

Rule of Life - Venerable English College, Rome

“The Spirit yields a harvest of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, forbearance, gentleness, faith, courtesy, temperateness, purity. Since we live by the Spirit, let the Spirit be our rule of life.”

(Gal 5:22, 23a, 25)

“It is my hope that our seminaries and houses of formation will provide an education in responsible simplicity of life, in grateful contemplation of God's world, and in concern for the needs of the poor and the protection of the environment.”

(Pope Francis, *Laudato si'*, §214)

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Introduction

1. As a house of formation for the diocesan priesthood, the Venerable English College seeks to help seminarians grow in their knowledge and love of our Lord Jesus Christ. Priests are configured to Christ as Head and Shepherd of his Church. As such, they are called to share in the bishop's ministry of teaching, sanctifying and governing the people of God. This requires above all a readiness to model themselves on Christ the servant, who washed the feet of his disciples (*Jn 13:1-11*). The role of the seminary is to form candidates for this ministry. In the process, it helps them to discern whether this is indeed the life to which the Lord is calling them.
2. “The Church's work of formation is a continuation in time of Christ's own work, which the evangelist Mark illustrates in these words: ‘And he went up on the mountain, and called to him those whom he desired; and they came to him. And he appointed twelve, to be with him, and to be sent out to preach and have authority to cast out demons’ (*Mk 3:13-15*)” (*Pastores Dabo Vobis*, §2). This beautiful image expresses what lies at the heart of priestly formation: it is time spent with the Lord, listening to him, learning from him, being prepared by him for the mission that lies ahead. It corresponds to the time that the Twelve Apostles spent in our Lord's company during his earthly life, in preparation for the mission that awaited them after his Resurrection. Preparation for mission has always been at the heart of the College's *raison d'être*, since the days of the Martyrs. Preparation for mission, eloquently expressed by our motto

Ignem veni mittere in terram, remains the key to all that the College is and does.

Initial Formation

3. In §§ 65-69 of *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, Pope St John Paul II speaks of the various agents of priestly formation, beginning with the Church herself, as the setting within which the Spirit of Jesus forms pastors in the likeness of himself. He goes on to speak of the roles of the bishop, the rector and staff of the seminary, the various communities to which the candidate belongs and finally the candidate himself. In a striking phrase, he states that “all formation, priestly formation included, is ultimately a self-formation” (*op. cit.*, §69). The word “ultimately” is the key to understanding this phrase correctly. A formation programme is provided, in the external forum and in the internal forum, operating in structured ways and in more informal ways, but it is ultimately the responsibility of the individual seminarian to cooperate with the process. He needs to be ready to change, to be moulded by the Holy Spirit, to undergo a process of transformation that enables him to leave behind whatever may no longer be appropriate for him and to “put on Christ” (*Rom* 13:14). This is a lifelong challenge. While the Formation Handbook outlines the programme that the College provides, this Rule of Life sets out the ways in which the College invites each seminarian to engage with it, in order to develop a manner of life that, while lived “in” the world, is manifestly not “of” the world (cf. *Jn* 17:14).

Spiritual Formation

4. “The celebration of the Eucharist is to be the centre of the whole life of the seminary, so that the students, participating in the very charity of Christ, may daily draw strength of soul for their apostolic labour and for their spiritual life particularly from this richest of sources” (can. 246 §1). Every seminarian is to attend daily Mass as indicated on the College timetable. He is to pray such portions of the Liturgy of the Hours as he has agreed with his Spiritual Director. He should attend all community liturgical events and the weekly Spiritual Conference. If a seminarian is absent from one of these without permission, he is to see the Rector (or whichever member of the Formation Staff may from time to time be delegated for this purpose) within 24 hours to explain why he was absent. Each seminarian should devote time to personal prayer every day, the duration, timing and manner of which is a matter for discussion with his spiritual director. He should spend time in prayerful reading of the Scriptures. He should form a habit of regular examination of conscience and frequent Confession. He should cultivate a mature devotion to Our Lady, making use of opportunities to pray the Angelus and the rosary. As

an aid to developing an appropriate spiritual paternity, those in formation for the priesthood have much to gain from a devotion to St Joseph, while devotion to the College Martyrs serves to strengthen their sense of mission. Regular adoration of the Blessed Sacrament is also strongly encouraged.

5. Accountability to another, to a "soul-friend," is invaluable for spiritual growth and for accurate discernment of the inner promptings of the Spirit. Every seminarian is to have a spiritual director, whom he should see regularly. First-years see the resident Spiritual Director. From the second year onwards, a seminarian is free to see an external spiritual director, having obtained the Rector's permission.

