first help evaluate the data’s importance for religious practice, in this case for the practice of seminary formation (van der Ven, 1998:152–153). The current study has been proposed as relevant precisely because of the dearth of information about whether the formation activities taking place at Catholic seminaries or sponsored by them are leading future priests to persevere in ministry. In the process of theological reflection, this chapter will seek theological reasons for the data obtained and draw suggestions for praxis from this reflection. The first programmes to be examined are those which, according to the respondents, are associated with the most positive apparent impact on different areas of formation (IPF and the pastoral-year internship). What contributes to their apparent effectiveness? The propaedeutic (spirituality) year merits particular attention, given its increased importance in the 2016 *Ratio Fundamentalis* (Congregation for the Clergy, 2016:28–29). Given the negative results for CPE, even with its extensive history in seminary formation (Thomas, 2006:33), the place of CPE in today’s seminary curriculum also demands attention. In the case of the other activities, which are run locally, the question arises of how to increase the likelihood that seminarians will experience them positively. For each activity, the theological discussion will conclude by examining ways to strengthen its best aspects and looking for ways to ameliorate any of the negative effects associated with it.

Through theological-methodological reflection (van der Ven, 1998:154–156), it will also be important to reflect on the practical theological work conducted throughout this project and make as objective an evaluation of it as possible, to offer insights for practical theology in general and to suggest ways that further study about seminary formation and perseverance in ministry might be conducted more effectively in the future. This section will look at different choices that could have been made during the research that might have led to more useful results and to make specific recommendations for further research. These will include considering ways of garnering more responses both from priests out of ministry and in ministry, as well as suggesting ways to provide statistically significant data with regard to the relationship between participation in the six activities and perseverance in priestly ministry. This section will also examine the use of the Net Impact Score as a measure, the franchise effect concept, and the importance of the alignment of the purpose of specific formation activities with the mission of seminary formation.

The final aspect of theological reflection will be to make specific recommendations for the future of Catholic seminary work, in the hopes of offering suggestions, based on data and sound theological reflection, to enhance the likelihood of perseverance in ministry. The value of this research can be measured most directly by the usefulness of these proposals.

## **5.2 Methodological considerations**

As an introduction to the theological interpretation, asking how the present research fits into the enterprise of practical theology is appropriate. According to his model of practical theology, van der Ven (1998:101) supports an “intradisciplinary model,” which “requires that theology itself become empirical, that is, that it expand its traditional range of instruments, consisting of literary-historical and systematic methods and techniques, in the direction of empirical methodology.” Van der Ven (1998:102–112) argues, primarily in dialogue with Tillich, for the adequacy, relevance, and possibility of empirical methodology in practical theology. Some van der Ven’s defences for his method can help describe the present task.

Against an accusation of positivism, van der Ven (1998:105) argues that empirical methodology in practical theology requires the researcher to recognize the presuppositions brought into the research, since “every empirical probing of reality occurs from a particular angle and a particular starting point.” The present researcher entered this work with a great concern for the efficacy of the work of priestly formation and for the pain caused to the Christian people by priests who leave ministry or who do not exercise their ministry in life-giving ways. The researcher’s involvement in seminary formation work for many years greatly influences this work, which has been informed by research into Catholic theologies of priesthood and of the meaning of perseverance in ministry, as presented in chapter two, and the study of the theology and background of the formation

activities involved in this study, as seen in chapter three. This experience allowed the researcher to understand the programmes being studied and to see their impact on individuals, leading to more positive expectations of some of them and more negative of others. In particular, it is important to note that the researcher had a positive predisposition towards the pastoral internship and a negative predisposition toward CPE; there was not a strong expectation about the other programmes.

Van der Ven (1998:105) points out that empirical methodology is not about proving that certain hypotheses are correct. The hypotheses presented in the research, even if supported by the data, remain hypotheses. The current study has sought to show evidence of connections between certain formation activities and persevering in fruitful ministry, as well as point to the lack of such evidence for other formation activities. This endeavour has been conducted with the methodological humility necessary for a valid investigation.

The final point discussed by van der Ven (1998:106) in his defence of empirical methodology is that of objectivity in relation to “the commitment implicit in religious faith.” Arguing that quantitative and qualitative aspects complement each other in empirical methodology, van der Ven (1998:106) sees the complementary use of subjective and objective measures as a way for all the methodology to “correspond to the participant and the observer perspectives respectively.” This methodological perspective is helpful in considering the work done in this project, as the researcher, who is a participant in the work of theology and in the formation of future priests with a great deal invested in this effort, has sought to observe the results of different formation activities, while acknowledging his role as a participant.

These considerations frame the theological interpretation that this chapter will provide. The researcher recognizes the impact of presuppositions brought into the research and seeks to minimize their impact on the analysis. This research is thus conducted with a methodological humility that does not pretend to prove causality, but rather to consider the evidence that certain activities have helped to form the way future priests think and that their evaluations of these experiences say something to those who are making decisions about seminary formation today.

### **5.3 Theological interpretation**

The central research question proposed at 1.1.3 above was “What impact do the formation activities of Catholic seminarians have on their subsequent perseverance in ministry as ordained diocesan priests in the United States, and what specific changes in the choice of formation activities could increase the likelihood of lifelong perseverance?” At the same time, the following theoretical argument was proposed at 1.2.3: “Formation activities experienced during the

seminary experience of Catholic priests in the United States have an impact on their perseverance in ministry, and changes in the choice of formation activities can maximize the likelihood of perseverance in ministry.” Following a review in chapter two of the theologies of priesthood as they have developed over the last two millennia, in particular with regard to the importance of perseverance in ministry after ordination and, in chapter three, an analysis of the theological and other considerations undergirding the formation activities to be studied, the empirical study was initiated and conducted, as presented in chapter four.

The theological review of the Catholic understanding of priesthood, while presenting many different voices and points of view, found a common thread, seeing permanence in ministry as benefitting the People of God, more than for the good of the individual priest, even if many times this permanence has been considered a way of defending the power of the priesthood (see section 2.10.1). The study in chapter two supported the premise of this thesis, that everything done in Catholic seminary should promote perseverance in ministry, should a candidate reach ordination to the priesthood.

The formation activities being studied are programmes that seminaries, dioceses, or individual seminarians have a choice of participating in or not. Those investigated are CPE, a spirituality or propaedeutic year, priestly fraternity groups, the pastoral year internship, priestly fraternity groups, IPF, and language immersion programmes. Chapter three provided the necessary backdrop for the empirical study, by introducing and providing information about each programme, suggesting in 3.10 that even though perseverance *per se* is not the specific reason for being of any of the programmes, the argument for including them in seminary formation would be strengthened if an association with perseverance could be demonstrated. Finding an absence of such an association or even a negative relationship with perseverance in ministry would certainly argue against the use of a particular programme.

### **5.3.1 Review of the programmes**

The review of the data regarding these programmes will look first at the data related to each of these formation activities. Although the data does not support clear causal statements about some programmes leading to perseverance and others not, the data does allow some conclusions to be made about which formation activities priests in ministry for several years have found the most supportive of their priestly service, including aspects of their ministry which are certainly connected to perseverance.

Tables 4.25 to 27, where the Net Impact Score is presented for each formation activity, offer a clear visual indication of the strengths and weaknesses of each programme. In section 4.7, the Net

Impact Score was described as a way of pointing out the difference between the most positive evaluators of a particular activity and those who ranged from negative to neutral. Since statistical analysis is not being done and since there is no glaring difference between the data presented in this way and the examination of the raw data for each programme, it seems useful at this point to look more deeply at this presentation of the data.

The data clearly indicates that the most positive Net Impact Scores overall are for IPF. In fact, in every category, except “attitude towards and ability to serve diverse communities,” this scale offers a positive net impact. IPF also has the highest overall Net Impact Score of all the programmes. The other two formation activities with overwhelmingly positive Net Impact Scores are pastoral-year internships and propaedeutic- or spirituality-year programmes.

CPE is the programme with the most negative Net Impact Score and the only formation activity with no area in which the respondents give it a positive Net Impact Score, even in those that might be thought to be associated with CPE, such as “self-awareness for personal growth” and “development of pastoral skills.” It is helpful to remember that the *PPF* (USCCB, 2006:80, §239), considering pastoral formation programmes in general, states: “the Catholic, sacramental dimension of pastoral care is integral to all such programmes in which seminarians participate.” The *PPF* (USCCB, 2006:83, §247) goes on to say specifically about CPE programmes that they need to respect Catholic sacramental practice and moral teaching. CPE will receive special attention below in section 5.3.4. For the meantime, as noted in 4.8.1 above, the strongest criticism had to do with its disconnection from the purpose of Catholic seminary foundation and with a Catholic vision of priesthood and sacramental life, a specific concern already raised by the *PPF* in 2006.

Some of the programmes, while not receiving a high overall Net Impact Score or high scores in many of the individual areas, receive high scores on questions directly related to their purpose. Thus, priestly support groups received the highest Net Impact Score on the question regarding the respondents’ opinion of and likelihood of taking part in a priestly support group after ordination. Language immersion programmes, which received a negative overall Net Impact Score, received the highest evaluation in terms of priests being prepared to serve and wanting to serve diverse communities.

The responses to the narrative questions afford additional information to support this data. All the participants in IPF remain in active ministry and all of them give a positive evaluation of the experience. The responses about pastoral internships point out the varied types of placements and the different ways in which they related to the seminary. Several of the respondents indicate that the internship helped them to grow in skills for ministry or to make the final decision to continue

to ordination. The two respondents who have left ministry and took part in pastoral-year internships indicated that it was a negative experience. The responses about the spirituality or propaedeutic year suggest that there has been a great deal of variety in what has been considered appropriate preparation for seminary life. This result will be considered further in the recommendations below.

Diversity among specific versions of programmes also influences the narrative responses about priestly support groups. Some had faculty involvement while some did not, and this difference appears to have affected their impressions of the groups. Such groups should be used more broadly, while taking advantage of their most positive elements, since they are associated with a very important result, the encouragement of taking part in fraternal groups after ordination. One respondent expressed this point clearly: “The groups always emphasized how fraternity would be important post-ordination. That part was helpful.” Language immersion programmes in which respondents indicate they participated also varied greatly. In some cases, the seminarians were learning Spanish or another language useful for ministry, but in others they were learning Italian to study in Rome. Some lived with families in Mexico, while some stayed in the United States for more or less intensive programmes. This variety and the lack of significant commentary about these activities in the narrative responses make it difficult to arrive at significant judgements about the value of the language immersion programmes based only on the survey data. In section 5.4.5.5 below, suggestions will be made for ways of determining best practices for language immersion programmes, as well as linking them to the purpose of seminary formation (the issue to be considered next, in section 5.3.2).

The discussion of the Net Impact Scores associated with the individual programmes and of the narrative data indicates that the most positive evaluations of any formation activity can be seen among IPF participants. The pastoral-year internship and propaedeutic experiences received positive overall Net Impact Scores as well, but not as high and not as consistently. The most negative Net Impact Scores and the most negative comments relate to CPE. It is important to note that the other activities, language immersion and fraternal support groups, earned positive Net Impact Scores for areas associated directly with their primary purpose although their overall Net Impact Scores are negative. In sum, this initial analysis of the data supports the use of IPF and calls into question using CPE as part of Catholic seminary formation. The data regarding other activities offers some encouragement about the impact of some and some cautions about others. The results also suggest some questions for further analysis, which will take place in the subsequent sections. As noted already, ways of improving these programmes to ensure that they will contribute to perseverance in ministry will be discussed in section 5.4.5.

### 5.3.2 Purpose as a factor in evaluating programmes

The *PPF* (USCCB, 2006:29) calls for a holistic view of preparation for the Catholic priesthood, in which all the aspects or dimensions of formation tie together, and each aspect is measured in terms of its support of all the others. The *Ratio Fundamentalis* (Congregation for the Clergy, 2016:3) also speaks of the unity of the formation process: “The entire journey of formation must never be reduced to a single aspect to the detriment of others, but it must always be an integrated journey of the disciple called to priesthood.” This same document insists on linking ongoing formation and perseverance, as well as on the benefits to the Christian people of well-formed priests: “Ongoing formation is intended to ensure fidelity to the priestly ministry in a continuing journey of conversion, in order to rekindle the gift received at ordination.... It is important that the faithful should be able to encounter priests who are suitably mature and formed” (Congregation for the Clergy, 2016:35).

The formation activities listed above in 5.3 and discussed at length throughout chapter three are in relationship to the whole of the enterprise of seminary formation. The activities that seem to be most closely linked to an integrated vision of priestly formation, in which all of the elements are intentionally linked together, receive the most positive overall evaluation from former participants. It has been shown that IPF was specifically developed to strengthen spiritual formation for seminarians, while promoting a positive vision of diocesan priesthood. Its purpose, integrated into a holistic image of priesthood, is clear (Dwyer & Hogan, 2008:37). This clear purpose seems to contribute to the effectiveness of the programme, as measured in the responses of priest participants. It is important to note here that, even though the present research deals primarily with one aspect of successful ministry, perseverance, that perseverance is meaningful if it is a fruit of an integral view of ministry in which the people are nourished, because, in the words of the *Ratio Fundamentalis*, priests “constantly feed the ‘fire’ that gives light and warmth to the exercise of ministry” (Congregation for the Clergy, 2016:35).

Spirituality- or propaedeutic-year programmes, pastoral-year internships, and priestly fraternity groups, as they were described in 3.3 to 3.5 above, also have clear purposes, tied to the broader work of seminary formation. These purposes include preparing the seminarian humanly and spiritually for the whole work of formation, offering intensive pastoral experiences that allow for putting into practice what a seminarian has learned, giving an opportunity to “try on” priestly life, and building bonds of fraternity among seminarians while promoting the value of such groups after ordination. While the purpose of these programmes may be clear, their design and implementation vary greatly, as will be considered in the next section.

CPE and language immersion programmes, as has been seen already, do not have purposes specifically linked to Catholic seminary formation. Over 35 years ago, at least one author noted the lack of a clear rationale for the use of CPE in Catholic Seminaries (McCarron, 1981:8). The negative evaluation of CPE programmes among the survey respondents is tied directly to the sense that many CPE directors do not understand or appreciate Catholic seminary formation. The *PPF* (USCCB, 2006:83) is clear about the importance of this integration and, in particular, respect for Catholic teaching. The complaints by a number of the survey respondents turn specifically on this point. Additionally, the *PPF* calls for all pastoral supervisors not only to have skills for supervision, but also to be dedicated to the Church and appreciation for the Catholic priesthood (USCCB, 2006:84). Further discussion about CPE will be offered in 5.4.4 below.

