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From the Desk of the General Editor

In May of 2014, the Seminary Department of the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA) received word that it was closing following an organizational reconfiguration. With the spring 2014 issue of the journal in galley, Volume 20 went into suspended animation. I was separately involved at the time pursuing three levels of accreditation for the college and seminary at which I was working yet found myself the last man standing at the *Journal*. I managed to complete the Winter 2013 issue without a functioning staff, and the NCEA was kind enough to publish it. I then downloaded Adobe InDesign and began teaching myself how to use the program well enough to bring closure to the three issues due out in 2014. I did not succeed in that plan as life outside the *Journal* intervened. This labor of love, however, led to something else.

As part of my attempt to learn desktop publishing, I founded a publishing house called En Route Books & Media (currently available online at https://enroutebooks.com) through which I've published to date 350 Catholic books, starting with books written by the faculty at the seminary where I was serving as Vice President of External Affairs and continuing with some of the faculty in other seminaries who were sending me articles for publication. To assist in the promotion of their books, I founded an internet radio station called WCAT Radio and worked with a couple of colleagues, Ronda Chervin and Bob Olson, to develop at https://wcatradio.com what has to date become 75 unique programs with what is currently almost 9,000 podcasts available for on-demand listening. In 2021, I retired from a 20-year career of seminary teaching and began advancing the publishing house full time. I have not regretted my decision because of the added benefits my ability to work with all of the seminaries has brought me, but I do miss the day-to-day involvement with priestly and lay formation.

The resurrection of *Seminary Journal*, which Rev. Dennis Billy, C.Ss.R., made possible in the collection of these articles from the faculty at the School of Theology at St. Mary's Seminary & University in Roland Park, Baltimore, is a delight to my heart. It is an opportunity to place back into the service of the US seminaries the publishing house I founded because of the need to continue faculty publications. It is also an opportunity for the faculty at these seminaries to share their experiences with the 6th edition of the *Program of Priestly Formation.* For these reasons, I'm happy to restore the *Journal* with a few modifications for the new decade. The *Journal* will now be peer-reviewed and delivered online in both a PDF download and a blog format. Print copies will be available for on-demand purchase via Amazon.com. Please visit the *Journal* online at https://seminaryjournal.com for more details.

Sebastian Mahfood, OP, Ph.D.
General Editor

Introduction

In the Spring of 2021, the faculty of the School of Theology at St. Mary's Seminary & University in Roland Park, Baltimore decided to embark on a common faculty writing project in collaboration with *Seminary Journal*. The project was coordinated by Fr. Dennis Billy, C.Ss.R. The purpose of this effort on the part of the faculty was to encourage its members in light of the new *Ratio Fundamentalis* from Rome (2016) and the sixth edition of the *Program for Priestly Formation* (approved 2019) to delve more deeply into the various academic disciplines offered at the seminary, with an eye to how those disciplines should be taught in a Catholic seminary. It was also hoped that such a project would encourage closer collaboration among the faculty, with the hope of seeing how those disciplines relate to one another and how classroom pedagogy has an impact on the content being both conveyed and received. Another hope was to offer the wider seminary community in the United States and beyond insights into how classroom pedagogy might impact the integration of the various dimensions of priestly formation.

Founded in 1791 by the Priests of Saint Sulpice (the Sulpicians), St. Mary's Seminary is the oldest Roman Catholic seminary in the United States and has prepared more men for priestly ordination than any other seminary in the United States. Animated by a core of dedicated Sulpician priests, the faculty consists of a unique blend of diocesan priests, religious, and laity, all of whom are dedicated to forming young men for the Catholic priesthood for the Church of the twenty-first century. It trains seminarians from thirteen dioceses (as far apart as Portland, Maine and Louisville, Kentucky) and a number of religious orders. It also maintains rigorous standards for human, intellectual, spiritual, and pastoral formation.

"The goal of this project was to strengthen the intellectual bonds within our own faculty and to offer insights into how the intellectual formation of Catholic seminarians could move forward in the years ahead."

In the end, ten faculty members participated in this common effort that ultimately produced eight essays (one was co-authored by three faculty members) on the fields of English-language pedagogy and spirituality for beginners, as well as the disciplines of philosophy, liturgy, scripture, systematic theology, moral theology, and canon law. Each faculty member was given free rein to develop the assigned essay as he or she saw fit (hence the different styles and approaches taken), the only exception being that it fall largely within the general guidelines of the journal. Although the areas presented do not exhaust the wide range of disciplines taught in Catholic seminaries, they represent a large portion of those offered and

provide beginning reflections on how they should be integrated into the seminary program. It is hoped that this initial effort will encourage others to fill in the gaps with respect to those disciplines not treated.

It should also be stated that, although the entire faculty expressed interest in this common project, commitments of time and other responsibilities precluded everyone from participating in it. That said, one way in which the faculty has gotten everyone involved was to use individual essays for topics of discussion during faculty development luncheons. Such a discussion format may be a way for other seminaries to benefit from the fruit of these essays.

The goal of this project was to strengthen the intellectual bonds within our own faculty and to offer insights into how the intellectual formation of Catholic seminarians could move forward in the years ahead. May this project encourage other faculties to contribute similar offerings to *Seminary Journal* in the years ahead.

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Teaching Language Skills to International Students in Catholic Seminaries and the Critical Component of Culture

Emily Hicks, M.A., S.T.L.

In *Veritatis Splendor*, St. John Paul II acknowledges both the reality of cultural contexts and the necessity for transcending these contexts in order to live authentically in truth. He writes:

> It must certainly be admitted that man always exists in a particular culture, but it must also be admitted that man is not exhaustively defined by that same culture. Moreover, the very progress of cultures demonstrates that there is something in man which transcends those cultures. This "something" is precisely human nature: this nature is itself the measure of culture and the condition ensuring that man does not become the prisoner of any of his cultures, but asserts his personal dignity by living in accordance with the profound truth of his being.[1]

Both the recognition of culture and the call to transcend one's culture are relevant in seminary formation. When a seminarian takes the time to reflect upon the values of his native culture and how they manifest themselves in his perceptions, words, and actions, he is better able to understand his own motivations and potential biases which influence his relationships. Equally important is his awareness of how values in other cultures may manifest themselves so that he may respond appropriately and effectively. Ours is a multi-cultural Church, and the need for the knowledge and skills to communicate effectively across cultural boundaries is critical. Therefore, effective language teaching must include both academic and cultural components.

The Basic Realities and Needs

International seminarians come to the American Catholic seminary with varying proficiency levels in the English language. Some come from cultures where books are not as accessible as they are in the U.S., so they may not know how to read theological texts accurately or efficiently. Others may have read and studied English texts, but having little or no pronunciation training, they need intensive support in order to be intelligible in

[1] John Paul II, Pope. Encyclical Letter, Veritatis Splendor [The Splendor of Truth]. https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_06081993_veritatis-splendor.html.

spoken English. And still others may simply need to strengthen their reading, writing, and listening skills in order to manage the workload that a graduate program demands. Therefore, providing academic support for international seminarians includes, of course, those courses and other resources that will enable them to become better learners, readers, writers, and speakers, not only to be academically successful in the seminary but also, ultimately, to be excellent communicators in service to the people of God.

However, mastering these language skills to communicate well in a variety of contexts often requires more than just coursework. It requires the understanding that language, and the way we use it to express ourselves and relate with others, is shaped by our culture. It requires the understanding that truly effective communication requires a set of skills that not only grasp the basics of the English language but can also navigate the unspoken dimension of the culture reflected in language. An effective language program looks holistically at the needs of the international seminarian and integrates the critical component of culture with effective teaching strategies.

Cultural Considerations and Challenges

While English language teaching in the American Catholic seminary is concerned with the content itself, delivery of instruction, and ongoing assessment, it should also take into consideration culture, particularly the various cultures represented within the classroom and American culture (or cultures). It is useful to first look at a definition of culture and the various cultural dimensions that can impact teaching and learning.

"While much can be (and has been) written on cultural dimensions, this article will illustrate but a few of these dimensions and their potential impact on the seminary classroom."

Geert Hofstede, a Dutch social psychologist, defines culture as "the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the member of one group or category of people from another." [2] In other words, culture is learned, it is interrelated (i.e., various aspects of culture intersect with one another), it is shared, and it defines group boundaries.[3] Additionally, cultures are adaptations of a people to the conditions of life. They are shaped by the history and experience of a people and are resistant to change.[4] The anthropologist Edward T. Hall writes, "Culture is man's medium; there is not one aspect of human life that is not touched and altered by culture. This means personality, how people express themselves (including shows of emotion), the way they think, how they move, [and] how problems are solved."[5] However, ironically, culture often remains hidden from its own

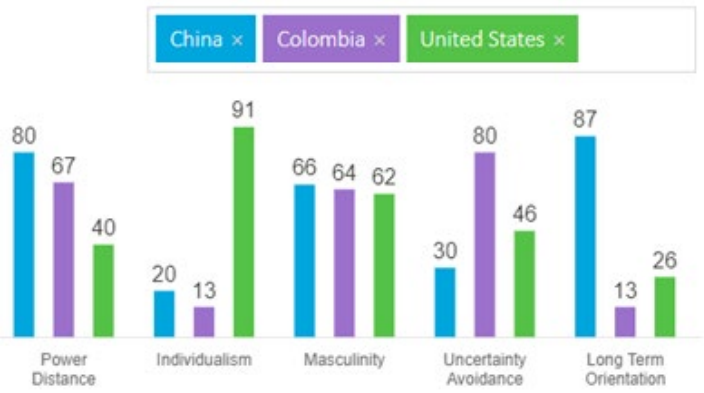
[2] Geert Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions, and Organizations Across Nations* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2001), 9.

[3] Edward T. Hall, *Beyond Culture* (New York: Anchor Books, 1981), 16.

[4] Gert Jan Hofstede et al., *Exploring Culture: Exercises, Stories and Synthetic Cultures* (Boston: Intercultural Press, 2002).

[5] Hall, *Beyond Culture*, 16.

members. These ways of thinking, feeling, and acting are assumed to be true for everyone until one encounters someone acting differently than they expect. Problems can arise when we use our own cultural frames of reference to interpret the words or actions of someone from outside our culture. Hall goes on to write that "culture equips us with built-in blinders, hidden and unstated assumptions that control our thoughts and block the unraveling of cultural processes."[6] Therefore, in order to create an environment where one can begin to understand these varying ways of thinking and behaving, and for effective communication and learning to occur, it is necessary to be more intentional about examining these hidden dimensions of culture. While much can be (and has been) written on cultural dimensions, this article will illustrate but a few of these dimensions and their potential impact on the seminary classroom.



See Hofstede Insights https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison/colombia,the-usa,vietnam/

Five cultural dimensions identified by Hofstede and explored here include the following: *individualism,* "the degree of interdependence a society maintains among its members"; *power distance*, "the attitude of the culture toward these power inequalities amongst us"; *masculinity*, the perception about gender roles as well as "what motivates people: wanting to be the best (masculine) or liking what you do (feminine)"; *uncertainty avoidance*, "the way that a society deals with the fact that the future can never be known"; and *long-term orientation*, "how every society has to maintain some links with its own past while dealing with the challenges of the present and future."[7] (For an example of a country comparison of these dimensions, see the chart below.)

One key principle of effective language teaching is to know who your students are so as to be better equipped to prepare effective language lessons.[8] While it is important to avoid stereotypes and overgeneralizations, each of these dimensions can lend valuable insight into classroom dynamics and social interactions. For example, those who have been born and raised in the United States will reflect more individualistic tendencies in their communication style and will tend to be direct and state concepts unambiguously. Students from a more collectivist culture, the other end of the spectrum, may prefer more

[6] Hall, *Beyond Culture*, 220.