Human Formation

"The candidate's desire to be holy and to have the heart of a shepherd demands a level of human maturity; what is being sought is always an integrated spiritual and human formation. The focus of human formation in the seminary is the person of Jesus Christ. He, the Word made flesh, embodies in His humanity the standard to which all priests should aspire" (*A Charter for Priestly Formation for England and Wales*, §76).

"There is a need for heralds of the Gospel who are experts in humanity, who have a profound knowledge of the heart of present-day man, participating in his joys and hopes, anguish and sadness, and who are at the same time contemplatives in love with God" (Pope John Paul II, *Address to the Council of European Episcopal Conferences*, 11 October 1985, §13).

6. These quotations illustrate two complementary aspects of the place of human formation – the formation of the heart - in seminary training. In the first place, seminarians need to seek every opportunity to grow in their own human maturity, if they are truly to serve as a "bridge and not an obstacle for others in their meeting with Jesus Christ" (*PDV* §43). This requires a readiness to cultivate the virtues, in imitation of Christ, to develop appropriate interpersonal skills and to overcome whatever obstacles to growth they may have acquired in the course of their personal history. Secondly, they need expert knowledge and understanding of the humanity of those they encounter if they are to minister fruitfully. Both aspects are addressed through the human formation programme offered at the College. While human formation is distinct from spiritual formation, the two are so closely intertwined that an integrated approach is essential.
7. To this end, seminarians are expected to participate in all Human Formation weekends and to arrange human formation meetings at intervals throughout the

year with the formator assigned for this purpose. First-years see the Director of the Human Formation Programme. In subsequent years, they may choose to see another member of the Human Development Team or other approved formator.

8. As Pope Benedict XVI wrote in his *Letter to Seminarians* (18 October 2010), “Sexuality is a gift of the Creator, yet it is also a task which relates to a person’s growth towards human maturity. When it is not integrated within the person, sexuality becomes banal and destructive” (§6). Among the areas to be explored in human formation meetings, special importance attaches to the affective maturity required to live a celibate life fruitfully, in imitation of Christ.
9. Human formation also includes the training in safeguarding that is required for all seminarians and priests of the dioceses of England and Wales.

Intellectual Formation

“Philosophical formation must be based on the philosophical heritage that is perennially valid, and it is also to take account of philosophical investigations over the course of time. It is to be so given that it furthers the human formation of the students, sharpens their mental edge and makes them more fitted to engage in theological studies” (can. 251).

“Theological formation, given in the light of faith and under the guidance of the *magisterium*, is to be imparted in such a way that the students learn the whole of catholic teaching, based on divine Revelation, that they make it a nourishment of their own spiritual lives, and that in the exercise of the ministry they may be able properly to proclaim and defend it” (can. 252 §1).

10. The requirements of the Pontifical Universities regarding lecture attendance, seminars, course work and private study should be conscientiously observed. Seminarians are to make appointments with the College’s own Academic Tutor from time to time in order to discuss the progress of their studies and such academic choices as they may be called upon to make.
11. Before giving interviews to journalists or publishing books or articles (including blogs), seminarians should obtain the permission of the Rector.

Pastoral Formation

“The priest’s pastoral ministry is founded on the mystery of Jesus’ death and resurrection; it takes its character from the action of the Good Shepherd, who

lays down his life for his sheep and who comes so that they may have life in abundance. This act of personal self-giving is expressed fully in the Eucharist, where the priest stands in the midst of the community to offer the unique sacrifice of Christ and re-affirm the pattern of his own ministry of serving rather than being served” (*Charter*, §146).

12. Pastoral assignments in Rome, pastoral placements at home and missionary placements abroad are opportunities to serve the people of God in a truly Christ-like manner. All such assignments or placements should be carried out conscientiously and discussed with the Pastoral Director, to whom any reports should be duly forwarded. Seminarians are also to attend and participate actively in pastoral classes, pastoral courses, House Groups, language study, speech training, and any other required activity. They should develop a good understanding of the pastoral reality that awaits them in England and Wales, including its ecumenical and inter-religious dimensions.