With regard to language immersion programmes, the reality is that their purpose has to do with learning a language (usually Spanish), a skill that is valuable for seminarians, but these activities do not have the development of a priestly identity as a goal. On the positive side, evidence indicates that these programmes help seminarians prepare to serve diverse communities, both in terms of skills and attitudes. Given the limited time and resources available during the seminary years, it would be helpful to consider ways of setting up the programme in a way that the broader purposes of seminary formation were clearly considered and promoted during the period of the language immersion. The mission statement for the language immersion programme run by the St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary Language Department (2017:1) states this integrated purpose clearly: “By participating in Mass with the Guatemalan people as well as sharing in local activities and participating in pastoral ministries, the seminarian will gain invaluable experience to help in his future parish ministries with Hispanic Catholics in Florida and beyond.” A challenge for any seminary, relying on personnel in foreign countries, is to ensure that such purpose statements are in fact implemented. Any Catholic seminary’s intent should always be to help future priests become truly “catholic.” Preparing English-speaking seminarians preparing to serve in the United States to be able to minister in Spanish and to work with and for Hispanic communities connects clearly with that purpose.

In 4.10 above, the question of purpose was linked to the analogy of a carpenter building a chair. To take the analogy further, if carpenters are working with several pieces of wood and each has a clear vision that a chair is the desired product, then it is very likely that chairs will be built. There may be discussion about the relative quality of different chairs built according to different plans by different carpenters, but chairs will be compared to chairs. The difficulty comes in when carpenters are used who are not really interested in building chairs. They may make very nice tables and desks, but tables and desks should not be asked to serve as chairs.

This analogy could be helpful in comparing different formation activities in terms of their purposes, but one weakness is that it is a static image, leading perhaps to imagining the seminarian as a piece of wood that needs to be hewn and sawed and sanded and nailed, all the while remaining docile. Every seminarian is unique and brings particular gifts of his own to formation. Indeed, the seminarian not only is not a static piece of wood, but he is “a necessary and irreplaceable agent in his own formation” (Congregation for the Clergy, 2016:26). With this caveat, this analogy is proposed to describe whether the purposes of the different formation activities being considered are or are not aligned with the mission of seminary formation.

IPF clearly seeks to build a specific chair: a Catholic priest committed to faithful ministry with sound principles for discernment, a clear sense of the meaning of chaste celibacy, and the specific personal gifts needed for diocesan priesthood (IPF, 2016). Those charged with implementing pastoral-year internships and spirituality- or propaedeutic-year programmes likewise have a clear sense that what they are doing seeks to prepare men for priesthood. Some of the responses about both types of programmes, however, also revealed that there are very different ways of doing these types of activity, indicating that the basic purpose of some of the organizers may not be as clearly focused on building the one chair. For example, one respondent mentioned the total lack of community in the rectory where he did his pastoral internship, something a good pastoral-year experience would include, while a participant in a spirituality year had what he describes as a “new age” experience.

Priestly fraternity groups begun in seminary are designed with the intention of building the same chair of priesthood, but their differences in design (and here the next topic arises, that of differences of implementation in different settings) mean that different models of the same chair might be being built. The involvement or lack of involvement of faculty, the spirituality of the groups, their size and make-up (self-selected or assigned) are all relevant factors.

As indicated in 4.10 above, the two activities with purposes independent of Catholic seminary formation are CPE and language immersion programmes. In these cases, to continue the analogy, there are carpenters dedicated to making coffee tables or desks, but the chair builders in seminary work have asked them to help manufacture chairs. The purpose of language immersion programmes, at the seminary level, is certainly to assist in a particular aspect of priestly ministry in the United States: ministry to non-English-speaking parishioners. The respondents make clear that these experiences fulfil this narrow purpose; participating in such activities has helped future priests gain skills and develop attitudes needed for ministry to diverse populations. Given the limited time and resources available for the years of seminary formation, however, how can

seminaries ensure that all aspects of their language immersion experiences contribute to building the chair?

With regard to CPE, which will be discussed in more detail in 5.3.3 below, the scaled responses and the comments offered by participants confirmed a number of the observations made in the discussion about CPE in 3.2. At that time, it was noted that many of the negative remarks about CPE were anecdotal in nature. Given the nature of the present study, the same argument could still be made. At the same time, the response of the 19 study participants who took part in CPE during their seminary formation indicates that, for them at least, CPE did not tend to contribute to building the chair of priesthood. Powell's comment (2009) is relevant to the apparent disconnection between the purposes of CPE and Catholic seminary formation: "Our American bishops need to re-evaluate and reform the CPE process for Catholic seminarians so that the unique character of the priestly charism is honoured and developed."

Seminary staff, vocations directors and bishops, as they consider using different programmes to assist in the formation of seminarians, would do well to consider the purposes of the programmes. Are they dedicated specifically to the formation of Catholic priests in all dimensions of formation? At the same time, those who are working to implement any programme with the intention of serving Catholic seminarians would be likely to be most successful if they were intentional in tying their own project to the wider task of Catholic seminary formation.

The present research indicates that unity of purpose is important in those programmes that receive the most positive evaluations in the survey data and narrative responses. These are the programmes whose purpose is most closely linked to supporting aspects of formation and priestly life which would seem to be associated with successful and persevering priestly ministry. This discussion offers additional support for the use of IPF, spirituality- or propaedeutic-year experiences, pastoral-year internships, and priestly support groups, and suggests additional reasons for caution about the use of language immersion groups and CPE. Additionally, this discussion suggests a principle that could be helpful in future studies of any kind of formation activity, not only for the preparation of priests, but also for activities aimed at the lay faithful or at other groups. An intentional unity of purpose or, as the illustration in this section indicated, intending to be a part of building a particular chair, makes a difference on the positive impact that any activity will have.

Having already noted the potential weakness of the analogy of the carpenter, another image that might be suggested for this notion of unity of purpose would be that it is important for all who work in seminary formation to be on one team, playing the same game with the same rules. It must be ensured that all of those taking part in seminary formation activities are aware where the

goal is and what victory means. The rules of the game need to be clear as well. There will be more discussion about potential improvements in the use of each kind of formation activity in the following sections. It seems already that alignment of purpose is a key factor in choosing, designing, and implementing programmes.

### **5.3.3 “Franchise effect”: impact of different locations, programme designs, presenters**

In 4.9 above, the concept of “franchise effect” was offered as an explanation for the different evaluations of similar activities conducted in different places and the high rating given to the one programme that was offered at only one location, IPF. In an article considering the advantages and disadvantages of franchising a business, Shane (2013) notes that the major advantages of franchising, for a business owner, are the accessibility of more qualified staff, being able to expand a business without expending a great deal of capital, and minimizing risk. The factors that discourage franchising seem more readily comparable to the situation of seminary formation activities: “less control over managers: You can’t tell franchisees what to do...; a weaker core community ...; innovation challenges.”

As has been seen, IPF (as it was conducted during the years when the respondents in the current study took part, in the early 2000s) is perceived as having been a very positive experience, in every area considered, by almost all ten respondents who took part in this programme. It is the only formation activity being studied that was offered at only one location. The other programmes are independent of each other and quite different in terms of location, design and the presenters, as well as other aspects. This reality makes comparing their impact difficult, but also affords some ideas about the possible advantage of collaboration among seminaries in the future development of these types of formation activities.

It is not surprising perhaps that the Catholic Church, the institution that gave the word “parochialism” to the world, struggles to design programmes without the negative effects of franchising. It would be good to consider whether there could be a way for formation faculty members from seminaries using one of the programmes being considered to work together to devise the best practices in the design and implementation of that activity. For example, seminaries requiring the pastoral internship could collaborate in the improvement of the pastoral-year model, using the results of the present study and their own evaluative work. The downsides to franchising described above would be ameliorated if pastoral formators from various seminaries could cooperate with confidence that their work would be taken seriously by their institutions and by the dioceses they serve and if they had a sense of common purpose and the desire to improve the effectiveness of seminary formation across the country.

The franchise analogy, borrowed from the business world, is offered as a way of considering the differences between programmes with similar names and purposes, run at different locations and with varying degrees of diversity in terms of design, staffing, and other aspects. While it might not cover all the differences in programmes, this analogy does help in grasping the reality that, with the exception of IPF, each of the programmes being considered is a more or less independent entity in each location. The narrative responses obtained in the surveys indicate significant variety in all the programmes being considered. This element of difference suggests caution in trying to generalize the qualitative data, but also suggests potential benefits if there could be greater cooperation among Catholic seminaries in the US in the design and the implementation of these activities. Some specific suggestions for those programmes conducted on individual campuses will be made in the next section.

## **5.4 Theological reflection**

### **5.4.1 Reflection on IPF and pastoral year internships**

It has been seen in 5.2.2 above that a clear purpose is a key factor in the apparent success of the programmes evaluated most positively by the survey respondents. At this time, it seems opportune to reflect more deeply on what it is about IPF (10 participating respondents) and the pastoral-year internship (15 participating respondents), which clearly received the highest evaluations by respondents. What are the other aspects of these programmes that contribute to their efficacy? What do these factors have to do with perseverance in ministry?

#### **5.4.1.1 IPF**

IPF itself has found that its participants have reported themselves to grow spiritually as a result of their participation in the summer programme at Creighton University (Dwyer & Hogan, 2008:39–41). The elements included in the programme connect to the life of a priest in very clear ways, with prayer, discernment, celibacy, discernment, pastoral service, and the identity of the diocesan priest all being focused on in intentional ways (IPF, 2016). In the present survey, IPF received the highest Net Impact Score with regards to the evaluation of the overall experience and the impact on the totality of the seminary experience, as well as on five of the remaining ten areas being studied.

Several areas in which IPF received the highest marks relate directly to the concern of perseverance. The very high scores given to IPF on these scales is relevant: understanding of priestly identity, development of a solid base for the spiritual life, self-awareness for personal growth, discernment of the call to priesthood, attitude towards the spiritual life and maturity in

the faith, and attitude towards the commitment to celibacy. If the activities seminarians take part in during one summer in Nebraska have led them, over ten years after priestly ordination, to indicate that this experience has helped them in all these areas, it speaks well of the long-term impact of IPF in areas that are of great importance for persevering and effective priestly ministry.

One response to the narrative questions speaks to the impact of IPF in a very practical way: “Highly recommend IPF and if I were vocations director would probably require all seminarians to attend.” The total cost for the summer programme is \$9,445.00 (IPF, 2016). This cost is a factor that many dioceses and seminaries would need to consider in deciding whether or not to send seminarians to IPF, but the results of the programme may offset any expense, when one figures the human and financial costs associated with all of priestly formation and with a successful (or an unsuccessful) ministerial career.

One caution that could be expressed about IPF, as a programme clearly associated with an ideal view of Catholic priesthood, is to make sure that the image it presents and supports is realistic. Given the importance of preparation for celibate living in IPF (IPF, 2016), an example of an issue that needs to be addressed is the reality that seminarians are being prepared to live out this commitment in an environment with a growing number of married priests in the United States. This occurs because of provisions offered to former Episcopalian or other Protestant clergy to be ordained as Catholic priests and because of the presence of married Eastern Catholic priests (Tchekmedyian, 2017).

Looking towards the future, how can the data and the reflection upon the data conducted in this project contribute to the best use of these programmes in the future? It is important that within IPF itself there be continued reflection to ensure that the image of priesthood presented in the IPF programme is consistent with the reality of priesthood in the twenty-first century. Already some have mentioned the importance of helping future priests discern celibacy in a context in which they will be working with priests who are not celibates in their future ministry. The mission of IPF, linked closely to helping seminarians recognize and be grounded in their own identity as sons of God, is key to helping the people to whom they will minister know and rejoice in their own filial identity (Williamson, 2015:25). It is important to ensure that there not be a disconnection between the very important personal work, that of recognizing and rejoicing in the seminarian’s own identity, and the pastoral connection, that of strengthening the identity of the People of God.

There is ample evidence of the efficacy of IPF, at least as it was conducted in the first years of the last decade, in supporting the work of seminaries across a spectrum of important areas of formation, including a variety of areas linked to perseverance in ministry. These findings suggest

the value of this programme. At the same time, since it would be desirable to make this programme available to as many seminarians as possible, it may be advisable, given the great benefits found in participation in IPF, to look at ways of expanding or replicating the programme, bearing in mind the danger of the franchise effect. This project offers a challenge to seminary staff and diocesan vocation directors, as well as to IPF itself: in what ways could seminaries or groups of seminaries imitate the best elements of IPF? Or how would it be possible for IPF to expand in a controlled way to make its programmes available, in a cost-effective way, to seminarians across the country?

#### **5.4.1.2 Pastoral-year internships**

It has been noted that the results for pastoral-year internships would have been better without the presence in the sample of two individuals who are out of ministry and who took part in a pastoral-year internship. While it was the specific intent of the research to examine the relationship of different programmes with perseverance in ministry, it is noteworthy that most of the priests who have remained in ministry report that the pastoral internship had a very positive impact on their overall formation. In fact, in all the areas being measured, except the attitude towards and likelihood of participating in support groups, the Net Impact Score for internships was positive.

What has been described as the franchise effect certainly is relevant in this discussion, since the respondents took part in varied experiences, even in terms of the length of the internship, which ranged from seven to thirteen months. If clarity in discernment of the priestly vocation is important to perseverance, which seems fairly obvious, the internship's Net Impact Score of 60 on this question is very important. A full 67% of the respondents ranked this item as "9" or "10" for the pastoral internship, higher than for any other programme.

The pastoral internship also had the highest scores for the question regarding development of pastoral skills for ministry. Both these items support the argument that the seminarian who is able to try on priestly life in concrete ways, both in terms of the kind of work which priests are called to do and the priest's way of life, including a significant amount of time living in a rectory, is in a better position to make a final discernment of the call to priesthood. At the same time, the time in the parish gives the seminary formation team concrete information for its role in discernment.

As noted in 4.8.3, the only negative responses about the pastoral internship came from the two respondents who have left active ministry. The description these respondents give of their internship experience reveals that the seminary had little involvement in the programme. One respondent still in ministry speaks positively of the experience precisely because of the very real challenges faced in that assignment. Others clearly affirm that it was a watershed moment in their

process of discernment to the priesthood. While it is important to avoid drawing excessively broad conclusions from the experiences of a small number of respondents, these comments point to the importance of the internship's being part of the seminary's formation programme, as opposed to a diocesan activity, for which the seminary has little or no responsibility.

Considering the scaled and narrative responses with regards to the pastoral-year internship, this opportunity to serve for an extended time in parish ministry appears to offer a significant contribution in a number of important ways. On the basis of the previous discussion about the "franchise effect," it would be helpful to consider ways in which these activities could be implemented to get the greatest possible impact for the investment of time and other resources.

