

# VOCATION DIRECTORS' HANDBOOK

2014 Revision

Draft copy for Consultation

Confidential draft

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# SECTION ONE:

# INTRODUCTION

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## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 The Purpose of this Document

The purpose of this Handbook is to offer a *vademecum* both for Vocations Directors, in their task of fostering vocations to the diocesan priesthood, and for all those involved with the assessment and selection of applicants. It is a revision of the previous Handbook which was last approved by the Bishops' Conference in 2008 and which established standardised procedures and documentation for the selection of candidates for the priesthood in the dioceses of England and Wales<sup>1</sup>. The procedures establish a standard of 'good practice' to guide the work of Vocation Directors. Nevertheless, it should always be borne in mind that it is the diocesan bishop who has ultimate responsibility for the selection of candidates and that he retains the right to adopt or adapt the procedures as he sees fit according to the needs of his own diocese<sup>2</sup>.

Since the last edition of the Handbook there have been significant developments in vocations ministry and a more focused approach to the work of the Vocation Directors' Conference. The National Office of Vocation has also developed a clearer understanding of its role in facilitating the promotion of a culture of vocation in England and Wales. The current Handbook takes into consideration the recommendations of the Congregation for Catholic Education in its "Pastoral Guidelines for Fostering Vocations to Priestly Ministry" (2012) and reflects the provisions of the new "Charter for Priestly Formation" for use in England and Wales. It also seeks to provide greater clarity concerning some of the implications of current data protection legislation.

The procedures outlined in this document and the standard application forms included in the appendix have not been substantially changed and remain normative for the dioceses of England and Wales. Religious Congregations may choose to adopt the same procedures or to establish their own ones using the principles outlined in this document. If they choose to use the same forms, however, they must use them in their entirety and without adaptation unless explicitly approved by the Chairman of the Conference of Diocesan Directors of Vocation (CDDV). Those involved with the selection of candidates for the Permanent Diaconate will have their own parallel procedures.

### 1.2 Roles and Responsibilities

#### 1.2.1 The Diocesan Bishop

In each local Church it is ultimately the Bishop who has responsibility for the pastoral care of vocations in his diocese. Above all it falls to the Bishop and to his clergy to offer young people an inspiring and attractive vision of the ordained priesthood. The bishop appoints a Vocations Director to assist him in this task, and in some places he may also nominate some 'vocations promoters' or a diocesan Vocations Team to work with the Vocations Director to "develop pastoral initiatives aimed at promoting,

<sup>1</sup> The Vocation Directors' Handbook is subject to a five-yearly review and the Cumberledge Commission asked specifically that the uniform implementation of national policies and procedures in selecting candidates be included in this review.

<sup>2</sup> It should also be borne in mind that the Cumberledge Commission, while recognising that a bishop is not bound by the recommendations of a Selection Conference, nevertheless asked that he not do so if concerns were expressed about safeguarding issues.

especially among the young, an attitude of interior openness to a priestly calling”<sup>3</sup>.

### **1.2.2 The Vocations Director**

Each diocese in England and Wales has a Vocations Director whose task it is to accompany the applicant not only through discernment and selection, but also through priestly formation up to ordination. As well as advising the bishop about the applicant, the Vocations Director is usually charged with the responsibility of guiding the applicant through the selection process. He coordinates each stage of the process, ensuring that the applicant is fully aware of what is expected of him. He would also normally, during the formal selection process, feed back information to the applicant about how his application is progressing. This feedback also allows the applicant and director to agree a progression from one stage to another, recognising the freedom that both the applicant and the diocese have to delay, or halt the process at any stage.

### **1.2.3 National Responsibilities for the Coordination of Vocations in England and Wales**

The current shortage of priests affecting our dioceses shows how necessary it is to invest in the pastoral care of vocations, giving it a new impulse and coordination at both the national and diocesan level. In England and Wales there are two organisations that bear particular responsibility for this coordination: the **National Office for Vocation** and the **Conference of Diocesan Directors of Vocations**:

#### **The National Office for Vocation (NOV)**

The National Office for Vocation is the department of the Bishops’ Conference with special responsibility for establishing a “culture of vocation” within the Church. Among its varied responsibilities, the National Office for Vocation produces materials for use on Vocations Sunday, liaises with the Catholic Media Office, maintains a vocations website, co-ordinates statistical information and keeps the National Database of Applicants to the Priesthood established after the Nolan Report.

#### **Conference of Diocesan Directors of Vocations (CDDV)**

The National Office for Vocation also collaborates with the Conference of Diocesan Directors of Vocations that meets annually and provides an opportunity for Vocations Directors to exchange experiences, offer support and establish policy. The recommendations of the Conference are submitted to the Bishops’ Conference for their approval. The CDDV maintains close contacts with the seminaries used by the dioceses of England and Wales. The Chairman of the Conference is usually invited to attend the meetings of the English-speaking rectors as an observer.

## **1.3 Recent Developments in Vocations Ministry**

### **1.3.1 The Need for Preliminary Formation**

Recent years have seen a development in the Church’s understanding of the promotion and pastoral care of vocations. If emphasis was placed in the past on a model of ‘recruitment’, (characterised by the production of posters and materials advertising priesthood) it is now recognised that vocations cannot simply be ‘produced’; they must come from God. The priesthood “is not like other professions, we cannot simply recruit people by using the right kind of publicity or the correct type of strategy. The call which comes from the heart of God must always find its way into

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<sup>3</sup> Sacramentum Caritatis, n.78

the heart of man. And yet, precisely so that it may reach into hearts, our cooperation is needed"<sup>4</sup>.

Today the starting point for vocations ministry is a recognition that the Church, as the assembly of those called ('ecclesia'), is by nature vocational. Every member of the Church has received in baptism a call to holiness which is a call to follow Christ through a life of faith, hope and charity. The whole Church bears a responsibility for helping the individual grow in discipleship to the point where he or she will ask the question "What does the Lord want me to do with my life?" In that way, through the ministry of the Church, the discernment of a particular vocation will arise, be it to ordained ministry, religious life, marriage or apostolic celibacy.

The Church has always recognised the need to make a careful selection of candidates for the priesthood<sup>5</sup> and experience has shown that where this has not always been the case tragic consequences can result. More recently the experience of vocations as the fruit of initiatives associated with the New Evangelisation<sup>6</sup>, has shown the importance of a specific Christian formation for those who have recently come to the faith to help them grow into the demands of Christian discipleship.

### **1.3.2 The Work of the Conference of Diocesan Directors of Vocation (CDDV)**

Each year the Vocations Directors of England and Wales meet for their annual conference which, in addition to sharing ideas and experience, offers them a chance to reflect on their ministry and to establish a common approach to their work. After the publication of *In Verbo Tuo*<sup>7</sup>, the Vocations Directors' Conference asked the bishops of England and Wales to consider establishing a national Vocations Office which would have the responsibility of promoting a wider "culture of vocation" in the Church<sup>8</sup>. In recent years the Vocations Directors, at their annual conference, have developed the following themes: the need for a shift from "recruitment to discernment" (2010); the principles of selection (2011); and the characteristics of a pre-seminary formation (2012). To meet the recommendations of the Cumberledge Review, in 2013 the CDDV carried out a review of its policies and procedures to ensure they were being observed by all the dioceses.

The CDDV has also collaborated with the establishment of Invocation as an initiative to promote a culture of vocation in the Church and to provide discernment days and weekends for young people as well as offering training in vocations ministry to both priests and educators.

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<sup>4</sup> Benedict XVI, Address to Priests & Deacons in Bavaria, 14<sup>th</sup> September 2006. Cf. *Pastores dabo vobis*, n.34; *In Verbo tuo*, n.12 (c); *Sacramentum Caritatis*, n.79.

<sup>5</sup> *Optatam Totius*, 6: "In the entire process of selecting and testing students, however, a due firmness is to be adopted, even if a deplorable lack of priests should exist, since God will not allow His Church to want for ministers if those who are worthy are promoted and those not qualified are, at an early date, guided in a fatherly way to undertake other tasks".

<sup>6</sup> "The statistical data of the Catholic Church and several pieces of sociological research highlight that, when new evangelisation initiatives are promoted in parishes, associations, ecclesial communities and Movements, young people show themselves to be open to God's call and to offering their lives in the service of the Church" *Pastoral Guidelines for Fostering Vocations to the Priestly Ministry*, 3.

<sup>7</sup> Published in January 1998, *In Verbo Tuo* is subtitled "New Vocations for a New Europe" and is the final document of the Congress on Vocations to the Priesthood and Consecrated Life in Europe.

<sup>8</sup> After a period of consultation the National Office for Vocation was established in September 2002.

### 1.3.3 The National Vocations Framework

In April 2012 the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales adopted the National Vocations Framework detailing the key aims of the National Office for Vocation for a three-year period. The National Vocations Framework identifies three key aims for the work of the National Office for Vocation. They are: understanding vocation, communicating vocation and discerning vocation. The implementation of the National Vocations Framework is monitored by an Advisory Board which includes representation from the CDDV.

### 1.3.4 Pastoral Guidelines for Fostering Vocations to Priestly Ministry

In 2008 the Pontifical Work for Priestly Vocations began a review of the situation regarding priestly vocations throughout the Church with a view to establishing some "pastoral guidelines" which were published in March 2012. The main findings of the review were published in paragraph 3 of the Guidelines and are as follows:

- prayer in our parishes and communities reinforces a "shared awareness with regard to vocations";
- a "pastoral ministry" with families and young people which integrated with a pastoral ministry for vocations leads to a "flowering of priestly vocations".
- Vocations ministry cannot be reduced to the establishment of programmes but must become "the natural expression of the whole community";
- when "new evangelisation initiatives are promoted in parishes, associations, ecclesial communities and Movements, young people show themselves to be open to God's call";
- Care for vocations presupposes a strong family pastoral ministry;
- the importance of the "joyful witness of priests";
- charitable service to those who suffer, to the needy and the poor as well as time spent on Catholic missions can help young people discover the call to priesthood and to the consecrated life;
- schools can help begin "a process of vocational discernment" by offering young men the chance to meet with priests or to take part "in events to deepen their understanding of the Christian faith".

### 1.3.5 The Charter for Priestly Formation

The seminary rectors invited the Chairman of the Vocation Directors' Conference to contribute to the revised "Charter for Priestly Formation" by contributing a chapter on "*The Promotion of Priestly Vocations and the Selection of Candidates for the Diocesan Priesthood*"<sup>9</sup>. This edition of the Vocation Directors' Handbook draws on its provisions throughout.

The Charter reminds Vocation Directors that the whole Church is responsible for the pastoral care and promotion of vocations and that they and the bishops rely on the collaboration of the whole people of God. It highlights in particular the following groups:

- a. *Priests*. A priest's love for and fidelity to his vocation will be the best and most effective form of vocations promotion at a local level. "The bishop can rely above all on the cooperation of his presbyterate. All its priests are united to him and share his responsibility in seeking and fostering priestly vocations".
- b. *The seminary*. The seminary has a key role in the promotion and pastoral care of vocations. The witness and example of seminarians can be a source of great encouragement to others considering a priestly vocation, particularly where the seminary is able to welcome men for visits, retreats and vocational

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<sup>9</sup> This chapter of the Charter for Priestly Formation (Chapter Two) is included as an appendix to this Handbook.

- experiences. Seminarians should be encouraged to foster a sense of responsibility for prayer and action for the promotion of vocations to their dioceses.
- c. *Families*. The pastoral care of vocations is at the crossroads between the pastoral care of families and that of young people. In a way, the vocations of their children inevitably become the vocations of their parents, too: parents often find themselves involved in a journey that strengthens and renews their faith.
  - d. *Diocesan youth ministries*. The Church's ministry to young people involves serving them in such a way that they may be able to discern God's plan for their life. Those responsible for youth ministry, including those who work in schools and chaplaincies, should not draw back from being mediators of the Lord's call. Every young man should be asked at some stage whether he has considered a priestly vocation. For some that question will be the seed sown that one day flourishes in a new priestly vocation.
  - e. *Chaplaincies in universities and colleges*. These are privileged places of encounter between the Catholic Church and young, enquiring minds, where many people either return to the faith they once knew or discover it for the first time. While many people's connections to such chaplaincies are instrumental in their decision to commit themselves more deeply to the life of faith, it is clear that many vocations to priesthood and religious life are nourished and encouraged here.
  - f. *Movements, groups and associations*. Significant numbers of young people today belong to movements or associations or participate in other activities for young adults. Such groups are welcome partners in the pastoral care and promotion of vocations, and the Church values the enrichment such groups offer to the life of priests. It is important, therefore, that vocations coming from such traditions are not asked to "break their links with the environment which has contributed to their decision to respond to their vocation, nor should they erase the characteristic traits of the spirituality which they have learned and lived there in all that they contain that is good, edifying and rich. For them too, this environment from which they came continues to be a source of help and support on the path of formation toward the priesthood"<sup>10</sup>.

Pope Francis, in *Evangelii Gaudium*, speaks of the important role of the lay faithful in promoting and encouraging vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life: "Many places are experiencing a dearth of vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life. This is often due to a lack of contagious apostolic fervour in communities which results in a cooling of enthusiasm and attractiveness. Wherever there is life, fervour and a desire to bring Christ to others, genuine vocations will arise. Even in parishes where priests are not particularly committed or joyful, the fraternal life and fervour of the community can awaken in the young a desire to consecrate themselves completely to God and to the preaching of the Gospel. This is particularly true if such a living community prays insistently for vocations and courageously proposes to its young people the path of special consecration"<sup>11</sup>.

A significant part of the Vocations Directors' work will, therefore, be to foster good relations with all these groups in order to ensure a mutual understanding of Christian discipleship as an element of vocations discernment. Vocation Directors may also find it helpful to establish a Vocations Team or other consultative body, including lay faithful, to help and support them in their work. It is strongly recommended that all

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<sup>10</sup> *PDV* 68; cf. *PDV* 31

<sup>11</sup> *Evangelii Gaudium*, 107

those who collaborate more closely with the Vocations Director in the work of promoting and supporting vocations, including lay men and women, be given some training in the principles of selection outlined in Section Four of this Handbook. They should also have the duty of confidentiality carefully explained to them.

### **1.3.6 The Primacy of Prayer**

The Church, in obedience to Christ's command, must never cease to pray the Lord of the harvest to send labourers into his harvest (cf Mt 9:38). Our prayer for vocations has a twofold dimension. On the one hand it recognises that vocations come from God and cannot be manufactured. On the other, prayer for vocations invites people to make space in their hearts to discern God's call. Therefore, at the same time as encouraging national and local movements of prayer – such as the ever-increasing popularity of Eucharistic Adoration for Vocations – the Church must ensure that at every level of her life and ministry opportunities are provided for her members to grow in prayer. The Lord has a plan for each one of us and he calls each of us by name, "our task is to learn how to listen, to perceive his call, to be courageous and faithful in following him and, when all is said and done, to be found trustworthy servants who have used well the gifts he has given us"<sup>12</sup>.

The experience of many local Churches is that young men, in large numbers, sense the call to ministerial priesthood, especially where prayer is a constant and profound dimension of the community's life.

The "Pastoral Guidelines for Fostering Vocations to Priestly Ministry" specifically mentions the *Invisible Monastery* as an initiative to promote prayer for vocations in each diocese<sup>13</sup>. There is now a website ([invisiblemonastery.com](http://invisiblemonastery.com)) where members of each diocese can commit themselves to assisting in continuous prayer for vocations.