[7] Hofstede Insights, "Country Comparison." https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison/.

[8] Deborah Short et al., *The Six Principles for Exemplary Teaching of English Learners* (TESOL Press, 2018), 111.

indirect communication and rely more on nonverbal cues to interpret a situation.[9] Such a student may not organize his ideas in a linear fashion in his writing assignments, and he will thus need to practice North American rhetorical conventions. Seminarians from high power-distance cultures may not feel comfortable reaching out to the professor if they have questions or are struggling in class. Also, these students may need some time adjusting to North American classroom dynamics where expectations include active participation. Those who are from cultures high in uncertainty avoidance are typically more comfortable when expectations and rules are very explicit. Examples, models, and concrete explanations are very helpful. Finally, those who are long-term oriented may be very direct about wanting to understand the connection of material they have learned to the material they are learning now and its relevance for their future. In short-term oriented cultures, on the other hand, it is important not to lose face, so the manner in which an instructor corrects the student in class can impact his attitudes and feelings of safety.

Other considerations and challenges may include how culture impacts one's receptivity to language support. For example, some seminarians come from cultures where the seminarian has a high social status, and being assigned to language remediation might be insulting. After all (they are thinking), they were chosen by their bishops because of their recognized intelligence. The student's perception of his own language ability also comes into play. In many countries, while there may be many different dialects spoken, the language for business and education is English. The reality is, however, that this sometimes does not translate into strong reading, writing, and speaking skills for the North American academic context. Additionally, a seminarian's attitude toward women is very relevant. He will, hopefully, have a Christian understanding that men and women are both made in the image and likeness of God and are equal in human dignity. However, in cultures where gender roles are more rigidly defined, students might find it challenging to offer what we would consider to be appropriate respect to female faculty, not to mention women who work in various staff positions.

Increasing Intercultural Competence

What, then, is a way to move forward so these challenges can be met and resolved? One solution can include intentional training in intercultural readiness, which is concerned with the "attitudes, knowledge, and skills that enable a person to get along with, work with, and learn from people from diverse cultures."[10] According to Ursula Brinkmann, a leader in the field of intercultural communication and creator of the Intercultural Readiness Check,[11] four competences in particular can assist in increasing intercultural readiness

[9] Hofstede, *Exploring Culture*, 96.

[10] Ursula Brinkmann, Intercultural Readiness Check Online Certification Course by Intercultural Business Improvement (May 2019).

[11] See Intercultural Business Improvement, https://www.ibinet.online/competence-assessment/

"Ultimately, [training centered on these competencies] creates a common language one can use to approach difficult situations and creates a safe environment for the seminarian to work out his understanding of the resident culture and his place in it."

and thus improve interpersonal relationships. The first competence is *intercultural sensitivity*, which is "the degree to which a person takes an active interest in other people's cultural backgrounds, their needs and perspectives." It asks the question: how well are we aware of different cultural perspectives? The second competence is *intercultural communication*, defined as "the degree to which one actively monitors one's own communicative behaviors, which in turn supports the ability to adjust one's style to the needs of people from other cultures." It asks: how well do we adapt how we communicate? The third competence is *managing uncertainty*: "the degree to which we see the uncertainty and complexity of culturally diverse environments as an opportunity for personal development." It asks the question: how well do we deal with the uncertainty of intercultural interactions? Finally, the fourth competence is *building commitment* and is "the degree to which we actively try to influence our social environment, based on a concern for relationships and integrating people and concerns." This competence asks: how well are we able to bring people together around shared goals?[12]

Training that is centered on these competences includes awareness-raising activities to gain insight into one's own cultural assumptions and expectations. It provides information about the values of other cultures and how they manifest themselves in thinking, behaving, and relating. It offers opportunities to learn about and practice adjusting communication styles so one is better able to listen and respond well to others. It engages in activities that teach team-building and conflict-resolution strategies. Ultimately, it creates a common language one can use to approach difficult situations and creates a safe environment for the seminarian to work out his understanding of the resident culture and his place in it. In fact, given the multicultural nature of the Church, this kind of training is beneficial not only for the international seminarians, but also for the entire seminary community.

Intercultural readiness is a state of mind,[13] and these competences, aided by cultural knowledge, help individuals to be better listeners and observers so that they can navigate social interactions, classroom dynamics, assignment expectations, and pastoral placements well.

[12] Ursula Brinkmann and Oscar Van Weerdenburg, *Intercultural Readiness: Four Competences for Working Across Cultures* (New York: Springer, 2014), 36.

[13] Brinkmann and Weerdenburg, *Intercultural Readiness*, 12.

Language Support: Courses & Pedagogy

The intercultural readiness training creates a foundation that supports language instruction. Content, context, delivery, and ongoing assessment ensure that the international seminarian is prepared for the rigors of graduate-level work. When seminarians first arrive at St. Mary's, they take a diagnostic exam that evaluates reading comprehension, writing skills, vocabulary, and grammar. The international seminarians are given an oral diagnostic as well, which assesses their fluency, pronunciation, and listening. Additionally, prior to admission, foreign-born seminarians are required take the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language). Based on the results of these assessments, the best level of support, if any is needed, is determined. This includes tutorials or placement in language courses.

St. Mary's offers a variety of courses to meet the needs of the incoming international seminarians, covering the topics of reading, writing, grammar, theological English, pronunciation, and American culture. Each course incorporates content relative to the seminary context. Each course also employs critical thinking and learning strategies not only to help seminarians improve their language skills, but also to provide them with tools to become better students, better learners, and ultimately better theologians. Students engage in metacognitive activities (e.g., planning, reflection, analysis), which encourage them to analyze their thinking and learning, as well as cognitive strategies (e.g., summarizing, application, review), which help them master content areas. The intercultural readiness program assists in fostering socio-affective strategies, helping to create a safe environment in which the students and instructor can develop mutual understanding and respect. An overview of specific courses will demonstrate these pedagogical objectives more concretely.

Reading & Writing addresses a variety of writing genres specific to the seminary context (e.g., summary & critique) and provides practice for clear, concise, unified writing from the sentence and paragraph levels to the research paper and exegesis levels. Authentic texts that model excellent writing are used to help students understand various rhetorical forms and learn how to identify the most essential ideas. By reading theological texts that are contemporary and accessible (i.e., those that avoid dense and complex language), students are able to analyze and seek to imitate the very clear organization of the authors and also broaden their knowledge of theological vocabulary (as well as quite a bit of idiomatic vocabulary). Seminarians also analyze rhetorically powerful texts and are able to identify various literary devices with an eye to using them in their own reflection writing and homilies to make their language both beautiful and powerful.

Grammar takes an integrated-skills approach in which students practice targeted structures and vocabulary within a variety of contexts. Lessons are scaffolded, progressing in difficulty, but also continue to revisit and review the targeted structures. Students analyze the grammar structure in authentic texts, practice it in guided exercises, and then communicate using the structure

in both speaking and writing. Texts analyzed in *Reading & Writing* are revisited in order to deepen students' understanding of a particular structure. Listening skills are targeted as well, and students listen to biblical and theological lectures to improve their listening comprehension and theological vocabulary.

Theological English develops vocabulary, reading, and complex grammatical skills necessary for proficiency in reading theological publications and Scripture. This course focuses specifically on learning strategies, reading strategies, and vocabulary strategies.

Speech presents the basics of American-English pronunciation necessary for overall intelligibility and clear, effective proclamation. It focuses on elements of prosody, which is comprised of rhythm and melody.[14] This is by far the most difficult course for most students. Altering one's pronunciation can impact students on a psychological level because of its personal nature.[15] The melody and rhythm of language is learned before one is even born, for the vibration of the mother's speech is experienced in one's very bones. Thus, speaking in a way that differs from one's native language can just *feel* wrong. It takes a great deal of humility to modify such an important and personal part of oneself. Students must both be sufficiently motivated and feel safe in the classroom to make mistakes and practice. As students move through the basics, the lectionary becomes our text, and we apply the various pronunciation concepts to proclamation skills. Most assignments and assessments are oral recordings, and, through the seminary's learning management system, the instructor provides video feedback, often requiring the resubmission of assignments until the student is able to improve on a targeted structure.

Cultures is designed to help students understand some common American values, learn about the history and traditions behind these cultural values, and develop skills to interact appropriately with Americans in a variety of contexts. Students are often asked to interview American seminarians on various aspects of culture (e.g., education, family) and compare the answers with their own perceptions and their own cultures. Students discuss current events and cultural trends as well as how these might impact the U.S. Church and their future ministries. There is ongoing dialogue about how the same values may manifest themselves differently depending on the culture.

Additional Support

In addition to language courses, other forms of support, while available to all seminarians, have been especially valuable for the international seminarians. One such support is the *Communication Resources Center (CRC)* in which seminarian tutors are available in the evenings to assist with writing and presentation skills. Tutors

[14] Judy Gilbert, *Teaching Pronunciation Using the Prosody Method* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 1.

[15] Gilbert, *Teaching Pronunciation*, 1.

"Effectively teaching language skills to international seminarians in a Catholic seminary requires viewing seminarians holistically, considering not only their academic needs, but their culture as well."

are trained to provide constructive feedback on student papers with the goal of helping students become self-editors. Tutors also have access to a plagiarism checking tool, so students can receive feedback on how to summarize and cite accurately. This, in addition to a workshop on academic integrity, helps to address the persistent issue of plagiarism. Individual *Peer Tutors* are also available to work with a seminarian one-on-one, usually for a specific class, throughout the course of the semester. In these sessions, the American seminarian will help the international student summarize, both in speaking and writing, the course material being studied, thereby increasing the international student's fluency and comprehension. Seminarians also have the opportunity to join the *Conversation Partners Program* in which international seminarians are paired with American seminarians to discuss a weekly list of idioms (e.g., feeling under the weather, driving me nuts, etc.) and share their cultures. This has had the side-effect of community-building, for most of these conversations occur over lunch, and frequently other seminarians and faculty sitting at the table join in and add their own idioms and perspectives.

Faculty Role in Language Learning

Efficient language learning requires a language teacher, but it is essential, in order for language learning to continue, that all faculty understand the unique challenges international seminarians face and incorporate strategies that will help students thrive. In preparation for class, it is helpful if professors can provide outlines, visual aids, and guiding questions for readings. During instruction, by communicating classroom expectations, connecting abstract ideas to concrete examples, and avoiding (or explaining) idiomatic language, students are able to engage with the content more deeply. With regard to assignments, if faculty can provide examples or models, give opportunities for feedback prior to the assignment being graded, and offer clear evaluation criteria, students will be better equipped to meet the expectations set forth. Finally, by checking in with students individually and communicating with academic support when needs arise, faculty open up lines of dialogue so that students get the support they need until they are acclimated to the program of studies and are able to function more autonomously.

Additionally, Hofstede's cultural dimensions can help faculty identify certain needs unique to different cultural groups. When faculty have some knowledge of how these cultural dimensions manifest themselves in the classroom, misunderstandings can be avoided. For example, if a student does not participate, it *may* not mean that he is not prepared or that he does not understand the material. Again, as long as one is careful not to overgeneralize or stereotype, these dimen-

sions can provide useful background information on the cultural makeup of the class and help inform student-teacher interactions.