Given the positive impact of a pastoral-year internship on the development of pastoral skills and on a clear discernment of the vocation to the priesthood, it is a formation activity that is worthy of being protected where it already exists and promoted where it does not. Section 3.4 above treated the reasons for the inclusion of the pastoral-year internship in this study. The intention was to evaluate the anecdotal argument in favour of its effectiveness in preparing seminarians for priesthood. Specifically, does the pastoral-year internship help seminarians to be more certain of their decision to pursue holy orders and assist the seminary formation staff in its evaluation of the seminarian? The information gathered regarding the internship has provided this supporting evidence.

The *Ratio Fundamentalis* is equivocal in its discussion of pastoral experiences during seminary. On the one hand, it powerfully addresses the importance of preparing seminarians to know their dioceses and their traditions, learning from "the example of priests who have preceded the candidates into the priesthood" (Congregation for the Clergy, 2016:53). Furthermore, the *Ratio* repeats the teaching of Pope St. John Paul II that the parish is a privileged place for pastoral formation experiences (Congregation for the Clergy, 2016:53–54). At the same time, when it discusses the various stages of formation, the *Ratio Fundamentalis* treats the "pastoral stage, or vocation synthesis" as "the time from leaving the Seminary until the subsequent priestly ordination, which obviously is brought about by conferral of the diaconate" (Congregation for the Clergy, 2016:33). The discussion of the pastoral internship has made clear that there is evidence of great benefit from an intense period of pastoral activity, linked to the work of the seminary and not after "leaving the Seminary." Thus, the implication in the language of the *Ratio Fundamentalis* that the most significant pastoral formation for seminarians should take place after diaconal ordination is a cause for great concern. The work done in this project supports a recommendation to those charged with preparing the new *Program of Priestly Formation* for the

United States that significant parish experience *during* seminary formation be encouraged, if not required.

In this regard, at least one of the respondents experienced a pastoral year after ordination to the diaconate. While there are arguments in favour of extended pastoral experience between diaconal and priestly ordination, such a setup does not meet the first purpose of the internship, which is to provide skills and contribute to the discernment process, precisely before the decision to seek (and to recommend for) ordination to the diaconate takes place. Thus, such an experience should be in addition to, not instead of, an extensive pastoral internship near the middle of the years of theological study.

Furthermore, as with other programmes, it is recommended that for the pastoral internship, every effort be put forth to ensure that the design of the individual programme be consistent with the purpose of the formation activity regarding aspects conducted at the seminary and those occurring in the seminarian's home diocese. While the actual design of the internship may vary, such as its length or which semesters it could encompass, it is an investment of time that has proven invaluable. Lastly, it would be most helpful for seminaries and dioceses to be in dialogue about best practices in the design and implementation of pastoral internships.

#### **5.4.2 Reflection on the spirituality or propaedeutic year**

The requirement by the Vatican's Congregation for the Clergy (2016:28–29) that the propaedeutic stage be implemented in regulations for seminary formation of each national conference of bishops makes this study's questions about the spirituality or propaedeutic year quite relevant. As has been noted in 4.8.2, the respondents described very different kinds of programmes as being a spirituality or propaedeutic year, despite being asked a question that seemed clear: "During your seminary formation, did you participate in a spirituality year or propaedeutic year (an entire year dedicated to spirituality and preparation for full immersion into seminary life)?" Taking into consideration the great disparity among the programmes described as fitting in this category and the small number of responses (total of eight), it is noteworthy that responses were positive overall.

Looking at the Net Impact Scores, the propaedeutic or spirituality year received the third highest overall score, after IPF and the pastoral-year internship. Although it did not receive the highest score in any category, it received the second-highest score in five areas: overall evaluation, impact of the totality of seminary formation, development of a solid base for the spiritual life, development of pastoral skills, and discernment of the call to priesthood. These positive evaluations are particularly striking, bearing in mind that they are for an experience that the

respondents in this survey would have taken part in at least five years prior to ordination and thus at least seventeen years or so before completing this questionnaire.

The Congregation for the Clergy (2016:28–29) indicates elements that need to be included in propaedeutic programmes in the future, while allowing for local adaptation: “In order to launch and develop their spiritual life, it will be necessary to lead seminarians to prayer by way of the sacramental life; the Liturgy of the Hours; familiarity with the Word of God, which is to be considered the soul and guide of the journey; silence; mental prayer; and spiritual reading.” Other elements mentioned include coming to know the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and having initial experiences of parish ministry and works of charity, as well as making up for lacunae in the candidates’ previous academic studies.

Unfortunately, not enough information from this study exists to suggest further development of these programmes as they become mandatory. The responses about the areas of the most positive impact would indicate that setting the foundations for a life of prayer, deepening discernment of the call to priesthood and offering the first pastoral skills are important areas to focus on during this year which, again remarkably, can be so formative as to be recalled by several participants as the most formative of all their years of seminary. This feedback bodes well for the potential these programmes offer, as they become obligatory in the future.

Successful work by those charged with the formation faculty in the propaedeutic programme will help to prepare seminarians for success in seminary and in priesthood. The *Ratio Fundamentalis* considers the importance of discernment, for the good of the individual and the good of the Church: “A serious discernment of the vocational situation of the candidate at the outset will avoid needless procrastination when it comes to making a judgement about suitability for priestly ministry” (Congregation for the Clergy, 2016:24). Promoting careful discernment of the candidates’ capabilities and of God’s call, by seminarians themselves and by those accompanying them, would be a great contribution of such programmes in the future, making it more likely that those moving on to the later stages of seminary formation would be prepared to make a permanent commitment before ordination.

In the United States, the development of new programmes will have to address questions about where to locate them and who should be responsible for running them. The Vatican document calls for them to be “distinct” from the seminary and for the propaedeutic candidates to live apart, when possible, from seminarians (Congregation for the Clergy, 2016:29). Furthermore, the Vatican document does not address the different needs of seminarians entering this propaedeutic stage at very different moments in their lives, especially the difference between a recent high-school graduate (at age 18 or 19) and someone with significant life and work experience (perhaps

after age 40). Taking seriously the real needs of the persons entering this stage of formation will be an important part of the development of programmes and of their implementation.

Dioceses and seminaries should see a cause for caution here. Propaedeutic programmes, which will soon be required, have some demonstrable benefits. But trying to establish programmes simply to meet the requirements of the new guiding documents will make the negative aspects of what has been described as the franchise effect will come into play. It will be very important for seminaries and dioceses to work in tandem, as they develop these programmes. A clear sense of purpose and of the link to the mission of seminary formation in general and of a particular seminary will be extremely important, as will be quality control, to ensure that the franchise effect is responded to.

Another concern that arises, recognizing the very positive results of IPF and pastoral year internships as noted in 5.4.1 above, is that implementing this new period of formation, with its cost in time and money, may cause seminaries to abandon proven seminary formation activities. The positive recommendations made in the present study are made with an awareness of the competition for resources that may strain dioceses' ability to continue to invest in some successful activities.

Although this study could not make more specific recommendations regarding propaedeutic experiences, which were new and rare in 2005, the principles that have been found helpful in the programmes perceived by participants as the most efficacious over the long term would apply here as well, as seminaries and dioceses work to establish them. It is a hopeful note that some of those who took part in a propaedeutic year and evaluated that experience highly consider the experience a key element of their vocational discernment many years later.

### **5.4.3 Reflection on CPE**

As was seen in section 3.2, the available information about the impact of CPE in Catholic seminary formation consisted primarily of negative commentary on the internet (Google, 2017). The results of the present study, although hardly unassailable, confirm the negative assessment. On all but one of the measures of the net impact of the different formation activities, CPE scored lowest, with a negative net impact in every area. It is striking that several of the respondents recalled CPE as the most stressful and least helpful part of their seminary experience.

It has been argued in this study that two of the greatest indicators of positive impact are a clear sense of an activity's purpose, one aligned with the mission of Catholic seminary formation, and a seminary's control over the activity. CPE, as it is currently utilized by Catholic seminaries in

the US, appears to fail on both counts. Seminarians are sent to CPE programmes whose purposes are not linked to the purposes of their seminaries. The seminary and diocesan staff have no control over these programmes, but rather are usually mere consumers. The concern raised in the *PPF* (USCCB, 2006:83) about the nature and supervision of programmes not directly conducted by seminaries cautions against such a situation.

Learning about hospital ministry and the care of the sick, as well as having an opportunity for serious theological reflection on ministry and on one's own identity as a minister, are important elements of seminary formation (USCCB, 2006:79; St. Paul Seminary School of Divinity, Department of Pastoral Formation, 2013:7). The current study, however, suggests that CPE — especially CPE programmes with no connection to a Catholic seminary — is not successful in meeting the purposes of seminary formation activities. It has sometimes been argued that CPE is not appreciated by seminarians because of their own resistance, conservatism, or other factors that make it difficult for them to get at deep issues within themselves or to accept an ecumenical approach to ministry (St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary, 2014:2). The data in this study provides important evidence, however, that the occasional success of some CPE placements does not warrant a generalized requirement that all seminarians complete CPE. Rather, seminaries should be encouraged to use existing programmes that develop pastoral skills in the care of the sick and promote theological reflection as well as to develop their own programmes (bearing in mind the discussion about franchise effect), in a way that respects the purposes of Catholic seminary formation (St. Paul Seminary School of Divinity, Department of Pastoral Formation 2013:7). If seminaries or dioceses choose to use an official CPE programme, it would be imperative to obtain specific information about the credentials and methodology of the programme staff and be clear about the seminary's or the diocese's expectations of CPE. If this is not possible — and, given the independence of CPE programmes and the requirements they have for accreditation, it most likely would not be possible in most cases — it would be better not to use CPE at all.

This study does not support the use of CPE as a required element of Catholic seminary formation. The negative memories of this formation activity, which respondents both in and out of priestly ministry still recall after more than a decade has passed, cause alarm. CPE's purpose does not align well with that of Catholic seminary formation. Moreover, CPE's own structure is such that it is difficult to envision a way in which sufficient input could be had by Catholic seminaries in order to improve the alignment and promote a methodology that would better serve the needs of Catholic seminarians and help them prepare for a fruitful and persevering ministry.

At the same time, it is important to note that hospital ministry and pastoral care of the sick and dying are very important parts of priestly ministry, and this kind of ministry training is a significant part of seminary formation. As has been seen, the Spiritual Pastoral Ministry Programme at St. Paul Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota, is one example of a programme seeking to offer an alternative to CPE for Catholic seminarians (St. Paul Seminary School of Divinity, Department of Pastoral Formation, 2013: 7).

Some occasionally object that abandoning CPE amounts to running away from challenging situations or eliminating opportunities for ecumenical encounters. The Spiritual Pastoral Ministry Programme at St. Paul, while focused on a Catholic understanding of ministry to the sick, offers opportunities for seminarians to work with Catholic and non-Catholic healthcare chaplains, as well as to visit Catholic and non-Catholic patients. The manual describes pastoral ministry that takes place in this programme:

The seminarian's primary role at the site is that of a ministry of presence to the sick: he visits the facility's patients on a regular basis, learning how to practice listening skills and mirroring, as well as becoming comfortable with offering spontaneous prayer reflective of the individual's needs. Seminarians also become familiar with the different types of illnesses and chronic conditions that patients experience (St. Paul Seminary School of Divinity, Department of Pastoral Formation, 2013: 29).

The recommendation is then to avoid using CPE, unless a given hospital's CPE course collaborates with the seminary to allay some of the concerns which have been raised. In order to ensure that seminarians receive some experience in healthcare facilities and with non-Catholic ministers, alternatives such as the Spiritual Pastoral Ministry Programme just discussed need to emerge. The principles discussed at length regarding other programmes would apply here: the importance that any programme being developed be aligned clearly with the seminary's purposes and that any new programmes developed take into consideration the best practices already being used at St. Paul Seminary.

#### **5.4.4 Reflection on the other programmes**

Before considering each of the remaining programmes, some reflection about an element they share, that they are locally designed and implemented, is in order. It has been seen that there is a greater range of responses for the programmes run independently by individual seminaries or run by different groups independent of seminaries. The tables of responses for the overall evaluation of the programmes in 4.6.1 bear this out. While not all the questions in the survey have been presented in this report with the full range of responses, a review of the data indicates that the

responses for IPF are much more closely clustered together. This is an aspect of what is described as the franchise effect in this thesis. In addition to encouraging cooperation among seminaries, as has already been suggested in the discussion of the franchise effect, it is important to consider whether other ideas could be helpful in the further development of programmes conducted by or contracted by individual seminaries.

The discussion about the link between a clear purpose, tied to the purpose of seminary formation, in section 5.3.2 above, offers a starting point for a place for seminaries to start their reflection on all programmes they run on their own. It would be helpful to spend time considering each formation activity in the light of the foundational documents for seminary formation and the seminary's own mission statement. Any programme worth having should have a clear link to these purpose-expressing texts, not only in terms of general principles, but in every aspect of the design and implementation of the programme. The anecdotal negative narrative responses regarding some of the activities, such as listening to New Age music during a propaedeutic experience, or a fraternal support group whose nature was not clearly defined, or a language immersion programme that was not truly immersive, are all cases of a misalignment of the purposes of seminary formation, the purpose of the formation activity, and the design and implementation of the programme.

An example from the researcher's own seminary could be helpful. The expectation of the seminary is that the Spanish language immersion programme in which seminarians who are not native Spanish speakers participate, conducted in Guatemala's original capital, Antigua Guatemala, should include formal language study, community with host families, a chance to put Spanish to use in pastoral situations, and the opportunity for daily Mass and for theological reflection on the entire experience (St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary Pastoral Language Department, 2017:1). Discussions with seminarians who took part in the 2017 summer programme revealed several deficiencies in the ways the programme was actually organized by the local school with which the seminary had contracted. Further discussion among seminary staff, consultation with dioceses who have sent seminarians to other schools in this town and research by the seminary's language department led to the decision to contract with a new school and to ensure that seminary staff visit the programme during the summer of 2018 (Hernández, 2017).

A clear sense of purpose, linked to the mission of the institution and to the principles set forth for seminary formation in the guidelines published by the Holy See and the US Bishops, should be a *sine qua non* for the implementation of any formation activity in any seminary. Collaboration with other seminaries would also be of great help, to promote best practices. Frequent review of

evaluations and other methods of measuring effectiveness, to ensure that the programmes are in fact running as they are intended to run and are having the desired effects, at least in the short term, would also be an important element in the improvement of locally run programmes. Lastly, obtaining long-term data about the impact of these formation activities also could be of benefit. All these elements will be important in the development of propaedeutic experiences across the country, in response to the requirements of the 2016 *Ratio Fundamentalis* (Congregation for the Clergy, 2016:28–29) and the forthcoming edition of the *PPF*.