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<sup>12</sup> Benedict XVI, Vespers with Religious and Seminarians of Bavaria, 11.09.06

<sup>13</sup> "It would be good for the Diocesan Office for Vocations to propose and organize an "invisible monastery" in which many persons, day and night, are committed to continuous prayer for priestly vocations". - Pastoral Guidelines, Section III.

## SECTION TWO

# THE APPLICATION AND ASSESSMENT PROCESS

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## **The Application and Assessment Process**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The application process for diocesan priesthood has two distinct stages. The first stage is a period of informal inquiry and formation. It lasts as long as is necessary for the individual and Vocations Director to come to a decision about whether or not a formal application should be made to the diocese. The second, or formal, stage begins when the Vocation Director receives the completed Application Forms. The approved Application Forms include a Statement of Consent that the applicant must sign to cover the requirements of Data Protection legislation. When the Vocations Director receives this consent he should immediately send the relevant information to the National Office for Vocation for inclusion in the National Database of Applicants.

Practice varies with regard to the timing of the Psychological Assessment. In some dioceses it is part of the informal stage, contributing to the development of the individual, while in others it takes place once the formal stage has begun and is, therefore, primarily an assessment tool.

### **2.2 Timetable**

At the request of the Seminary Rectors, the Conference of Diocesan Directors for Vocation discussed a timetable for the application process at their meeting in November 2012. In order to ensure planning for adequate provision, Rectors find it helpful to receive the names of new students and their paperwork by the end of June. This enables a seminary both to process the paperwork (so as to ensure enough accommodation, for example) and, more importantly, to be able to prepare a formation programme taking into account not only the academic courses but also considerations such as learning needs (dyslexia or language assistance) and opportunities for pastoral work. It was noted that some professions, such as teaching, require a term's notice and that it is therefore preferable for applicants to hear the outcome of the application process before the end of May.

More generally, the application process should ordinarily take at least a year. Part of the assessment involves looking at how the applicant has changed since he has considered the possibility of priesthood more seriously and begun to receive regular spiritual direction. Working on an academic year (September to August), the Vocation Directors agreed that the formal stage of the application process should begin at some point during the Autumn term (September to December).

### **2.3 Outline of the Process**

#### **2.3.1 Informal Stage**

##### **2.3.1.1 First Contact:**

It is usually the candidate himself who takes the initial step to contact the Vocations Director or diocesan Vocations Office. Occasionally he first approaches a priest or chaplain who then offers to contact the Vocations Director. A first contact may only be to register an interest and does not necessarily signify an intention to apply.

##### **2.3.1.2 Initial Meeting**

It is considered good practice to arrange to meet with a potential applicant as soon as possible after he has made the first contact. This initial interview would usually last up to two hours. During that time the Vocations Director should encourage the individual to talk as much as possible about himself in order to gain an understanding of where he is in his vocational journey. He will do this through a number of open questions such as "What can you tell me about yourself?" It is sensible also to ask

questions concerning obstacles or impediments to acceptance.

The interview is also an opportunity for the Vocations Director to outline the components of the process to the enquirer and to explain his own role in coordinating that process. It is good to explain the importance of sincerity in self-disclosure and to explain in general terms the criteria for assessment. It should also be made clear that although an application is dealt with discretion and that some documentation is confidential, nevertheless moving to a formal stage is a public act and that, in addition to a check with the National Database, the diocese reserves the right to publish the names of applicants on its website or through other media.

The meeting should give the candidate the opportunity to ask questions and seek clarifications throughout.

Sometimes it is appropriate for the Vocations Director to give some specific advice to potential applicants including a recommendation about finding a spiritual director<sup>14</sup> as well as suggesting further reading<sup>15</sup>. The meeting should end with a request that the candidate take time to think and pray about the discussion and get back to the Vocations Director if he wishes to take it further.

### **2.3.1.3 Period of Discernment**

If the enquirer decides to take things further, a second meeting may be arranged to explain the discernment activities on offer in the diocese or he may be invited directly to attend these activities. Typically these include: regular (monthly) meetings with some input and a meal, discernment groups such as the Melchisidek Project<sup>16</sup>, an annual retreat and pilgrimages.

During the discernment period the individual should be advised to begin spiritual direction meeting with a priest every two to four weeks. The Spiritual Director should help the candidate grow in virtue, develop a life of prayer and grow in charity towards others. Where possible Vocation Directors may find it helpful to recommend Spiritual Directors trained by the CDDV.

During the period of discernment the Vocations Director should observe the candidate and also make suggestions to him. Does he have a spirit of service? How does he respond to correction?

The period of discernment would ordinarily last not less than a year and may, in the case of university students, last several years. Sometimes the Vocations Director may need to set particular targets such as a minimal educational achievement, stability in employment or, when appropriate, insisting on a minimum period of sexual abstinence before moving to the next stage. When the time is right the Vocations Director may suggest to the candidate that he may wish to move to the next stage: a formal application.

### **2.3.1.4 Candidates who will not continue to the Formal Stage**

If in the course of the initial interview or during the discernment period it becomes apparent, for whatever reason, that an individual cannot proceed to a more formal process it would be good to establish this as quickly as possible. However, the Vocations Director should communicate this sensitively particularly when the reason may affect the individual's self-esteem. If someone shows signs of depression or mental illness special care should be taken.

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<sup>14</sup> In order to keep separate the internal and external fora, the Vocations Director does not act as Spiritual Director or Confessor to potential candidates for the priesthood or seminarians from his own diocese.

<sup>15</sup> He may for example recommend the UK edition of To Save a Thousand Souls (published by the Catholic Truth Society in 2013).

<sup>16</sup> A discernment programme for diocesan priesthood details of which are included as an appendix to the book "To Save a Thousand Souls" (CTS edition).

## 2.3.2 Formal Stage

### 2.3.2.1 Formal Application

An individual becomes a formal applicant for the priesthood when he completes and returns to the Vocations Director an Application Form. To ensure a uniformity of approach all the dioceses in England and Wales use a standard form approved by the Bishops Conference. The form should only be made available to the individual by the Vocations Director once the decision has been made to allow the man to progress to the formal stage.

The formal Application process consists of the following elements:

- Application Form
- Consent Form
- Photographs
- Psychological Assessment
- Medical Examination
- National Database
- References
- Sacramental & Academic Records
- Essay
- DBS Check & Confirmation of Identity
- Selection Conference or Bishop's Selection Panel Interview
- Publication of names
- Bishop's Interview
- Final Decision

### 2.3.2.2 Application Form

A formal application is initiated when the individual returns a signed copy of the standard Application Form approved for use in the dioceses of England and Wales. This form brings together a lot of the background information needed for each individual applicant. The form should be returned with four passport style photographs.

### 2.3.2.3 Consent Form

The Applicant is asked to sign a Consent Form giving permission for his name to be included in the National Database and also for the establishment and transfer of records. The nature of this consent should be explained to the applicant by the Vocations Director before it is signed.

### 2.3.2.4 Psychological Assessment

The psychological assessment can be used both as a tool for discernment and as a tool for selection. Some dioceses emphasise the former and arrange for a psychological assessment to take place quite early in the discernment process. The report then gives the individual and the Vocations Director something to work on during the discernment period. Elsewhere the Assessment takes place after formal application and is considered more as a selection tool. If a considerable time has elapsed between the assessment and the commencement of a Formal Application process, it is recommended that a second assessment be considered as part of the selection process.

Sometimes the Psychological Assessment will identify significant areas for development before an applicant begins formation. Such recommendations must not be taken lightly by the Vocations Director as they suggest the applicant may not be ready to receive or to benefit from seminary formation. The best course of action

would be to discuss the recommendation with the person responsible for the Assessment in order to gain some understanding of why that judgement was made and what specific course of counselling or therapy is recommended, as well as advice about how the individual might access it.

When the Vocations Director receives the report, and having sought any necessary clarifications, he should sit down with the applicant and go through it in person.

#### **2.3.2.5 Medical Examination**

A candidate for the priesthood will need a reasonably robust constitution before taking on the demands of formation and priestly ministry. Applicants are therefore required to undergo a medical examination to ensure they are in reasonably good health. This examination should be carried out by a qualified doctor making use of the medical inquiry form which forms part of the approved documentation for the dioceses of England and Wales.

#### **2.3.2.6 National Database of Applicants**

The Database is administered by the National Office for Vocation and is a means of ensuring appropriate checks are carried out on candidates who may have previously applied to other dioceses. The National Office is working to include applicants to Religious Congregations on the database. The Vocations Director should submit a name to the database as soon as he receives the signed consent from the applicant. Each year the National Office will send a list of new applicants to the Vocations Director for him to confirm that his diocese has complied with the requirement to add all names to the database.

#### **2.3.2.7 References**

References should, as far as possible, be made using the standard reference forms as these have been designed to ensure all necessary information is covered. At least four references should be obtained:

- Academic Reference
- Employer's Reference
- One or more Character References
- At least one Priest's Reference

If, for some legitimate reason, it is not possible to obtain one or more of these references they should be replaced by further Character references. It is preferable that references reflect different areas of an applicant's life. It is always possible to seek more than one reference for each category however care should be taken to ensure that the employer's reference come from the most recent place of employment. Likewise the priest's reference should also include one from his parish priest even though the candidate may wish to include other priests who know him better. As far as possible, Character References should cover all the stages of the applicant's adult life. References from seminaries, houses of formation, and dioceses abroad must always be sought and obtained through the Curial Offices of the relevant diocese or religious institute.

#### **2.3.2.8 Sacramental & Academic Records**

The applicant is asked to obtain a recent copy of his baptismal record (not more than six months old) unless he was baptised in another denomination in which case he will need a certificate of reception into the Church as well as his original baptism certificate. He also needs a copy of his Confirmation certificate.

Academic certificates should reflect the highest grade achieved either in the form of a university degree or A Level or GCSE certificates or their equivalent.

The Vocations Director needs to see the original copy of the records and will himself make a photocopy before returning the originals.

### **2.3.2.9 Biographical Essay**

Each applicant is asked to prepare a biographical essay which should be four to five pages in length. The essay should describe something of the applicant's family and educational history as well as his professional career. It is very helpful if it gives a timeline or chronology from birth up to the present time. It should mention his family as well as his relationships and experiences. A second part of the essay should describe something of his faith journey and spiritual development including his involvement in the life of the Church and those people or occurrences that have had a significant impact upon him. Finally, it is helpful if the applicant gives an account of how he understands priestly ministry today and what he considers to be the strengths and weaknesses he would bring to priesthood.

Guidance to help the applicant prepare the autobiographical essay is given in an appendix to this Handbook.

### **2.3.2.10 DBS Check and Confirmation of Identity**

At some stage in the formal process each applicant will require a DBS<sup>17</sup> check which is usually organised through the diocesan Safeguarding Office. Part of this check involves a confirmation of identity. Once the clearance has come through from the Safeguarding Office it should be kept in the applicant's file. The Vocations Director should encourage the applicant to register a satisfactory clearance with the appropriate government authority. The usual practice in England and Wales is to renew the DBS check when a candidate is preparing for major orders (diaconate).

### **2.3.2.11 Selection Advisory Conference or Bishop's Selection Panel Interview**

The Selection Advisory Conference, or Applicant Review Weekend, is a service provided to the dioceses by some seminaries. Increasingly individual dioceses are establishing their own Selection Conference or Advisory Panel. The importance of the Selection Conference is that it offers an independent insight into the applicant's readiness to begin formation. A seminary based Selection Conference can have the additional advantage of offering an assessment through the particular lens of those involved with seminary formation and is, therefore, well placed to offer an opinion as to the applicant's suitability. Whatever form the Selection Conference takes it is important that each applicant is interviewed by people who have been trained for that task and who carry out their function in accordance with an agreed Code of Conduct. Guidance for establishing a Selection Advisory Committee is given in the next Section. Members of a Selection Advisory Conference or some similar body should be given formation in the Criteria for Assessment contained in Section Four of this Handbook as well as in the obligation of confidentiality both with respect to the provisions of the Data Protection Act and also the Code of Canon Law which states that, "No one may unlawfully harm the good reputation which a person enjoys, or violate the right of every person to protect his or her privacy"<sup>18</sup>.

The Nolan Report recommends that Bishops not overturn the advice of a Selection Advisory Conference when a negative opinion is expressed from a safeguarding point of view. The Vocations Director is encouraged to be present for the feedback session when his applicants are being discussed in order to be able to better contextualise the summary recommendations.

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<sup>17</sup> DBS = Disclosure and Barring Service.

<sup>18</sup> CIC, Canon 220

#### **2.3.2.12 Publication of Names**

St Luke's recommends the publication of the names of applicants as part of the selection process. They state: "This raising awareness or wider consultation is one way of gaining positive prayerful support for the potential candidate, as well as gathering possible safeguarding information about them from family, parish and the wider community".

Dioceses must take care to ensure they do not act in a way that may be prejudicial to applicants. Therefore, just as the employer's may be deferred until the last stage in the process so also the timing of the publication of the names should be carefully considered and should not be undertaken without the applicant's consent. However, acceptance by a diocese is a public act and there should be no reason for not publishing the names of those who have been accepted on the diocesan website, in the *Ad Clerum*, or equivalent diocesan mailing, as well as in diocesan newspapers or magazines.

#### **2.3.2.13 Bishop's Interview**

Many bishops like to get to know their potential candidates for the priesthood even before they make a formal application to the diocese and Vocations Directors are encouraged to facilitate this wherever possible. The Vocations Director needs to ensure that the potential applicant does not have the impression that knowing the bishop somehow minimises the importance of the selection process.

The final decision as to whether or not to accept an applicant lies with the Bishop of each diocese who comes to his decision having reviewed all the information available to him and usually in consultation with the Vocations Director and, should he so decide, other advisers who may have knowledge of the applicant. This decision is ordinarily made having personally interviewed each applicant.

The bishop's interviews are co-ordinated by the Vocations Director who ensures he has all the necessary documentation, including the Selection Advisory Conference report and the psychological assessment in good time. The bishop will decide whether or not to accept, defer, or reject an applicant. If he chooses to accept an applicant he needs also to make a decision about where he is to begin his studies.

#### **2.3.2.14 Communication of the Final Decision**

Care and respect should mark the manner in which the decision is communicated. This includes avoiding any undue delay in communicating the final decision regarding acceptance. Confirmation that an applicant has been accepted would usually be accompanied by some indication as to where the bishop would like him to study.

Communication of a negative decision should ordinarily be done in a face-to-face conversation and care should be taken to ensure that the candidate understands the reasons for the decision.

In both cases a written statement or letter, which should be brief and succinct, should accompany, or follow soon after, the verbal communication of the decision to the applicant.

Unless it is a specific recommendation of the Selection Conference, the Vocations Director should avoid any suggestion that the applicant may consider re-applying at some stage in the future. To act otherwise can result in men, who are unlikely ever to be accepted, holding on perhaps for years to the belief that they should reapply.

## SECTION THREE

# THE SELECTION ADVISORY CONFERENCE OR BISHOP'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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## **Selection Advisory Conference or Bishop's Advisory Committee**

### **3.1 A Tool for External Validation**

The information gathered about an applicant as part of the selection process is both self-reported (essay and application forms) and also reported by third parties (references and certificates). It is important that reported information be validated by direct contact with the applicant. For the purposes of selection there are three key components to the validation process. The first is the impression of the Vocations Director who will have met with the applicant regularly over the course of a year or more and who makes a decision about the appropriate time to begin the formal application process. The second is the psychological assessment, one element of which is to explore the applicant's past history including his psycho-sexual development. The third part of this validation process in the dioceses of England and Wales is some form of independent review of paperwork and interview of the applicant. This may take the form of either a Selection Advisory Conference or a Bishop's Advisory Committee both of which offer the possibility of bringing qualified and objective people into the assessment process.