Integration of the four areas of formation

13. Seminarians are to meet their Formation Tutor regularly. These meetings provide a valuable opportunity to monitor progress, to work towards the goals that are proposed and to discern the seminarian’s vocation in the external forum. Honesty and openness as well as a readiness to receive and reflect upon feedback from the staff is essential if these meetings are to bear fruit.
14. The annual self-assessment, containing the seminarian’s responses to a series of questions supplied by the Rector, should be written with care in a similar spirit of honesty and openness, after due reflection in prayer.
15. When invited to petition for the ministries of Reader or Acolyte, for admission to candidacy or for Holy Orders, the seminarian should make a thorough discernment with much prayer, if possible in the context of a retreat, and never without consulting his Spiritual Director, before submitting the petition to the Rector.

Relations with the formation staff

“The formation programme ought to lead ... to an appreciation of the spiritual dimension of authority and obedience in the Catholic Church, where respectful submission to the Word of God and the Church’s Magisterium are clearly of paramount importance. As their formation progresses, seminarians should be given more opportunities to exercise responsibility and freedom, and be helped to see that part of their freedom is being accountable to the community and to those in authority there. This will be an excellent preparation for the occasions

when they will have to co-operate with their bishop or superior, particularly when they are given a new assignment” (*Charter*, §86).

16. The Church’s understanding of authority and obedience is in stark contrast to prevailing notions in contemporary Western society. This is an area where many seminarians have to learn an entirely new approach and the transition is not always easy. In the Church, the model of authority is that of a loving father, a good shepherd, one who comes to serve and not to be served. The model of obedience is that of the Son who says to the Father “Here I am, I have come to do your will” (*Heb* 10:9). The fact that God himself is the source of all authority in the Church profoundly shapes both the manner in which authority is exercised and the response that is given to it.

In their relations with the formation staff, seminarians should be helped to develop an appropriate respect for ecclesial authority and a mature sense of obedience, which is more than mere external compliance (cf. *Charter*, §106). They are welcome to express their own point of view, whatever it may be, but a certain skill is needed in order to do so respectfully, with the caveat “*salvo meliore iudicio*” – “with due deference to the superior judgement of others”.

Ongoing formation

17. Seminarians following the standard formation programme are usually ordained to the priesthood after completing the second year of their licence studies. It follows that a few of them whose licence studies last for three or more years are likely to spend their first year(s) of priesthood resident in the College.

18. Moreover, it happens from time to time that bishops ask the College to admit for further studies one or two priests who already have a number of years of pastoral experience. These priests are often from dioceses in England and Wales, but sometimes they come from other nations that do not have their own College in Rome. It may be that the bishop wishes to prepare such a priest for a role as a seminary formator. More often, though, he simply wishes to develop the academic potential of his priests so as to ensure a range of expertise among the presbyterate of his diocese.

19. The presence of a small number of priests who are not members of the formation staff is a great enrichment for the College community. The College values their contribution and seeks to provide an environment in which they can devote themselves to their ongoing formation.

20. While these priests do not hold a pastoral office as such, they exercise a degree of co-responsibility with the formation staff for the well-being of the seminarians. Even though they play no part in the formal assessment process, their priestly example, their preaching, their availability to hear Confessions and their involvement in the life of the community can make a valuable contribution to the formation of the seminarians.
21. As their own formation needs vary considerably, the College cannot offer these priests a standard formation programme but needs to adopt a flexible approach that will vary according to circumstances.

Newly-ordained priests.

22. The newly-ordained, who are normally in their third year of licence studies, welcome the extra freedom for study that comes with the conclusion of their initial formation. During the previous two years of licence studies, they often feel at a disadvantage, as most of their fellow students from other Colleges, being already ordained, are free of the demands of initial formation.
23. This being the case, they are eager to focus principally on intellectual formation once they have been ordained. At this time, they are generally preparing the *tesina* and the final examination and this leaves them with little time to spare for other activities. Having spent many years in Rome already, they will be familiar with the city and the Italian language and they will already have had plenty of pastoral experience here.
24. What is new for them is their priesthood. The College seeks to help them enter into the mystery and the joy of their priesthood while respecting their need to focus principally on study.
25. It is likely that they will already have established a rapport with a spiritual director and they are encouraged to continue seeing him during the initial phase of their priesthood. Retreats and days of recollection are particularly important for them. It may be appropriate for them to join the College community for these – but if another solution is preferred, the College is happy to assist with making suitable arrangements.
26. Many can benefit from a mentor, advising them on the practical consequences of living as a priest in a seminary community. This may be a member of the College's formation staff, or any other priest resident in the city. In some circumstances it may be appropriate for one of the other priests resident in the College, with some years of pastoral experience behind him, to assume this role.