#### 5.4.4.1 Priestly fraternity groups

Rossetti's research (2011:196) finds that healthy and supportive friendships are a key factor in the happiness of priests and in their perseverance, and thus need to be promoted by seminary formators. Having friends to assist each other in “living the priestly vocation with clarity and joy” and to “call each other on toward this priestly holiness which we all seek” (St. Paul and Minneapolis Companions of Christ, 2017) is important for seminarians and for all priests after ordination. In this light, the finding that taking part in fraternal support groups in seminary promotes participation in such groups after ordination would be reason enough to promote the use of such groups in seminary formation. In designing and implementing such programmes, clarity about confidentiality is one element that the present research suggests is important in building confidence among participants. As with other programmes, conversation among seminaries about what seminaries have found to be most effective would be of great help in developing and implementing the most effective programmes.

Many writers have recommended that seminaries encourage deep spiritual friendship among seminarians (Waddell, 1996:28–29). The sense of being on a common mission is of huge importance in helping priests to deal with the very real stresses of ministry and life. Anything that seminaries can do to help seminarians not only help each other on the journey during the time of formation for the priesthood, but also to be more committed to sharing a journey together of continuing formation in the priesthood, is likely to be of great benefit in promoting successful and faithful ministry. Fraternal support groups, in seminary and in priesthood, help to prevent the danger of the “lone ranger” attitude in the priesthood and can give great support at difficult times in the priesthood (Euteneuer, 2000:42; Romano Gómez, 2006:867). Having this sense of shared mission and accountability is not only a practical aid to success and perseverance, but also meets the challenge expressed in the *Ratio Fundamentalis* that seminarians and priests not assume that fraternity will happen naturally or by happenstance, but see it as a “conscious choice and an ongoing challenge” (Congregation for the Clergy, 2016:25).

Taking into consideration the practical recommendations already made, seminaries need to work to promote true fraternity among seminarians while in the seminary, in such a way that these same individuals are encouraged to continue to live out that friendship. The same section of the *Ratio Fundamentalis* also mentions fatherhood in addition to fraternity (Congregation for the Clergy, 2016:25). A theological and pastoral caution that should be mentioned here is that a paternal sense among seminary formation faculty towards seminarians and of fraternity among seminarians should not devolve into paternalism and clericalism, which are specifically discouraged by the same text (Congregation for the Clergy, 2016:19).

#### 5.4.4.2 Language immersion programmes

As discussed in 5.3.2 above, the use of language immersion programmes in seminaries has been found to promote specific attitudes and skills important for priestly ministry in the United States, together with the desire and ability to serve in culturally diverse communities. If participation in such activities is to be helpful in supporting the broader formation mission of seminaries, it will be essential for seminaries to collaborate in discussing aspects they have found most helpful, not only in terms of the learning of language and culture, but also in terms of promoting all aspects of the formation of seminarians during their time in these programmes.

It is important to be aware of a flip side to the concern addressed by language immersion programmes, that of foreign-born seminarians who are studying to serve in the United States. They too need to be prepared to minister in the United States, adapting to American culture and speaking English in a way that is comprehensible in the United States. While this study did not examine programmes specifically designed for this population, it is certainly related to the purposes of seminary formation. The *Guidelines for Receiving Pastoral Ministers in the United States* (USCCB, 2003:37–39) presents some programmes that are suggested as potentially helpful for seminarians, as well as priests and other ministers, who have come to the United States from abroad.

Hoge and Okure (2006:15) found that over a decade ago there were about 5,500 foreign-born priests in the United States, making up 16% of all active priests, and at the same time they found that about one-third of all the priests ordained in the United States were from abroad. In their study, they cite several arguments both in favour of and against recruiting and admitting such priests. The urgent need for priests in many US parishes and the inability of dioceses abroad to provide for all of their priests are presented as arguments in favour, and fairness to their home churches and the foreign-born clergy's difficulty of assimilating and being understood in American English as arguments against (Hoge & Okure 2006:17–19).

Seminarians must be encouraged to recognize their responsibility to do everything possible to prepare themselves to serve their future parishioners. Developing language skills is an essential aspect of formation, both for English-speaking seminarians who will need to work with Spanish-speaking communities and with those who speak other languages, and for foreign-born seminarians seeking to be ordained for ministry in the United States. For example, the researcher's own seminary sets as a benchmark for its language programme that "90% of graduates not bilingual at entry [become] prepared to competently celebrate Mass in a second language" and has a specific rubric to assess whether this benchmark has been met (St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary, 2018). Although the present study has focused on programmes designed to prepare native English speakers to work in other languages, the pastoral zeal to which all seminarians and priests are called applies as well to seminarians who need to strengthen their English for service in the United States. In any case, the present research supports the conclusion that intensive work on language encourages the development of language skills, as well as the desire to serve diverse populations. At the same time, it is important that any programmes, especially if they continue for a long time, fit into the purposes of the whole of the seminary experience. The *Ratio Fundamentalis* (Congregation for the Clergy, 2016:75–76) mentions learning languages for pastoral ministry, as well as getting "to know the life of the Church rooted in a different culture," as specific reasons to have formation experiences outside of seminary and even outside the seminarian's home country.

## **5.5 Theological-methodological reflection**

The last tasks for this chapter involve theological-methodological reflection, calling for consideration of the research itself, and suggesting ways it could have been conducted in a more effective manner. It will also be important to offer recommendations for further research in the area of seminary formation and perseverance in ministry (van der Ven, 1998:154–156).

### **5.5.1 Reflection on the research**

The present research study has obtained important data about the impact of the seminary formation activities being studied on seminarians and future priests, in a variety of areas that could influence perseverance in ministry. The principal research question, as presented in chapter one, was "What impact do the formation activities of Catholic seminarians have on their subsequent perseverance in ministry as ordained diocesan priests in the United States, and what specific changes in the choice of formation activities could increase the likelihood of lifelong perseverance?" The analysis of the study results conducted in this chapter has shown that participants in the six formation activities indicate diverse impacts in a variety of areas related to perseverance. This analysis has led to a number of recommendations for the improvement of

seminary formation. The timing of this project, with the imminent rewriting of the *Program of Priestly Formation* for the US, gives these recommendations particular urgency.

The study was not able to respond to the first part of the research question with the level of specificity desired, that is, with a statistically significant difference between those still in ministry and those not in ministry, in terms of participation or non-participation in the different programmes. The low number of total respondents and the fact that only two persons who had been ordained but left active ministry responded made this kind of quantitative analysis impossible. Although useful data has been obtained, it is important to consider ways in which the study could have been improved.

The first weakness of the study that would have been helpful to overcome is the negligible response rate among those who have left ministry. The many efforts to contact them through diocesan offices and through social media had little success. One possibility that might have helped would have been to contact networks of former priests, using online resources, and seek assistance from them in contacting their members. A lack of motivation for such groups to assist in the research may have deterred such an effort, however. Also, casting a broader net, as opposed to only three years of ordination classes of priests out of ministry and one year of priests in ministry, might have netted more responses. At the same time, the likelihood of the classes having had similar opportunities for formation activities would have diminished if more classes were included.

In terms of getting more active priests to respond, it is possible that getting dioceses or seminaries to have been directly involved in getting the surveys out might have helped. The hesitance of Church leaders to support research that may challenge the status quo (Froehle, 2011:30–31) could be a factor here as well. Despite clear information indicating the legitimacy of this study in the request to participate, few responded. It is difficult to know whether direct collaboration with seminaries or dioceses might have helped.

In addition to specific recommendations for the use of these seminary formation activities, the present research has proposed three concepts as a contribution to further research in seminary formation and related fields. The Net Impact Score, described in section 4.7 and used in this chapter in section 5.3.1, is a way of measuring the relative influence of different programmes. As seen in 5.3.2, a purpose intentionally aligned with the mission of seminary formation in general and especially of a given seminary is an important factor in evaluating the effectiveness of different formation activities. Finally, the franchise effect, described in 4.9 and used in this chapter's analysis at 5.3.3, offers a way at looking at the impact of the implementation of similar programmes under different conditions in different locations.

The present study makes a significant contribution to the work of Catholic seminary formation, with specific recommendations for the use of certain formation activities, in the hopes of encouraging perseverance in ministry after ordination. This section suggests some ways in which it may have been possible to obtain more robust data. In accord with van der Ven's suggestion (1998:155) that needing to revise the research question is not a failure but a success, being able to make recommendations for what could be hoped would be more successful research in the future is itself a mark of success. Three specific contributions to practical theology have been mentioned in the previous paragraph: Net Impact Score, the importance of purpose, and the franchise effect.

### **5.5.2 Recommendations for future research**

In the discussion in 5.5.1 about possibilities for improving research in this area in the future, the suggestion that was made to get seminaries or diocesan leadership directly involved leads to the first recommendation for future research. Even though the present study offers insights which should contribute to decision-making about formation activities by seminary and diocesan personnel, as well as by those charged with preparing the new *PPF* for the US, it would still be very useful to be able to provide quantitative data to support a link between any of these formation activities and perseverance in priestly ministry.

It would be good for an organization with the resources and the reputation of the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) to undertake this kind of research. Since CARA already conducts research into each graduating class of US seminaries, it could include questions about participation in different formation activities in seminary in the annual survey. Longitudinal comparisons after ordination would provide very good information about factors that appear to promote perseverance or not. It would behoove dioceses and seminaries to do all in their power to support such research, as it would make seminary formation more effective and allow seminaries and dioceses to invest their resources more prudently. This research has strongly emphasized that perseverance in priestly ministry matters above all for the good of the People of God. Research that can help to promote formation activities that strengthen the likelihood of perseverance in an effective and joyful priestly ministry would greatly strengthen the Church.

An important aspect of seminary formation activities is the importance of helping those candidates who would not be good candidates for ordination to accept this fact and help the seminary staff, charged with making recommendations to the bishops, to get as much information as possible about their suitability for ministry and their capacity to make a permanent commitment. The importance of this certainty is expressed in the *Ratio Fundamentalis* (Congregation for the Clergy, 2016:84), which speaks of the importance of determining, before ordination, that a candidate

“possesses the necessary human and spiritual qualities,” among other requirements. It goes on to insist that the seminarian must present positive arguments for ordination and “not simply the absence of problematic situations.” Although it may be counterintuitive, one of the greatest aids to perseverance in ministry after ordination might be reducing the perseverance in seminary of candidates who will not be good priests. The present study cannot address this topic directly, since the questionnaire was addressed to those who were in fact ordained for presbyteral ministry, but further study might profitably examine which formation components best help seminarians (and their superiors) determine that they are not suited for the priesthood.

On a practical level, some of the concepts mentioned in this study would benefit from further study. Is the Net Impact Score truly a helpful measure for this kind of research? While this researcher has found the Net Impact Score useful, it would benefit from further consideration by other practical theologians. Also, the concept of the franchise effect, introduced to explain the challenges of implementing good programmes in different locations, would also be worthy of further examination. Finally, there needs to be further consideration of whether a formation activity has a clear purpose aligned to the purposes of seminary formation and of the mission of the individual seminary, and the effectiveness of this activity.

## **5.6 Theological evaluation in perspective**

This chapter has presented theological evaluation (van der Ven, 1998:152–156), through the stages of theological interpretation, theological reflection and theological-methodological reflection. This process has led to consideration of the theological meaning of the research results and the proposal of the purpose and the specific local implementation of individual programmes as key aspects in their efficacy.

Theological reflection on the results considered the six formation activities and presented recommendations for seminaries and dioceses about their use in the future. In addition to the very clear benefits of IPF and the pastoral-year internship, the research suggests the benefit of seminaries and dioceses working together to consider the best practices for those programmes they choose to use. It would be very helpful if some of this collaborative work could inform the authors of the new *PPF*, especially in the implementation of the Holy See’s call for a propaedeutic year before seminary formation. Finally, the value of CPE as part of Catholic seminary formation was discussed, and it seems advisable either to eliminate it altogether or consider ways to negotiate more control over the programme, so that the purposes of the programme and of Catholic seminary formation can be brought in line. The analysis of the data has been done with the methodological humility of Dillen and Mager’s (2014:323) “abductive reasoning,” with its effort to avoid simple description of the facts (inductive reasoning) or recommendations for

improvement (deductive reasoning), looking to “what could be.” The facts have been described, and recommendations have been made for improvements in the use of programmes, but there has been an emphasis on different possible interpretations of the data and on what seminary formation activities could look like if the results of this study were taken into account in the development of the new *PPF* and in decision-making at individual seminaries.

The theological-methodological reflection has examined the present research, considering ways in which it has been successful and ways in which it could have been improved in design and implementation. Recommendations for future research have also been offered. These include recommendations for further research on the topic of perseverance in ministry and seminary formation activities, more consideration of the Net Impact Score as an appropriate adaptation of a concept from marketing research to practical theological research, as well as on the concepts proposed in the theological interpretation, namely, the importance of the alignment of purposes and the franchise effect.

The permanence of priestly ministry is not only a matter of dogmatic theology alone, but it has been shown throughout this study that faithful perseverance in ministry matters to the People of God. It behoves seminaries and dioceses in the United States to choose programmes for their seminarians that have been shown to assist them in preparing for effective and persevering ministry. The well-being of seminarians and priests, as well as the good of the people they are being prepared to serve, calls for an attentive reading of the results of this study, as well as for the additional research recommended here. This project is presented in the hopes that it will indeed lead to the improvement of the programmes and to the selection of those programmes that will help the most in helping priests to be joyful, faithful, and fruitful in their ministry.

## **6 Chapter six: Conclusion: Hermeneutical interaction between theory and praxis and practical theological perspectives on strategies of action for the future**

### **6.1 Overview of the chapter**

As this study comes to its conclusion, this final chapter will examine the hermeneutical interaction among the findings of this study, suggest a new practical theological theory to support praxis, and lastly, offer a conclusion to the entire thesis. First, there will be a brief summary of the work of the previous chapters. This review will include discussion of recommendations for future action in Catholic seminary formation, particularly on strategies that could promote perseverance in ministry after ordination, as well as suggestions for future research. This chapter will complete the work of theological evaluation begun in chapter five, with particular emphasis on “theological-methodological reflection,” which looks broadly at the practical theological methodology applied in the project and “whether the methodological consequences of this process have been adequately taken into account,” while also examining the specific steps of the methodological process in the present study (van der Ven, 1998:154–156). This process will not only seek to respond to the research questions as adequately as possible, but also to inform future research (van der Ven, 1998:155–156), bearing in mind theological underpinnings of the permanence of ordained ministry, the discussion of the individual formation activities and the empirical findings in their mutual interrelationship.