The "Charter for Priestly Formation" describes the Selection Advisory Conference as "a service provided by some seminaries to help bishops in the selection of candidates". Increasingly dioceses are establishing their own Advisory Committee to fulfil this role. In both cases applicants are "interviewed by a panel whose members normally have access to the application documents (except the psychological assessment). The panel then makes a recommendation to the candidate's bishop. It is not a substitute for other parts of the selection process, but should be seen as one part of the whole process. The Nolan Report asked bishops not to overrule selection advisory conferences "where reservations are expressed about a candidate's suitability for ordination on the grounds of possible risks to children" (and, by extension, to vulnerable adults)<sup>19</sup>. Ultimately, however, it is the Ordinary who has the right to decide which applicants he will accept for formation.

### **3.2 Membership**

The Selection Advisory Boards or Committees should be composed of a number of people carefully selected because they bring professional competency and specific expertise to the process of assessment. Wherever possible lay people, both men and women, should be represented as well as diocesan priests. A panel member with experience of seminary formation can bring a particular insight into the applicant's readiness to begin formation. It is also useful to have, if possible, a qualified psychiatrist who can make recommendations as to a candidate's mental health or at least a doctor who can review the content of his medical report. In some places the panel is convened and chaired by an auxiliary bishop entrusted with a special responsibility for matters to do with vocations in his diocese. It is not recommended that the Ordinary or the Vocations Director adopt this role because their role is to receive the report and, in the case of the diocesan Ordinary, make the final decision.

### **3.3 Training and Confidentiality**

Applicants have a right to expect that the conduct of people entrusted with a role in the selection process should always reflect the highest ethical standards as well as a great respect for each individual. Anyone applying for the priesthood has a right to be treated with respect, honesty and compassion.

Members of the board need to be clear about their role. It is not to assess whether an

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<sup>19</sup> Charter for Priestly Formation, par 55

applicant is ready for ordination but whether he is open to begin formation. Great care must be exercised to ensure the applicant is not given the impression that he is being assessed on the basis of theological position or ecclesial outlook. An underlying principle is that it must offer a fair and objective assessment of candidates. For this the board members will need training. They must take care to ensure they cover the same material with all applicants. It will help them to have a copy of the objective criteria against which they are assessing the applicant<sup>20</sup>. Particular care should be given to ensure those associated with the selection process understand the need to observe due confidentiality. Selectors should not talk about or discuss applicants except in the context of formal discussions.

### 3.4 Paperwork

As soon as possible after the Selection Conference all paperwork should be returned to the Vocations Office to be disposed of in accordance with established norms and legal requirements<sup>21</sup>. Where a Selection Conference is arranged by a seminary as a service to dioceses all the paperwork should be gathered and either destroyed or returned to the relevant Vocation Office observing, by extension, the provisions of the policy document of the Bishops' Conference regarding the record keeping of student files<sup>22</sup>. No paperwork should be kept on file at the seminary except a summary report which may be kept as an historical record.

### 3.5 Role of the Assessors

In addition to considering the requirements of Canon Law and relevant ecclesiastical guidelines, the panel should seek to assess the quality of the applicant's Christian discipleship or response to his baptismal vocation to holiness by the way he lives out the Christian virtues of faith, hope and charity<sup>23</sup>. Given that each applicant will have had some form of contact with the Vocations Office, and some form of spiritual direction, for some considerable time before making a formal application, the panel should expect evidence of growth in the life of virtue, in turning towards priestly service and in the development of a rule of life<sup>24</sup>.

The Charter for Priestly Formation establishes the broad parameters for the work of the Selection Advisory Committee. First of all, in paragraph 43, it gives three questions that need to be considered. These are:

- i. whether an individual may be hearing a call from God to priesthood;
- ii. whether the individual is suitable to be accepted for priestly formation;
- iii. the individual's ability to make a commitment to the demands of priestly life.

When interviewing the applicant in the light of these questions it will be useful for the members to bear the following considerations in mind:

- his emotional maturity;
- his educational ability;
- his understanding of diocesan priesthood.

The board members should consider whether the applicant will benefit from the four areas of formation: human, intellectual, pastoral and spiritual. They will also need to

<sup>20</sup> cf Section Four of the Handbook.

<sup>21</sup> Guidance is given in Section Five of the Handbook.

<sup>22</sup> Policy Regarding the Record Keeping of Student Files, CBCEW 14/02/12. For reference a copy is included in the Appendix to this Handbook.

<sup>23</sup> cf Charter for Priestly Formation, par 28

<sup>24</sup> cf Charter for Priestly Formation, par 38

bear in mind the principle that past behaviour is often the best predictive of future behaviour and to ask themselves whether the applicant is sufficiently free of problematic habits of behaviour to begin the process of formation.

### **3.6 Recommendation to the Bishop**

The board may either give a specific recommendation to the bishop or present him with a 'narrative report'. A specific recommendation may be that he accept, decline or defer the applicant. A narrative report may simply be an account of the applicant's perceived strengths and weaknesses as well as any issues or recommendations it may want to highlight.

The bishop should receive the panel report before his final interview with the applicant. In that way he is able to take all available information into account, as well as his personal impressions, before coming to his own decision.

### **3.7 Feedback to the Applicant**

Wherever possible the Vocations Director should attend the deliberation of the board. This also enables him to offer an informed feedback to the applicant including, if deemed appropriate, before his final interview with the bishop. This feedback should be as honest, open and complete as possible. If the recommendation is that an applicant not be recommended for formation the Vocations Director should explain that clearly to the applicant leaving no room for doubt and avoiding giving the impression that he might consider applying again at some future date unless the panel has explicitly made that recommendation. If such a recommendation is made he should explain what specific work needs to be undergone before the applicant would be deemed ready. As far as possible this feedback should be done face to face.

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## SECTION FOUR

# CRITERIA FOR ASSESSMENT

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## Criteria for Assessing an Applicant's Suitability

### 4.1 Introduction

The Charter for Priestly Formation recognises that the Vocations Director exercises a true ecclesial ministry in making an assessment of whether an individual shows signs of a priestly vocation and in helping these signs grow. It states explicitly that he "should not abdicate his responsibility by putting every candidate forward for selection; nor should he overstep his role by filtering candidates according to personal or subjective preferences"<sup>25</sup>. The Charter also recognises that the Selection Process normally takes at least a year and states that "it is not a judgement about an individual's suitability for ordination" but rather a preliminary assessment of:

- i. whether an individual may be hearing from God a call to priesthood;
- ii. whether the individual is suitable to be accepted for priestly formation;
- iii. the individual's ability to make a commitment to the demands of priestly life<sup>26</sup>.

The purpose of this chapter is, therefore, to provide Vocations Directors and those involved in the selection process with some objective criteria for assessing an applicant's suitability to begin priestly formation. The evaluation of a candidate in relation to the assessment criteria will have a number of complementary components rather like different pieces in a jigsaw. In England and Wales the most significant components of the process include:

- the application form, essay and references;
- the psychological assessment;
- the medical examination;
- the Selection Panel report;
- the Vocation Director's reference.

Not all these components have equal weight - for example an academic reference may not be as significant as a report from the Vocations Director who will have worked with the applicant over a number of months - and ultimately it is the task of the Ordinary to come to a decision about the suitability of each individual.

### 4.2 Methodology

It has increasingly become apparent that it is not sufficient to assess an applicant simply on the basis of his stated beliefs and values. The Charter for Priestly Formation recognises that Christian life is vocational by its very nature: "In baptism every member of the Church has been called to holiness, to follow Christ through a life of faith, hope and charity"<sup>27</sup>. Assessment will, therefore, also pay heed to the quality of an individual's discipleship. This is particularly important because while an applicant for the priesthood may have good and noble ideals it is nevertheless important to consider whether he will be able to live them. Assessment of an applicant's suitability for priestly formation needs to take into consideration not only his present but also his past patterns of behaviour because, as it is frequently said, past behaviour is often the best predictor of future behaviour.

Behaviour-based assessment does not exclude the reality of grace in bringing about a conversion of life. On the contrary, by looking at the applicant's behaviour over an extended period of time it offers the possibility of evaluating the effect of grace in the life of the individual. Every applicant is expected to have worked with a Spiritual Director for an extended period before beginning the application process and the

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<sup>25</sup> Charter for Priestly Formation, par 37.

<sup>26</sup> Charter for Priestly Formation, par 43.

<sup>27</sup> Charter for Priestly Formation, par 28

Charter for Priestly Formation identifies three quantifiable areas for growth under the influence of God's grace: a turning away from sinful habits and a style of life inappropriate to priestly service with a corresponding growth in freedom; the development of a style of life that is less self-interested and more open to those in need; and the development of a Rule of Life centred on the sacraments and prayer.

Behaviour-based assessment should take into consideration:

- the individual's family background including any history of traumatic events which may include bereavements, violence or abuse as well as addictions or mental disorders within the family;
- his interpersonal relations with men and women including relationships and looking at his group membership and his roles within them;
- his psycho-sexual development<sup>28</sup>;
- his religious history as well as his personal faith journey;
- his personal response to his vocation over time including any previous applications for priesthood or religious life;
- his educational history and his academic background;
- his physical well-being including questions of substance abuse and any medical history of drugs or other medications.

The information required for this behaviour-based assessment is gathered in a number of ways as part of the selection process. These include self-reporting (application forms, autobiographical essay and interviews); testing (medical and psychological assessment); observation (through contact over a period of time); authenticated records (academic transcripts, sacramental certificates); references (using the approved reference forms) and checking with the National Database of Applicants.

#### 4.3 The Importance of Criteria

Pope Francis, in *Evangelii Gaudium* states explicitly that "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"<sup>29</sup>.

Applicants for the priesthood are assessed for their capacity to benefit from the four areas of formation outlined in *Pastores Dabo Vobis* - human, pastoral, intellectual and spiritual. These four areas may be represented as a triangle with the base representing the candidate's human capacity on which the other areas will be built. A damaged personality will significantly impact on the applicant's ability to receive formation. The two sides, leaning against and supporting each other, represent intellectual and pastoral formation. An applicant needs not only to be able to receive intellectual and pastoral formation but also the capacity to allow them to influence and inform each other. The space between the three sides is the place where the sides meet and represents spiritual formation. A successful applicant will show a capacity to allow the other areas of formation to inform and be informed by his spiritual life.

Applicants would benefit from an explanation of the criteria for acceptance and these

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<sup>28</sup> A complete psycho-sexual inventory forms part of the Psychological Assessment and should not be repeated at the Selection Conference.

<sup>29</sup> *Evangelii Gaudium*, Par. 107



would usefully be explained to them early in the selection process. It is also important that Vocation Directors explain carefully what may be considered as obstacles and impediments. This may be done by preparing some written "Guidelines for Applicants" which could also include information concerning confidentiality and safeguarding issues. Should it become apparent during the application process that an applicant does not meet the required criteria it would be best to communicate this to him in person as soon as possible and to follow this with a letter, a copy of which should be kept in his file.

#### 4.4 Criteria for Assessment

The following criteria are given as a guide to Vocations Directors and those involved in the Selection Process. An understanding of the criteria for assessment is important because before we can select suitable candidates it is important to know what we are looking for. It is also important to recognise that the selection process is not simply one of identifying areas of concern but of recognising strengths and skills that will contribute to priestly ministry and thereby help select candidates showing a well-founded potential for becoming priests who are both faithful and joyful. These criteria are listed under the following headings:

- i. The Requirements of Canon Law
- ii. Human Criteria
- iii. Intellectual Criteria
- iv. Pastoral Criteria
- v. Spiritual Criteria
- vi. Other considerations.

##### 4.4.1 The Requirements of Canon Law<sup>30</sup>

The Code of Canon Law lists six *irregularities* or "enduring impediments" to ordination (Canon 1041). Each of these impediments would require a dispensation before a man could be admitted to priesthood. The likelihood of obtaining such a dispensation must be considered as part of the selection process. The six impediments are:

1. Suffering from any form of insanity, or from any other psychological infirmity, because of which he is, after experts have been consulted, judged incapable of properly fulfilling the ministry;
2. Having committed the offence of apostasy, heresy or schism;
3. Attempting marriage, even a civil marriage, either while prevented from entering marriage whether by an existing marriage bond or by a sacred order or by a public and perpetual vow of chastity, or with a woman who is validly married or is obliged by the same vow;
4. Committing wilful homicide, or having actually procured an abortion, and all who have positively cooperated;
5. Having gravely and maliciously mutilated oneself or another<sup>31</sup>, or having attempted suicide;
6. Carrying out an act of order which is reserved to those in the order of the

<sup>30</sup> Canon 1029 speaks of the necessary virtues of those to be ordained. They are not listed here as this section concerns the selection of candidates for admission to seminary and not their suitability for ordination.

<sup>31</sup> "Mutilation" is to be understood as damaging an organ of the body in such a way as to frustrate its purpose and would include, for example, a vasectomy.

episcopate or priesthood [= impersonating a person in holy orders].

In addition to the six irregularities the Code also gives a further three simple impediments to priesthood. A simple impediment lapses when the reason for the impediment is no longer present. The three simple impediments as listed in Canon 1042 are:

1. a man who has a wife;
2. one who exercises an office or administration forbidden to clerics;
3. a neophyte, unless, in the judgement of the Ordinary, he has been sufficiently tested.

#### **4.4.2 Human Criteria**

In assessing an applicant's suitability for seminary formation consideration needs to be given to his human capacity to receive formation which will include his level of human development and maturity as well as the level of integration of the different aspects of his personality. Every applicant will have both strengths and areas for growth. When assessing an applicant the task is not simply to identify these areas but to evaluate his potential for growth by engaging in the formation process.

##### **4.4.2.1 Psychological Health**

Psychological health is more than the absence of mental illness and therefore all mental health conditions need to be evaluated carefully and with appropriate professional advice. For example it is not unusual for an applicant to have suffered from some form of anxiety or to have been prescribed medication for depression. Where this is the case it is important to seek the advice of a qualified psychiatrist to determine the precise nature of the medication and to ensure that the condition is unlikely to be exacerbated or to recur as a result of the stresses of seminary formation or priestly ministry.

Sometimes issues affecting an applicant's mental health can be adequately addressed by appropriate professional counselling. When these issues are identified as part of the selection process consideration should be given by the diocese to help the applicant access such counselling even if it is unlikely that he will continue to seminary formation. It should also be considered good practice to ask the applicant to complete any prescribed therapy before a definitive decision is made to accept him even if this means stalling the application process.

In most cases it is reasonable to expect mental health conditions to be identified as part of the psychological assessment. Vocation Directors and those involved with the selection process need to be aware that the presence of certain mental health conditions, whether neurological or personality disorders, should be seen as a concern serious enough to preclude the possibility of accepting an applicant. These include schizoid personality; borderline personality; narcissism; bi-polar disorder; the clinical manifestation of depression; some anxiety and panic disorders; as well as debilitating addictions or compulsions such as gambling, drinking, eating and sexual disorders. The presence of these or similar disorders would seriously affect the ability of the applicant to receive formation and also have the potential to introduce unacceptable strains to the seminary community.