27. Priests in ongoing formation are encouraged to take part in the liturgical life of the community, especially the daily Eucharist. “It is desirable that all the Priests who are not obliged to celebrate individually for the pastoral benefit of the faithful concelebrate insofar as possible at the conventual or community Mass” (GIRM §114). It is understood, though, that the newly-ordained welcome opportunities to preside. Once or twice a week, if they wish to avail themselves of opportunities to preside at Mass elsewhere, they are free to do so – though care must be taken that they do not become detached from the community: a temptation for some when they gain the freedom that comes with the conclusion of initial formation. It is important also to bear in mind that “Mass should not be celebrated without a minister, or at least one of the faithful, except for a just and reasonable cause” (GIRM §254).
28. The newly-ordained are encouraged to continue attending the weekly spiritual conference and to take part in House Groups, perhaps as leaders. Those aspects of the formation programme that are specifically linked to initial formation, such as the human development weekends, are clearly not aimed at the priests in the house, although the College does take responsibility for their continuing safeguarding training.
29. If the newly-ordained express a desire for some spiritual talks that are specifically related to their priesthood, the College is happy to invite speakers and provide opportunities for prayer in common and priestly fraternity in the context of a reflection of this kind.
30. Newly-ordained priests who wish to undertake or continue a pastoral apostolate in the city are encouraged to do so, as long as it does not interfere with their studies.

Priests with pastoral experience

31. These priests have very different needs from the newly-ordained. They are likely to be unfamiliar with Rome, with the approach to study found at the Pontifical Universities and with the Italian language. The College takes responsibility for their initial and ongoing language study and is solicitous about helping them to settle into their new environment. This includes helping them to obtain a *celebret* from the Vicariate of Rome with faculties to hear Confessions. Assistance can also be provided with any visa or residence requirements that may arise.
32. Inscription at the universities and choice of courses can often be daunting for priests who are new to Rome, and the College is able to provide valuable

assistance in these areas. In the first instance, these priests are likely to give preference to courses taught in the English language.

33. Unlike the newly-ordained, these priests are likely to be well settled in their priestly identity. It is living in community that is more likely to present them with a challenge. The College is happy to help them find a spiritual director, as they are unlikely otherwise to know who to approach. A mentor can also be of great assistance, whether a member of the formation staff or another priest resident in Rome.
34. Often they will have spent some years away from formal academic work, and here the College's Academic Tutor may be able to help them relearn habits of study.
35. Their unfamiliarity with the Italian language is likely to limit the pastoral opportunities available to them, but in many cases they will be eager to explore possibilities, as they may well experience the lack of regular pastoral engagement as a deprivation. The College is pleased to help them explore such pastoral openings as may exist, for example among communities of religious sisters who use the English language for divine worship.
36. Along with the newly-ordained, these priests are encouraged to take part in the daily Eucharist at the College (cf. no. 27 above), to attend the weekly spiritual conference and to exercise leadership roles within the community, for example in the House Groups (cf. no. 28 above). They also stand to gain from the opportunity for speaker evenings designed for priests, in a context of prayer and priestly fraternity (see no. 29 above).

Community life

“Formation must be undertaken in community. This community life is essential. I would like to stress the importance, in this community life, of relations of friendship and brotherhood that are an integral part of this formation ... Gossip is terrible! Underlying gossip is envy, jealousy and ambition. Think about this. I once heard of a person who after the spiritual exercises ... had promised the Lord never to speak badly of another. This is a beautiful, beautiful way to holiness! Never speak badly of others” (Pope Francis, *Address to seminarians and novices*, 6 July 2013).

37. Every member of the College is called to help build up a community that is centred on Christ. As a house of formation for the priesthood, the College must always have Christ present at its heart. It is he who has called us into this

community, it is his Holy Spirit who forms us and empowers us to carry out the mission he entrusts to us.