Conclusion

Effectively teaching language skills to international seminarians in a Catholic seminary requires viewing seminarians holistically, considering not only their academic needs, but their culture as well. Principles for effective teaching require that the teacher know the students, create conditions for language learning, design high quality lessons for language development relevant to the students' context, adapt lessons as needed, and consistently monitor and assess language development.[16] Because language is the vehicle by which we encounter others, charity requires that we be mindful of others, particularly their cultural contexts. It requires that we work to understand our own expectations and assumptions. Developing intercultural competences requires that we come out of our self-centeredness and work to remove our "cultural blinders" so we are better able to understand others and communicate well.

Our culture informs everything about us. Ruth Benedict, an American anthropologist, writes, "No one views the world through pristine eyes."[17] A seminary that has admitted international seminarians has a responsibility to ensure they have the resources to acquire the language skills to succeed in an academically rigorous environment. By including the goal of intercultural effectiveness for *all* seminarians, and for the faculty, seminaries are better able to provide the foundation that will strengthen international seminarians' intellectual formation, their interactions, and, ultimately, their ministries. They will be able to connect with people in differing cultural contexts and transcend these contexts to live in the life and truth of the Gospel.

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[16] Short, *The Six Principles for Exemplary Teaching of English Learners*, 111–13.

[17] Ruth Benedict, *Patterns of Culture* (New York, First Mariner Books, 1934), 2.

TEACHING SPIRITUALITY TO BEGINNERS

Lawrence Terrien, P.S.S., S.T.D.

Introduction

In the Second Vatican Council's *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, the Council Fathers asserted the "universal call to holiness." They affirmed that there is one holiness that all are called to, and it is described as the "perfection of charity" (LG #40). In reading the post-Synodal exhortations on the Priesthood (*Pastores Dabo Vobis*), on Religious Life (*Vita Consecrata*), and on the Laity (*Christifideles Laici*) I believe that Saint John Paul II outlined what is particular to the path of holiness in each of the three traditional states in life. All three states have as the goal of their spiritual journey the "perfection of charity." I believe that a fundamental principle of the French School of Spirituality has something useful to offer on the pursuit of holiness.

The Council Fathers chose not to use the expression "*alter Christus*/another Christ" in speaking of priests. They feared that this language risked separating the priest from the community he serves and putting him on a pedestal. The expression is found as early as Gregory of Nyssa who, citing St. Paul, says that Christ lives in those who bear his name by the Holy Spirit who was given to us at our baptism. Two of the popularizers of the theology of Cardinal Pierre de Bérulle, the founder of the French School of Spirituality, St. John Eudes and Father Jean-Jacques Olier used the expression but did not limit its application to the clergy. It was rather applied to all those who become members of his Body, the Church. Unfortunately, the second successor to Father Olier at the head of the Society of the Priests of Saint Sulpice, Father Louis Tronson, edited writings from Father Olier on the priesthood entitled *A Treatise on Holy Orders*. In quoting Olier he only used this appellation for priests. That work went through many editions in many languages and enjoyed wide popularity internationally. I believe that this work was responsible for limiting the use of the expression "another Christ" to priests.

Both Olier and St. John Eudes also spoke clearly about the "royal priesthood of the baptized." The leaders of the Protestant reformation did not accept ministerial ordination as a sacrament and claimed instead that the only participation in the priesthood of Christ is the priesthood of the faithful. The Catholic Church never spoke against the priesthood of the baptized. After all, the expression "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own" appears in the First Letter of Peter and three times in the book of Revelation. However, the concept was not extensively developed since the Council of Trent vigorously defended the priestly character of ordained ministry in the Church. Nonetheless, the French School spoke very emphatically on the

priesthood of the baptized. In no way did this reform movement want to denigrate the office of ordained ministry. They worked tirelessly for the reform of Catholic priesthood precisely by calling priests to live up to the high dignity of their office. But that exalted vision of priestly ministry was not affirmed at the expense of the royal priesthood of the baptized.

The heart of the vision of the spiritual life in the French School is rooted in St. Paul's statement: "I live, yet it is not I who live, it is Christ who lives in me." The Holy Spirit, given to me in my baptism is at work binding me to the Body of Christ and it is my responsibility to let this Spirit transform my life, configuring me to the image of the Lord Jesus. The more I abandon myself to that Spirit, the more I will resemble Christ. He comes to dwell in his servants and will continue to live his mysteries within his disciples. The principal mysteries are his Incarnation, his passion and death, his burial, his resurrection, and his ascension. He will also build up in us his thoughts, his feelings, his attitudes, and his dispositions. My way of cooperating with the movements of his Holy Spirit operates through prayer centered on the person of Christ. The more I come to know him by contemplating the Christ I meet in the gospels the more I will adore and love him. The more I love him the more I will act as he did. For he is not only the visible image of the invisible God; he is also the visible image of what God wanted us to be from the moment he created the human race.

Thus, the members of the French School tell us that Christians are other Christs walking on the earth. Father Olier, for example affirms that whatever good we do is really done by Christ who lives within. He says that it is Christ who takes care of his mother in the person of Saint John. It is Christ who preaches in Saint Paul. We are to re-present him to the world. We do so according to our state in life. Priests are configured to Christ as the Head, Shepherd and Spouse of the Church and their path to holiness is achieved through pastoral charity, through a loving gift of self. Consecrated religious are configured to and make visible Christ who continues through their lives to live the values of the Kingdom of God in a radical way, by manifesting the truth of the Beatitudes and by their vowed commitment to the evangelical counsels. In their lives we see that the Kingdom of Christ did not go back to heaven with Christ's ascension. They are signs of its presence. Lay people re-present and make visible Christ who is actually transforming the values of this world into the values of the Kingdom.

"In the Sulpician tradition, spiritual formation is seen as the most important element in the preparation of candidates for priesthood."

My Courses in Spirituality

I have been teaching two courses in spirituality for beginners for several years. The first is an introduction to prayer for candidates who have

never been in a seminary. It takes place in the first year of pre-theology under the title "Prayer and Priesthood." With the new version of the Program for Priestly Formation, it would logically be included in the "Propaedeutic Year" of formation prior to entrance into the Seminary program. The other course I teach is an "Introduction to Spiritual Theology" for those in the first semester of theological studies. I do believe that all study of the theological disciplines in the seminary is a transformational project, feeding our spiritual growth and drawing us closer to God, but I think the study of spirituality is a more intense way of promoting the process of personal integration needed for effective priestly ministry. In the Sulpician tradition, spiritual formation is seen as the most important element in the preparation of candidates for priesthood. And according to Saint John Paul II the "perfection of charity" is pursued by the exercise of the ministry:

> "The relation between a priest's spiritual life and the exercise of his ministry can also be explained on the basis of the pastoral charity bestowed by the sacrament of holy orders. The ministry of the priest, precisely because of its participation in the saving ministry of Jesus Christ the head and shepherd, cannot fail to express and live out his pastoral charity which is both the source and spirit of his service and gift of self. In its objective reality the priestly ministry is an "amoris officium," according to the previously quoted expression of St. Augustine. This objective reality itself serves as both the basis and requirement for a corresponding ethos, which can be none other than a life of love, as St. Augustine himself points out: Sit amoris officium pascere dominicum gregem.(60) This ethos, and as a result the spiritual life, is none other than embracing consciously and freely - that is to say in one's mind and heart, in one's decisions and actions - the "truth" of the priestly ministry as an amoris officium" (PDV #25).

Prayer and Priesthood

According to the syllabus, this course on prayer is described as "an experiential introduction to a Catholic spirituality that is specifically priestly. . .. It is a year-long course which seeks "to help a seminarian develop a spiritual "core which unifies and gives life to his being a priest and his acting as a priest" (*Pastores Dabo Vobis*, #45). The objectives of the course are the following:

1. Understand and appropriately articulate that their call to live in unceasing union with God as disciples of Jesus requires conversion of heart in prayer.
2. Listen and learn spiritually with the heart of a disciple.
3. Recognize that spiritual discipleship is intimately connected to both priestly mission and ecclesial communion, requiring

both sacrifice and discipline.

The pastoral outcomes that we hope to see are described in this way:

1. Understand basic Catholic teaching on prayer as a touchstone of future priestly leadership.
2. Experience personal assimilation of Scripture as both a transforming challenge and a hope, which in turn serves as remote preparation for later preaching of that Word.
3. Practice the ecclesial dimensions of spiritual formation by gaining ease in praying and faith-sharing in a group.
4. Practice the human dimensions of spiritual formation by respecting others' spiritual insights and by respecting healthy boundaries through discretion in shared insights.

I spend the first semester reviewing the last part of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, which, I believe, presents a very comprehensive introduction to the subject. I ask the seminarians to read part of that section of the Catechism for each class and to give me in written form two insights that they drew from the reading along with two questions about the material. We then speak about our own experiences in prayer and what they may have found helpful in their reading. In the last part of the class, we may have an exercise in prayer which we then review together. It may be a particular type of guided meditation, a devotional practice, or one of several forms of *lectio divina*. I also introduce them to the type of *lectio divina* presented in the USCCB document "Fulfilled in Your Hearing." I think it is a very useful tool for priests to consider using with a group (either a support group of priests or the members of the parish staff) in preparation for a Sunday homily. Ministry of the Word, sustained by prayerful reading of the Scriptures, will surely draw the priest more deeply into the mystery of God's own life.

Another aspect of the course that continues throughout the year is an introduction to the diversity in our Catholic Church. The Archdiocese of Baltimore has a multicultural history from its beginning. We take advantage of the opportunity to experience Sunday liturgy in various forms. Our first excursion is not a Catholic one, but worship with our spiritual ancestors in the faith. When I first started taking the seminarians to liturgies in various Catholic traditions, one of the seminarians pointed out that we pray the psalms every day. He asked if we could experience worship in the Jewish community that gave us these prayers. Since the feast of *Yom Kippur* occurs in the month of September, we begin with that celebration. It is the penitential liturgy equivalent to our Ash Wednesday, always well attended, and quite moving. Our next experience is Mass in the extraordinary form. I think it is important for the seminarians to know where we came from. I find that they begin to see for themselves why the Council established as the first principle of the reform of the liturgy "the full and active partici-

pation of the entire congregation according to their role." The following visit is a celebration of the Anglican Usage. It is essentially the Latin rite of Pius V, but in an earlier form of the English language with a few prayers added by Thomas Cranmer, the Archbishop of Canterbury appointed by Henry VIII.

In the second semester we begin with two experiences of the Byzantine liturgy. We start with the Ruthenian Rite in English so that they can follow the celebration without much difficulty. The next visit is the Mass in the Ukrainian Rite in the Ukrainian language. The parish of Saint Michael the Archangel is extraordinarily beautiful, and so is the music. Our final excursion is to an African-American parish. Last year we went to St. Bernardine's parish in West Baltimore. The Archbishop of Washington, Cardinal Wilton Gregory was the guest presider. The liturgy was very lively with an excellent gospel choir and soloists, and the Cardinal's preaching was very powerful.

In the second semester our primary text is *Prayer in the Catholic Church,* edited by Robert Wicks. This is an outstanding collection of articles on prayer in the Scriptures, prayer in the various schools of spirituality, and prayer in the works of many of the great figures of the spiritual life. I assign a chapter or two, and as in the first semester I ask for two questions and two insights to stimulate group discussion of what the seminarians found helpful. I assign two papers in the first semester: a reflection on Anthony Bloom's *Beginning to Pray,* and a personal reflection on the Our Father. In the second semester I ask them to compose a guided meditation on a Gospel passage either in the Sulpician style or in the Ignatian style.