##### **4.4.2.2 Physical Health & Personal Well-Being**

It is important to consider an applicant's physical health and awareness of issues relating to his personal well-being particularly if these have the potential to interfere with seminary formation or future priestly ministry. An applicant should be

comfortable with his physical being and appearance which should in turn be appropriate to his age and perceived vocation. He should demonstrate good care for his health and also needs to recognise that some activities such as smoking, while legitimate in themselves, may be difficult to sustain within the constraints of a seminarian's budget. Does he play sport or take any form of physical exercise? Is he aware of his physical image and personal hygiene and its impact on other people? During the course of the application process some applicants will respond well to suggestions about their personal health and hygiene. However, problems may arise with a candidate who shows no personal awareness or who responds with anger or ignores such suggestions. A candidate who is grossly over-weight or who has a debilitating or life-threatening illness may also give rise to legitimate concerns about their long-term well-being.

#### **4.4.2.3. Stamina**

Applicants need to be able to demonstrate that they also have the stamina to persevere through six or seven years of seminary formation and on into a lifetime of priestly ministry. Good signs are a record of completing previous activities and stability at work. Countersigns may include a series of short-term jobs, an inability to complete studies, and possibly long periods of unemployment. It is reasonable to ask an applicant to show evidence that he can stick at something for at least a couple of years before beginning training for priesthood.

#### **4.4.2.4 Personality Features**

Some personality features and patterns of living may be problematic in the context of priestly formation and ministry. Even though they may not constitute 'mental illness' consideration needs to be given as to how the following factors may impact upon the effectiveness of seminary formation and priestly ministry.

##### **4.4.2.4.1 Openness to Formation**

An applicant is being assessed as to his capacity to receive formation and also his capacity for personal growth. A concrete sign of the necessary openness is his capacity for receiving feedback from others and his ability to use this constructively for his personal growth. How, for example, does this person deal with criticism or being challenged? Responses that manifest anger, a dismissive attitude or an excessive submissiveness can be equally problematic as they all suggest an inability to engage with the concerns raised. A reaction manifesting a 'victim complex' can be manipulative and divisive in the context of a seminary community. An applicant's resistance to constructive feedback, or his repeated inability to learn from mistakes, can serve as signs that the potential for meaningful growth is minimal.

##### **4.4.2.4.2 Self-Knowledge**

An applicant should possess a strong sense of self, a good knowledge of himself and positive self-esteem. His self-perception should be based on reality and lacking both self-preoccupation and narcissism. Minimal self-awareness and negative self-esteem are problematic signs in an applicant for the priesthood. To what extent does the applicant have a clear sense of identity rooted in a stable home background? Does he have a sense of being his father's son? How does he think other people consider him?

##### **4.4.2.4.3 Openness and Sincerity**

An applicant can be expected to demonstrate an ability to be open and sincere about himself within the appropriate contexts. A comfort with himself and with his personal history and family background will enable him to engage in spiritual and human formation. On the other hand, an inappropriate

openness in the wrong context, or a resistance to appropriate self-revelation should be seen as problematic signs particularly if the importance of openness and sincerity had been explained to him as part of the spiritual direction he received while undergoing the application process.

#### **4.4.2.4.4 Life Skills**

The applicant should possess the appropriate skills for independent and autonomous living. He should be able to take care and look after himself without excessive needs. He should be flexible and able to adapt to a variety of different situations including ones which involve a certain physical discomfort. An applicant will need to be able to deal with stress and work under pressure and also to cope with multiple responsibilities. Has he coped away from home for any significant period of time? Can he recognise and meet his own changing needs? Does he show signs of adequate and appropriate defences, coping mechanisms and strategies?

It is important also to consider the quality and quantity of physical and emotional energy available to the applicant; his time-management abilities; punctuality; and his ability to balance the different areas of his life. Problematic signs in the context of life skills would include neediness or relational dependencies; low stamina or frustration levels; family dynamics affected by trauma or conflict as well as a lack of differentiation from his family; rigidity used as a means of maintaining control over personality conflicts; a defensive posture; and in general a basic unwillingness or lack of desire to change or enter the dynamics of growth.

#### **4.4.2.5 Social Skills**

A candidate for the priesthood needs to be able to function well on an emotional or affective level. This can be shown by his ability to form and sustain healthy relationships and, where necessary, his willingness to learn how to interact socially in appropriate and effective ways.

#### **4.4.2.6 Emotional Life**

A candidate for the priesthood needs to have an awareness of his emotional life, an ability to identify, integrate and respond to his own emotions and those of others, and the ability to express emotions appropriately and selectively. *How does the applicant deal with his emotions?* As a man called to serve others, an applicant should not be focused on himself and may be expected to demonstrate a capacity for empathy, or compassion for the highs and lows experienced by other people in their lives and relationships. At the same time he must be able to set, maintain and respect boundaries both by appropriate detachment from the lives of others and by establishing appropriate friendships that are healthy and personally satisfying. This capacity for friendship can be identified through his ability to identify specific current friendships, his capacity to give and receive love and support, his capacity for commitment in relationships, and his ability to trust and be trustworthy.

A healthy sense of humour, that is neither cynical nor hurtful towards others, can help a candidate maintain a sense of detachment and joy even in difficult circumstances.

There are a variety of problematic signs that may demonstrate an applicant is not suited to become a candidate for priesthood. These include: lack of connection to people on an emotional level, isolation, a sense that he simply does not care about others, evidence that he does not maintain appropriate boundaries personally or professionally, emotional neediness, a sense that he uses or manipulates others in relationships for his own gain, and the presence of debilitating anxiety, rage or significant authority issues.

#### **4.4.2.7 Decision-Making Skills**

A candidate for priesthood must have the ability to generate alternative options and foresee the consequences of choices. His discernment of priesthood should demonstrate consideration of vocation alternatives and a healthy mix of intellectual, emotional and spiritual factors involved in his decision.

Decision-making that is solely based on emotional factors or intense spiritual experiences may be signs of a lack of adequate decision-making abilities. Likewise, lack of impulse control will be problematic in a man's candidacy for priesthood.

#### **4.4.2.8 Psychosexual Development and Maturity**

A full 'sexual inventory' should form part of the psychological assessment as part of the selection process. An applicant can be expected to have an awareness, acceptance and integration of his own sexuality and sexual orientation. He must demonstrate stability in chaste celibacy for a substantial period of time (at least two years) and have the capacity to live a life of genital abstinence. An applicant must also show comfort with his sexuality and with relationships with men and women of various ages.

Problematic signs might include: sexual ambivalence, unaddressed history as a survivor of sexual abuse, sexual harassment or sexual exploitation by others, addictive sexual behaviour, and the use of pornography including internet pornography. Other behaviours that are a cause for concern include: excessively effeminate manners and behaviours, sexually suggestive speech, affected sexualised behaviour such as "campness", as well as frequenting bars, clubs and other venues associated with a sexual subculture.

#### **4.4.3 Intellectual Criteria**

The assessment of an applicant's intellectual capacity to begin formation will look not only at his academic achievements and intellectual curiosity but also his innate ability and openness to learning.

##### **4.4.3.1 Academic Achievements**

Generally a candidate for the priesthood will be expected to complete tertiary education up to degree level and in some cases a candidate may be selected for studies at a Masters or Doctoral level. The basic entry requirement for seminary is, therefore, the same as a university which is either three A Levels or their equivalent. Candidates who have left school without sufficient qualifications should be encouraged to complete a "university access course" which can ordinarily be undertaken part time and completed in one or two years.

##### **4.4.3.2 Intelligence Tests**

Some form of intelligence test should form part of the psychological assessment. Sometimes an applicant who has not done well at school discovers, contrary to his own expectation, that he is more intellectually able than he believed. Such a person, if well-motivated to study, may with hard work cope well and even flourish academically at seminary. On the other hand, an academically bright student who is not well-motivated may rely on his ability to pass exams without much study and effectively become a lazy student. There is always the danger that a lazy seminarian will become a lazy priest.

##### **4.4.3.3 Reading & Cultural Interests**

Some applicants are avid readers or have a broad range of cultural interests. In the selection process it is good to encourage applicants to talk about what they have learned from their reading, interests and hobbies. This can help determine whether

an individual uses his cultural formation for the service of others.

#### **4.4.4 Pastoral Criteria**

Direct involvement in the life of a particular parish is not necessarily a criterion for accepting an applicant for the priesthood particularly in those parts of the country where parish life can be more anonymous. However, a legitimate question must be asked about the applicant's use of his spare time and whether he shows any sign of putting that to the service of others whether in the Church or in other volunteer projects. While it is not expected that an applicant have any direct pastoral experience, it is nevertheless expected that he should have a reasonable and realistic understanding of the life and ministry for which he is applying. In addition it would be useful to give consideration to the following points:

##### **4.4.4.1 Commitment**

An applicant must understand that priesthood is a life-long commitment and have the life-skills necessary to make that commitment. He must possess adequate relational and social skills and have the capacity for healthy intimacy, trust and interdependence. He should be comfortable either living with others or living alone. What is the applicant's record with regard to education and employment? Does he complete projects or is he a drifter?

##### **4.4.4.2 Communion**

He must be a man of communion, possessing competency working with groups, bringing people together, and having the desire to collaborate with others, particularly the lay men and women he will serve in a parish. He should have an ability and desire to relate well with priests and a willingness to promote priestly fraternity.

##### **4.4.4.3 Obedience**

He must have an appropriate respect for the authority of others and for that which he might be given. This includes a sense of responsibility towards the tasks entrusted to him and a desire to fulfil them in a generous spirit of service. He must have a sense of initiative to make tasks his own and fulfil them to the best of his ability and also to use his time well without the need to be micro-managed.

He needs also to have the humility to consult others and seek help from others who may be more experienced and avoid the sense that he knows best or is indispensable. A seminarian or priest who acts as a 'guru' or who is on a one man mission to 'fix' what he sees as wrong can be a great danger to souls.

##### **4.4.4.4 A Joyful Desire to Serve**

An applicant should demonstrate a willingness to serve in a variety of parish contexts. He should be willing to minister to the people of a diocese whatever their age, culture, ethnic origins, financial standing and level of faith development. He should also have an openness to ecumenical and inter-religious activities. Does the applicant believe the priest exists to serve the lay faithful or the other way round?

##### **4.4.4.5 An Openness to the New Evangelisation**

It is important that a candidate for the priesthood have a desire to share his faith with others especially with those who are living alienated from the Church. A candidate needs to be open to the New Evangelisation and to adapt to its demands especially in the area of reaching out to young people.

#### **4.4.5. Spiritual and Moral Criteria**

The call to priesthood comes from the heart of Christ and finds its home in the heart

of the one called who responds by seeking the Lord and growing in discipleship. It is a response that matures over time, particularly during the years of formation, and which sustains a man when faced with the demands of ministry. In an applicant for the priesthood, particularly one who has come recently to the faith, there may sometimes be a great enthusiasm that is not matched by an appropriate conversion of life and turning towards the Lord in prayer. Part of the assessment process is, therefore, to see whether a candidate has made sufficient progress in these areas to have established a solid basis on which to build in future formation. Discipleship will include an applicant's formation in the faith, his spiritual maturity and also his conversion of life or moral character expressed through virtuous living.

#### **4.4.5.1 Relationship with Christ**

An applicant must be a Roman Catholic in good standing with the Church who demonstrates a good Christian lifestyle. His relationship in faith with Christ must be the priority and foundation of his life. All other aspects of his vocation and life must be centred around this relationship. Can the candidate identify a moment when he was "evangelised" when the faith became real to him and led to the development of a personal commitment to Christ? Has this commitment given rise to a life of discipleship and to the discernment of a vocation as a call from Christ?

#### **4.4.5.2 Spiritual Life**

The applicant must have demonstrated a desire to deepen his spiritual life and a commitment to ongoing discernment. He should have a capacity both to differentiate and to integrate his relationship with God, the Church and faith. He should have a personal spiritual competence and an integrated religious life. He must be a man of prayer and sacramental life. *How has the applicant benefitted from the spiritual direction he has received during the application process?*

#### **4.4.5.3 Freedom**

The applicant should understand that pursuing God's will includes freedom of choice. His spiritual life ought to show flexibility and an ability to differentiate essential spiritual practices from personal devotion. Will the applicant be able to adapt his spiritual life to that of the seminary? Is it rooted in prayer and a relationship with Christ or is it reduced to a series of devotional practices?

#### **4.4.5.4 Virtuous Life**

He should be able to identify the major precepts by which he lives. His behaviour should demonstrate that he lives these out with integrity and honesty. He should be able to distinguish the demands of Christian fraternity from the attitudes, assumptions and prejudices that sometimes arise from political rhetoric or social background.

#### **4.4.5.5 Motivation for Priesthood**

Why does the applicant want to be a priest? Is he free from undue influence from other people such as parents or friends. Some proper motivations for priesthood would include: a desire to serve others in their spiritual lives; a zeal for the love of God and his Church; a mission to bring Christ to the people and the people to Christ; and a hope that his ministry will further the kingdom of God. It is also important to consider an applicant's interests and hobbies and to evaluate whether these are, on the whole, compatible with those who are happy and fulfilled in ministry.

Counter-signs would include: a desire for status, clericalism, a desire to escape a difficult family situation or some aspect of his own sexuality, psychological issues, or some other adverse life situation.

#### **4.4.5.6 Problematic Behaviour**

Problems may arise with a candidate who sees ministry as a human endeavour disconnected from faith or who sees faith primarily in terms of rules and regulations. This is sometimes evidenced by a person who is unwilling to try to understand the Church or the faith and who does not recognise that the faith is a *fides quaerens intellectum*. A man who possesses a spirituality that is focused on set practices, who is threatened by other kinds of spirituality, or who is judgemental towards them may also be a concern. Similarly an inconsistency or lack of integrity and honesty in living the moral life as well as appropriate Catholic values may also be problematic. Some applicants may have an ambition that is beyond their intellectual or emotional capacity, a desire to cling to others or dependency on a system of support. Some may inappropriately approach priesthood with a sense of shame, guilt or fear.

### **4.5 Other Considerations**

#### **4.5.1 Maximum Age**

It is advisable that in each diocese the Vocations Director in consultation with his bishop should determine policies regarding the maximum (and minimum) age for considering applications. There should also be policies with regard to how long a convert might be asked to wait before making an application as well as any minimum period for living chaste celibacy (usually not less than two to three years).

#### **4.5.2 Men Previously Married**

A diocese may also have a policy for widowers which would include any length of time they may be expected to wait after the death of their spouse before making an application.

If the man is divorced and has had the marriage annulled the diocese may consider questions regarding the public knowledge of the divorce, the residence of the former spouse and any children, the time between the annulment and the application, the status of any children for whom he may be responsible, and the reason for the divorce and annulment. The diocese, with the consent of the candidate, will need to see the decision of the tribunal and consider any evidence that might impact on the applicant's ability to live or minister as a priest.

#### **4.5.3 Applicants from outside the Diocese**

Some dioceses may have specific policies applicable to applicants from outside their diocese. These may include stipulations requiring a period of residence in that diocese or what other connections with the diocese may be considered.

#### **4.5.4 Seminarians Transferring Diocese**

It is helpful to a diocese to have policies for seminarians who wish to transfer either from or to another diocese. These should be communicated to all seminarians at the beginning of their seminary training. The policy should state what financial remuneration, if any, would be expected from the new diocese.

In all cases the Vocations Director should obtain written permission from the applicant to transfer his file to the new diocese. The receiving diocese should not accept the candidate without the file and a report from his seminary.

The policy may state that a student seeking to transfer to another diocese withdraw as a seminarian for his original diocese. In other words he ceases to be a seminarian and must effectively make a new application to his diocese of choice. In this case he is not strictly a transfer and no financial remuneration is liable. However, the diocese



is still required to release a copy of the student's file<sup>32</sup>.