The methodology proposed for this research project was described in section 1.4.1, and it is helpful to review how it has been fulfilled. This review of the work seeks to demonstrate to what extent van der Ven’s map of the empirical-theological cycle (1998:119–156) has been followed and how the work done to date can contribute to advancement in practical theology and to improvement in the work of preparing candidates for the Roman Catholic priesthood.

The recommendations for new strategies of action for formation activities have special urgency in the light of the work being done in the United States in preparation for the new *Program of Priestly Formation*, which will implement the *Ratio Fundamentalis* for Catholic seminaries in the United States (Congregation for the Clergy, 2016:7–9). In addition to the recommendations already made in the last chapter and summarized here, there will also be some broader suggestions, placing the results of this study within the framework of the current discussion about the direction of Catholic seminaries in the United States and around the world.

## **6.2 Review of the chapters**

### **6.2.1 Chapter one**

Chapter one introduced the thesis project, demonstrating its timeliness as well as showing evidence that it represents research that has not previously been conducted, offering a contribution to Catholic seminary work as well as to practical theology. The principal research question, as presented in 1.3.3, was “What impact do the formation activities of Catholic seminarians have on their subsequent perseverance in ministry as ordained diocesan priests in the United States, and what specific changes in the choice of formation activities could increase the likelihood of lifelong perseverance?” Chapter one also presents further research questions, which will be mentioned in the review of the chapters in which they are treated.

This chapter presents initial discussion of the importance of seminary formation and of perseverance in ministry, as well as of the formation activities being examined in this study. After a review of several practical theological approaches that could be relevant to this project, the decision was made to follow the phases of the empirical-theological cycle as proposed by van der Ven (1998:106, 119–156). The appropriateness of this methodology in quantitative research and its openness to dialogue with systematic theology were factors considered in choosing it.

In chapter one, the theological problem was presented and the goal of the research was articulated. While further clarification of the theological problem would take place in the next chapter, already here the purpose of the research was presented. The aim and the objectives, described in sections 1.2.1 and 1.2.2, offered a plan for the research. While the first part of the initial aim, “to determine the impact on perseverance in ministry of the formation activities being considered,” has not been achieved fully, on account of the inability to obtain sufficient data from individuals who have left active ministry, the data that has been received and analysed has provided insights on which formation activities do promote lifelong perseverance, as well as joyfulness and effectiveness in ministry, topics that were not directly part of the study objectives, but clearly connect to its purpose.

### **6.2.2 Chapter two**

The second chapter presented a discussion of Catholic theologies of priesthood and their development over history, with emphasis on factors relating to the importance of perseverance in ministry. The question considered in this chapter was “How does a review of the development of the theologies of Catholic priesthood inherent in seminary formation in the United States clarify the theological problem and goal and thus permit theological deductions that support the

expectation that the ordained priest should persevere in ministry for life?” (Section 2.1). The work of this chapter continued the clarification of the theological problem and goal, begun in chapter one, as well as presenting theological reflection about the meaning of Catholic priesthood and perseverance in ministry (van der Ven, 1998:119–120, 122–125).

This chapter provided a review of the historical witness, providing evidence of an understanding of permanent ministry dating back to the foundations of Christianity, as well as discussion of twentieth and twenty-first century Catholic theologians and of current magisterial and disciplinary texts of the Catholic Church. Presbyters have been seen to be in a permanent relationship with Christ and the Church from apostolic times, rooted in the faithful and eternal priesthood of Jesus Christ (cf. Vanhoye, 2009:45). A key factor in the development of the understanding of perseverance is the role of ordained presbyters as committed to service, for the good of the people they are ordained to serve. The final text considered in chapter two, *The Gift of the Priestly Vocation* (Congregation for the Clergy, 2016:3), which calls for each conference of bishops to prepare new national norms for seminary and ongoing priestly formation, affords urgency and timeliness to the present project, as it is hoped that the findings of this study will contribute to the development of the new *Programme for Priestly Formation* for the United States, to ensure that seminarians preparing for ordination will be ready to share fully in the permanent priesthood of Jesus Christ as well as in its self-giving service.

While permanence in ministry is of huge importance, ordination does not end a process of becoming a servant of the People of God, but it is a key moment in ongoing formation. In subsequent chapters, the programmes that promote the need for continuing learning, spiritual growth, and fraternal support are shown to have a positive impact on the priests who took part in the study.

### **6.2.3 Chapter three**

The purpose of chapter three was to conduct an inductive examination of the formation activities being studied, examining their background, conducting theological reflection on the purpose of each activity, and considering the reasons for and against using these programmes in Catholic seminary formation. This chapter responded to the process of theological induction, as well as theological reflection and research design (van der Ven, 1998:120–128).

Donovan (1992:8–9) reviews the teaching of the Second Vatican Council on ordained ministry, in its document on the priesthood, *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, and describes the role of the priest or presbyter as a service that “does not exist above or outside this communion, this people, but rather within it ... in order to offer it leadership, to build it up, to serve it in all its members in their

efforts to become the kinds of persons and community that they are called to be.”<sup>1</sup> There is also a particular focus in the conciliar texts on priests as members of a collegial body, the presbyterium: “In every case the emphasis is on the communal and collegial nature of the presbyterate” (Donovan, 1998:10). Donovan also points out that the description of priestly spirituality in *Presbyterorum Ordinis* requires a balance between the ontological view of priesthood, which predominated at the time of the Council, and a functional view: “Although rooted in the reality of grace and demanding a life of holiness, [priestly spirituality] is by definition ordered to activity on behalf of others” (Donovan, 1998:17). Donovan (1998:20) sums up the teaching of the Council: “The model whom the council repeatedly presents to bishops and presbyters alike is Christ, the good shepherd, the one who came not to be served but to serve and to give his life for the many.”

This brief consideration of the perspectives presented by Donovan helps set the context for the six formation activities under examination in this study. The most important aspects of these activities are the extent to which they promote (or hinder) a sense of the seminarian and future priest belonging to and serving the People of God, the unity to which they are called in the presbyterate, the kind of spiritual life to which they need to aspire, and what the “configuration to Christ” (Congregation for the Clergy, 2016:4) described by the *Ratio Fundamentalis* is supposed to look like.

The discussion of the different seminary formation activities and the process of theological reflection in chapter three led to the development of eight questions that would be added to the survey instrument, addressing points suggested by the reflection about each seminary formation activity (section 3.9). These questions helped to focus the study on the impact of the different formation programmes on issues related to perseverance in and effectiveness in ministry that might otherwise have been missed, including priestly identity, awareness of the need for spiritual growth, pastoral skills, vocational discernment, openness to receiving support from other priests, commitment to the spiritual life, the desire and ability to serve diverse communities, and the commitment to celibacy.

Consideration of the Council’s view of particular aspects of the presbyterate offers a lens through which the work of chapter three can be examined. Priests’ seeing their ministry as a service to others, exercised in communion with the People of God and with other presbyters, is a key part of several of the formation activities, especially the pastoral internship and priest support groups, but is also relevant to language immersion programmes and CPE. Developing a sound spiritual life is an emphasis of IPF and the propaedeutic or spirituality year programmes. The image that Donovan (1992:14–15) presents of all the aspects of a presbyter’s life being connected to the

sacrificial aspect of priesthood, connects with the argument of chapter three, that the programmes that promote committed self-giving for the people of the Church are those that most align with what should be the purposes of seminary formation.

#### **6.2.4 Chapter four**

Chapter four provided the core of the empirical research of this study. Theological conceptualization (van der Ven, 1998:128) helped in the development of the survey instrument to be used to seek to determine the relationship between the various formation activities being studied and priestly perseverance. The empirical-theological testing phase (van der Ven, 1998:140–151) included the implementation of the survey and the initial analysis of the data.

Following a description of the design of the study and its implementation, sections 4.6.1 to 4.6.11 present the principal responses to the questionnaire. Already in the responses to the first question evaluated, the overall evaluation of the programmes, a pattern was established that was repeated as the individual questions were analysed and as the data was considered from different vantage points: the most uniformly positive evaluations were for IPF, followed by the pastoral year internship and the spirituality or propaedeutic year, and the most negative evaluations were for CPE.

In section 4.7, a more graphical way was proposed to analyse the results. The Net Promoter Score (Bain & Company, 2017), which was developed as a means of examining the success of marketing practises, was used to consider the relative efficaciousness of the different programmes. The premise of this approach is to consider only those responses to each question where the respondents gave the highest marks to the programme (9 or 10) and those where they gave scores of 1–6. The difference, positive or negative, yields the “Net Impact Score.” Tables 4.25–27 present the results of this examination of the responses. By this measure, too, IPF received the highest Net Impact Score on seven of the eleven measures, while pastoral year internship scored the highest on two, and language programmes and priestly support groups on one each. On all but one of the eleven measures, CPE scored the lowest Net Impact Score or, more to the point, the highest negative Net Impact Score.

The responses to the narrative and open-ended questions, described in section 4.8, also provided helpful information, offering colour and texture to the results of the Likert scale questions. The strength of the reaction to participation in some of the programmes, more than a decade later, is striking. Notable are the negative comments regarding CPE (section 4.8.1) and the positive comments regarding IPF (section 4.8.5).

In the theological interpretation of the data (section 4.9), it was noted that the desired outcome of the study, to be able to differentiate the effects of the various programmes on perseverance in priestly ministry, was not accomplished, because of the very small number of respondents among those who have left ministry. At the same time, the results of this study provide much helpful information about the impact of the various programmes on a series of factors that can reasonably be expected to relate both to perseverance in priesthood and effectiveness in priestly ministry.

In addition to the discussion about the individual programmes, it was proposed in section 4.9 that one factor that leads to a wider range of evaluations among some of the formation activities is what was identified as the “franchise effect.” Even if the intention in different seminaries and other institutions is to conduct the same programme, differences in presenters and locations and curricula and other factors will lead to different results.

In section 4.10 on theological perspectives, there is some discussion on the potential causes for the low response rate as well as about the relevance of this project to practical theology today. Moreover, this section noted that the purpose of programmes is an important factor to consider in analysing their results. The alignment of the purposes of individual formation activities with the purposes of seminary formation was offered as an issue to consider in greater depth.

### **6.2.5 Chapter five**

In chapter five, these last two theories, the franchise effect and the question of alignment of purpose, were discussed. Beforehand, however, this chapter began with consideration of methodological issues. After discussing some of the methodological concerns involved with empirical research in theology (van der Ven, 1998:102–112), the researcher’s presuppositions that could affect the research were mentioned and put out into the open, so that the reader can evaluate the suggestive power of the findings on their own terms.

In the section on theological interpretation, there was first a review of the individual formation activities, with regard to the results for each one on the various questions (section 5.3.1). The Net Impact Scores were used as a way of differentiating among them, as a useful means to highlight differences. The most positive results were for IPF, pastoral-year internships, and a spirituality or propaedeutic year (in that order), and the most negative were for CPE. There was some discussion, using as well the responses to the narrative questions, about some of the reasons for this, including mention of the importance of an alignment of purpose of any programme with the purposes of seminary formation.

Section 5.3.2 addressed the question of purpose directly. The research demonstrated that the formation activities which respondents recall as having the most positive impact across a variety of areas related to effectiveness and perseverance in ministry are those most closely aligned to the deeper purposes of seminary formation.

The next section (5.3.3) addressed what this researcher has termed the franchise effect. While it could provide an explanation for the wider difference in responses about programmes run in one location, specifically IPF, and the rest of the programmes, which are usually run independently in each seminary or diocese, more important is the call to learn from this effect. Greater cooperation among seminaries in designing and implementing programmes would do a great deal to address this concern. The work being done already by the National Association of Catholic Theological Schools and the Seminary Formation Council could offer an opening for the kind of cross-pollination that is needed.

In the following section (5.4), there was a detailed theological reflection about the different programmes studied. IPF and the pastoral-year internship were examined first, because of their very positive results, examining the causes and the impact on perseverance of the factors identified (5.4.1). With regards to IPF, the suggestion was made to find ways to allow more seminarians to participate, bearing in mind cost and capacity, and to replicate it, bearing in mind the availability of human resources and the dangers of the franchise effect. With regard to the pastoral internship, encouraging seminaries and dioceses to work together to promote best practices was strongly encouraged.

Given the impending implementation of the Holy See's call for a propaedeutic year as a standard practice (Congregation for the Clergy, 2016:28–29), it seemed opportune to give space for a focused discussion about this programme (5.4.2). The number of responses and the amount of material in the narrative responses were insufficient to say much about the propaedeutic programmes, but a number of suggestions were made for those charged with organizing them, including an awareness of particular needs of different groups of seminarians depending on their age and previous experience, the importance of working together across seminaries in order to reduce the negative aspects of the franchise effect, and the urgency of having a clear purpose, aligned with the seminary's purpose.

The strong negative responses about CPE and the importance of this programme, at least historically, in the formation programmes of many seminaries, led to dedicating section 5.4.3 to discussion of CPE and recommendations with regards to this programme in the future. The final programmes considered were fraternal support groups and language immersion programmes. Recognising the positive purposes of promoting fraternal support, during seminary and after

ordination, and of learning a pastoral language (in the United States, most commonly Spanish, but often speakers of other languages need to learn English), those working in designing or implementing these programmes or working with outside personnel who provide them, need to be aware of the twin concerns of quality control and clarity of purpose. For both kinds of programmes, as different as they are, section 5.4.4 encouraged seminaries to work in league with each other to promote best practices.

The final section of chapter five, section 5.5, offered theological-methodological reflection, looking at the research itself, considering ways it could have been improved and offering suggestions for future research, as well as examining contributions of this study. Ways to have gotten more participation from potential respondents were considered, including seeking more direct participation from seminaries or dioceses, or to have cast the net more broadly, to have invited more participants to take part. Of particular note, it was suggested that contacting networks of priests out of ministry could have been a helpful approach.

Although the initial research question was not answered in a quantifiable way, the research does provide strong evidence about which optional formation activities have had a positive or negative impact, over more than a decade, on the lives and ministry of this group of responding priests. This information has helped to provide concrete recommendations for the use of these seminary formation activities. Additionally, several concepts have been proposed as contributions to practical theological research: the Net Impact Score, the importance of purpose, and the franchise effect.

With regard to future research, the recommendation has been made in section 5.5.2 that an organization such as CARA undertake longitudinal quantitative research to provide decision-makers in seminaries and dioceses with the information to make the best decisions possible, in choosing among formation activities to include in seminary programmes in the future. Researchers have not conducted longitudinal studies of the long-term efficacy of seminaries themselves or of specific formation activities, either to examine perseverance in ministry, the specific intent of the present study, or to examine other measures of the efficacy of priests.