Spiritual Theology

The other course in spirituality that I teach is called "Spiritual Theology." Again, I am looking for personal integration more than memorization of information. In the first semester I ask them to read Ronald Rohlheiser's *The Holy Longing,* which I consider a good contemporary approach to the spiritual life. We spend class time discussing a chapter of the book each week. This takes approximately half of the semester. In the second half of the course I present major themes from two schools of spirituality that I believe have a great deal to offer to diocesan priests: the French School and the Jesuit tradition. I also ask them to do a reflection paper on a classic work of spirituality that they can choose from a long list of works on the subject. They can also choose a book that is not on the list as long as they clear it with me first. My goal is two-fold. Because every vision of the spiritual life is rooted in a theological tradition, the guiding question for their paper is "What did this classic work teach you about God, Christ, the Church and the human condition and what did you find helpful for your own spiritual life."

The syllabus describes the course as follows:

> This course is meant as an introduction to the important ways that theology and spirituality mutually inform and

shape each other. Since the students in this course are embarking on graduate theological studies while preparing for ordained ministry within the Church, it is important for them to develop an ability to integrate theology and spirituality that informs both their academic lives and priestly formation.

The desired learning outcomes are:

1. To understand the crucial relationship between theology and spirituality.
2. To know the major features of Catholic spirituality.
3. To grasp the vast diversity within Catholic spirituality.
4. To comprehend the contributions of a major spiritual writer within the Catholic tradition.
5. To understand the links among the theological, spiritual, pastoral and personal dimensions of priestly formation.

My experience of teaching these two courses has been very rewarding. I am consistently impressed by the seminarians' active engagement of the material. I find their transparency in speaking about their own spiritual journeys edifying and challenging.

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Teaching Philosophy in Today's Seminary Context

Peter Paul Seaton, Jr., Ph.D.

I've been teaching philosophy in a seminary context for going on twenty years. In the main, my experience has been fortunate, happy, and blessed. The Lord has been good to me in calling me to seminary teaching. I'm a better teacher and a better Christian for it. In what follows, I will share some observations, convictions, and practices that have proven effective for me and, more importantly, for students, over that period. I begin with the incoming students slotted for philosophical studies in a pre-theology program, or, as we now say, the Discipleship Stage.

Our challenge: unpromising soil

Philosophy itself typically begins with the recognition of a conundrum or perplexity. The one with which I begin is the large gap between what the Church wants its seminarians to learn during the course of philosophical studies and what students are prepared to handle when they embark upon philosophical studies in the Discipleship Stage. The bluntest way to put the problem is that today's students can't read. Of course, I don't mean that they're illiterate (although some are deeply "grammatically challenged"). I mean "reading" in a rich normative sense. They can't engage with intellectually serious texts with anything approaching adequate means. This inability to read is in turn an indication of something deeper. They haven't yet entered into possession of their minds. They're not truly self-aware or intentional in their intellectual life. They don't have an explicit conception of how to conduct their minds in the essential human activities of reading, speaking, and writing. In the language of Church documents and Aristotelian-scholastic philosophy, they lack the *habitus* (in the plural) of a well-formed mind. And since nature abhors a vacuum, various ersatz substitutes have occupied the territory.

To that, one must add that that there are huge gaps in their knowledge, most relevantly in the humanities. These include not only lacunae in American literature and history, but in western literature and history. There is no Homer, Sophocles, Virgil, Dante, Chaucer, Cervantes, or Goethe, no Achilles, Odysseus, Oedipus, Aeneas, "Virgil," Beatrice, Wife of Bath, Knight, Don Quixote, Sancho

"The teacher is the indispensable transmitter and translator of something infinitely greater than he is. His job is to connect that "infinitely greater" with the often-disadvantaged students before him."

Panza, Faust or Gretchen populating and nourishing their imaginations, and precious little Shakespeare and his galaxy of memorable creations. The battles of Thermopylae, Actium, Tours, Lepanto, and Verdun mean nothing to them. Where to locate an historical event or personage is a crapshoot, as they lack a chronological framework in which to place them. When did Homer live? Thales? Socrates? Moses? David? Jeremiah? St. Augustine? Charlemagne? St. Thomas? Richelieu? ("Rish-who?") Cue the deer-in-the headlights look.

Malformed and uninformed, they're not just pre-philosophical, they're poorly tilled ground with sinkholes and rocks. Philosophy is supposed to take root and grow in that? Let's be real. Let's be real about the steep decline of American education and culture as evidenced in our students Let's be educators, not ostriches. Whatever philosophical education is, it shouldn't proceed on the basis of a denial of the reality immediately before us. Rather, let us acknowledge the truth of what Augustine said: *Nam in quem locum quisque ceciderit, ibi debet incumbere, ut surgat*. (In my translation: It's from wherever anyone has fallen that he has to steady himself, that he might get up.[1]) We live in a time of the cave beneath the cave beneath the cave.[2] The way up and out is long and arduous. The Church gives us two years.

Sed contra: grounds of hope

After this downer of an introduction, where I deliberately "forced the note" (i. e., exaggerated, leaving out all qualifications and exceptions), it is important to acknowledge that there are grounds for hope. Indeed, there are solid grounds. In two pregnant words, we can count on nature and on grace. More expansively, there's individual and common nature and corporate and individual grace. Despite the impact of original and personal sin and the deformations of culture, the human mind does have a natural bent toward truth. The first line of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* still rings true. Natural curiosity still exists, and some students are moved by an *eros* they cannot name. Moreover, grace is always on offer, by definition infinitely beyond what we can fathom. We've got a lot going for us.

Still, human art is needed to cooperate with them and lend them judicious support. In this work of assistance, curriculum matters greatly, but pedagogy is key. The teacher is the indispensable transmitter and translator of something infinitely greater than he is. His job is to connect that "infinitely greater" with the often-disadvantaged students before him.

A personal response

What follows is a selective report of how I perform this daunting task. The reader will take

[1] St. Augustine, *De vera religione*, XXIV, 45.

[2] Channeling Plato, Leo Strauss said of human beings formed by modern philosophy, especially by positivism and historicism, that they live in "the cave beneath the cave." In important respects, we today are even more deeply removed from reality than was the case in Strauss's day.

from it what he or she finds useful. Pedagogy, I believe, is deeply personal. My way is far from the only way. Different assessments of students, different strengths of the instructor, different emphases in approach or content, will dictate other paths. My approach here will be brief reports of the three courses I teach in the first semester (with sideline glances to others). First, however, an overview of the three. It embodies the first principle of my pedagogy, which is to present and consider things as wholes with parts.

A *tour d'horizon*

The first course, Philosophy 101, is an introduction to the philosophy curriculum as a whole. It is the part that presents the whole. It provides students with a roadmap for what lies ahead. As such, it introduces the important notion of "whole with parts" as an essential form for reading, thinking, and speaking philosophically.

One thing the students learn in this overview is that the philosophy curriculum is divided into two main parts: a historical sequence that tracks the history of western thought and a number of philosophical disciplines. Next, therefore, I will say some words about the first course in the history sequence, which deals with ancient and medieval thought. Besides reenforcing the notion of reading texts as wholes with parts, it introduces the notion of "two tracks" of western civilization that need to be followed in one's study, and not just in philosophy. The first track begins with the ancient Greeks and the cultural (Homer & Hesiod) and political (the *polis*) developments that occasioned the emergence of the distinctive human activity they were the first to call "philosophia," while the second is the history of Revelation, starting among the ancient Jews. In other words, "Jerusalem and Athens."

Eventually these two tracks encountered each other in the context of imperial Rome and produced a dramatic history of dispute, dialogue, and enrichment conducted by figures such as Philo of Alexandria, Justin Martyr and Philosopher, Plotinus, Augustine, and Boethius, then continued in different circumstances by Anselm, Abelard, and the scholastics. The providential coming together of these two tracks and their subsequent career is the broad focus of the first course in the historical sequence.[3]

Finally, I will say several words about the Philosophical Anthropology course I teach. In addition to the history sequence, Philosophy 101 introduces the students to the philosophical disciplines and their interconnections. They learn that it's not just "one damn thing" (or course) after another, but there's an inner logic obtaining among them. We learn in the ancient/medieval course that philosophy was born in the discovery

[3] As Benedict XVI put the matter: "The encounter between the Biblical message and Greek thought did not happen by chance. The vision of Saint Paul, who saw the roads to Asia barred and in a dream saw a Macedonian man plead with him: "Come over to Macedonia and help us!" (cf. Acts 16:6-10) - this vision can be interpreted as a "distillation" of the intrinsic necessity of a rapprochement between Biblical faith and Greek inquiry. In point of fact, this rapproachement had been going on for some time." Benedict XVI, The Regensburg Address.

of the idea of Nature.[4] The *ordo disciplinarum* echoes that discovery by beginning with the philosophy of Nature, then proceeds from it. It is the foundation upon which the edifice, or rather two edifices, of the philosophy curriculum are built.

In the first edifice, after nature is investigated philosophically, yielding fundamental categories and principles such as material-and-form, act-and-potency, and four-fold causality, the philosophical mind turns toward a distinctive nature among Nature. It turns in a dispassionate but highly interested way to human nature. In turn, the philosophical anthropology course serves as the predicate for a series of courses that consider aspects of human nature in greater specificity and detail. These are epistemology, philosophical ethics, and social philosophy, which consider man as knower, as agent, and as social or communal. Philosophical anthropology is thus a pivotal course in the curriculum. It effects the transition from nature in general to man specifically and prepares for further disciplinary considerations. And there's even more to the course's work of mediation.

I teach the course in consultation with a colleague who teaches theological anthropology and moral theology. I ask him, "What do you need from me for your courses? 'Natural law.' Got it. 'Conscience.' Got it." Curricular coordination and coherence need to exist not only within the philosophy curriculum but between philosophy and the systematic theology courses. Metaphysics should be tailored (at least in part) to Christology and Trinity courses. Students should learn the significance of Thomas's saying about the Aristotelian category of "relation" in connection with the Persons of the blessed Trinity: "*In Deo, ens minimum (relatio) est ens maximum*."[5] Students benefit from these self-conscious coordinations, which reenforce their experience and expand their understanding of seminary education as an integrated "whole with parts." The *Program for Priestly Formation* mandates that "The academic curriculum as a whole should have a discernible and coherent unity" (*PPF*, #194). We teachers need to work to make that coherence and unity visible to students.

"As I conduct them, each of these courses explicitly addresses 'where the students really are' and tries to bring them along step-by-step so that they can grow not just in content-acquisition but in justified self-confidence, that is, in the self-awareness and *habitus* (plural) required for philosophical thinking."

To summarize this opening overview: As I conduct them, each of these courses explicitly addresses "where the students really are" and tries to bring them along step-by-step so that they can grow not just in content-acquisition but in

[4] See Laurence Berns, "Rational Animal/Political Animal," *Essays in Honor of Jacob Klein* (1976).

[5] "In God, the least form of being (relation) is the maximum form." Inherent in this formula is the entire adventure of the Christian faith's encounter with pagan thought. What was ontologically weakest (relation) became the strongest, what was strongest (substance), was seen as utterly dependent.

justified self-confidence, that is, in the self-awareness and *habitus* (plural) required for philosophical thinking. I do this principally by teaching an *ars legendi*, whereby we apprentice ourselves to minds greater than our own and closely track and reflect on how they conduct theirs. In other words, we cultivate critical docility. Two years is barely enough, but the frequent result is a student who is better aware of what the life of the mind consists in, who is aware of the requirements of what we could call "the Catholic intellect." This type of intelligence has distinctive learning, distinctive interests, and a distinctive bent of mind – and is aware of the reasons for that distinctiveness and is personally convinced by them. The Catholic intellect is more than a philosophical mind, but it necessarily includes the latter.