#### **4.5.5 Financial**

Every candidate is asked to make a declaration of financial liabilities when they fill out the standard application form. Ordinarily a student is expected to have met any debts for which he is legally or morally responsible before entering seminary. Each diocese needs to have a policy as to whether it will help with a loan for relatively small amounts and also for dealing with Student Loans. It is also important to determine whether an applicant will have any ongoing financial responsibilities if accepted for formation. Is he, for example, expected to contribute to the upkeep of parents or family members?

#### **4.5.6 Applicants from Abroad**

When considering an applicant from abroad additional considerations need to be borne in mind. These include immigration status, and likelihood to be given leave to stay, language proficiency, background checks and references, academic background and cultural adaptation.

In England and Wales it is usually the case that an applicant who was born abroad should have lived independently in this country for two to three years before beginning an application process for a diocese. This gives them time to adjust to the specific characteristics of the Church in this country.

Applicants whose primary language is not British English may be asked to undergo an English proficiency course and examination.

Applicants from abroad should be able to demonstrate compliance with all the regulations concerning immigration legislation. That is, they must have come to this country with the appropriate visas and have observed all the provisions of that visa throughout their stay. Applicants who have not complied with the provisions of their visa should not be considered by a diocese. Similarly an applicant who comes on one visa - student or visitor's - but seeks immediately to apply to a diocese should be informed that it is likely the UK Boarder Agency would not have allowed him into the country had they known his true intent and that the diocese cannot accept him.

Particular care must be taken over foreign applicants who may previously have been in seminary formation. It is sometimes difficult to get information from foreign seminaries but it is not impossible. Reference documents from abroad must not be collected or provided by the applicant himself. The Vocations Director should contact the seminary or house of formation through the curial offices of the diocese where the seminary or house of formation is located. In the case of men who were formerly members of a religious congregation in a different country, he should contact the curial offices of the relevant congregation. If no reference documents are forthcoming the applicant should not be accepted.

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<sup>32</sup> of the specific guidance given in Section Five of this Handbook.

## SECTION FIVE

# DATA PROTECTION AND OTHER LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

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## Legal Considerations Concerning Data Protection, Individual Files and the National Database of Applicants

### 5.1 Informed Consent

As part of the Application process a file is established for each individual and kept, ordinarily in the Vocations Office. The contents of the file include the paperwork sent by the diocese to the seminary (or seminaries) where the individual will study. To meet the provisions of current Data Protection legislation, the applicant needs to know what information is being stored about him, why it is being kept and for how long.

The standard application documents contain a consent form which has now been clarified in order to facilitate informed consent. However, it is important that the Vocations Director explain the following points in person to each applicant:

- i. the paperwork associated with the application, including references and other documents obtained from third parties, will be kept on file by the diocese;
- ii. The information is kept not only for the purpose of his application but additionally for formation (and a copy is therefore sent to the seminary rector should he be accepted), and to demonstrate due diligence on the part of the diocese should questions arise concerning the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults;
- iii. The current policy in England and Wales is that files relating to safeguarding issue be kept for one hundred years;
- iv. If an applicant were to apply to another diocese or Religious Congregation at some later date, he will be asked to give his consent to a copy of his file being shared with them.

The applicant must also give a separate written consent to his details being added to the National Database of Applicants (see below).

#### **Important:**

Vocation Directors must remember that written consent is required before they can share information contained in an applicant's or student's file. Where files are kept elsewhere than in the Vocations Office (such as the Chancery) it may be helpful to include the following statement at the front of the file:

*"In order to meet the requirements of Data Protection Legislation, the contents of this file may not be shared with third parties without the written consent of the individual concerned. A sample Consent Form may be obtained from the Vocations Office or from the National Office for Vocation"*<sup>33</sup>

### 5.2 National Database of Applicants

The National Office for Vocation has responsibility for maintaining a National Database of Applicants for the Priesthood<sup>34</sup>. The purpose of the database is to flag up those applicants who may previously have applied to another diocese in England

<sup>33</sup> A sample Consent Form is included in Appendix Five to this Handbook

<sup>34</sup> The NOV Policy Statement on the Database is reproduced in the Appendix to this Handbook.

and Wales in order to allow enquiries to be made about any previous application(s). This is especially important when an applicant has been rejected because of concerns about his suitability to work with children or vulnerable adults. Originally established in response to a recommendation of the Nolan Report, the importance of accurately maintaining the database was emphasised by the Cumberledge Commission reviewing the implementation of that Report.

Each applicant must give his consent to his details being kept on the database and a consent form is included in the national application documents. The relevant details must be submitted by the Vocations Director as soon as possible once he receives a completed application form.

### **5.2.1 Consent**

The national Application Form has been amended to clarify what information will be included in the National Database, why it is being held and for how long it will be kept. It is nevertheless important that the Vocations Director explain in person the following points to each applicant:

- The National Database contains the applicant's name, date of birth, address;
- If a Vocations Director is told that there is already an entry on the database, he is referred to the diocese, Ordinariate or Religious Congregation, which will hold further information, but that information will not be shared without consent;
- The information on the database may be used in the future for statistical purposes but without revealing individual details.

### **5.2.2 Procedures**

It is important that the Database be kept up to date and that all the dioceses of England and Wales, as well as the Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham, are participating. When a Vocations Director receives a signed Application Form he must email the name, date of birth, and address of the applicant to the National Office for Vocation - [enquiries@ukvocation.org](mailto:enquiries@ukvocation.org). The National Office will add the details to the database and conduct a simple search for any previous entries of the individual and let the Vocations Director know the outcome. If a duplicate or suspected duplicate is found the Vocations Director will be asked to contact any previous Vocations Office. It is important to remember, however, that written consent must be given before files can be shared.

### **5.3 Guidance for Maintaining the files of Applicants and Candidates for the Priesthood.**

As part of the application process a wide selection of documents are collected by the Vocations Director. Each diocese needs to make an informed decision about what records to retain and how long they should be kept. This is important because all records must be kept in accordance with the Data Protection Act. This Act stipulates that personal data may only be obtained for one or more lawful purposes, and that it may not be kept for longer than is necessary for such purposes. In the case of applicants for the priesthood lawful purposes may include both the selection of suitable candidates and also as evidence of due diligence on the part of the diocese. Records should not be kept simply for the sake of keeping them. In time some information may no longer be relevant for the purpose of selection. For example the psychological assessment, medical report or references may no longer be relevant as selection documents but may nonetheless be important for seminary formation.

The fact that documents be no longer needed for selection (or formation) does not necessarily mean they should be destroyed because in a legal setting due diligence is not assumed. It must be established and proven. Appropriate records can be used to demonstrate due diligence on the part of a diocese whereas a lack of appropriate records may be considered a breach of guidelines or even as an attempted cover-up should there be a legal investigation. A decision therefore needs to be made about which records are needed for future reference. They also need to be kept in a way that makes them accessible to relevant parties in accordance with the provisions of the Act.

In making an informed decision about which records to retain, the following considerations should be kept in mind:

- i. We recommend that each diocese has a written policy for the retention of records and that this policy be reviewed from time to time to ensure compliance on the part of the diocese. It should also be reviewed to ensure it meets the requirements of any changes to legislation.
- ii. The Vocations Director should explain to the applicant what documents will form part of his file and that the Application Document requires him to sign a Consent Form which explains the lawful purposes for the establishment and retention of a file. This form should also consent to adding his details to the national Database of Applicants.
- iii. Records should be kept in a secure place. If copies are kept in more than one place (for example in the Vocations Office as well as the Chancery) it is important to ensure that proper control is maintained and that a single file is established as soon as practical.
- iv. When a student is ordained or leaves seminary, his file must be transferred securely to the relevant ordinary of their incardination or sponsorship although a duplicate copy (except of the psychological assessment) may be retained by the seminary.
- v. Files should never be released to another party, such as another Vocations Director, without the individual's written consent. Sample Consent Forms are given in the appendix to this document.

#### **5.4 A Note about Electronic Files**

These days many files are kept electronically and a lot of correspondence takes place by electronic mail. Whether or not an applicant is accepted, leaves formation, or proceeds to ordination, a decision needs to be made about which electronic documents should be retained in hard copy and placed in the permanent paper file. All electronic files should be deleted and only hard copies retained. Particular care should be taken to ensure any email correspondence which may express, or gives rise for, concern is retained.

#### **5.5 Contents of the File**

The following sections recommend which files should be retained and for how long and may form the basis of a diocesan policy.

##### **5.5.1 Applicants who are not accepted for Formation**

*If an applicant is not admitted or chooses not to enter seminary his records should be retained for one hundred years. The file should include the following:*

- Application Form
- Signed Consent Form
- Psychological Assessment

- Autobiographical Essay
- Medical Report
- Sacramental Certificates
- References
- DBS clearance (usually from the diocesan Safeguarding Office)
- Selection Conference (Committee) Report or Recommendation
- Correspondence between the applicant and the Vocations Director

*After the retention period has elapsed, the file can be reduced to a one-page summary. This should include the reasons why he was not accepted or chose not to enter. It should also confirm when the documents were destroyed and by whom.*

#### **5.5.2 Applicants who are accepted for Formation**

*During formation the candidates should be retained in an active file (not the diocesan archive). The file should include all the documents listed above as well as:*

- Correspondence between the diocese and the seminary about the applicant
- Seminary Reports and other evaluations
- Any subsequent psychological reports
- Academic transcripts and reports
- Canonical documents

#### **5.5.3 Candidates who are Ordained**

*Once a candidate is ordained his file should be transferred from the Vocations Office and given to the Chancellor or Vicar for Clergy and should become part of the relevant diocesan archive. Before doing so it should be combined with the file received from the seminary and checked to ensure only necessary items are transferred.*

- Application Form
- Signed Consent Form
- Psychological Assessment
- Autobiographical Essay
- Medical Report
- Sacramental Certificates
- References
- DBS clearance (usually from the diocesan Safeguarding Office)
- Selection Conference (Committee) Report or Recommendation
- Correspondence between the candidate and the Vocations Director
- Correspondence between the diocese and the seminary about the candidate
- Seminary Reports and other evaluations
- Any subsequent psychological reports
- Academic transcripts and reports
- Canonical documents

#### **5.5.4 Candidates who discontinue Formation**

*When a candidate leaves formation his file must be returned to the diocese by the seminary. This file should be combined with the relevant diocesan file. It should contain all the documents listed in the above section plus:*

- Any documents related to the student leaving formation.

## SECTION SIX

# SPECIFIC PROCEDURES FOR THOSE PREVIOUSLY IN FORMATION



*Confidential draft*

## 6.1 Applications from those Previously in Formation

Vocations Directors should exercise particular care when dealing with applications from men who have previously been in a seminary or Religious Congregation. In addition to the ordinary paperwork, the Code of Canon Law states: "If there is a question of admitting those who have been dismissed from another seminary or religious institute, there is also required the testimony of the respective superior, especially concerning the reason for their dismissal or departure"<sup>35</sup>.

Although the Canon refers specifically to those who were dismissed, the following provisions may also be considered as good practice for all applications from men who have previously been in formation.

Decisions about the suitability of an applicant require both adequate information and consistent procedures. The Vocations Director needs to ensure that there has been a full disclosure of all relevant information. For this he cannot rely simply on self-reporting or documents provided by the applicant but must make direct and personal contact with the previous place of formation.

The national Application Forms include a question which specifically asks whether an applicant has ever applied to, been accepted or rejected by, or been dismissed from a diocesan formation programme, seminary, institute of consecrated life or society of apostolic life. On receipt of the Application Form the Vocations Director must send the applicant's details to the National Office for Vocation for inclusion in the national Database of Applicants and to allow a check to take place.

An applicant who has previously been in formation must permit the release of all relevant information concerning his departure from any previous programme of priestly formation or institute of consecrated life or society of apostolic life. This information is released to the Vocations Director on behalf of the Ordinary and is made available to all those involved in the selection process in a manner parallel to the other application documents. If the applicant is accepted it is also made available to the Rector of the seminary where he will study.

All those involved in the application process where an applicant has previously been in formation should be reminded of the confidentiality required in such matters. This is particularly important where the reasons for leaving previous formation may no longer be significant factors in the life of the applicant. It is important to remember that every applicant has a right to privacy and to a good reputation<sup>36</sup>.

In order to permit the release of information, the applicant is asked to sign a specific release form<sup>37</sup> which clearly states that he:

- 1) Consents to the sharing of all relevant information from previous formation programs with the diocese to which he is applying and to a future seminary rector should he be accepted;
- 2) Understands that no person has a right to be accepted into a programme of priestly formation.

An applicant's refusal to provide the release of all relevant information provides

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<sup>35</sup> CIC, Canon 241, Section 3

<sup>36</sup> cf CIC, Canon 220

<sup>37</sup> A sample Release Form is given in the Appendix to this Handbook

sufficient grounds to reject the application. Likewise, inaccurate, incomplete, or misleading information provided by the applicant also provides sufficient grounds for the rejection of the application.

Once the release form has been signed the Vocations Director must write requesting a reference and all relevant paperwork from all the seminaries or houses of formation previously attended by the applicant and also to his previous diocese and / or Religious Congregation. He should also, if possible, seek a confidential, oral interview with the Rector or person responsible for the applicant's formation at that time. He should take contemporary notes during this interview for inclusion in the applicant's file.

To facilitate this, it would be very helpful when a man leaves seminary for whatever reason if Rectors were to add a document to the individual's paperwork indicating why he left formation. This "exit evaluation" should summarise the concerns if a student was asked to leave or dismissed.

Although not forming part of the ordinary application paperwork, all resulting paperwork, including the contemporaneous notes should be seen by the Selection Panel and also by the Bishop as part of the application process for all men who have previously been in formation.

If an applicant is not accepted for formation it would be helpful for the Vocations Director to explain the reasons why as far as possible and to include a note to that effect in his file.

## **6.2 Protocol for Seminarians wishing to Transfer Dioceses**

### **6.2.1 Introduction**

There are sometimes legitimate reasons for a student to want to transfer to another diocese during his period of seminary formation. These reasons will usually be particular to the individual's personal circumstances (eg he grew up in another part of the country). Occasionally they may be specific to the diocese he wishes to leave. While not the same as an applicant seeking re-admission to formation, requests for transfers between dioceses should also be subject to proper scrutiny by the receiving diocese.

There are a number of principles that should always be borne in mind:

**Respect for the original Bishop:** Seminarians are diocesan students. An initial discernment has already taken place between the seminarian and his diocese. While discernment may continue at seminary, the student nevertheless remains primarily a diocesan student and has a particular relationship with his Bishop and his Vocations Director. The original diocese should not, therefore, be excluded from any discussion about transfer to another diocese.

**Respect for the Law:** The Code of Canon Law (Canon 241 s1) states that the diocesan bishop is to admit to the major seminary only those candidates whose human, moral, spiritual and intellectual gifts, as well as physical and psychological health and right intention show the applicant's capability to dedicate himself permanently to the sacred ministries. Following a standard procedure is not only prudent but necessary to show that the diocese has exercised due diligence in applying the Law.

**Safeguarding:** To ensure confidence in this area the transfer should be arranged by the two dioceses. The student should give written permission to his original

diocese for all documentation to be transferred to the new one. The receiving diocese must ensure it acts in accordance with the same safeguarding procedures it would apply to any other applicant.

**Justice:** Seminary training is an enormous investment for a diocese and financial constraints may affect where new students are sent to study. A new diocese may reasonably be expected to compensate the original one for the costs incurred during the years of formation. It is also a matter of justice to the seminarian that a request for a transfer be expedited as quickly as possible.