Section 5.6, after affirming the importance of the faithful and persevering ministry of priests, not as a matter of sustaining their authority in the Church or their power, but for the good of the People of God, invited those involved in seminary formation to consider the results of this study in making decisions for the future of Catholic seminaries in the United States. It is this researcher's hope that this work will lead to the selection of those programmes that will contribute the most to the success of seminarians in seminary, but even more, to the success of those who move on to ordination in their ministry with and for the people in their parish communities.

### **6.3 Hermeneutical interrelationship among the chapters**

This research has considered perseverance in priestly ministry from the perspective of Catholic theological theory, as well as the rationale and history for a variety of seminary formation activities in use in the United States. The empirical research has sought to investigate the relationship between the use of any of these formation activities and perseverance. It is important to consider how the different findings connect together to suggest links between theory and praxis (cf. Kruger, 2018:5). This reflection will prepare the way for a new practical theological theory, which can support priestly formation and assist in future research.

#### **6.3.1 Perseverance in ministry and the formation activities**

As has been seen, chapters two and three set the stage for this study, from different angles. Given the nature of this project, there was a need to look at the systematic theological underpinnings of priestly perseverance, as well as the more practical theological background of each of the formation activities being studied. These two chapters together demonstrated the importance of a permanent commitment at ordination and the potential connection of each formation activity to issues related to perseverance. The work of these two chapters support the notion that any programme which is supposed to assist in seminary formation needs to promote perseverance, not as an abstract concept, but as a means of helping priests to give themselves entirely to the People of God.

#### **6.3.2 Revision of the questionnaire**

Chapter four presents the questionnaire developed for the study, which was improved upon, and based on the work in chapters two and three. It is worthy of note that the additional questions for the questionnaire, proposed at the conclusion of chapter three, provided very significant data in the research. At the same time, however, the assistance of a trial group of survey takers, described in chapter four, led to the refinement of these questionnaires, so that the data related to these questions was more accessible. Practical-theological, systematic-theological and empirical concerns related to each other to provide a useful survey. Had this work not been done, it is questionable whether the study would have garnered useful information, given the low response rate. Thus, it is essential that there be cross-pollination across fields in a practical theological study.

#### **6.3.3 Survey results and recommendations for formation activities**

The importance of linking the purpose of each formation activity to the overall purpose of seminary formation, as well as ensuring that the inputs into any programme can be controlled

(franchise effect), reveals the fruit of reading the results of the survey data, as analysed in chapter four, in the light of the study of each formation activity in chapter two. Chapter five's theological evaluation of the whole project, with the core element being theological interpretation of the meaning of the results for the programmes examined and specific proposals for interpretation made in the study (specifically the concepts of alignment of purpose and "franchise effect"), led to specific recommendations for the use of these programmes and for future research.

#### **6.3.4 Survey data of different types**

In looking at the survey results in chapter four, the combination of quantitative survey results with narrative data allowed for a richer analysis of the information garnered from this study in chapter five. Being able to use the different types of contributions by participants in the study was a great boon to this research. From the perspective of practical theology, this result reflects the importance of allowing the participants to tell their story.

#### **6.3.5 Net Impact Score**

The use of the concept of the "Net Impact Score" was one particular fruit of allowing a tool of marketing research to contribute to the present study. This tool did not change the nature of the data obtained, but allowed it to stand out more vividly, and thus helped to express the findings more clearly. This aspect demonstrates the importance of cross-pollination among fields.

#### **6.3.6 Priestly identity and spiritual life**

It has been noted that being "in love with the Master" (Congregation for the Clergy, 2016:4) is an essential aspect for priestly ministry. The programmes that were found to have the most impressive impact on the questions relating to spirituality (priestly identity, foundation for the spiritual life, attitude toward the spiritual life and maturity in the faith) were IPF, the pastoral internship, and propaedeutic experiences. Taking into consideration the adage that one cannot give what one does not have, doing whatever possible to ensure a deep and committed spiritual life is closely related to helping priests to be effective and to persevere. One formation activity that was not specifically addressed in this research but was mentioned as being of tremendous value by one of the participants in the study is the thirty-day Ignatian retreat, which in that case had been conducted by IPF, but is available in many locations.

#### **6.3.7 The formation activities and perseverance in ministry**

The two items in 6.3.1 above can be re-examined, in view of the totality of the research. Throughout this study, a key premise has been that perseverance in ministry matters for Catholic

priests, not because of an abstract reliance on a theology of character, but because the presbyter is committed to a life of service of God's people. This view of permanence has illuminated the interpretation of the different formation activities being considered. The empirical data has revealed that the formation activities that promote commitment to service, healthy fraternity among priests, respect for the people with whom priests will work and whom they will serve, and a serious spiritual life are the ones that respondents remember as being most helpful to them, taking into consideration the factors of alignment of purpose and control of the different elements of the programme.

#### **6.4 Developing a new theory for formation activities**

Recognizing that this study has considered not the whole of seminary formation, but of elective (on the part of the seminary, the diocese or the seminarian) formation activities, this analysis leads now to the articulation of a new theory about the use of formation activities. This study has not addressed the structure of Catholic seminaries in the United States or in the Western world, so many questions that could be addressed about seminaries are beyond the scope of this project. Looking at all the work that has been done in this study and taking seriously Vanhoye's view (2009b:314–315) of the relationship between the priesthood of the ordained ministers and the common priesthood of the faithful, with the former being always "at the service" of the latter, it is possible to offer a new theory for formation activities in seminary formation.

Stated succinctly, those responsible for choosing formation activities for seminarians should conduct serious theological reflection about the purpose of each activity and the extent to which its purposes align with the purposes of the seminary itself. In choosing to use a formation activity, especially if seminarians are to be required to participate in it, the extent to which there is control over the inputs and outputs in the programme is key in determining the advisability of a particular programme. While it is beyond the scope of the present study to make wholesale recommendations for the design of seminaries themselves, guidance is offered by the tone of the norms coming from the new *Ratio Fundamentalis* (Congregation for the Clergy, 2016:17–18), which focuses its discussion of the identity of priests with reference to Christian people, for "the service of which they consecrate their lives" and in relationship to the Holy Spirit, who makes them "inseparably part of the ecclesial community and, at the same time, by the will of Christ and in continuance of the work of the Apostles, have been constituted pastors and leaders." These dual aspects require that the whole exercise of seminary formation should be connected to preparing seminarians for a life of deep prayer and commitment to and for the People of God they will serve. All activities seminarians take part in should prepare them for this life of committed service, integrating spiritual maturity, fraternal bonds, and a clear view of the ordained ministry

as being at the service of the People of God (Vanhoye, 2009b:314–315). The formation activities encouraged most strongly in this study meet these criteria.

An important element of the formation activities that have been found to have the most positive impact is that they helped the candidates discern and respond to God's call to priesthood. Discernment must be exercised both by candidates and those charged with formation (Congregation for the Clergy, 2016:17). Formal evaluation of the seminarian's participation in the formation activity is a key element of several of these formation activities, most especially the pastoral-year internship, but also IPF and the propaedeutic year. Whether or not evaluation is a part of the programme itself, the most helpful formation activities will either provide direct information about candidates' aptitude for orders or will help candidates themselves to evaluate their own capacity, even if that evaluation will take place more in what is called the internal forum (between candidates and their spiritual directors) or in another quasi-confidential setting. IPF, the propaedeutic year, and fraternal support groups would provide this kind of evaluation, helping in candidates' own discernment.

The *Ratio Fundamentalis* (Congregation for the Clergy, 2016:35) also insists on the importance of ongoing formation. Although this study has not addressed ongoing formation directly, some of the programmes that have been found to have the most positive impact (IPF and fraternal support groups) also encourage in some way continuing formation after ordination. The discussion at 4.6.8 above, about the impact of IPF and fraternal support groups on a commitment to seeking fraternal support after ordination, relates to one important aspect of continuing formation. Additionally, the clarity of purpose which has marked the formation activities having the most positive impact should include an openness to the value of lifelong learning as a priest, precisely for the good of people being served.<sup>2</sup>

## **6.5 Practical theological perspectives on strategies for the future**

A primary purpose of this project has been to offer strategies for promoting perseverance in ordained ministry in seminary formation, with a particular view to the situation in the Catholic Church, but which could be applicable in other contexts as well. With an interest in making them easily accessible, the major recommendations outlined in the body of this study are offered:

1. Ensure that all programmes used in seminary formation align with the principal purposes of the seminary. Doing this will require theological reflection on what the goals and means are for each programme used or proposed as part of formation. This recommendation applies not only to the formation activities studied as part of this research, but also for any new activities proposed in the future.

2. When borrowing ideas for formation activities that have been shown to be effective at other institutions, make every effort to guarantee that the elements that made them effective in other environments can be replicated. This proposal responds to what has been described in this study as the franchise effect.
3. Encourage seminaries to collaborate in the development and implementation of the best programmes possible, both among the programmes studied in this research and others that might be suggested. While the *Ratio Fundamentalis* and the new *PPF* will provide guidance to all seminaries, cooperation in the development and implementation of specific programmes would be of great assistance in assuring that best practices are used in each case. The National Association of Catholic Theological Schools (NACTS) and the Seminary Formation Council (SFC) are both avenues to promote collaboration and reduce the competitive spirit among Catholic seminaries in the United States.
4. The programme that has been shown to have the most long-lasting positive impact in the lives and ministry of the priests who responded to this study is the Institute for Priestly Formation (IPF). Seminaries and dioceses should use this programme whenever possible and should consider ways of replicating this programme, should it reach capacity.
5. Pastoral-year internships, when properly designed and connected to the formation programme of the seminary itself, have also been shown to have had a very positive impact on the participants in this study. Pastoral internships, of at least seven to ten months' duration, should be a part of the normal plan of studies. This internship should take place early enough in the process of formation (normally between the second and third year of theological studies) to allow for sufficient time of reflection back in seminary before a candidate petitions for and the seminary formation team recommends ordination to the diaconate.
6. The soon-to-be-required propaedeutic year experiences should be designed with the principles proposed in this research in mind, especially with regard to alignment to the broader purposes of seminary formation and looking to the best practices in programmes already in use. Although the propaedeutic year should take place before entrance into a college seminary or pre-theology programme (Congregation for the Clergy, 2016:28–29), and so not will not occur when seminarians are enrolled in the theological seminary, the lessons of this research still apply.
7. CPE should not be a required part of formation in Catholic seminaries. Hospital and hospice chaplaincy and other programmes that promote ecumenical and interreligious openness in ministry should be a part of pastoral formation programmes, in a manner that aligns fully with the broader purposes of the seminary, as indicated in the first recommendation above.

8. Fraternal support groups should be included as a formation activity in seminary, with a particular interest in promoting participation in such groups after ordination, but with care to study and share what are found to be best practices.
9. Although language immersion programmes have not been seen to be directly connected to factors associated with perseverance, they relate to openness to ministry in diverse communities. Thus, such programmes should be used when appropriate, being aware of the need to ensure that the purposes of seminary formation are respected in their implementation, through such means as having seminary staff available to the participants during the immersion experience or using programmes based in or conducted by seminaries abroad. If such immersion programmes are used earlier in seminary, during philosophical studies, this might be a helpful way to offer the positive benefits of immersion, with more opportunity to focus on activities more directly aligned to the purposes of the theological stage of formation, “configuration of the seminarian to Christ, Servant and Shepherd” (Congregation for the Clergy, 2016:31).
10. In addition to the recommendations for further research made in this chapter, a final practical recommendation is that the results of this study be disseminated among seminary rectors and staff, vocations directors, and Bishops, in order to open up a conversation about forming for perseverance, precisely as the new *Program of Priestly Formation* is being prepared for the United States.

## **6.6 Practical theological perspectives on the broader relevance of this study**

In bringing such a project to a close, unanswered and even unasked questions arise. In chapter two, the foundation for this study was laid with the affirmation of the theological basis for the permanence of ordained ministry, a permanence that is based not on a power to be protected but rather exercised in service. The review of the different programmes that seek to assist in the process of seminary formation and the empirical study and analysis of the data have led to conclusions about the formation activities that have the greatest positive impact on future priests and for specific recommendations for the future, with regards to the use of these programmes and to other implications stemming from this research. The research also sheds light on other aspects of seminary formation and priesthood.

This project did not look at the whole of seminary formation, in terms of the academic programme or of the spiritual, pastoral, and human formation activities that make up the bulk of the formation programmes. It looked at specific activities that are perhaps peripheral to the programmes, but that can have a significant impact on the project of preparing seminarians for the priesthood. It is very likely that the publication of the new *Program of Priestly Formation* for the United States

will lead to the re-examination of some of the elements that have not been considered directly, but it is hoped that this work will offer a significant contribution on its own, in particular through the recommendations offered in the previous section.

There are many other questions about priesthood that could have been addressed in this study, such as the debate over required celibacy, collaboration with laity and religious, and the presence of married priests who have come into full communion with the Catholic Church or are from the Eastern Churches, sharing ministry together with celibate Catholic priests. While these issues have been beyond the scope of this study, the importance of helping seminarians preparing to be ordained as celibate Catholic priests to serve in the United States throughout the twenty-first century requires preparing them to be rooted in their identity, not to find in it a place of refuge from changing reality, but an anchor that allows them to give themselves completely to God and to the Church.

Schuth (2002:142) addresses the importance of seminaries dealing adequately with the topic of celibacy. The *Ratio Fundamentalis* also calls for serious preparation for the commitment to chaste celibacy, not placing it above marriage, but considering it in the light of the meaning and value of marriage (Congregation for the Clergy, 2016:48). At the same time, preparation for celibacy needs to take into account the fact that there are a significant number of married Catholic priests in the United States, including former Episcopalian priests who have come into the Catholic Church and married priests of the Eastern Catholic Churches, who are now allowed to minister in the United States. The possibility of ordaining married men to the presbyterate as a topic of debate in the upcoming synod for the Church in the Amazon region (Rezac, 2017) is another example of the need for seminarians to be prepared for their commitment to celibacy as a lifelong commitment, recognizing that celibacy is not the only way that the priesthood is lived. To this end, programmes that treat celibacy positively and realistically, as IPF claims to do, will have particular relevance, as long as the reflection on celibacy takes into account the diversity already present and ever more likely to be present in the future.