The Church as Reason-Giving Authority

Students come to seminary with any number of emotions and questions. The first course in the philosophy curriculum, Philosophy 101, addresses some of the important ones. It lets the student know that it's okay to have these questions and to feel these emotions. Moreover, he learns that the seminary and the Church have anticipated them and have answers to their questions. And not just answers to take on faith, but intellectually cogent ones. In this, he has an experience of a special type of Institution and a special type of Authority. The Church gives commands ("Study philosophy for two years"), but it explains its commands. (Sometimes at great length). Here is a very concrete example of the character of the Church as an Institution doubly committed to *logos*, to divine *Logos* and human *logos*.[6]

The course accordingly begins by raising the question, at once general and personal: Why does the Church want you to study philosophy? The student's natural curiosity is piqued and his self-interest addressed.

To pursue it, we read and discuss three texts: the "Decree on the Reform of the Ecclesiastical Study of Philosophy" promulgated by the Congregation for Catholic Education in 2011; the section in the USCCB's *Program of Priestly Formation* on "Intellectual Formation" (with special attention to what it says about the study of philosophy); and a text by Monsignor Robert Sokolowski aptly entitled "Philosophy in the Seminary Curriculum." The texts wear their relevance on their sleeve, while reading and reflecting upon them reveal important consonances and interesting differences among them. In the first two, we listen to authoritative bodies in the Church speak to the question, while the third is the confirming and explicating voice of a professional philosopher. Moreover, in reading the texts, the student encounters a concrete application of the attitude of the centurion of St. Luke's Gospel ("I too am a man under authority.") that

[6] See footnote #3 above. A capital point on which the pagan and the biblical traditions agree is that to live a human life is to be under the obligation "to give an account" (*logon didonai*) of oneself. Cf. Plato's *Apology of Socrates* (39 c-d) and *Romans* 14:12. The Lord Jesus himself is rather demanding in this regard. Cf. *Matthew* 12, 37.

"Sound philosophy is a necessary bridge between the faith of the Church and the ills of contemporary culture."

applies to the teacher as well as the student. We are both doing what the Church tells us to do. This Authority, however, gives reasons for its command and rather extensive guidance for its execution.

The Church, philosophy, and the dominant culture

Philosophical studies are necessary, the Church explains, for purposes of intellectual formation, which is part of human formation, for subsequent theological studies, and for future pastoral ministry. Here, it is impossible to delve into all the reasons the Church gives. But two things about the Church's "case for philosophy" should be noted, as they further illustrate the fruitfulness of the principle of considering things as wholes with parts. Starting with the Decree, in all three texts, seminary education in philosophy is situated at the nexus of the Church, its work of evangelization, and contemporary culture. Why? In ways detailed by the texts,[7] contemporary culture is misologistic and hence ill-suited to hear and understand the Gospel of the Incarnate *Logos*. In keeping with her own nature as professing a "reasonable faith," the Church wishes to equip her ministers to be able to diagnose and minister to the rational ills – the ills of reason - of contemporary culture. This means that they must know both the health of reason and its manifold contemporary diseases. Sound philosophy is a necessary bridge between the faith of the Church and the ills of contemporary culture.

The present, however, is not the only dimension of reality subject to contemporary intellectual darkening. The past is obscured as well.

Custodes memoriae

In contemporary America, democratic presentism is increasingly overlaid by partisan obfuscation and ideological tendentiousness. Tocqueville analyzed the former in his magisterial *Democracy in America*, while Joshua Mitchell recently dissected contemporary racialist "wokeness" in *America Awakening*.[8] Ideologically falsified history and the loss of cultural memory are serious threats to humane and civilized existence, as civilization and our very humanity itself require life-giving connections with the past.[9]

[7] Written during the pontificates of Saint John Paul II and Benedict XVI, these texts rehearse characteristic themes and formulations of those two learned pontiffs, including diagnoses of "scientism," "the dictatorship of relativism," and an unreasonable "self-limiting" of the scope of reason by reason itself. See the reference in footnote # 16.

[8] Joshua Mitchell, *America Awakening: Identity Politics and Other Afflictions of Our Time* (Encounter Books, 2020).

[9] For a recent reflection on this theme, see Wilfred McClay, "The Claims of Memory," www.firstthings.org/Jan/2022. "Santayana was not concerned here with the putative "lessons of history," about whose precise contents he was always skeptical and circumspect. He was speaking of something more fundamental, more elemental, more anthropological. He was designating memory as a central precondition for a mature, civilized way of life—a subject about which he knew a great deal."

Today, however, the past is all-too-often reduced to a catalogue of errors and sins against contemporary moralistic pieties and ideological diktats. In countering this loss and this mendacity, the Church has a special role to play with its own capacious memory, its expertise in judging the deeds of fallible humans, and its placing of all human cultures and agents under the judgment of God Almighty.

In the restoration of civilizational memory, the study of the history of philosophy has its special contributions to make. These include recalling inestimable glories of the west, starting with philosophy and political life themselves, as well as the various criteria that it has forged to measure and judge itself.[10] It could be argued that western civilization is characterized by a unique capacity for self-criticism.

Accordingly, there is a dimension to the historical sequence of courses that I call "essential elements of the history of western civilization." To speak succinctly: the philosophers lived at distinct times and places, which they subjected to searching scrutiny. To understand their thought, we must pay attention to the human world in which they lived, how they approached it, and how they judged it. They turn out to be privileged guides to the civilizational adventure which is the west.

Phūsis, logos, koinōnía

My design of the history sequence of courses (ancient/medieval//modern) aims to combine three factors. What is a plausible account of western philosophical development? What do students need from philosophy for theological studies? And, finally, what can they realistically be expected to handle? Too much on the plate leads to intellectual indigestion and worse.

Avoiding that prospect prompts me to select three focal topics (with others gravitating around them) and to trace them throughout the history sequence. The title of this section indicates these main themes in their original Greek philosophical names. "Nature," "intelligible speech," and "human community." Aristotle brought them together in his famous dictum that "man, by nature, is the *polis*-animal because the *logos*-animal."[11] On their basis, pre-Socratic *phusiologia* and *cosmologia*, Socratic *dialogía* and *dialectics,* Aristotelian *epistēmē* and *sophía*, and the *polis* (real and idealized) come to sight and lay down predicates for retracing the subsequent history of philosophy. Different views of Nature, different conceptions of philosophy and its starting points, methods, departments, and achievements, and different forms of authoritative human association, constitute different epochs of the western adventure. When Nature becomes Creation and the Aristotelian *nous*-god or the Platonic One becomes the God who creates by speaking (*Genesis*

[10] Cf. Pierre Manent, *Seeing Things Politically* (St. Augustine Press, 2015), translated by Ralph C. Hancock, with an Introduction by Daniel J. Mahoney, "What is the West?," pp. 171-180.

[11] *Politics*, I, 2.

1), or the Trinity that Understands and Loves with perfect adequacy, then a new period in the west has, in principle, begun. And when both are contested, philosophical modernity has declared itself.

In order to retrace the authoritative communities of the west, I employ Pierre Manent's notion of "political forms."[12] The ancient world knew two natural political forms, the city and the empire, while the modern period saw the rise of a distinctive political form, the nation-state. The nation-state is, of course, a major bone of contention today, therefore its genesis and nature are studied in the modern philosophy course and contemporary debates revolving around it are considered in Political Philosophy. With respect to Nature, I enlist a variety of primary texts and well-known scholars who together help retrace the general concepts of Nature – elemental material, teleological, created, mechanistic, evolutionary, and quantum – that have punctuated western thinking. As for *logos*, in addition to what I indicated above, the logical forms of S is P and genus-species, and the requirements of defining, are brought to light in the first semester and constantly reenforced. How I do so merits its own section.

"Thomas shows what it takes to put the small "c" in Catholic, being open to all significant voices on a topic, while being faithful to the received Faith and advancing our understanding of it."

Texts exhibit fundamental forms of thought

S is P is the fundamental unit of intelligibility: merely uttering a name doesn't articulate a thought, it merely preps an object for predication; and a predicate needs its subject to inhere in the world. The two must become one to form a whole and do the work of *logos*. In keeping with my focus on an *ars legendi*, the notion of S is P is first introduced as a way to identify the rationale for parts of a text. A new part (whether paragraph or section) is called for if either the S or the P changes in the course of an argument. Once they grasp the concept, students are amazed at how much more fruitful reading is. The text becomes more memorable, because more intelligible. In turn, this experience of the intelligible articulation of texts can be applied to things. The French political philosopher Claude Lefort coined a fine phrase for this movement: *vers le texte et vers le monde*.

Aristotle opens the *Politics*, the *Nicomachean Ethics*, and the *Metaphysics* with what I call genus-species "sweeps" where a focal topic – the *polis*, *politiké*, and *sophia* – is at the peak of a series of human associations, dynamic skills, or forms of knowledge. At the beginning of each of these fundamental texts, the same intellectual operation is at work. Employing it three times cannot

[12] *Metamorphoses of the City: On the Western Dynamic* (Harvard, 2013). For modern political philosophy, in addition to primary texts, I use his *An Intellectual History of Liberalism* (Princeton, 1995).

be an accident. It indicates how thought ought to begin an investigation: situate your subject within its appropriate genus, then work to specify it. Certainly this was a lesson that Thomas drew from Aristotle.

Thomas's definitions of virtue (Q. 55) and law (Q. 90) in the *Summa theologiae* further indicate the *terminus ad quem* of genus-species thinking, which is to define the essence of something by way of its four causes. Here logic and being reach out to complement one another. Definition gives thinking its point and being its crown.

In coming to terms with these logical forms, the *ars legendi* is at work, noting patterns in how Aristotle opens a discussion, accounting for the fact that one paragraph succeeds another in accordance with a change of S or P, and retracing the progression of thought in the titles of the articles that make up Thomas's *quaestiones.* In the instances given above (virtue and law), by following their article titles one observes the topic being located in a genus, then further specified, and finally defined by causal analysis. Thomas was a past master at thinking. In observing closely how he conducted his mind, we are instructed in how to conduct our own.

Thomas X 2

Two other features therefore further characterize the history sequence. In the first course (ancient/medieval), Thomas is presented as the culmination of the meeting and engagement between the two tracks ("Jerusalem and Athens") mentioned above, and in the second (modern) course, he is paired with a series of modern philosophers on topics central to each philosopher. Thomas's definition of *virtus* in Question 55 of the *Summa theologiae* is contrasted with Machiavelli's concept of princely *virtù* in *Il Principe*, the two Thomases, Thomas Aquinas and Thomas Hobbes, dispute the question of the nature of natural law, and so on. Both out of personal conviction and the strong recommendation (verging on requirement) of Church authorities, Thomas is given a certain pride of place even in the history sequence. The advantages of employing him in these ways are multiple. The first way - as culmination - has him considering all of the intellectual and spiritual developments of the west to his day and undertaking the gigantic task of synthesizing them. That is a magnificent (if daunting) lesson for us today. Thomas shows what it takes to put the small "c" in Catholic, being open to all significant voices on a topic, while being faithful to the received Faith and advancing our understanding of it.

In other words, a close reading of Thomas reveals that he is at once deeply conservative and a bold innovator. The text with which the first history course ends, Question 1 of the *Summa theologiae* on *sacra doctrina*, is a fine example of this dual attitude. In articulating "sacred doctrine," Thomas employs Aristotelian categories to draw out meaning and truth from Sacred Scripture that the traditional ways of reading the Bible did not and could not. He thus answers legitimate worries of Traditionally-minded theologians about the propriety of engaging with the pagan philosopher and parries the thrusts of "mere

Aristotelians" such as Siger of Brabant. The contemporary relevance of this example of "creative fidelity" (the phrase is Gabriel Marcel's) is fairly easy to spell out in class.