### **6.2.2 Procedure**

Having discussed his reasons for wanting a transfer with his Spiritual Director and relevant seminary authorities, the seminarian should initiate the process by speaking with his existing Vocations Director who will explain to him the policy of that diocese.

It is particularly important that a seminarian be made aware if it is the bishop's policy that a man seeking a transfer be terminated forthwith as a candidate for his diocese as this could create a situation whereby the individual is without a diocese and thereby potentially interrupt his seminary formation. The Vocations Director should also explain to the seminarian the policy regarding financial remuneration from the new diocese to cover the costs already recurred. If he still wishes to go ahead with a transfer he should then contact the Vocations Director of the diocese where he wishes to apply. If the new diocese deems a transfer may be in the best interests of the candidate, the Vocations Director of that diocese should ask him to sign a form consenting to the release of his files. He should then write to the houses of formation requesting those files and also seek to have a conversation with those responsible in a manner analogous to the process for students previously in formation.

Transfers should not be initiated or arranged by the seminary.

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# SECTION SEVEN

## APPENDICES

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## APPENDIX ONE

### Psychological Assessments Code of Practice

*A guide for Bishops, Vocations Personnel, Seminary Rectors, Psychologists and Applicants*

#### **Psychological Assessment**

Canon Law (esp. Canons 1029 & 1041) requires that the diocesan bishop must take the psychological health of a candidate into account when he is assessing that candidate's ability to be able to dedicate himself permanently to the ordained ministry. The 2008 document *Guidelines for the Use of Psychology in the Admission and Formation of Candidates for the Priesthood*, issued by the Congregation for Catholic Education, recommends the use of psychological assessment as an aid in vocational discernment and as an integral part of the selection of candidates for the priesthood, subject to safeguarding the freedom and privacy due to the individual. The *Guidelines* recognise that such assessment is for both the good of the Church, and that of the candidate. This code of practice, approved for use in the dioceses of England and Wales, reflects those *Guidelines*.

A formal psychological assessment of the candidate should be made by a suitable psychologist to advise the bishop in this regard. The psychologist who carries out the assessment should be a chartered clinical or counselling psychologist who is currently in practice and who is also familiar with the demands of the priestly life and formation. It may be helpful if the candidate knows of these qualifications. The candidate should also be made aware of the duty of care that the psychologist has for both the candidate and diocesan bishop.

Whilst an important function of the assessment is to be of service to the candidate in helping that person to respond in freedom to a call from God to serve Him in the ordained ministry, the assessment is commissioned first and foremost to help the diocesan bishop assess a candidate's psychological health and potential ability to dedicate himself permanently to the ordained ministry. The contents of the assessment and report will provide the bishop with important insights into the candidate's personality and suitability for ministry. In the case of priesthood (and religious life) this includes exploring issues to do with celibacy and obedience. In doing this, the assessment may also help the candidate to understand the psychological factors at work in his present choices and the implications of these in vocational effectiveness. It also indicates areas for future growth.

The psychologist should be sufficiently qualified to cover all the terms of reference of the psychological assessment, which should include:

- Issues the candidate wishes to explore.
- The candidate's family and social history, including education and employment.
- The candidate's personal history, including developmental background, relationships, **vocationality, Attentional maturity and** should also be given to childhood **experiences, esp** abuse/neglect.
- The candidate's self-awareness



- The candidate's spiritual and religious life.
- The candidate's interpersonal skills.
- The candidate's value system, attitudes and needs.
- The candidate's gifts, strengths and weaknesses.
- The candidate's level of intellectual functioning.
- Areas of conflict.
- The candidate's defensive systems and coping mechanisms.
- The candidate's patterns of behaviour in prayer, work and relationships.
- The candidate's motivation.
- The candidate's attitude to authority.
- The candidate's medical and psychological background, including alcohol and substance abuse and personal and family history of psychological and psychiatric disorders or dysfunction.

It is expected that the assessment will include clinical consultations and psychometric assessment of intellectual functioning and personality. The assessment may also include the use of projective techniques.

Usually a candidate should have been in regular contact with a Vocations Director for some months before being put forward for psychological assessment. The assessment should not be undertaken without the candidate's freely given written informed consent to both the assessment and the preparation of a written report. This written report is shown to both candidate and to the bishop (and his advisors). Note that the diocesan bishop is the 'client' for the purpose of the assessment, and as such has the right of ownership of the report. The candidate must be given the right to make comment on any aspects in the psychologist's report that he feels needs clarification or that he objects to.

The report can be usefully be used in spiritual direction and, if the candidate is accepted for training, in formation; but this must only be done with the permission of the candidate.

If the report indicates areas of possible future growth that require a significant amount of therapy, then consideration should be given to having therapy, which is normally paid for by the diocese, before the candidate enters formation.

### **1. Purpose of Assessment**

The fundamental starting point for all assessments is the recognition that every man who offers himself for the priesthood is valued by the Church and has a right to feel treated with dignity and respect, whatever the ultimate outcome of the process.

The Handbook for Selection is clear on the purpose of the assessment. The Handbook should be known and adhered to by Bishops, Vocation Directors, chosen Psychologists, the Bishop's Selectors and Seminary Rectors alike.

Everything humanly possible needs to be done to ensure that candidates for the priesthood are psychologically healthy – not perfect but with the personal qualities necessary to benefit from the formation process, and to be able to serve as effective priests after ordination. Psychological Assessments seek to provide valuable information on and insights into the person being assessed within a professionally safe and ethically sound framework.

It should always be borne in mind that data from psychological assessments is only

one source of information for the bishop to consider. The candidate's own life story, the reports of the Selection Advisory Conference and other people who know the candidate are also important sources of information. These should all be used when making a decision about a candidate's suitability to proceed to priestly formation.

Tim J. Costello, S.M., writes (1985), "Psychologists can help religious authorities and candidates come to responsible and informed decisions concerning admission or the call to holy orders. The consultant can do no more and should do no less than to provide the right kind of information to assist in this task of discernment. Religious formators and administrators cannot expect the psychological assessment to provide a decision that properly lies beyond its scope and purpose". (Psychological Evaluation of Vocations. Human Development, (6)4, p.39)

## **2. The Client**

*Note that the diocesan bishop is the 'client' for the purpose of the assessment, and as such has the right of ownership of the report.*

It is the bishop who commissions and finances the report, specifies its purpose and what is required of it. In this way the bishop is the contractual client for the assessment. This in no way detracts from the professional responsibility of the psychologist towards the subject of the report, the candidate himself.

## **3. Timing of Assessment**

*Usually a candidate should have been in regular contact with a Vocation Director for some months before being put forward for psychological assessment.*

*If the report indicates areas of possible future growth that require a significant amount of therapy, then consideration should be given to having therapy, which is normally paid for by the diocese, before the candidate enters formation.*

It is recommended that a psychological assessment be carried out on applicants at an early stage in the selection process.

## **4. Assessors**

See Section 66 above, taken from the Handbook for Selection, for all terms of reference of psychological assessments that chosen psychologists should be sufficiently qualified to cover.

*The psychologist who carries out the assessment should be a chartered clinical or counselling psychologist who is currently in practice and who is familiar with the demands of priestly life and formation.*

The chosen psychologist could be an appropriately qualified layperson, priest or religious. If a priest who is a trained psychologist is asked to carry out the assessment, consideration needs to be given regarding any possible future conflict of interest that might arise if the priest belongs to the candidate's diocese of application. This would also apply if the psychologist is a member of the staff at a seminary to which the candidate may be sent for formation.

## **5. Preparing Candidates**

Vocation Directors need to be aware of the importance of accompanying and

supporting candidates through the psychological assessment process, from beginning to end. Sometimes a candidate may feel anxious about this aspect of the selection process; however it should be borne in mind that in most cases the assessment usually turns out to be a very positive experience. Vocations personnel should take care to avoid any use of language which may cause the candidate to worry about the psychological assessment or have a negative perception of it. It should not be automatically presumed that all candidates will necessarily find the experience threatening.

Attention should be given to the venue in which assessments are undertaken, and the need for candidates to talk about the experience.

Candidates should have the three-fold purpose of the assessment explained, that is, (1) helping the bishop make his decision, (2) helping the candidate in his discernment, and (3) identifying areas of growth. They should be encouraged to be as open and relaxed as possible. Information should also be given about what is to be expected in the process, and assurances about confidentiality and procedures for sharing information.

*It may be helpful if the candidate knows of these (the psychologist' s) qualifications.*

*The candidate should also be aware of the duty of care that the psychologist has for both the candidate and diocesan bishop.*

## **6. Preparing Assessors**

It is recommended that there be a close partnership between the Vocation Director and psychologist. Psychologists making the assessments have their own professional ethical arrangements to make with Vocation Directors, and a mutual understanding of these expectations and the reasons for them will be helpful when commissions of assessments are made. Psychologists can also give information about which personal qualities might be explored most helpfully in the assessment, in order to promote the Church's priorities for formation and priestly ministry, particularly with respect to recent research and issues of law where these are relevant.

At the same time, clear guidance should be given to psychologists as to the purpose and limitations of the psychological assessment by those responsible for commissioning the report, based on the Handbook for Selection. The Vocation Director may wish to highlight particular areas for the psychologist to explore with an individual candidate.

There needs to be a particular sensitivity to the needs of young candidates, for whom the whole process may be difficult.

The psychologist has a professional responsibility to be objective and fair, and should only explore and report on what is directly relevant to the assessment.

Psychological interviews and reports should be limited to areas within the psychologist's brief and competence. It should be recognised for example, that screening for sexual abusers is a very specialist area that not every psychologist will have been fully trained in. In some cases it might be deemed necessary for a further referral to a more specialist psychologist.

A feedback meeting between the candidate and the psychologist should always be a

part of the process, enabling the candidate to understand clearly what has been written, and why. *The candidate must be given the right to make comment on any aspect of the psychologist's report that he feels needs clarification or that he objects to.*

The Vocation Director, on behalf of the Bishop, should have an explanatory feedback from the psychologist on the contents and conclusions of the report.

## **7. Confidentiality Agreement**

*The assessment should not be undertaken without the candidate's freely given written informed consent to both the assessment and the preparation of a written report. This report is shown to both the candidate and the bishop (and his advisors).*

A written three-way Confidentiality Agreement should be prepared by the psychologist and signed by the client (the Bishop or Vocation Director acting on his behalf), the candidate and the psychologist. It should cover the psychologist's Code of Conduct and Ethical Principles of the British Psychological Society, the opportunity for the candidate to see the draft report and amend any incorrect factual details, who owns the report (the client), how it will be confidentially stored, and who has access to the report. Those with access to the report should be named (including the Bishop, the Vocation Director, the candidate, and the Rector of whichever seminary the candidate attends, should they be accepted). If the bishop feels that others (his advisors) need access to the report, the written permission of the candidate should be sought. In the notes accompanying the Application Form, the candidate is made aware that the Rector of any seminary he attends will receive a copy of the report, though he also has the right to request that this does not happen. If a candidate wishes to exercise this right, then it should not be done lightly – he should be made aware of the potential benefits of the report being used in formation in a carefully controlled way.

If a candidate does not go forward for selection or formation, or if he leaves formation at any stage, he is entitled to keep a copy of his report.

If a candidate moves to a different seminary, a further written permission from the candidate is necessary before the new rector can have a copy of the report.

It should be noted that the assessment is the property of the bishop (and candidate). Although the assessment can be used in formation, the seminary rector's copy of the assessment should be destroyed when he leaves, as it is no longer pertinent to his formation there (given that he has left). Ideally, seminaries should develop their own policies regarding the retention and destruction of this and other selection documents (See paragraphs 87 and 88 of the Handbook).

## **8. Use of Assessment**

*The report may be used in spiritual direction and, if the candidate is accepted for training, in formation; but this must only be done with the permission of the candidate.*

Although the Rector receives a copy of the psychological assessment, this is not to be interpreted as blanket permission for the document to be used generally in the candidate's formation. Only with the express written permission of the seminarian can the psychological assessment be used by formation staff in human and spiritual formation. The report could profitably be used during formation, particularly in the early years, as a basis for ongoing reflection on identified areas of growth.

Psychological reports are only useful in formation in so far as formation staff are competent to read and understand them. This may require particular training. Clearly the confidentiality of the report is paramount throughout formation, and beyond.

### **9. Further Assessments**

If a further psychological assessment is compiled by another psychologist at some point during formation then thought needs to be given to its purpose and how it relates to the initial assessment. Clearly there are issues of confidentiality if another psychologist seeks reference to the original psychological report, and the seminarian's written permission should be given for this.

It is recognised that not every psychologist can be an expert in all areas. The purpose of the assessment is to provide a view regarding the applicant, based on the particular insights of the psychologist. If a situation occurs whereby further, more detailed assessment is warranted, then a second, more specialist psychologist can be used.

### **10. Shelf-life**

Clearly some aspects of psychological assessment reports have a limited life-span, especially in the case of younger candidates. Formation is about growth, development and change. It is recommended, however, that the diocese keep a single secure paper copy on file to allow for possible legal or other repercussions.

If a man is ordained, the standard practices relating to the storage of files, in the light of the recommendations of the Nolan Report, should be adhered to. Practice will vary between dioceses as to where this file is kept if a man proceeds or otherwise to ordination. Nolan recommends that files should be retained for 100 years.

Candidates should be told at what point the report will be destroyed. In this case of candidates who have been in formation the 100 year rule should apply for records. In the case of those not accepted, it may not be practical nor desirable to keep files longer than necessary; however a basic synopsis of the files should be kept, and this should include details from the psychological assessment if information from this led to the decision not to accept the candidate.

Policies regarding the destruction of out-of-date reports should be respected in dioceses and houses of formation. It is desirable that a destruction date be clearly written on the front cover or front page of a candidate's file. [See Section 7 above].

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## APPENDIX TWO

### Database of Applicants

#### National Office for Vocation: Policy Statement

When an individual applies to a Catholic diocese in England/Wales or a Catholic religious congregation with a religious house in England/Wales for training as a Catholic priest they are required to consent to limited information about their application being entered on the National Database for Applicants to the Priesthood. This database is held by the National Office for Vocation (NOV), an office of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales (CBCEW). It is held on the shared drive of the CBCEW computer system in an area that can only be accessed by authorised NOV personnel. The first entries on the data base date from 1997.

**Access** to the database is password restricted to the Director of NOV and the Vocations Administrator of NOV. Day to day, the Administrator processes requests to check a person against the database. These requests may only be made by the vocations director of either a Catholic diocese or a Catholic religious congregation.

**The purpose** of the database is to ensure that anybody who applies for training as a Catholic priest cannot hide any previous application. When a vocations director requests that a person's details are added to the database, if the applicant has previously applied for training, this will be flagged up and the vocations director will be informed of the details of the previous application. This then enables the vocations director to contact those responsible for the previous application to ask why the applicant did not begin or complete his training to see if there are any concerns.

**The information retained** is a person's full name, age and date of birth, address at the time of the application, date of the application, diocese or religious congregation to which application is being made, name of the vocations director handling the application. This information is retained on the database until the applicant reaches the age of 80, the age beyond which a person would not be ordained.

Fr Christopher Jamison OSB  
Director, NOV  
25<sup>th</sup> March 2014

*Confidential draft*

## APPENDIX THREE

### POLICY REGARDING THE RECORD KEEPING OF STUDENT FILES

**This policy is to be observed by the following Seminaries:** St Mary's College, Oscott, English Hall, Chelsea St College, Rome Pontifical Beda College, Rome Royal College of St Alban, Valladolid

The Bishops' ask that the following policy for all student records is adopted by those Seminaries, including those overseas, serving the Dioceses of England and Wales:

#### A. CURRENT AND FUTURE STUDENTS

The records of all current and future students attending an English and Welsh seminary, at home or abroad, should be processed in the following way:

A1 Following ordination, or when a seminarian leaves the seminary, the file of each student who has attended an English and Welsh seminary, at home or abroad, must be transferred securely to the relevant Diocesan Ordinary of their incardination or sponsorship.