38. This means above all a readiness to be of service to others. “One of the goals ... is to cultivate in seminarians a spirit of generosity, freeing them to be men for others and men who have grown beyond a spirit of entitlement” (*Charter* §92). There are many opportunities to serve others in the College. Some, such as liturgical duties, house jobs and refectory duties, are required activities for those to whom they are assigned, while others, such as involvement in the Charities Committee, the Justice and Peace Committee, the Schola, the Venerable Committee, the Entertainments Committee, sport and music-making, are voluntary. These activities provide ample opportunities for members of the community to be generous in placing their own talents and experience at the service of their brethren.
39. The men who are sent to the English College for their formation come from a variety of backgrounds with regard to their age, their professional and personal history, and their experience of the Church. This variety brings a great richness to the community as well as a challenge – the challenge to respect and value what others bring, to make due allowance for what others may lack, to be ready to learn from others and to offer one’s own contribution in a spirit of humble service, for the upbuilding of the community.
40. A Christian community must always be marked by charity. The way we speak of others and the way we speak to them should radiate a Christ-like love. We might well draw inspiration from the saying quoted by Tertullian: “See how these Christians love one another” (*Apologeticum*, ch. 39,7) – and ask ourselves whether our contemporaries would say the same of us. We should show compassion in the face of the shortcomings of others, while always ready, if and when appropriate, to offer gentle correction in a way that is kind and constructive, remembering to pray for the person concerned and to set a good example ourselves. Besides offering correction, we should be ready to receive it in a spirit of genuine humility.
41. When we live in community, our words and actions, our manner of life and our dispositions are bound to have an impact upon others, for better or worse. Consciously or unconsciously we contribute to the formation of one another. Every member of the community has a responsibility to promote the good of the others, especially the weaker ones, by the example of his Christian life.
42. The friendships formed during the years spent in seminary are frequently a source of lifelong support. The emergence of friendship groups within the community is greatly to be encouraged. At the same time, such groups must

never become closed or inward-looking, but always remain open to welcoming others, particularly those who may appear isolated and those who are new to the community.

Rules for community living

43. In any community, certain agreed practices are needed in order to provide a context in which all can flourish and show care and respect for one another. In a house of formation there is a further need for norms that promote an atmosphere of prayer and fraternity in which a priestly vocation can mature and develop. The discipline regulating the life of a seminary community, in other words, responds to a need that arises from the nature of the community itself. Consequently, the observance of that discipline – not only the letter but also the spirit – brings great freedom: the freedom to discern and respond to the Lord's call, the freedom to grow in humanity and in Christian discipleship, the freedom to form lasting friendships and to be conformed to the likeness of Christ himself. The fraternity that is fostered in a well-ordered community of this kind serves as a foundation for living priestly fraternity in the future. It is in accordance with such a vision of community life that the following norms are proposed for observance by all members of the house.
44. From 2pm to 4pm, after 10pm, and before Morning Prayer, there should be no playing of musical instruments, radios or hi-fi equipment (unless earphones are used), nor should there be loud noise of any kind such as could disturb those who are sleeping. Guests should normally leave the premises by 10pm, although for guest nights, film nights, College feasts or other special celebrations, they may remain until 11pm, due account being taken of the fact that some members of the community may have already retired for the night. Lights should not be left on in public areas after 11pm. Doors should be closed quietly. No seminarian should be in the room of another after 10.30pm without good reason. From Sunday to Thursday, no seminarian should be out of the house after 11pm without good reason. On Friday and Saturday evenings, while it is recommended that the 11pm rule be maintained, greater latitude is permissible, as long as all residents are in the house by midnight.
45. It is essential for future priests to develop a responsible relationship with alcohol and with all that pertains to their physical well-being. They are expected to show moderation in the use of alcohol, taking account of the limits of their personal capacity. They should take good care of their health, ensuring that they take sufficient exercise and watch their diet, if necessary abstaining from some of the food supplied at mealtimes.

46. Rather than missing meals, though, seminarians are encouraged to come frequently to the refectory, moderating their food intake if necessary. Meals in the refectory are a privileged opportunity for building fraternity in the house. Residents are asked to fill the seats at mealtimes in order of arrival. Care should be taken to arrive on time for meals, especially when there is a formal beginning and ending. In such cases, everyone should remain in the refectory until grace has been said. Sunday lunch is the principal meal of the week which all seminarians are expected to attend, unless they have been dispensed, for a pressing reason, by the Rector. All residents should take care to sign in for meals in good time, using the lists that are kept at the bottom of the main staircase.
47. Smoking should take place only in designated outdoor areas, and those who smoke should be conscious of the long-term implications for their health.
48. In keeping with its ancient tradition, the College seeks to provide hospitality to bishops and priests from England and Wales, and a limited number of guest-rooms are available for this purpose. Occasionally the College provides short-term hospitality to other visitors – persons connected with the activities and aims of the College, pilgrims or guests of the College. Yet the function of the College as a seminary must always remain the paramount consideration and the number of visitors must therefore be kept to a minimum, so as to avoid disrupting the atmosphere of prayer and study. Hospitality is never offered with a view to making a profit.
49. House guests should be made welcome by members of the student body, who may invite their own family and friends to stay in the College during the Easter Triduum and Easter week, but not at other times. The Guestmasters operate a system for processing applications for Easter guests in order to ensure fairness, should the demand exceed the space available. At other times guests may be invited to meals, especially on Wednesday evenings, when there is an evening Mass and the bar is open after supper. On Sundays and major celebrations it may be necessary to restrict the number of guests. It is important to remember that such guests are always guests of the community, and their hosts should make every effort to introduce them to others. Visitors should always be accompanied while they are in the building. It is best to avoid inviting the same guests too frequently, without good reason.
50. Besides welcoming guests and taking an active part in the life of the community, those in formation for the priesthood should be at ease in their own company, practising a degree of solitude conducive to a healthy prayer life, not least in view of the fact that priests in England and Wales often live alone. Seminarians should be comfortable with silence (cf. *Charter* §180), and