Secondly, the use of Thomas as a regular foil to modern philosophers makes him relevant to modern life in a way that prepares students to bring Thomas to bear on contemporary issues and debates. They practice answering the question, WWTS?, in connection with the founding fathers of modernity. Thomas on Descartes's strategic bifurcation of the human person into *ego cogitans* and *res extensa* is good preparation for transgenderism. Thomas and Kant on what constitutes human dignity is good preparation for addressing Justice Kennedy's dignitarian jurisprudence in Political Philosophy. To be sure, there are limits to this Thomistic pairing and preparation.

The need for other authors

I have great respect for Thomas *and* I have certain reservations about his thought (whether it be his interpretations of Plato and Aristotle, his commitment to premodern astronomy and cosmology (which, truth be told, is fairly low-hanging fruit), or the place of political philosophy in his "division of the sciences"). The reservations are implied in the title above. They can be also summed up in the recognition that Thomas did not directly encounter modern science and modern culture, so we need more direct assistance in dealing with them. For example, he did not know what modern science can tell us about sexual dimorphism. On that important matter, we need other authors, such as Ryan Anderson.[13]

To be sure, the core content and main thread of the philosophical anthropology course is the Roman Church's traditional teaching on human nature, which means that it is largely Thomistic. Hylomorphism, the general powers of the soul, the analytic schema of power-act-and-object, the "rational powers" (*ratio* itself and "the rational appetite" or will), natural law, conscience, and the last end of man – all these find their place in the course, all are studied under Thomas's tutelary gaze. But certain considerations, both pedagogical and substantive, prompt me to supplement him with other authors. In the first place with Leon Kass, in a second with then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, and a third with Germain Grisez. Let me explain.

Kass's contribution

In discussing the topic of human nature, or the human person today, several circumstances already shape the discussion. The issue of transgenderism alluded to above can stand for a host of such factors. Sound pedagogy requires that they be taken into account. Thomas needs contemporary assistance to bridge the gap.

We therefore begin the course with Leon Kass's magisterial essay, "Thinking about the [Human] Body."[14] I do so for four reasons. Kass,

[13] Ryan Anderson, *When Harry Became Sally: Responding to the Transgender Movement* (Encounter, 2018).

[14] Leon Kass, *Toward a More Natural Science* (The Free Press, 1988).

unlike Thomas, is aware of the culturally dominant views of the human body and directly addresses them; he provides an alternative philosophical way of thinking about the body than that provided by modern science and cultural relativism; he thoughtfully lays out the marvelous nature of the human body, at once dignified and vulnerable, a fit object of pride, but also of human chagrin and even shame. And, last, what he says about human upright posture is remarkably consonant with Thomas's discussion of "the suitability of the disposition of the human body" in the *Summa theologiae* (Q. 91, 3). Here, unassisted natural reason echoes and develops what Thomas said in a theological key.

In our contemporary setting, where the nature of the human person is widely contested and universal truths about it are often said to be unattainable, starting with obvious features and characteristics of the human body secures a fairly stable beginning for further considerations of the human. This beachhead secured, then Thomas can be brought in to complement, and in some ways enrich, Kass's discussion. For example, Thomas links the body's character and characteristics to man's distinctive "rational soul," which Kass intimates but shies away from affirming. Between Kass and Thomas, then, one can orchestrate a dialogue that fruitfully involves medieval, modern, and contemporary thoughts and thinkers. In the exchange, Aristotelian hylomorphism is vindicated, but also enlarged. Indeed, one is pointed to aspects of human nature that transcend the categories of natural philosophy derived from lower nature. The need to employ a term like "person" in connection with human nature surfaces. As we go through the course, that reality and that need become ever more prominent. Cardinal Ratzinger makes it thematic in two lectures on conscience that we read.[15]

Ratzinger's cultural analysis and retrieval

Modern science and modern culture loom large in Ratzinger's thinking about all issues today, including the human person. His general concept of "secular culture" analyzes the framework within which man is predominantly viewed today, and over against which he argues for truer views of the human person, society, and humanity.[16] In the opening lecture of *On Conscience*, he first presents this central human faculty in its contemporary secular and theological versions and, in a characteristically socratic move, points out the untoward consequences from them that prompt one to revisit their premises and indeed the topic itself. Having thus reopened the *quid sit?* question concerning conscience, he moves to retrieve older and truer traditional understandings (supplemented by insights of contemporary psychology and philosophy). In a wonderful fit between *what* he talks about (conscience) and *how* he goes about talking about it (in the first person), this essential feature of our humanity is

[15] *On Conscience* (National Catholic Bioethics Center & Ignatius Press, 2007).

[16] Paul Seaton, "Benedict XVI on Secular Culture, Technological Rationality, and Contemporary Liberty," in *Jerusalem, Athens, and Rome: Essays in Honor of Fr. James V. Schall, S. J.* (St. Augustine Press, 2013).

discussed in strikingly personal terms, that is, both autobiographically and biographically, before being laid out more systematically. Recognition of this artful move by an expert writer is another insight of a developing *ars legendi*.

While not a Thomist, Ratzinger dutifully sketches Thomas's understanding of conscience during the course of the systematic exposition. But his mind and preferences are elsewhere. Conscience is alternatively, or successively, presented by him as a "window or door" that opens human subjectivity to the wider world of "being and human solidarity," as a compelling inner "voice" that commands and judges in ways that go beyond the warrants of any merely human voice, and (much like the human capacity for speech) as an "organ" that is both an essential part of our human endowment and in need of regular cultivation, both communal and personal. Alas, "the modern liberal view" of man, society, and authority, taken to an extreme in "secular culture," denies or distorts all of that. Even worse, certain theological voices within the Church have adopted this erroneous view of conscience with disastrous consequences for souls. So much is at stake in what the Church appropriates from the ambient culture! Accordingly, one of the chief tasks of a good philosophical education is to provide students with the intellectual resources to take the measure of ambient ideas, to be able to retrace what Lord Acton called the "irritating pedigree of ideas."

A closing Epilogue, "Conscience and Grace," places the dictates and judgments of conscience within a greater economy of speakers and speech. Left to itself, the final word of conscience is indictment, as all of us have a burden of guilt that we cannot remove. In the revelation of Jesus Christ, however, the inner word of indictment reveals itself to be more fundamentally a Word of forgiveness and welcome. Thus does the philosophical theologian of the creative *Logos* close the circle that begins with the inner life of the Trinity and ends with that same creative *Logos* having "pitched His tent among us." *Tout se tient*.

Contemporary contexts for natural law

In the Thomistic understanding of conscience, conscience presupposes natural law. Natural law is certainly an essential part of the intellectual patrimony of the Church. Ratzinger, however, is known to have reservations about appealing to natural law today and liberal theologians are past masters at calling it into question, especially in sexual matters. At the other end of the spectrum, important debates over its very nature are current among its proponents. It is in these varied contexts that we approach natural law in the course. Here, my aim is two-fold. First, to consider Thomistic texts that are essential for anyone who wishes to participate in the debates, and secondly to provide some

"[T]he initial notion of natural law presupposes a certain natural philosophy and a creationist metaphysics. The cognitive burden for defending natural law is, accordingly, quite heavy."

guidance vis-à-vis the debates. I do so first by reading Questions 90, 91, 1 & 2, and 94, 2 of the *Summa theologiae*.[17] Other texts, of course, merit consideration, but time constraints preclude them. On the other hand, these particular texts nicely display another characteristic feature of philosophizing: its ambition to think all things together in a comprehensive way.

Primary texts

Question 90 on "the essence of law" provides a first normative understanding of the nature of law that any claim for "natural law" must fulfill. Question 91, articles 1 & 2, then provide another overarching framework for understanding natural law, to begin with, its eternal paradigm and source, "eternal law," which is God's own "regulatory scheme" (my phrase) for all of creation. Existing in God's Mind, however, it has to be promulgated, it has to be applied to those it regulates. This application occurs at creation and is natural law in its initial meaning: the "imprinting" of eternal law on created natures. In Thomas's initial presentation, natural law presupposes the world as composed of divinely-created natures, each with divinely-inscribed natural "inclinations" to their "proper activities and ends." In other words, Nature is not mere Nature, but created Nature, and it is thoroughly teleological. Put yet another way, the initial notion of natural law presupposes a certain natural philosophy and a creationist metaphysics. The cognitive burden for defending natural law is, accordingly, quite heavy.

Remarkably, though, 91, 2 indicates that this initial or most general notion of natural law is not the "proper" understanding of natural law. The "proper" understanding is more specific, it is restricted to "the rational creature," man. Because of his reason, he can "participate" in the divine regulatory Reason. The natural light of reason is illumined by divine Light and in that compound light man can distinguish good from bad, *bonum* from *malum*, which is the proper work of natural law. The reader cannot help but notice that the second formulation both expands and narrows the nature and work of natural law. It expands it: natural reason is not merely natural, it is "participatory" in the *summa ratio in Deo existens*; it narrows it: its focus now is on goods and evils connected with human nature, not on the whole of creation. This "narrowing" and "expanding" continue in the *locus classicus* for understanding Thomas on natural law, Q. 94, 2.

There, the fundamental principle of practical reason, the good, is paralleled with the fundamental principle of speculative reason, being, and then spelled out in terms of three generic types of goods to which human nature is naturally inclined. Remarkably, the last type contains two sorts of rational goods, the good of knowing the truth about God, or the ultimate Cause of all things, and the good of living in society, as the

[17] Question 90, "on the essence of law"; Question 91, 1 & 2, "Is there such a thing as eternal law?" and "Is there such a thing as natural law in us?"; Question 94, 2,"Does the natural law contain many precepts, or just one precept?".

fulfillment of our social nature. Thus, 94, 2 brings full circle the understanding of man as the rational social animal that was the ground of Question 90 on the definition of law. There, law was the work of and response to this dual character of man.

With the foregoing, the student has acquired enough of an understanding of Thomas on natural law to engage critically with modern philosophers' subsequent reworkings of the same. More importantly, he learns that natural law's strength is also a limitation. In 94, 2, Thomas is clear that natural law grasps the general precepts, the most common principles, of human action: health is good; procreation of new life (and its rearing) is good; truth is good; social comity is good. That generality is its strength and its indispensable contribution. But since human action always takes place in the concrete, natural law's deliverances must be supplemented to become realized. This is what human law and prudence do for a particular people and a particular individual. In other words, one should not ask of natural law more than it can deliver. The intellectual virtues of prudence and legislative craftmanship are also required.

Thomas further adds that since human nature is ordained to an end above that nature's power and reach, it must needs receive authoritative guidance from Above. This is the work of Divine Law. Admittedly, this is a huge addition, one rife with complications.

The natural law debates and the final debate

As the last comment indicates, there are many issues that surface in these texts on natural law (all of which I pretermitted), and even more that emerge in contemporary debates among self-declared proponents of St. Thomas. In class, I walk a fine line between conveying settled points and acknowledging debatable and debated ones. This requires sketching the debate between the so-called New Natural Lawyers and their more traditional critics, as well as indicating what I consider the best of the contemporary discussion.[18]

This entails the introduction of Germain Grisez into the course. He was the patriarch of the NNLs. He then reappears in the last unit of the course on "the last end of man." Having developed an understanding of human nature and the human person during the course of the course, the question naturally arises: what would be this rational nature's, this embodied person's, purpose and fulfillment? Thomas provided the classic answer to this question – "the beatific vision" - at the beginning of the Second Part of the *Summa theologiae*, in Questions 1-5, while Grisez famously took issue with that answer in an article pointedly entitled "The True Ultimate End of Human Beings: The Kingdom, Not God Alone."[19] Tellingly, Grisez did so in the names of both philosophy and Scripture. He argued that

[18] James Carey, *Natural Reason and Natural Law* (Resource Publications, 2019); Steven V, Jensen, *Knowing the Natural Law* (The Catholic University of America Press, 2015).