A2 A complete duplicate copy of this file (with the exception of the content noted in A3 below) may be retained by the seminary for archival purposes and processed strictly in accordance with the data protection principles in force during the period of their retention. Each duplicate file is to be securely retained for archival and historical research purposes only (see attached guidance). Access to this secure data must be restricted to the person holding the office of Seminary Rector alone.

A3 Whenever any student leaves seminary, all professional psychological assessments are to be returned to the sponsoring diocese. No copies of students' psychological assessments are to be retained by the seminaries.

A4 The seminary file sent to the Diocesan Ordinary should be combined with the student's diocesan 'personnel' file.

A5 Where a student is transferring to another seminary, the complete file should be passed on to the other seminary. A duplicate copy of the student's file (with the exception noted in A3 above) may be retained for archival purposes and be processed strictly in accordance with the data protection principles in force during the period of the file's retention.

#### B HISTORICAL FILES

The 'historical' files (for the last 75 years) of all students who have attended an English and Welsh seminary, at home or abroad, should be processed in one of the following two ways (B1 or B2):

B1 Where a seminary Rector determines that the 'historical' files (for the last



75 years) of former students should not be retained for archival purposes:

B1.1 All such files should be transferred securely to the relevant Diocesan Ordinary of the file subject's incardination or sponsorship.

B1.2 A complete list of the files sent to the relevant Diocesan Ordinary must accompany the files.

B1.3 A copy of the list (not the files) in B1.2 above must be sent by the Diocesan Ordinary to the relevant Diocesan Safeguarding Co-ordinator. It will then be that Co-ordinator's responsibility to add these files, as appropriate, to their diocesan past case review.

B2 Where a seminary Rector determines that the 'historical' files (for the last 75 years) of former students should be retained for archival purposes:

- . B2.1 A duplicate copy of each file should be made and transferred securely to the relevant Diocesan Ordinary of their incardination or sponsorship.
- . B2.2 If, during the copying of 'historical' files, the professional psychological assessment of a student is found within their file, this assessment must be separated from the historical file and transferred with the copy of that student's file to the relevant sponsoring diocese.
- . B2.3 No copies of psychological assessments are to be retained by the seminaries (see A3 above).
- . B2.4 A complete list of the files sent to the relevant Diocesan Ordinary must accompany the copied files.
- . B2.5 A copy of the list (not the files) in B2.4 above must be sent by the Diocesan Ordinary to the relevant Diocesan Safeguarding Co-ordinator. It will then be that Co-ordinator's responsibility to add these files, as appropriate, to their diocesan past case review.

The original 'historical' files may be securely retained for archival and historical research purposes only (see in the Appendix attached: *'Data Protection in Relation to Archives and Records Kept for Historical Research'*) and be processed strictly in accordance with the data protection principles in force during the period of their retention.

**Date: 14 February 2012**

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## APPENDIX FOUR

### Data Protection in Relation to Archives and Records Kept for Historical Research

The second data protection principle requires that personal data shall only be obtained for one or more specified and lawful purposes and shall not be further processed in a manner which is incompatible with such purpose(s). The fifth data protection principle requires that personal data shall not be kept for longer than is necessary for such purpose(s). Section 33 provides the processing of personal data for research purposes in compliance with the *relevant conditions*. The *relevant conditions* are:

- that the data are not processed to support decisions about individuals being made on the basis of the processing and

- that substantial damage or substantial distress is not likely to be caused to any data subject by the processing of the data
- may be selected for permanent preservation and stored, if these two conditions apply, with the proviso that the other data protection principles are complied with. The exemption from compliance with data protection principles two<sup>38</sup> and five<sup>39</sup> is not lost if the data are disclosed to third parties for research purposes, or to the data subject. If the results of any research or any resulting statistics become anonymised and the *relevant conditions* apply, the data becomes exempt from data subject access rights, provided the data are processed only for research purposes.

Personal data

The processing of personal data by an archive institution would not be in breach of data protection principle two where there was a statutory obligation on the body that collected the data to transfer it to the archive, or a definite expectation of the collecting body that it would maintain an archive, as the archival purpose would be compatible with the purpose of collection. The data could be kept as long as it was of archival interest without offending the fifth principle. However, further processing for a non-archival purpose such as making decisions about individuals would not be compatible with the archival purpose and would be in breach of the second data protection principle.

Allowing access

and publication of, personal data in archives comes within the definition of processing within the Act. As such it must comply with the data protection principles. The data controller of the archived data would be in a position to make a judgement and impose such conditions as they merited on the processing of the data to comply the processing within the law.

As a general rule, processing for the purposes of archival preservation can be considered a compatible further use of the data. Processing for the purposes of archival preservation is undertaken by reference to the “research exemptions”

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<sup>38</sup> Principle 2 of the Data Protection Act states that: “Personal data shall be obtained only for one or more specified lawful purpose, and shall not be further processed in any manner incompatible with that purpose or those purposes”

<sup>39</sup> Principle 5 of the Data Protection Act states that: “Personal data processed for any purpose or purposes shall not be kept longer than is necessary for that purpose or those purposes”.

set out in Section 33 of the Act<sup>40</sup> Personal data may be stored indefinitely as archives for research purposes provided that the “relevant conditions” are observed.

Archivists processing sensitive personal data who are unable to comply with any of the conditions specified in Schedule 3<sup>41</sup> may benefit from SI 2000 No. 417 Data Protection (Processing of Sensitive Personal Data) Order 2000.

This sets

out additional circumstances in which sensitive personal data may be processed and thereby provides supplementary Schedule 3 conditions. Paragraph 9 of the Order makes lawful any processing which, in addition to satisfying the general requirements that sensitive data is processed lawfully and fairly:

- (a) Is in the substantial public interest;
  - (b) Is necessary for ‘research purposes’
  - (c) Does not support measures or decisions with respect to any particular data subject otherwise than with the explicit consent of that data subject;
- and (d) Does not cause, nor is likely to cause, substantial damage or distress to the data subject or any other person.

Except when they themselves collect data for the purposes of administering their offices, archivists will generally not be expected to inform data subjects of processing they undertake for research purposes because to do so would involve disproportionate effort. The unfairness of not so informing data subjects is minimal where the relevant conditions are observed and records either kept closed for an appropriate period or used only for research which will be anonymised.

<sup>40</sup> 1) “research purposes” includes statistical or historical purposes. 2) the further processing of personal data only for research purposes in compliance with the relevant conditions are not to be regarded as incompatible with the purposes for which they were obtained. 3) Personal data which are processed only for research purposes in compliance with the relevant conditions may, notwithstanding the fifth data protection principle, be kept indefinitely. 4) Personal data which are processed only for research purposes are exempt from data subject access requests if they are processed in compliance with the relevant conditions, and the results of any resulting statistics are not made available in a form which identifies data subject or any of them. 5) Personal data are not to be treated as processed otherwise than for research purposes merely because the data are disclosed to any person, for research purposes only, to the data subject or a person acting on their behalf, at the request, or with the consent, of the data subject or a person acting on his behalf.

<sup>41</sup> 1) Data subject has given explicit consent to the processing of the personal data. 2) The processing is necessary for legal purposes in connection with employment. 3) The processing is necessary to protect the vital interests of the data subject or another person. 4) The processing is carried out in the course of legal corporate activities, with appropriate safeguards, is relevant, and does not involve disclosure to a third party without the consent of the data subject. 5) The information has been made public as a result of steps taken by the data subject. 6) The processing is necessary for the exercise of justice. 7) The process is necessary for medical purposes. 7) The processing is of sensitive personal data, is necessary for equal opportunities monitoring, and is carried out with the appropriate safeguards.

References given in connection with the education or employment of the data subject are exempt from data subject access requests. Note that this exemption does not apply to confidential references received by the data controller. By default, Section 37 of the Act allows for the provision of references to be considered a business reason for holding personal data. It is preferable, however, that this possible use be included in any collecting policy pertaining to the records in question. Note that no exemption is made for the provision of references that include sensitive personal data.

To comply with the Act, when providing references ensure the following:

- . a) That the information given is factually correct
- . b) That disclosure is kept to a minimum
- . c) That sensitive personal data must not be disclosed without the explicit consent of the data subject
- . d) Where opinions about a person's suitability are disclosed, your comments are defensible and justifiable on reasonable grounds
- . e) You do not disclose any information if asked to give an unsolicited reference without the individual's consent.

*Confidential draft*

**APPENDIX FIVE**

**Sample Forms**

Consent Forms

**Consent for the Release & Transfer of a File**

Name of Candidate: \_\_\_\_\_

Statement:

*Mindful of the provisions of current Data Protection Legislation. I hereby ask the diocese of \_\_\_\_\_ to release and transfer a copy of my application and formation file, and all other relevant information, to the Vocations Director [or other person] for the diocese of \_\_\_\_\_.*

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX SIX

### Autobiographical Essay Notes for Applicants

A part of the application process each candidate is asked to write an autobiographical essay of about 2,500 words. This essay will be read by all those involved in the selection process and enables them to have some insight into your life. The Vocations Director can let you know who they will be. Apart from a chronology of your life up to the present time, it is particularly helpful if the essay contains some reflection on your experiences. You may wish to describe, for example, what you learned about yourself while at school or university or how membership of a particular parish, club or association has enriched your life.

You may find the following ideas helpful as you begin to think about what you will write. Rather than a series of questions for you to answer, they are simply suggestions to give you some idea of what you should cover in the essay. It would be very helpful if you could include at the end a personal timeline or chronology from birth up to the present time. As part of the timeline please list all the places where you have been employed in your life with dates and descriptions of the jobs done.

#### Personal & Family Background

The essay should describe something of your family as well as your relationships and experiences. You may wish to start by writing about your family, educational history and professional career. How do you relax and use your leisure time? What do you do to keep fit? What hobbies do you have? You might like to mention the last film you saw or book you read. What did you think of them? How easy do you find it to make friends?

How did you find school? How were your relationships with teachers and other students? What were you most successful at in school? What did you find most difficult? What influenced your decision to go (or not go) to university? Why did you choose that particular place or subject? What university societies did you join and which ones did you remain active in? Did you run for or hold any offices in them? What would you say you learnt from your extra-curricular activities at university? What have you learned about yourself from the experience of study or work? How important is study for you? How do you feel about the possibility of going back to study?

Tell us something about your relationships. Have you ever dated? How long did such relationships last? What did you learn from them about yourself?

What sort of jobs have you done? Did you receive any awards or commendations for your work? Were you ever fired or terminated from your work in any way? If so what were the issues? Have you ever spent time doing volunteer work? What have you learned from your experience of work or volunteering?

#### Christian Discipleship

A second part of the essay should describe something of your faith journey and spiritual development, including any involvement you may have in the life of the Church. Have you always been a practising Catholic? If not what brought you to the Church? How often do you attend Mass or go to confession (reconciliation)? Are there any particular moments that stand out in your journey of faith? How regularly do you pray? What form does your prayer take?

Have there been any people, movements or associations that have had a particular impact upon you? What have you learned from them? Do you have any involvement in the life of your parish?

How long have you felt called to priesthood? How did you perceive this call? What do your friends and family think? How would you say you have changed during the period you have been discerning a priestly vocation? What would you do if you were not called to priesthood?

**Understanding of Priestly Ministry**

Finally, it is helpful if you can give an account of how you understand priestly ministry today. What do you perceive to be the challenges facing priests in the modern world? What do you consider to be the strengths and weaknesses you would bring to priesthood? Looking back over your life what responsibilities have you had at school, university, work, clubs, chaplaincies and parishes? How might that experience of responsibility impact on the way you would live your priestly ministry? What difficulties will you experience in committing yourself to a celibate life? In entering seminary formation what do you see as the major areas of growth for yourself?



*Confidential draft*

# APPLICATION FOR PRIESTLY FORMATION



*This form asks you for some basic information which will inform those involved with the selection process about your personal history, education, employment and membership of the Church. In addition you will be given the opportunity to tell us in an essay something about your life journey to date and also about your sense of vocation and understanding of the priesthood.*

*Please note carefully the following points:*

- 1) Please do not alter any sections, boxes or questions on the Application Form.*
- 2) Please ensure that you have read carefully and understood the notes accompanying this form.*
- 3) All questions must be answered. Please provide accurate details of all the information asked for.*
- 4) Please enclose four passport-style photographs of yourself and recent copies of your baptismal and confirmation certificates.*
- 5) Please include the original copies of your academic and professional qualifications, as well as your birth certificate.*
- 6) After having printed-off the form, please ensure that you have signed and dated it in your own hand, having carefully read the declaration. An electronic signature is not acceptable.*
- 7) The completed forms, your essay and certificates should be sent to your Vocations Director by secure means (original certificates will be copied and returned).*

Have you included:	
<b>Birth Certificate</b>	
<b>Baptism &amp; Confirmation Certificate(s)</b>	
<b>Essay</b>	
<b>Photographs</b>	
<b>Proof of qualifications</b>	
<b>Supplementary sheet(s)</b>	

Name of the diocese to which you are applying: \_\_\_\_\_

## 1) Personal Details

Title: _____ Surname: _____ Forenames: _____	
Place & Date of Birth: _____ Nationality: _____	
National Insurance Number: _____ Marital Status: _____	
Have you ever used a name different to the one you have given above: <b>YES/NO</b> (if 'Yes' please give details) _____	
<b>Your Permanent Address:</b> _____ _____	<b>Correspondence address (if different):</b> _____ _____
<b>Telephone:</b> _____	<b>Telephone:</b> _____
<b>Dates contactable here:</b> _____	<b>Dates contactable here:</b> _____
<b>Email:</b> _____	<b>Mobile:</b> _____
<b>Name of next of Kin:</b> _____ <b>Relationship:</b> _____	
<b>Address:</b> _____ _____	
<b>Telephone:</b> _____	

**2) Family Details** *(if you are adopted please consult your Vocations Director before filling in this part of the form)*

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Father</b> <i>(please indicate if deceased)</i></p> <p>Name: _____</p> <p>Address: _____ _____</p> <p>Age: _____ Occupation: _____</p> <p>Religion: _____</p> <p>If received into the Catholic Church from another denomination please state: _____</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Mother</b> <i>(please indicate if deceased)</i></p> <p>Name: _____</p> <p>Address: _____ _____</p> <p>Age: _____ Occupation: _____</p> <p>Religion: _____</p> <p>If received into the Catholic Church from another denomination please state: _____</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Brothers and Sisters</b> <i>(please include any step-brothers, step-sisters and half-brothers and half-sisters)</i></p> <p>Name: _____ Age: _____</p> <p>Name: _____ Age: _____</p> <p>Name: _____ Age: _____</p> <p>Name: _____ Age: _____</p> <p>Name: _____ Age: _____</p> <p>Name: _____ Age: _____</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Children or Dependants</b></p> <p>Name: _____ Age: _____</p> <p>Name: _____ Age: _____</p> <p>Name: _____ Age: _____</p> <p>Name: _____ Age: _____</p> <p>Name: _____ Age: _____</p> <p>Name: _____ Age: _____</p>

*Please continue on a supplementary sheet entitled 'Family' if needed.*

**3) Education**

Names and addresses of schools, colleges and universities attended	
	Dates
Primary school(s)	
Secondary school(s)	
Institute(s) of further education	
Institute(s) of higher education	

## 4) Qualifications

Name of educational establishment	Subject	Dates	Type of qualification	Result
Secondary Education				
Further Education				
Higher Education				

Please use this space to tell us anything else you wish to let us know about your education (e.g. other courses attended or if you feel that the details above do not reflect your true ability, such as vocational courses, NQVs or apprenticeships).