Of obvious importance for the effectiveness of seminaries is the work that is done in the promotion of vocations and in admission to seminary, both in terms of encouraging vocations and ensuring careful screening of candidates. The urgency of vocations work and of rethinking seminary formation and religious life was expressed by Pope Francis (2018) in an address to the Bishops of Italy. While his comments speak to the issue of vocations in Italy and thus do not directly touch on the situation in the United States, they speak to the importance of a thorough examination of how best to recruit and prepare seminarians in the Western world:

The first thing that troubles me is the crisis of vocations. And it is our paternity that is at stake here. Regarding this concern, rather, this haemorrhage of vocations, I have spoken to at the Plenary of the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and the Societies of Apostolic Life, explaining that it is the poisoned fruit of the culture of the temporary, of relativism and the dictatorship of money, which distances the young from consecrated life; alongside, certainly, the tragic reduction in births, this “demographic winter”; as well as the scandals and lukewarm witness. How many seminaries, churches and monasteries will be closed in the coming years due to a lack of vocations? God knows. It is sad to see that this land, which has for long centuries been fertile and generous in producing missionaries, nuns, priests full of apostolic zeal, is entering along with the old continent in a vocational sterility without searching for effective remedies. I believe that it searches for them but we are not managing to find them!

The preparatory document for the XV General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, which will focus on “Young people, the faith, and vocation discernment,” discusses the concerns of young people from around the world. What this document says in the name of the young people who took part in a meeting in Rome in March 2018 is relevant to this discussion as well: “Today’s young people are longing for an authentic Church.... A credible Church is one which is not afraid to allow itself be seen as vulnerable. The Church should be sincere in admitting its past and present wrongs, that it is a Church made up of persons who are capable of error and misunderstanding” (Synod of Bishops, 2018:§11). While this research has focused on what can be done in seminary formation to help seminarians preparing for priesthood be able to succeed and persevere in ministry, it is essential to recall that they need to be prepared to respond to the real needs and questions of the people. This preparatory document offers some suggestions, when it addresses the “lack of leading female role models within the Church” and the need for “seminarians and religious [to] have an even greater ability to accompany young leaders” (Synod of Bishops, 2018:§12). These examples, while only a glimpse of the many issues seminarians will need to deal with after ordination, offer a sense of the importance of preparing seminarians not only to persevere, but to do so in a way that is relevant in the twenty-first century.

Of all the programmes studied in this research, the pastoral-year internship especially ensures that seminarians are prepared for the real-world issues and experiences of the People of God they will be confronting as priests. Schuth (2002:142) noted that a study of recently ordained clergy at the turn of the twenty-first century recommended that seminarians have the opportunity to work more with women. Working in parishes — where the majority of their co-workers and volunteers and most active parishioners are women, where they can hear the questions and concerns of young and old, where they can see grace at work in the lives of priests and laity — seminarians can be

helped to know the people whom they are called to serve and for whom their perseverance will make a difference.

The notion of alignment of purpose, which has been proposed as a key recommendation for the discernment of which programmes to use and how to implement them, connects to a principal concern of the *Ratio Fundamentalis*, that of “integral formation” (Congregation for the Clergy, 2016:3, 8, 27, 28, etc.). Considering seriously the meaning of priesthood and what kind of priest a seminary should be trying to prepare is a key part of preparing seminarians to take on a life-long commitment at ordination: “For an integrated formation of the candidate, it is necessary to reflect on the identity of the priest. A first consideration must be theological in nature, since the vocation to priesthood is rooted, and finds its *raison d’être*, in God and in his loving plan” (Congregation for the Clergy, 2016:17). The theological work that was done in chapter two needs to continue, in dialogue with the mandates of the Holy See and the local episcopal conferences, as an essential means of ensuring integral formation of priests who will be “missionary disciples who are ‘in love’ with the Master, shepherds ‘with the smell of the sheep,’ who live in their midst to bring the mercy of God to them” (Congregation for the Clergy, 2016:4).

## **6.7 Conclusion**

This project intended to find signs of a connection between taking part in several different seminary formation activities and perseverance in ministry after ordination. Although the quantitative study did not succeed in obtaining enough responses in order to make statistically significant judgements, the data that was obtained offered reasons to support the use of some programmes and not others, as well as suggestions about the importance of using the best practices from other seminaries implementing the same programmes (countering what has been called the franchise effect) and of aligning the purpose of any programme in which seminarians take part with the seminary’s goals and objectives. In addition to these two particular suggestions, another contribution of the thesis is the use of the Net Impact Score as a way of presenting the relative impact of different programmes on the various aspects of the life and preparation for ministry of seminarians which have been considered. In this final chapter, the recommendations made throughout the study have been itemized, making them readily available, offered as a contribution to those preparing the new *Program of Priestly Formation* for the United States, as well as to all involved in seminary formation.

Throughout this project, the researcher has had in mind many seminarians and priests he has worked with in the past, as well as the people of the parishes and communities where he and they have served. As important as are the theological arguments presented in the second chapter about the permanence of ministry, more than that has motivated this thesis. Personal witness of the joys

of effective and persevering ministry and of the sorrows caused by resignation from ministry, for the priests themselves as well as for the people they have ministered to and with, has been a part of the background of this research. Two intentions have been essential aspects of the researcher's prayer, which has constantly undergirded this thesis: the desire that the seminarians he accompanies in seminary and the priests with whom he has worked on the way to ordination never experience the pain of leaving ministry, never cause pain to others, and the desire that their "ministry and life" (Vatican II, 1965b:title) always be a source of joy and grace for priests themselves and for all the members of the Body of Christ.

Perseverance in ministry must be seen in terms of the good of the people served by priests and the good of priests themselves. Promoting a sense of fraternity among seminarians and collaboration with parishioners and other priests is a particular focus of some of the programmes studied, especially fraternal support groups and the pastoral year internship. Comments by a recently ordained deacon from the researcher's own seminary affirm this purpose, using the image of a basketball team to describe priesthood (a group from the seminary had participated in and won an inter-seminary tournament): "In addition to benefitting the people of God, a team-oriented approach to Holy Orders also helps each individual priest by fostering an environment of fraternal support.... As a team united on the court, we will build up victories; as a team united through Holy Orders, we will build up the Body of Christ" (Stelzer, 2018:13). These comments express the need for a focus on the ministerial priesthood at the service of the common priesthood and on the presbyterate as the necessary location for the exercise of priestly ministry.<sup>3</sup>

When talking to priests who have been ordained 50 years or more, it is clear that the way that priesthood is lived today is vastly different from how it was lived in the early 1960s. It is impossible to predict what the life of priests will look like in 50 years. The *Ratio Fundamentalis* (Congregation for the Clergy 2016:4, 23) uses the image of "missionary disciple" to describe what a seminarian and priest is to be formed to be. One aspect of missionary discipleship is to be ready, like missionaries going to lands where Christians have never set foot, to face a reality where the structural supports that have been present in the past, whether in terms of buildings or finances or respect of the people, may not be there. The elements shared by the formation activities supported by this research, encouraging a solid spiritual life and being full of love for Christ (Congregation for the Clergy, 2016:4), solid preparation for a life of ministry, and fraternal support, are all aspects of formation that, while experienced in the structures in effect today, should prepare a seminarian to be ready for whatever changes in ministry the future brings.

Helping seminarians to prepare for a permanent commitment in an uncertain future — or to realize before ordination that that commitment is not one to which they are called or are capable of

fulfilling — is of importance, for the good of the People of God, as well as for their own good. Future priests need to be helped especially by formation activities in which they are asked to participate to see their priesthood not as a power given to them but as a relationship of love and service. All that is done in seminary should help to strengthen the seminarian's relationship with God and his people. Dulles (1997:65) describes the relationship between grace and works in priesthood: "Priestly office is both a gift and a task. If we neglect the task, the gift will not profit us." This project has been dedicated to assist those charged with preparing seminarians for the task, in the hopes that, if their call is genuine, the gift will be given to these candidates, that they may be priests after the heart of Christ, faithfully and permanently living out the "task" as a "gift" for the good of the Church.

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<sup>1</sup> Donovan 1992:3–5) comments on the process that led to the writing of the Vatican II document on priestly, or presbyteral ministry, *Presbyterorum Ordinis*. The transitions in the development of the title of the decree are instructive: "Originally called *de clericis* (on clerics), it became *de sacerdotibus* (on priests), then *de vita et ministerio sacerdotium* (on the life and ministry of priests), and finally *de Presbyterorum ministerio et vita* (on the ministry and life of presbyters" (Donovan 1992:3). Donovan stresses that placing "ministry" before "life," was an important way of the Council to emphasize the priority of mission and service, which gives reason to the kind of life the priest or presbyter is called to live. The decision to refer to the ordained minister as *presbyter*/presbyter was also of significance, allowing focus on different aspects of the ministry of these ordained ministers, beyond the sacral roles associated with priesthood. Donovan (1992:5) points out that the English translations of *Presbyterorum Ordinis* translate both words as priest, "thus making it all but impossible to understand the nuances of the council's teaching."

In this regard, it is noteworthy that a search of *Presbyterorum ordinis* (Vatican II, 1965) in Latin finds 185 occurrences of a form of *presbyter* and 75 occurrences of a form of *sacerdos*, while the English text reveals 237 occurrences of a form of *priest* or *priesthood*, proving Donovan's point. In the present study, both terms are used.

See also the discussion about the use of *presbyter* and *priest* in the New Testament, at 2.2.1 above, and about Vatican II, at 2.8.

<sup>2</sup> This study has taken place in the middle of the third decade of the researcher's own presbyteral ministry. This personal note speaks to the importance of ongoing formation in the researcher's own priestly life.

<sup>3</sup> Team ministry (also referred to as collaborative ministry) is a key concept in discussion of work in the Church in the United States, especially in the Hispanic community. In the Final Document of the Aparecida gathering of the Latin American episcopate, the term "collaborative ministry" describes the way that parishes, dioceses, vocations work, international efforts, and other Church ministries should be organized (Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano [CELAM] 2007:§98g, 169, 371, 475). An indication of the importance placed on the ability to work collaboratively at the researcher's own seminary is the description of "exemplary" performance on the relevant row on the seminary's pastoral formation rubric: "Demonstrates a sincere and enthusiastic eagerness to engage collaboratively with parishioners/clients and staff. Is socially appropriate, respectful, and inviting. Works well in groups, recognizing and drawing out the strengths and gifts of others and steps up to offer leadership where appropriate. Works in a professional manner with both women and men" (St. Vincent de Paul, 2017:1).

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## 8 Annexure 1: Seminary formation activities survey

### Seminary Formation Activities Survey

#### Instructions

**Please answer each question as best as you can. If there is any question to which you do not remember the answer or which you would rather not answer, feel free to leave it blank. As much information as you can provide, however, will be of great assistance to this research. Thank you very much for your participation.**

- \* 1. You received a request to participate in this study and a consent form. In addition to a description of this study, the form gives you the opportunity to consent to participate in this survey. It is essential that you agree to complete the questionnaire, fully informed about how it will be used in this research project. Have you read and returned the consent form? (Note, this is the only question that requires an answer in order to continue with the survey.)

Yes

No

For the questions on each of the following pages, please indicate whether you took part in the following formation activities while in seminary. For those programs in which you participated, additional questions will be asked. Some of the questions will be more relevant to some activities than for others, but please provide as complete answers as you can.

Thanks very much for your participation!

*Father Alfredo I. Hernández*

## Seminary Formation Activities Survey

### Instructions

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Yes

No

For the questions on each of the following pages, please indicate whether you took part in the following formation activities while in seminary. For those programs in which you participated, additional questions will be asked. Some of the questions will be more relevant to some activities than for others, but please provide as complete answers as you can.

Thanks very much for your participation!

*Father Alfredo I. Hernández*

## Seminary Formation Activities Survey

### CPE

1. Which of the following best describes why you participated in Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE)? Mark all that apply.

- Participation was required generally by the seminary.
- Participation was required generally by my diocese.
- Participation was required generally by seminary and diocese.
- My seminary or diocese specifically asked me to participate, though this was not required for all.
- It was my choice.

Other (please specify)

2. Please describe the nature of your CPE experience, including the duration of the program, kind of hospital, your supervisor's religious background, religious make-up of your cohort, etc.

3. Please evaluate the CPE experience. (Please mark the most appropriate spot on the scale for each of the following questions.)

Most negative					Neutral						Most positive
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

4. Please indicate the impact CPE had on the totality of your seminary formation experience.

Most negative					Neutral						Most positive
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

5. Please indicate the impact CPE had on your understanding of priestly identity.

Most negative					Neutral						Most positive
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

6. Please indicate the impact CPE had on the development of a solid base for your spiritual life.

Most negative Neutral Most positive

7. Please indicate the impact CPE had on your self-awareness for personal growth.

Most negative Neutral Most positive

8. Please describe the impact CPE had on your development of pastoral skills for competent priestly ministry.

Most negative Neutral Most positive

9. Please indicate the impact CPE had on your discernment and the formation team's discernment of your call to priesthood.

Most negative Neutral Most positive

10. Please indicate the impact CPE had on your attitude towards seeking the support of other priests and your participation in fraternal support groups after ordination.

Most negative Neutral Most positive

11. Please indicate the impact CPE had on your attitude toward the spiritual life and your maturity in the faith.

Most negative Neutral Most positive

12. Please indicate the impact CPE had on your attitude towards and your ability to serve diverse communities.

Most negative Neutral Most positive

13. Please indicate the impact CPE had on your attitude toward the commitment to celibacy.

Most negative Neutral Most positive

14. Please add any comments you would like to share about CPE and its impact on you, in particular related to your decision to remain in or to leave active priestly ministry.

## Seminary Formation Activities Survey

### Spirituality Year or Propaedeutic Year

1. During your seminary formation, did you participate in a spirituality year or propaedeutic year (an entire year dedicated to spirituality and preparation for full immersion into seminary life)?

- Yes, I participated.
- No, I did not participate.

**Seminary Formation Activities Survey**

**Spirituality/Propaedeutic Year**

1. Which of the following best describes why you participated in a spirituality/propaedeutic year (an entire year dedicated to spirituality and preparation for full immersion into seminary life)? Mark all that apply.

- Participation was required generally by the seminary.
- Participation was required generally by my diocese.
- Participation was required generally by seminary and diocese.
- My seminary or diocese specifically asked me to participate, though this was not required for all.
- It was my choice.

Other (please specify)

2. Please describe the nature of your spirituality/propaedeutic year experience.

3. Please evaluate the spirituality or propaedeutic year experience. (Please mark the most appropriate spot on the scale for each of the following questions.)

Most negative Neutral Most positive

4. Please indicate the impact the spirituality or propaedeutic year had on the totality of your seminary formation experience.