should observe it during retreats and during the Lenten *magnum silentium*, both for their own sakes and for the sake of others in the community. Silence should be understood to include refraining from the use of social media.

51. In their general demeanour, members of the College should cultivate a simple lifestyle, avoiding all semblance of worldliness or luxury or anything that could give scandal to the faithful. Fasting and almsgiving should be practised by all.
52. Specific norms pertaining to dress are issued from time to time by the Rector. Clerical dress is worn on public occasions by those who have been admitted to candidacy and by those who have been ordained. Formal dress is worn by all for Sunday Mass, Sunday lunch and other occasions as indicated from time to time. Care over appearance and attire is a mark of respect for others and should be understood in this light, never as an excuse for vanity.
53. In the use of communal areas, such as the library, the computer room, the gym, the swimming pool, the student kitchen, the common room and the television room, consideration should always be given to other users. Rules in force should be observed and care should be taken to leave these areas clean and tidy after use. Similarly, all residents should keep their own rooms clean and tidy. From time to time, individual rooms may be visited by a member of the formation staff or administration staff, and the occupants may be challenged if the condition of the room gives cause for concern. Not only is it necessary to take good care of College property, but future priests need to be formed in responsible stewardship of the Church's goods.
54. Cars are available for the use of residents and the rules governing their use and payment for petrol should be observed. Here too there are opportunities for formation in responsible stewardship and in service to the community - drivers should be willing to offer their services to others.
55. All residents have free access to the internet throughout the College, but here too responsibility should be exercised. Care should be taken to avoid spending excessive amounts of time online. Sites that are inappropriate or distasteful should be assiduously avoided.
56. There should be no telephone conversations in any of the chapels, the sacristy, the refectory or the library.
57. For the Liturgy of the Hours, books should be used in preference to electronic devices, even though many of our visitors may be using the latter.

58. On those occasions during the year when seminarians are free to travel (e.g. free weekends, the period after exams), they are encouraged to explore Italy. With the exception of the Christmas holiday, Easter week and the summer vacation, they need the Rector's permission to travel outside Italy. Not only is it helpful to be exposed to the Italian language as much as possible, but living in Italy offers an unparalleled opportunity to develop a familiarity with the culture, the natural beauty and the extraordinarily rich artistic and religious heritage of the country in which we live.

59. During the periods when they are free to travel, the College's summer villa, Convento di Palazzola, is normally available to members of the house who wish to relax or study in a familiar environment outside the city. Subject to the availability of rooms, they are normally free to stay at Palazzola overnight on Fridays, leaving Rome once they are free of their other commitments that day. They should always leave an address and a contact number with the Vice-Rector if they are going away. If any resident is absent overnight, this should be clearly indicated on the fire lists at the bottom of the main staircase. Indeed, all residents should familiarize themselves with the fire regulations and take part in any fire drills that may be held.

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As stated in the Charter for Priestly Formation for England and Wales, "the Rule of Life provides the basis for a common way of life ... students must commit themselves to expectations stemming from shared values and to regular activities in which all are expected to take part ... with a secure community foundation each seminarian can grow humanly, spiritually and intellectually and can develop his pastoral skills ... the experience, self-knowledge and skills that will be learnt in seminary will form [the seminarians] in the virtues that are essential for future ministry" (§§178, 177).

On the basis of the present Rule, it is hoped that those who are sent to the Venerable English College in Rome for their formation will indeed have the opportunity to grow in these ways and to develop the qualities needed to serve the people of England and Wales as worthy priests.