## 5) Employment

Dates		Name of Employer	Address of Employer	Position held and nature of work	Reason for leaving
To	From				

Please continue on a supplementary sheet entitled 'employment' if needed.

## 6) Interests, Skills, and Positions of Responsibility

Give details of your main interests and hobbies:

Give details of any activities in which you have been involved and any positions of responsibility you have held which you feel would help us know more about you:

Please list any particular skills or abilities that you have.  
(You may wish to include things such as driving, computer literacy, musical or artistic gifts)

## 7) Christian Vocation

### Baptism

Denomination of Baptism: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Baptism: \_\_\_\_\_

Name Church/place of baptism: \_\_\_\_\_

Address of Church/place of baptism: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*Please note that you are also asked to provide recent proof of baptism. This can normally be obtained by writing to the church where the baptism took place. If for some reason this is not possible, please consult your Vocations Director for guidance.*

### Reception into the Catholic Church

*(if applicable)*

Name of Parish: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Reception: \_\_\_\_\_

Address of Parish: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*Please include a certificate of reception into the Catholic Church. This can normally be obtained by writing to the church where the baptism took place. If for some reason this is not possible, please consult your Vocations Director for guidance.*

### Confirmation

Name of Parish: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Confirmation: \_\_\_\_\_

Address of Parish: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Marriage/Partnerships

Have you ever been through any form of civil partnership or marriage (civil or religious)? **YES/NO**

If 'Yes' please give details below, including place and date of any ceremony: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever lived with another person in an on-going relationship (other than above)? **YES/NO**

If 'Yes' please give details: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Previous Applications for the Ordained Ministry or Religious Life

Have you ever applied to be accepted as a candidate for the Permanent Diaconate, Priesthood, Religious Life or a Secular Institute in the Catholic Church, or any other church community? **YES/NO**

If 'Yes' please give full details, including whether the application was successful, how long you spent in formation and also the reason for you leaving.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*(Please note that we will eventually need a reference from the house of formation, diocese or religious community to which you belonged)*

## 8) Parish Community

Name and address of the parish where you currently reside: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How long have you been a member of this parish? \_\_\_\_\_

Is this the parish you normally attend? **YES/NO**

*(If 'No', please list the parish you attend and state why you have become involved with this particular parish)*

\_\_\_\_\_

How often do you attend Mass? \_\_\_\_\_

Tell us about any part you take in the life of your parish or the wider Church, including membership of any societies or prayer groups, any liturgical ministries (e.g. reading) and any apostolic work you do (e.g. work with youth or homeless people).

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## 9) Personal Health

Do you suffer from any medical or psychological condition that you feel may affect your ability to work effectively as a priest?

**YES/NO**

Have you ever suffered a major illness, chronic condition or serious allergy?

**YES/NO**

Are you registered as disabled?

**YES/NO**

During the last five years have you taken any single period of more than 1 week off work or education as a result of illness or injury?

**YES/NO**

If the answer to any of the above is 'Yes', please give details

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Note: You will be required to undergo a medical examination and psychological assessment as part of the selection process

## 10) Personal Financial Situation

If you have any debts or borrowings with any of the following please indicate details in the spaces below

	Amount Owing	Credit Limit	Repayment Terms	Date of Final Payment
Bank Overdraft				
Bank/Personal Loans				
Credit/Store Cards				
Hire Purchase or Rental Agreements				
Student Loans				
Other				

### Home Ownership

Are you

A home owner

**YES/NO**

Mortgage outstanding £ \_\_\_\_\_

A tenant

**YES/NO**

With parents

**YES/NO**

Other

**YES/NO**

Will you have any continuing financial commitments to any of the above if accepted for formation?

**YES/NO**

Will you have financial commitments, for example, to a parent or other family members?

**YES/NO**

If 'yes' please give details: \_\_\_\_\_

Where will you live during holiday periods if you are accepted for priestly formation?

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## Pension Arrangements

How many years contribution have you made to the State Pension via National Insurance? \_\_\_\_\_

Have you opted out of the State pension?

**YES/NO**

If yes, please give details of your arrangements and explain how your pension will provide for your future retirement (you may need to consider whether or not you can take a 'holiday' from payments if you are accepted for formation).

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## Other Responsibilities

<b>Please give details in the space provided if any of the following apply to you:</b>	
You are or have been a trader, company director or business partner.	
You have any kind of debt or guarantee liabilities in respect of a business.	
You have any kind of debt or guarantee liabilities in respect of others (e.g. joint account or first-named on a contract).	
You hold any kind of office or trusteeship other than your job (either paid or voluntary).	
You have been refused credit or subject to legal proceedings regarding your financial affairs.	
You have money owing to a government body or local authority (including tax).	
You are (or may become) subject to maintenance or alimony payments	
You have any other debts or liabilities (or possible future debt or liabilities) not included in the above.	



## 11) References

Please give the names of at least four persons whom we can contact for a reference. At least one of these should be your Parish Priest.

If you are currently in work we will need to contact your current employer at some stage; we may also need to contact previous employers (see page 4). It may also be necessary for us to contact an academic referee. Referees should be independent and should not be personal friends or relations.

Please note that the Vocations Director will be asked to submit a reference and that we may approach other people or organisations you have been involved with for character references.

Parish Priest		
Name:	Address:	<i>May we contact immediately?</i> <b>YES/NO</b>
Telephone no:		
Email:		
Another priest known to you (optional)		
Name:	Address:	<i>May we contact immediately?</i> <b>YES/NO</b>
Telephone no:		
Email:		
Academic		
Name:	Address:	<i>May we contact immediately?</i> <b>YES/NO</b>
Telephone no:		
Email:		
Employer		
Name:	Address:	<i>May we contact immediately?</i> <b>YES/NO</b>
Telephone no:		
Email:		
Personal		
Name:	Address:	<i>May we contact immediately?</i> <b>YES/NO</b>
Telephone no:		
Email:		

## 12) Declaration

### Declarations and Consents

If you feel that the Application Form has not given you the opportunity to include some other relevant information about yourself which you would like to be considered, please include this on a supplementary sheet *entitled 'Additional Information'*.

**You are also asked to declare at this stage, in writing on a separate sheet, any convictions, cautions or other sanctions (legal or otherwise) that may affect your application, especially if these pertain to your suitability to work with children or vulnerable adults.**

### Personal File

As part of its procedures the diocese establishes a file for each applicant which contains the application documents, references and other relevant paperwork including medical and psychological assessments. When an applicant is accepted for formation his application file becomes his student file and a copy is sent to the seminary or houses of formation where he will study (only the rector has access to the psychological assessment).

During his studies relevant assessment reports are added to the student file. After ordination the student file is transferred to the relevant diocesan archive. All other files are kept, whole or in summary form for a hundred years. Your Vocations Director can give you a list of the documents usually kept in these files.

**I hereby give my consent to the establishment of a personal file in accordance with the details given above.**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### National Database of Applicants

The National Office for Vocation maintains a National Database of Applicants so that dioceses can check whether an applicant has made a previous application elsewhere and carry out the necessary checks required by Canon Law and safeguarding procedures.

**I hereby give my consent to my name address, age and date of birth being added to the National Database of Applicants.**

**I consent to this information being retained until my eightieth birthday along with the date of my application and the diocese to which I am applying.**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Declaration

**I declare that, to the best of my knowledge, the information contained in this form is accurate and complete.**

**I agree to the Bishop of the diocese to which I am applying (or his agents) making any enquiries that they see fit to establish my suitability for priestly formation, including checks with civil authorities for criminal convictions or similar.**

**I understand that the diocese will require me to undergo a medical and psychological assessment and that I am expected to share the reports from these.**

**I also understand that if any of the statements I have made are false or misleading, or if I have withheld any relevant information, this may lead to my application being rejected or to the ending of my seminary training.**

**I also understand that any relevant information which becomes available at a later date may also have to be considered by the diocesan bishop.**

**I have, if applicable, declared any criminal convictions, cautions or other sanctions (legal or otherwise) that may affect my application.**

**I have not made any adjustments to the text or structure of this Application Form.**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## NOTES FOR APPLICATION FORM

The following notes are to help you understand some of the parts of the selection process for diocesan priesthood, including the form that you are about to complete. Please read these notes carefully before filling in the Application Form. If you have any questions about any aspect of the form or selection process, please speak with your Vocations Director who will do his best to help. Throughout the selection process your primary point of contact should be your Vocations Director, who has been appointed by the bishop to assist him in the process. The Vocations Director will guide you through each stage of your application. Please note that at any stage you are welcome to withdraw or defer your application; however this should not usually be done without having first talked to the Vocations Director.

It is the bishop of your diocese who will make the decision as to whether or not you are accepted for priestly formation. He will seek the advice of others before he makes that decision. As the priesthood is a life-long commitment, which also involves a good number of years of training, it is important that those applying for this ministry are properly assessed. You should note that whilst aspects of that assessment may be similar to those you might expect if you were applying for a job, the priesthood is not a 'job' in the traditional understanding of the term. It is a vocation, and as such, the assessment process centres around discernment, rather than on 'selling oneself' at interview. Given the role of the priest and life-long nature of that calling, the Church recognises its responsibilities to both the applicant and also to the wider community he may be called to serve. It is therefore important that the candidate be as honest and open as possible throughout the selection process so that a genuine two-way discernment can take place between the candidate and the bishop. Please note that should you subsequently not be accepted for priestly formation, it does not mean that you have 'failed'; rather that your Christian vocation is to be lived out in some other way.

### THE COMPONENTS OF THE PROCESS

You have already had a number of meetings with your Vocations Director, before getting to the stage of filling in an Application Form. Once you have completed the form, it is assumed that you are willing to take an active part in the fairly intensive process of selection which will include:

- a visit to a seminary where a series of interviews may take place
- a medical examination
- a psychological assessment by a chartered clinical or counselling psychologist, currently in practice
- a formal interview with a bishop (often assisted by others)

You will need to furnish recent evidence of your baptism and confirmation. References will also be taken up and other checks will be made, such as investigating whether or not you have any criminal convictions. You will give your consent for such checks to be made when you sign the final section of the Application Form.

### CONFIDENTIALITY

Whilst your application will be handled in a professional manner regarding confidentiality, it is important that candidates recognise that information gleaned during the process is not akin to material covered by the 'seal of the confessional'. Spiritual Direction must be kept wholly separate from Selection, even though both may be dealing with similar material at an important stage of an individual's life.

A file regarding your application will be securely kept by the Vocations Director which will include: your Application Form, medical and psychological reports, references, reports written about you by bodies who interview you and any correspondence. Please note that this will form a chronological 'structured file' for the purposes of the 1998 Data Protection Act. The information you provide in your application will only be used for the purposes for which it was given (unless, for example significant issues arise regarding the protection of vulnerable people).

If you are accepted for formation, records from your training will be added to this file, and if you are eventually ordained, the file will become part of your diocesan record. If you are not accepted, or later withdraw from formation, your file will be kept in case you apply to another diocese or religious community at a later date (in which case information may be shared with your consent). Those involved with your formation, should you be accepted, will be given relevant information from your file. Your records will not be passed on to any person not involved with your selection and formation without your written consent; however dioceses may be required by law to disclose records in rare circumstances.

### REFERENCES

As part of the selection process we ask you to name a number of referees on the Application Form. We will contact these prior to the interview with the bishop. Sometimes these references are made available to the Seminary Selection Advisory Panel prior to your visit there also. If there is a good reason for us not contacting a referee before a certain date please state this clearly on your form, also indicating your reasons.

To help us build up a clear picture of your life history we may also contact some of your previous employers or places of education. Please carefully fill in the relevant section of the Application Form. We might also wish to contact other persons or organizations that you are known to. If you are concerned about us contacting any of these, you can ask us not to do this; however you must give a good reason for this. If we are unable to build up an accurate picture of your past life history this may affect your application. You are also advised to declare to us in advance anything you feel may be detrimental to your application in this regard.

### **CRIMINAL RECORD CHECK**

Due to the nature of their pastoral responsibilities, priests often have opportunities for periods of unsupervised access to persons of all ages. The Catholic Church in England and Wales has committed itself to taking appropriate steps to protect those in its care. Those applying for ordained ministry or employment in the Church are now vetted for criminal records and other behaviours that might make them unsuitable to work with young people or vulnerable adults. Your personal details will be checked against government-maintained databases which contain details of criminal convictions and those found unsuitable of working with vulnerable persons. There a Code of Practice to which dioceses must adhere.

You are invited to disclose in advance any past conduct that may affect your selection. You should declare any previous convictions, and also any bindings over, cautions and conditional or absolute discharges. Please note that the nature of priestly work means that the office you may hold is exempt from the provisions of Section 4(2) of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. Therefore applicants are required to disclose convictions which for other purposes are counted as 'spent'.

### **NATIONAL DATABASE FOR APPLICANTS FOR PRIESTHOOD**

After you have formally applied to a diocese for consideration for priesthood, your name will be entered on a National Database of Applicants which is kept by the National Office for Vocation. The fact that you may already have applied to a diocese in the past should not of itself prejudice your current application. The database exists simply to provide a record of individuals who have applied for diocesan priesthood in the current (or past) years. Sometimes a Vocations Director may have submitted your name prior to your formal application; however this will not have been done without your consent. Only Vocations Directors from dioceses and approved religious orders who may wish to ascertain if an individual has made a previous application can have access to the information contained in the database.

### **FINANCIAL LIABILITIES**

Priests are responsible for their own personal financial affairs. The stipend of a priest is not large; therefore it is important that anyone considering applying for the priesthood give serious thought to their current and future financial affairs. If you have any loans, debts, liability guarantees or mortgages you should discuss these with your Vocations Director.

During formation, your costs are usually met by your diocese which also often provides pocket money for daily expenses. Sometimes individuals are able to contribute towards their own formation costs. Again, please consult with your Vocations Director about your own position.

### **MEDICAL**

You will be required to undergo a thorough medical examination as part of the Selection Process. Your Vocations Director will give you the appropriate forms to take to your doctor.

### **PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT**

Candidates are required to undergo a psychological assessment with a psychologist who is currently practising and who has knowledge of the life and ministry of priests. This is carried out so that the bishop can take your psychological health into account when making a decision. The psychologist will explain the purpose of the assessment and their terms of reference to you. The assessment is viewed as being of service to both the diocesan bishop and yourself. The psychologist will prepare a report for you and the diocesan bishop (and possibly his advisors). The report, or aspects of it, will also be helpful to those involved in your priestly formation if you are accepted. Normally the rector of any seminary you attend will receive a copy of the report; however you do have the right to withhold this information if you choose to do so. Please consult with your Vocations Director if you have any questions in this regard.

### **FAIRNESS & EQUALITY**

The Church recognises the God-given dignity of each person. Applications for the priesthood will be treated with justice and fairness. The Church can only accept those who are canonically suitable for priesthood (i.e. those who fulfil the requirements of Canon Law and Church norms). If at any stage you feel that you have not been justly treated in your application, please speak to your Vocations Director, who will do his best to look into the problem and resolve it where possible. If the problem is not resolved to your satisfaction by the Vocations Director, you may write to your diocesan bishop who has final say in these matters.