Most negative Neutral Most positive

5. Please indicate the impact the spirituality or propaedeutic year had on your understanding of priestly identity.

Most negative Neutral Most positive

6. Please indicate the impact the spirituality or propaedeutic year had on the development of a solid base for your spiritual life.

Most negative Neutral Most positive

7. Please indicate the impact the spirituality or propaedeutic year had on your self-awareness for personal growth.

Most negative Neutral Most positive

8. Please indicate the impact the spirituality or propaedeutic year had on your development of pastoral skills for competent priestly ministry.

Most negative Neutral Most positive

9. Please indicate the impact the spirituality or propaedeutic year had on your discernment and the formation team's discernment of your call to priesthood.

Most negative Neutral Most positive

10. Please indicate the impact the spirituality or propaedeutic year had on your attitude towards seeking the support of other priests and your participation in fraternal support groups after ordination.

Most negative Neutral Most positive

11. Please indicate the impact the spirituality or propaedeutic year had on your attitude toward the spiritual life and your maturity in the faith.

Most negative Neutral Most positive

12. Please indicate the impact the spirituality or propaedeutic year had on your attitude towards and your ability to serve diverse communities.

Most negative Neutral Most positive

13. Please indicate the impact the spirituality or propaedeutic year had on your attitude toward the commitment to celibacy.

Most negative Neutral Most positive

14. Please add any comments you would like to share about the spirituality or propaedeutic year and its impact on you, in particular related to your decision to remain in or to leave active priestly ministry.

## Seminary Formation Activities Survey

### Pastoral Year Internship

1. During your seminary formation, did you participate in a pastoral year internship (at least 7 months)?

- Yes, I participated.
- No, I did not participate.

## Seminary Formation Activities Survey

### Pastoral Year

1. Which of the following best describes why you participated in a pastoral year internship (at least 7 months)? Mark all that apply.

- Participation was required generally by the seminary.
- Participation was required generally by my diocese.
- Participation was required generally by seminary and diocese.
- My seminary or diocese specifically asked me to participate, though this was not required for all.
- It was my choice.

Other (please specify)

2. Please describe your pastoral year internship experience, including length, nature of responsibilities, and the involvement of the seminary in the process.

3. At what point in formation did the pastoral year internship take place?

- Before I Theology
- Between I and II Theology
- Between II and III Theology
- After III Theology

4. Please evaluate the pastoral year internship experience. (Please mark the most appropriate spot on the scale for each of the following questions.)

Most negative					Neutral						Most positive
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

5. Please indicate the impact the pastoral year internship had on the totality of your seminary formation experience.

Most negative Neutral Most positive

6. Please indicate the impact the pastoral year internship had on your understanding of priestly identity.

Most negative Neutral Most positive

7. Please indicate the impact the pastoral year internship had on the development of a solid base for your spiritual life.

Most negative Neutral Most positive

8. Please indicate the impact the pastoral year internship had on your self-awareness for personal growth.

Most negative Neutral Most positive

9. Please indicate the impact the pastoral year internship had on your development of pastoral skills for competent priestly ministry.

Most negative Neutral Most positive

10. Please indicate the impact the pastoral year internship had on your discernment and the formation team's discernment of your call to priesthood.

Most negative Neutral Most positive

11. Please indicate the impact the pastoral year internship had on your attitude towards seeking the support of other priests and your participation in fraternal support groups after ordination.

Most negative Neutral Most positive

12. Please indicate the impact the impact the pastoral year internship had on your attitude toward the spiritual life and your maturity in the faith.

Most negative Neutral Most positive

13. Please indicate the impact the impact the pastoral year internship had on your attitude towards and your ability to serve diverse communities.

Most negative Neutral Most positive

14. Please indicate the impact the pastoral year internship had on your attitude toward the commitment to celibacy.

Most negative Neutral Most positive

15. Please add any comments you would like to share about the the pastoral year internship and its impact on you, in particular related to your decision to remain in or to leave active priestly ministry.

## Seminary Formation Activities Survey

### Priestly Fraternity Groups

1. During your seminary formation, did you take part in a fraternal support group (e.g., Jesus Caritas, Emmaus, Companions of Christ)?

- Yes, I participated.
- No, I did not participate.

## Seminary Formation Activities Survey

### Priestly Fraternity

1. Which of the following best describes why you participated in a fraternal support group (e.g., Jesus Caritas, Emmaus, Companions of Christ)? Mark all that apply.

- Participation was required generally by the seminary.
- Participation was required generally by my diocese.
- Participation was required generally by seminary and diocese.
- My seminary or diocese specifically asked me to participate, though this was not required for all.
- It was my choice.

Other (please specify)

2. Please identify and describe the fraternal support group in which you participated.

3. Please evaluate the fraternal support group experience. (Please mark the most appropriate spot on the scale for each of the following questions.)

Most negative					Neutral					Most positive
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

4. Please indicate the impact the fraternal support group had on the totality of your seminary formation experience.

Most negative					Neutral					Most positive
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

5. Please indicate the impact the fraternal support group had on your understanding of priestly identity.

Most negative					Neutral					Most positive
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

6. Please indicate the impact the fraternal support group had on the development of a solid base for your spiritual life.

Most negative Neutral Most positive

7. Please indicate the impact the fraternal support group had on your self-awareness for personal growth.

Most negative Neutral Most positive

8. Please indicate the impact the fraternal support group had on your development of pastoral skills for competent priestly ministry.

Most negative Neutral Most positive

9. Please indicate the impact the fraternal support group had on your discernment and the formation team's discernment of your call to priesthood.

Most negative Neutral Most positive

10. Please indicate the impact the fraternal support group had on your attitude towards seeking the support of other priests and your participation in fraternal support groups after ordination.

Most negative Neutral Most positive

11. Please indicate the impact the fraternal support group had on your attitude toward the spiritual life and your maturity in the faith.

Most negative Neutral Most positive

12. Please indicate the impact the fraternal support group had on your attitude towards and your ability to serve diverse communities.

Most negative Neutral Most positive

13. Please indicate the impact the fraternal support group had on your attitude toward the commitment to celibacy.

Most negative Neutral Most positive

14. Please add any comments you would like to share about the fraternal support and its impact on you, in particular related to your decision to remain in or to leave active priestly ministry.

## Seminary Formation Activities Survey

### Institute for Priestly Formation (IPF)

1. During your seminary formation, did you take part in the Institute for Priestly Formation (IPF)?

- Yes, I participated.
- No, I did not participate.

## Seminary Formation Activities Survey

### IPF

1. Which of the following best describes why you participated in the Institute for Priestly Formation (IPF)?  
Mark all that apply.

- Participation was required generally by the seminary.
- Participation was required generally by my diocese.
- Participation was required generally by seminary and diocese.
- My seminary or diocese specifically asked me to participate, though this was not required for all.
- It was my choice.

Other (please specify)

2. Please evaluate the IPF experience. (Please mark the most appropriate spot on the scale for each of the following questions.)

Most negative Neutral Most positive

3. Please indicate the impact IPF had on the totality of your seminary formation experience.

Most negative Neutral Most positive

4. Please indicate the impact IPF had on your understanding of priestly identity.

Most negative Neutral Most positive

5. Please indicate the impact IPF had on the development of a solid base for your spiritual life.

Most negative Neutral Most positive

6. Please indicate the impact IPF had on your self-awareness for personal growth.

Most negative Neutral Most positive

7. Please indicate the impact IPF had on your development of pastoral skills for competent priestly ministry.

Most negative Neutral Most positive

8. Please indicate the impact IPF had on your discernment and the formation team's discernment of your call to priesthood.

Most negative Neutral Most positive

9. Please indicate the impact IPF had on your attitude towards seeking the support of other priests and your participation in fraternal support groups after ordination.

Most negative Neutral Most positive

10. Please indicate the impact IPF had on your attitude toward the spiritual life and your maturity in the faith.

Most negative Neutral Most positive

11. Please indicate the impact IPF had on your attitude towards and your ability to serve diverse communities.

Most negative Neutral Most positive

12. Please indicate the impact IPF had on your attitude toward the commitment to celibacy.

Most negative Neutral Most positive

13. Please add any comments you would like to share about IPF and its impact on you, in particular related to your decision to remain in or to leave active priestly ministry.

## Seminary Formation Activities Survey

### Language Immersion Program

1. During your seminary formation, did you take part in a language immersion program?

- Yes, I participated.
- No, I did not participate.

## Seminary Formation Activities Survey

### Language

1. Which of the following best describes why you participated in a language immersion program? Mark all that apply.

- Participation was required generally by the seminary.
- Participation was required generally by my diocese.
- Participation was required generally by seminary and diocese.
- My seminary or diocese specifically asked me to participate, though this was not required for all.
- It was my choice.

Other (please specify)

2. Please describe the language immersion program in which you participated, including where it was held, how long it lasted and what language you studied.

3. Please evaluate your language immersion experience. (Please mark the most appropriate spot on the scale for each of the following questions.)

Most negative					Neutral						Most positive
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

4. Please indicate the impact the language immersion program had on the totality of your seminary formation experience:

Most negative					Neutral						Most positive
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

5. Please indicate the impact the language immersion program had on your understanding of priestly identity.

Most negative					Neutral						Most positive
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

6. Please indicate the impact the language immersion program had on the development of a solid base for your spiritual life.

Most negative Neutral Most positive

7. Please indicate the impact the language immersion program had on your self-awareness for personal growth.

Most negative Neutral Most positive

8. Please indicate the impact the language immersion program had on your development of pastoral skills for competent priestly ministry.

Most negative Neutral Most positive

9. Please indicate the impact the language immersion program had on your discernment and the formation team's discernment of your call to priesthood.

Most negative Neutral Most positive

10. Please indicate the impact the language immersion program had on your attitude towards seeking the support of other priests and your participation in fraternal support groups after ordination.

Most negative Neutral Most positive

11. Please indicate the impact the language immersion program had on your attitude toward the spiritual life and your maturity in the faith.

Most negative Neutral Most positive

12. Please indicate the impact the language immersion program had on your attitude towards and your ability to serve diverse communities.

Most negative Neutral Most positive

13. Please indicate the impact the language immersion program had on your attitude toward the commitment to celibacy.

Most negative Neutral Most positive

14. Please add any comments you would like to share about IPF and its impact on you, in particular related to your decision to remain in or to leave active priestly ministry.

## Seminary Formation Activities Survey

### General Information

1. Name of seminary attended

2. Location of seminary

3. For what diocese were you ordained?

4. Year of ordination

5. How many were in your ordination class?

6. How many years of seminary formation did you have in total before ordination?

7. What was your age at ordination to the priesthood?

8. What is your ethnic group?

- Caucasian/European American/white
- Hispanic/Latino
- Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian
- African/African-American/black
- Native American
- Other

9. What is your current ministerial status? (Please mark one)

- Active ministry
- Retired from ministry
- On Leave
- Resigned from ministry
- Other (please specify)

## Seminary Formation Activities Survey

### Not in Active Ministry

1. If you left active ministry, how many years after ordination did you do so?

2. How would you describe your current relationship with the Catholic Church?

3. Would you like to add anything, especially about the impact your seminary formation had or did not have on your eventual decision to leave active ministry?

## Seminary Formation Activities Survey

### In Ministry

1. Are you currently taking part in a fraternal support group?

Yes

No

If yes, please identify the group:

2. Would you like to add anything, especially about the impact of your seminary formation on your commitment to remain in active ministry?

## Seminary Formation Activities Survey

You're done!

1. Thanks so much for taking part in this survey. May God bless you for your generosity with your time. Please press "Done" to complete the survey.

*Father Alfredo I. Hernández*

## 9 Annexure 2: Request to participate in study/Consent form

Rev. Alfredo I. Hernández  
10701 S. Military Trail  
Boynton Beach, FL 33436

Request to participate in study/Consent form

**Introduction:** I am Father Alfredo Hernández, a doctoral student at the Greenwich School of Theology (UK) and North-West University (Potchefstroom, South Africa), as well as a faculty member at St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary. For my doctoral study, *Formation activities and Catholic seminarians: A practical theological study of their impact on subsequent perseverance in ministry*, I am conducting this survey. You may contact me at 561-346-5136 or by email at [ahernandez@svdp.edu](mailto:ahernandez@svdp.edu), if you have any questions before completing the questionnaire or afterwards.

**Purpose:** The purpose of this research is to look for evidence of a relationship between participation in several formation activities by Catholic diocesan seminarians in the United States and their perseverance in ministry after ordination.

**Procedure:** After you consent, you will be asked to fill out the questionnaire at the link below. It includes questions about your seminary, date of ordination, current status in ministry, and whether you participated in certain programmes in ministry. There are also open-ended questions and questions asking about these formation activities. You are under no obligation to complete the questionnaire and may stop at any time. **You may complete the survey on-line at SurveyMonkey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/formationactivities>.**

**Time required:** The questionnaire should take 20-30 minutes to complete, depending on how many programmes you participated in and how much you have to share about each one.

**Voluntary participation:** Your participation is voluntary, and you are under no obligation to participate or to answer any question.

**Risks:** The risk to taking part in this research has been determined to be a medium risk. The only potential risk to you I have identified would be that associated with recalling past events which may or may not have been positive. Also, the information gathered could potentially have positive or negative impacts on the reputation of seminaries, but results will not be reported in a way intending to identify specific seminaries.

**Benefits:** A potential direct benefit to you could be that completing the survey might help you to reflect on your seminary experiences in a healthy way. An indirect benefit could be that the information gathered will be of help to the Church and to those involved in seminary formation, in choosing programmes that will help seminarians and their formators to discern well before ordination, and prepare them for a lifelong commitment to the priesthood.

**Confidentiality/Anonymity:** Your identity will not be associated with any data I will have access to, and thus your anonymity will be protected. All data will be kept on a secure computer server and physical facility. All data will be destroyed when the study is completed.

**Sharing the results:** When the study is complete, I will share with you a summary of the results, if you so desire. If you would like to receive it, please indicate so at the bottom of this form and provide your email address.

**Publication:** The results of this study will be included in my doctoral thesis for the Greenwich School of Theology (UK) and North-West University (Potchefstroom, South Africa). It will be published as required by these institutions and may receive further dissemination. Its results may be shared with decision-makers in the Church, in particular those involved in seminary formation.

Completing this form:

If you agree to sign this form, please scan it and email it to me at [ahernandez@svdp.edu](mailto:ahernandez@svdp.edu).

Thank you very much for your openness to participating in this research.

Sincerely,



Rev. Alfredo I. Hernández

I have read the above description of this research project and agree to complete the questionnaire.

Participant's signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed name: \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to receive a summary of the results of the research at its completion. My email address is \_\_\_\_\_.

I am not interested in receiving a summary of the results.