[19] "The True Ultimate End of Human Beings: The Kingdom, Not God Alone," Theological Studies 69 (2008), pp. 38-61.

Thomas's teaching was philosophically inadequate and that it failed to cohere with the witness of Scripture and the prayer of the Church. Here is a Catholic instance of *amicus Plato, sed magis amica veritas.*

A Catholic socratic ending

Such a fundamental debate between Catholic thinkers is a fitting finale to the course for several reasons. Chief among them is a personal experience on the part of students of an essential element of philosophical self-awareness: Socratic "human wisdom," that is, knowledge of one's ignorance.[20] To mix metaphors: they're at the adult table, but candor requires them to acknowledge that they're not yet ready for prime time.

Because it is a legitimate debate, students cannot simply rely on authority. Each must think for himself. In engaging it, he has to bring to bear what he has learned in the course, starting with how to read. Having both authors' texts before him, he can, indeed must, ask, does Grisez adequately represent Thomas's argument? If not, what's missing? And to what effect? On the other hand, Grisez's Kingdom-critique requires one to revisit the Thomistic texts and ask, what use does Thomas make of Scripture in his argument? And how is it related to an otherwise philosophical argument, one based upon philosophical anthropology (and, we have to add, a creationist metaphysics)?

What ensues is a discussion among students, each putting forth his best understanding, each open to others' views, including their criticisms. Different mindsets emerge. Some students fall back on (their understanding of) Scripture. They haven't internalized the great lesson of the ancient-medieval history course, that the Catholic faith combines faith and reason—it's not based solely on *Scriptura*. This is an important discovery for student and teacher alike. Some fall back on (their understanding of) authority: *Thomas dixit, ita est*. But in the fray of discussion, they have to defend that appeal to authority. They have to philosophize.

"[T]he great lesson of the ancient-medieval history course [is] that the Catholic faith combines faith and reason—it's not based solely on *Scriptura*. This is an important discovery for student and teacher alike."

Sooner or later, all have to deal with the actual progression of Thomas's argument (omitted by Grisez), and all have to take stock of its disciplinary components and strategic distinctions. This starts with the philosophical anthropology he presents and the metaphysics of *esse* and essence, and the "diffusive Good," that he invokes to complement it, and continues with the strategic distinctions he makes to render his position clearer and more cogent. Happiness in "this present life" is distinguished from happiness "in the next life";

[20] Plato's *Apology of Socrates*, 29b.

and what's "essential to happiness" is distinguished from with what's "required" for it and "consequent" upon it, both in this life and the next. It's in their light that the partial character of Grisez's critique shows itself and thus can be subject to scrutiny in turn.

Each iteration of the course ends differently, depending upon the composition of the class and the course of the discussion. But three things typically are the same. The students see how far they've come in the short span of one semester; their appetites are whetted for subsequent courses in the philosophy curriculum (including Metaphysics and Modern Philosophy); and they look forward to their scripture courses with these new reading techniques and the concepts and issues that philosophy has brought to their attention in mind. Not bad results for a first semester of philosophical studies. Nature, grace, and art have done their work yet again.

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Teaching Liturgy in Seminary

James M. Starke, Ph.D.

Introduction

In June 2022 two documents were promulgated with important consequences for teaching liturgy in the seminary. On June 24th, the Solemnity of the Nativity of Saint John the Baptist, the sixth edition of the *Program of Priestly Formation in the United States of America* was promulgated in response to the 2016 edition of the *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis*.[1] A few days later on June 29th, the Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul, Pope Francis promulgated the Apostolic Letter *Desiderio desideravi* on the Liturgical Formation of the People of God.[2]

The aim of this article is to revisit Vatican II's foundational vision for teaching liturgy in seminaries and religious houses of studies in light of the directions and challenges offered by the updated *Program of Priestly Formation* and by Pope Francis in *Desiderio desideravi*. First, we situate the intellectual study of liturgy as one component of liturgical formation. In this section, Pope Francis' vision for liturgical formation provides framework for approaching liturgical studies, couched within the broader four-dimensional framework articulated in the *Program of Priestly Formation*. Second, we examine the study of liturgy under its interconnected theological, historical, juridical, spiritual, and pastoral aspects. Here, general comments about the study of each aspect open into considerations of how challenges suggested by Pope Francis might be addressed in teaching.

Liturgical Formation

In *Desiderio desideravi* Pope Francis calls for a "serious and vital liturgical formation" that leads the entire People of God to "the contemplation of the beauty and truth of Christian celebration" and to each member's conformation to Christ.[3] Francis himself provides "prompts or cues for reflections"[4] by articulating a twofold approach to liturgical formation (formation for liturgy and formation by liturgy), by identifying theological foundations for formation, by diagnosing pastoral and spiritual maladies large and small, and by challenging all believers to engage

[1] United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Program of Priestly Formation in the United States of America*, 6th ed. (Washington: USCCB, 2022); Congregation for the Clergy, *The Gift of the Priestly Vocation: Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis* (Vatican City: L'Osservatore Romano, 2016). Henceforth, *Program of Priestly Formation* is cited as PPF with article numbers.

[2] Pope Francis, "Apostolic Letter *Desiderio desideravi* on the Liturgical Formation of the People of God" (29 June 2022) https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_letters/documents/20220629-lettera-ap-desiderio-desideravi.html. Henceforth, *Desiderio desideravi* is cited as DD with article numbers.

[3] DD 27 (heading) and DD 1; also see DD 41.

[4] DD 1.

in the process. The pope's approach to liturgical formation revitalizes for new generations and new ecclesial contexts that herculean revisioning of liturgical studies articulated by the fathers of the Second Vatican Council in the Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium* on the Sacred Liturgy.[5]

The fathers of Vatican II directed that the study of liturgy "be ranked among the compulsory and major courses in seminaries and religious houses of studies" and "be taught under its theological, historical, spiritual, pastoral, and juridical aspects."[6] These two aims were the fruits of the twentieth-century liturgical movement, and their enshrinement in a conciliar constitution was a turning point at a time when seminary instruction in liturgy consisted largely in attaining rubrical competency. Six decades on, Pope Francis reminds the Church of the continuing importance of the conciliar vision,[7] and the *Program for Priestly Formation* instantiates it for liturgical studies in seminaries and religious houses of the United States.[8]

"Each theological discipline contributes to formation for liturgy because through theological studies the worshipping believer can better understand and appropriate the mysteries celebrated."

Like the conciliar fathers, Francis also connects liturgy with the wider theological formation of seminarians. The pope appeals to "the extraordinary capacity that the actual celebration has in itself to offer an organic and unified vision of all theological knowledge" in order to restate the conciliar vision that "[e]very discipline of theology, each from its own perspective, must show its own intimate connection with the Liturgy in light of which the unity of priestly formation is made clear and realized."[9] Each theological discipline contributes to formation for liturgy because through theological studies the worshipping believer can better understand and appropriate the mysteries celebrated.

In addition to theological formation, we might also consider the human, spiritual, broader intellectual, and pastoral dimensions of seminary formation as part of liturgical formation. This becomes important for responding to specific challenges observed by Pope Francis, such as the loss of man's symbolic capacity and a lack of appreciation for "the beauty of the truth of liturgy." Human formation is the foundation upon which other dimensions "can be received and lived."[10] The spiritual dimension includes the celebration of liturgy but also includes non-liturgical

[5] Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican, "Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium* on the Sacred Liturgy" (4 Dec 1963) https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html. Henceforth, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* is cited as SC with article numbers.

[6] SC 16; cf. PPF 341.

[7] For example, see DD 16, 29-31.

[8] PPF 241.

[9] DD 37; also see SC 16 and PPF 291.e-f.

[10] PPF 116.

components that provide formation for liturgy. In addition to their spiritual fruits, devotions familiarize seminarians with communal praying and symbolic languages, and guidance for personal and communal prayer is received in spiritual direction. Theological formation is built upon other disciplines that are addressed as part of intellectual formation more broadly (for example, philosophy), and theology receives insights from them. The pastoral dimension provides lived experiences of the Word of God and the ecclesial community that find their source and summit in liturgy.

Formation for liturgy, which includes academic study and teaching, depends upon formation by liturgy.[11] Formation by liturgy occurs when, as Francis describes, worshipping believers are "formed, each one according to his or her vocation, from participation in the liturgical celebration."[12] The fathers of Vatican II indicated the formative nature of liturgy for seminarians, specifically. In *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, they articulated seminary formation as including the celebration of "the sacred mysteries, as well as popular devotions which are imbued with the spirit of the liturgy."[13] Sixty years later, Francis takes up this vision anew to call on seminaries to offer men in formation "the possibility of experiencing a celebration that is not only exemplary from a ritual point of view, but also authentic and alive, which allows the living out of a true communion with God, that same communion toward which theological knowledge must tend."[14]

The daily and weekly rhythms of Eucharist and the Liturgy of the Hours are thus key components—indeed, the beating heart—of the overall formation work of the seminary.[15] The daily celebration of the Eucharist is, as the *Program of Priestly Formation* describes, "the source of pastoral charity, the love that animates and directs those who walk in the footsteps of the Good Shepherd, who gives his life for his sheep so that they may live."[16] In the regular rhythm of the Hours, "seminarians learn to pray with the Church and for the Church, assimilating the language of prayer of the Church that is pleasing to God and transformative, forming both mind and spirit."[17] Frequent celebration of the Sacrament of Penance "fosters the mature recognition of sin, continuous conversion of heart, growth in the virtues, and conformity to the mind of Christ" and "is a school of compassion that teaches penitents how to live out God's compassionate mercy in the world."[18] Devotions imbued with the spirit of the liturgy aid seminarians "in assimilating the

[11] See DD 34.

[12] DD 40.

[13] SC 17.

[14] DD 39. The rich theological foundation of this invitation is found in the sentence that follows: "Only the action of the Spirit can bring to completion our knowledge of the mystery of God, for the mystery of God is not a question of something grasped mentally but a relationship that touches all of life."

[15] See PPF 246-247.

[16] PPF 229.a.

[17] PPF 229.c.

[18] PPF 229.b.

mystery of Christ and hearing the invitation to live that mystery in the particular circumstances of their own life."[19]

The liturgical formation that Pope Francis unfolds from the vision of Vatican II also requires ongoing engagement after ordination.[20] Strong liturgical studies and especially experiences of liturgy in seminary that are authentic and alive are essential, Francis observes, "so that once seminarians become ordained ministers, they can accompany communities in the same journey of knowledge of the mystery of God, which is the mystery of love."[21] Here again, the pope echoes the direction of the conciliar fathers that pastors, in promoting liturgical formation of those in their care, "must lead their flock not only in word but also by example."[22] Leading by example involves ordained ministers' own effort to be formed for liturgy and formed by liturgy.

