

Program for the Ongoing Formation of Newly Ordained Priests

“Let no one have contempt for your youth, but set an example for those who believe, in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity. Until I arrive, attend to the reading, exhortation, and teaching. Do not neglect the gift you have, which was conferred on you through the prophetic word with the imposition of hands of the presbyterate. Be diligent in these matters, be absorbed in them, so that your progress may be evident to everyone. Attend to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in both tasks, for by doing so you will save both yourself and those who listen to you.”

1 Timothy 4: 12-16

■ Mission Statement

In keeping with the ideals expressed by the Bishops of the United States in *The Basic Plan for the Ongoing Formation of Priests*, this program will assist the newly ordained priests of the Diocese of Ogdensburg in a “journey of integration as they seek to link who they are and what they do, their priestly identity and service” (p. 41).

■ Rationale

Pope John Paul II, *I Will Give You Shepherds: On the Formation of Priests in the Circumstances of the Present Day*, 1992

“Ongoing formation is a duty, in the first instance, for young priests. They should have frequent and systematic meetings which, while they continue the sound and serious formation they have received in the Seminary, will gradually lead young priests to grasp and incarnate the unique wealth of God’s gift which is the priesthood and to express their capabilities and ministerial attitude, also through an ever more convinced and responsible insertion into the presbyterate, and therefore in communion and co-responsibility with all their brethren” (# 76).

Congregation for the Clergy, *Directory for the Life and Ministry of Priests*, 1994

“It is necessary to organize, in the first years of priesthood, annual meetings in which appropriate themes in theology, law, spirituality and culture are studied and dealt with in greater depth, as well as those special sessions dedicated to problems in morality, pastoral care and liturgy. It should be beneficial also that during these days, fraternity between the young priests and also with the more experienced ones be encouraged, allowing the exchange of experiences, greater friendship and the refined evangelical practice of fraternal correction” (#93).

National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *The Basic Plan for the Ongoing Formation of Priests*, 2001

“The first five years of ordained ministry are very important. They set a pace for the years that stretch ahead. They also lay a foundation for the future and provide a point of reference across a lifetime of priestly ministry....In an initial and decisive way, newly ordained priests embark on a formation journey of integration as they seek to link who they are and what they do, their priestly identity and service. They make themselves available to God’s transforming power at work in their ministry and lives” (p. 41).

■ Goals and Objectives

1. Assist the newly ordained in a transition from seminary to parish life
2. Assist with the integration of the newly ordained into the presbyterate of the diocese
3. Provide the tools by which the newly ordained can continue their human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral formation
4. Assist the newly ordained priests in their growth in a non-evaluative setting

■ Desired Outcome

Priests who are continuing their journey of formation and who are holy, healthy, and happy in their service to God and the Church

■ Leadership

1. *The Director*—A priest appointed by the bishop who will:
 - a. set up and structure the program
 - b. receive input from the team and newly ordained regarding topics for each year
 - c. establish a budget for the program with the diocese
 - d. contact resource personnel, speakers and facilities
 - e. set up locations and dates
2. *The Team*—A group which includes the Vicar for Clergy, the Chair of the Committee for the Continuing Education and Formation of the Clergy (or a designated member), a member of the Vocations Team, and the Director of Seminarians, who will:
 - a. assist the director regarding program procedures
 - b. take an active leadership in the program
 - c. be available for consultation to the newly ordained
3. *Contact Person from Among the Newly Ordained*—The corresponding member of the Council of Priests, who will serve as a liaison between the participants and the leadership of the program

■ Participants

1. All newly ordained diocesan priests will be required to participate
2. Newly ordained religious priests serving in the diocese will be invited to attend
3. Participation will continue for five years following ordination
4. Those who remain as Parochial Vicars after five years are welcome to participate
5. Those who are named as Pastors/Administrators during this time will continue in this program as well as attend any required programs for new pastors

■ Role of Pastors

The Pastors of the newly ordained will be:

- a. expected to make it possible for the newly ordained to freely attend the program
- b. asked to give their ideas and suggestions for the program
- c. invited to attend the summer social

■ Spiritual Directors

Every newly ordained priest will be encouraged to have a spiritual director. The program will serve as a resource to facilitate this.

■ Components of the Program

1. *Schedule*

- a. Overnight gatherings to be held four times a year (e.g. Sept., Nov., Jan., Mar.)
 - b. The May Presbyterial Assembly
 - c. A summer social gathering (e.g. July) to which the Pastors of the newly ordained, diocesan Seminarians, and the Bishop are invited for a portion of the gathering
2. *Locations*—A variety of locations should be used in order to facilitate familiarity with the diocese and its priests (e.g. Wadhams Hall, rectories, Guggenheim)
3. *Format*—Each overnight gathering should include common prayer, occasions for the sharing of opportunities and challenges, and the availability of the sacrament of Penance. Knowing that the schedule needs to be flexible in light of the needs of the group, the location, the topic, and any speaker(s), a possible format might be:
- a. Day I
 - Lunch
 - Midday Prayer
 - Afternoon session(s)
 - Evening Prayer
 - Dinner and social
 - b. Day II
 - Breakfast
 - Morning Prayer
 - Morning session(s)
 - Mass or Devotion
 - Lunch

■ Confidentiality

In order to facilitate free and open discussion, and that genuine sharing may take place, the leadership and participants are asked to be sensitive to the nature of this program.

■ Evaluation and Review of the Program

This program will be reviewed and evaluated annually by the Committee on Continuing Education and Formation of the Clergy with a report sent to the Bishop or his delegate. The team and participants will contribute to this process.

■ Possible Topics for Presentations and Discussion

1. *Human Formation*

- a. Loneliness
- b. Intimacy
- c. Solitude
- d. Identity
- e. Change of life-style
- f. Transitions
- g. Friendships
- h. Time off
- i. Personal financial matters
- j. Dealing with crisis situations

- k. What you can and cannot do or handle
 - l. Knowing your limits (how to say no)
 - m. Recreation with family and priests
2. *Spiritual Formation*
- a. Celibacy
 - b. Chastity
 - c. Prayer life
 - d. Spiritual direction
 - e. Retreat
 - f. Reconciliation (from both sides of the screen)
 - g. Spiritual reading
 - h. Discernment
3. *Intellectual Formation*
- a. Continuing education
 - b. Theological and pastoral readings
 - c. Updating self
 - d. Short and long sabbaticals
 - e. Conferences and workshops
4. *Pastoral Formation*
- a. From seminarian to priest
 - b. Preaching
 - c. Marriage issues
 - d. Diocesan policies (Pastoral Handbook)
 - e. Collaborative ministry
 - f. Boundaries with parishioners and children
 - g. Hospital visitation and experiences
 - h. Facing death with a family (process)
 - i. Pastoral presence (social and liturgical)
 - j. Special needs parishioners
 - k. Pastoral financial matters
 - l. Social services and resources
 - m. Legal issues and consultation
 - n. History of the Diocese and its priests

Note: where possible and practical, the newly ordained may be encouraged to take courses pertaining to accounting and/or management either in neighboring colleges or on-line as needed