Consequently, teaching liturgy in the seminary, by which we mean more narrowly academic instruction, is situated within a broad view of liturgical formation as articulated by the conciliar fathers in *Sacrosanctum Concilium* and reinvigorated by Francis in *Desiderio desideravi*. The academic teaching of liturgy is therefore an interdisciplinary and collaborative work. Academically, presenting liturgy in its five aspects is a complex task. Faculty providing instruction in liturgy can seek input, guidance, and resources from faculty in other theological disciplines, as well as from those in church history, canon law, and pastoral ministry. Because liturgy itself is the "unity which underlies all priestly training,"[23] liturgy faculty can likewise contribute insights and resources from liturgical studies to colleagues in other disciplines. At the same time, academic instruction in liturgy is connected to formation by liturgy, thus extending liturgical formation into the seminary chapel, retreat house, parish, and beyond. Collaborative relationships with seminary staff and administrators, spiritual directors, mentors, and pastoral supervisors can thus be great benefits for teaching liturgy in the classroom.

Intellectual Formation for Liturgy

As we now turn to the work of teaching liturgy, the integrated vision explained above is kept in mind, for as the *Program of Priestly Formation* directs, "[a]ll professors must be dedicated to the total formation of the seminarians."[24] Here, we consider the broad field of liturgical studies,[25] specifically under its interconnected theological, historical, juridical, spiritual, and

[19] PPF 229.i.

[20] See DD 39, SC 18, and PPF 114 and 399-405.

[21] DD 39.

[22] SC 19.

[23] SC 16; see DD 37.

[24] PPF 471.

[25] A recent introduction to the broad field of liturgical studies is found in Albert Gerhards and Benedikt Kranemann, *Introduction to the Study of Liturgy*, trans. Linda M. Maloney (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2017). This work includes a consideration of liturgy in contemporary contexts, methods of liturgical studies, a "historical sketch" of Roman liturgy, theological considerations, and "forms and methods of expression in worship."

pastoral aspects. General comments provide a foundation for considering specific challenges to each aspect that are suggested by Pope Francis in *Desiderio desideravi*.

Theological

To borrow a concise definition offered by the influential Benedictine theologian Cipriano Vagaggini, liturgy is "the sanctification and the worship of the Church actualized in sensible and efficacious signs."[26] The study of liturgy under its theological aspect, therefore, examines God's will, once hidden but now revealed to His chosen people, to sanctify His people through efficacious, sensible signs and His will to accept the worship of the Church, Head and members, that is effected through signs. In addition, the theological study of liturgy examines God's sanctifying action itself and the Church's worship itself, both of which the liturgical signs effect and which are perceived with the eyes of faith.

"[T]he challenge of approaching liturgical theology in seminary lies in providing a theological understanding of liturgy to students in their time of seminary formation, on the one hand, and on the other, in providing the tools they need to continue to explore and communicate the theological dimensions of liturgy as pastoral ministers in the future."

Approaching liturgy under its theological aspect has a solid foundation in magisterial teachings on liturgy in the twentieth century. From Pius XII's *Mediator Dei* (1947) through Vatican II's *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (1963) and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (2nd ed. 1997) to Francis' *Desiderio desideravi* (2022), the magisterium often approaches liturgy against the backdrop of God's action for humanity in salvation history and humanity's response, especially as culminating in the Paschal Mystery of Christ.[27] At the same time, Pope Francis notes persistent challenges in communicating these theological dimensions. In *Desiderio desideravi* he asserts, "We owe to the [Second Vatican] Council—and to the liturgical movement that preceded it—the rediscovery of a theological understanding of the Liturgy and of its importance in the life of the Church."[28] This statement carries an implicit critique of the way liturgy has been understood since the Council; somewhere along the way, a

[26] Cypriano Vagaggini, *The Theological Dimensions of Liturgy: A General Treatise on the Theology of the Liturgy*, trans. Leonard J. Doyle and W. A. Jurgens (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1976), fn. 15, p. 27.

[27] See Pius XII, "Encyclical Letter *Mediator Dei* on the Sacred Liturgy" (20 Nov 1947) https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_20111947_mediator-dei.html, nn. 1-3; SC 5-13; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed. (Washington: USCCB, 2019), para. 1076-1112, 1135-1144; DD 2-15. Henceforth, *Mediator Dei* is cited as MD with article numbers, and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is cited as CCC with paragraph numbers.

[28] DD 16.

theological understanding of liturgy has been lost. The pope's concern is less about magisterial teaching, upon which he relies in his own presentation of the theological meanings of liturgy, nor is it a concern principally with academic scholarship, whose "precious contributions" he acknowledges.[29] Rather, the pope desires that the rich theological understandings articulated by the magisterium and explored by theologians be spread "beyond the academic environment, in an accessible way, so that each one of the faithful might grow in a knowledge of the theological sense of the Liturgy."[30] Thus, the theological aspect here is intrinsically connected with the pastoral.

Seminary instruction has a twofold advantage in responding to Francis' concern: its focus on magisterial teaching and its purpose in forming pastoral ministers. On the importance of magisterial teaching, the *Program of Priestly Formation* states, "A fundamental task of the professor is to present Catholic doctrine as formulated by the authoritative teaching office of the Church."[31] On the pastoral orientation of intellectual formation, it states, "In the seminary program, intellectual formation culminates in a deepened understanding of the mysteries of faith that is pastorally oriented toward effective priestly ministry."[32] At the same time, starting theological instruction on liturgy from magisterial documents, whether for seminarians or in pastoral ministry, presents challenges. Magisterial presentations of liturgy against the backdrop of salvation history and as celebration of the Paschal Mystery of Christ, while rich, are frequently concisely worded and very dense. They often assume a depth of theological understanding not often found among introductory students or the general faithful. A twofold remedial study may be needed to unpack the meanings of 'salvation history', 'mystery', etc., in Christian theology and how these meaning apply to liturgy, specifically.

The work of unpacking the theological dimensions of liturgy is proper to the field of liturgical theology. The origins and development of contemporary liturgical theology as one of three principal subdisciplines of liturgical studies are relatively recent. The field itself has burgeoned through a variety of approaches for how to understand liturgy theologically, and it continues to confront unresolved methodological questions.[33] In addition, theological explanation of liturgy is greatly benefited by collaboration with other theological disciplines, such as biblical theology and fundamental theology.[34]

[29] DD 35; also see DD 2-15.

[30] DD 35.

[31] PPF 485; also see, PPF 350, 354, and 485-487.

[32] PPF 264; also see, PPF 116, 267, 320, 366, 370.g, 372.

[33] These issues are well documented in Joris Geldhof, "Liturgical Theology," in *Religion: Oxford Research Encyclopedias* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), accessed 1 Aug 2022, https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199340378.013.14. This work is a helpful orientation to the field of liturgical theology, with a concise twentieth-century history of the study of liturgy, notes on the field's interdisciplinary connecting points and ecumenical potential, and an invaluable record of historical and contemporary sources.

[34] See PPF 349.

In the end, however, the challenge of approaching liturgical theology in seminary lies in providing a theological understanding of liturgy to students in their time of seminary formation, on the one hand, and on the other, in providing the tools they need to continue to explore and communicate the theological dimensions of liturgy as pastoral ministers in the future. With the pastoral in mind, the mystagogical traditions (for example, Cyril of Jerusalem, John Chrysostom, Ambrose of Milan, and Theodore of Mopsuestia[35]) and contemporary approaches in which theological meanings of liturgy are drawn from the rites and texts themselves can be especially valuable.[36]

Historical

Often considered among the three major subdisciplines of liturgical studies, the historical study of liturgy investigates the origins and evolution of liturgical rites and texts up to the present day. Application of modern historical-critical methods to the study of the origins and evolution of liturgical practices flourished in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and it was a well-researched discipline leading up to the Second Vatican Council. Contributions of this science greatly influenced the liturgical vision of the council and the subsequent liturgical reforms in ways inaccessible to previous efforts of liturgical reform, not in small part because of nineteenth- and twentieth-century discoveries of manuscripts and artifacts that stimulated historical studies.

Numerous research-based overviews of liturgical history in general and for specific liturgies (especially Sacraments) are now available for orientation and introductory study.[37] At the same time, the field is continually growing, and older, broader overviews are being updated by specialized studies utilizing new methodological approaches that bring new light and even significant challenges to previously held positions. For example, updates regarding the authorship of the third-century church order *Apostolic Tradition* (previously attributed to Hippolytus of Rome), the origins and purpose of the tenth-century *Romano-Germanic Pontifical*, and the complexity of liturgical ritual developments and theological understandings in the post-Tridentine era—among many, many others—can be incorporated into classroom teaching, as well as shared with colleagues in other disciplines.[38]

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[35] See Edward Yarnold, *The Awe-Inspiring Rites of Christian Initiation: The Origins of the R.C.I.A.*, 2nd ed. (1994, reprint; New York: T&T Clark, 2006).

[36] For example, see Kevin Irwin, *Context and Text: A Method for Liturgical Theology*, rev. ed. (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2018).

[37] For example, see the relatively short overview in Marcel Metzger, *History of the Liturgy: The Major Stages*, trans. Madeleine Beaumont (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1997), the historically rich studies in *Handbook for Liturgical Studies*, 5 vols., ed. Anscar Chupungco (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2001), and the historical sections in the volumes of the Studies in the Reformed Rites of the Catholic Church series by Liturgical Press.

[38] On the specific topics mentioned, see Paul Bradshaw, Maxwell Johnson, and L. Edward Phillips, *The Apostolic Tradition: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002); Henry Parkes, "Questioning the Authority of

The complexity of teaching the history of liturgy in the seminary is not limited, however, to ensuring that well-researched and up-to-date scholarship is presented. Pope Francis identifies an issue concerning "the non-acceptance of the liturgical reform" and "also a superficial understanding of it."[39] The issue "is primarily ecclesiological,"[40] but it also has an historical dimension that needs to be resolved before a full appreciation of liturgical reforms can be gained. The reforms were grounded in part on the principle, articulated by the fathers of Vatican II, that "the liturgy is made up of immutable elements divinely instituted, and of elements subject to change."[41] Those elements subject to change, they continue, "not only may be but ought to be changed with the passage of time if they have suffered from the intrusion of anything out of harmony with the inner nature of the liturgy or have become unsuited to it."[42] The historical study of liturgy helps in distinguishing that which is immutable and that which is subject to change.

A closely connected question concerns the adaptation of liturgy's external rites and texts for diverse cultures, a process now identified under the terminology of 'inculturation'. Liturgical history is a history of variability according to "the genius and talents of the various races and peoples"[43] of diverse ages and places. Consequently, liturgical history provides a background for the ongoing work of inculturation today. Once more, a full appreciation of the post-conciliar liturgical reforms is greatly aided by an appreciation of historical facts (in addition to the theological foundations and pastoral insights) that led the conciliar fathers to acknowledge that "anything in…peoples' way of life which is not indissolubly bound up with superstition and error [the Church] studies with sympathy and, if possible, preserves intact."[44] "Sometimes," they continue, "she admits such things into the liturgy itself, so long as they harmonize with its true and authentic spirit."[45] The fathers then direct, "Provisions shall also be made, when revising the liturgical books, for legitimate variations and adaptations to different groups, regions, and peoples, especially in mission lands, provided that the substantial unity of the Roman rite is preserved; and this should be borne in mind when drawing up the rites and devising rubrics."[46] The study of liturgical history

"The historical study of liturgy helps in distinguishing that which is immutable and that which is subject to change."

Vogel and Elze's Pontificale Romano-Germanique," in *Understanding Medieval Liturgy: Essays in Interpretation*, ed. S. Hamilton and H. Gittos, 75-101 (Burlington: Ashgate, 2016); Gerhards and Kranemann, *Introduction to the Study of Liturgy*, 128-152. An updated commentary by Paul Bradshaw on the *Apostolic Tradition* is expected in 2023 from Liturgical Press.

[39] DD 31.
[40] DD 31.
[41] SC 21.
[42] SC 21.
[43] SC 37.
[44] SC 37.
[45] SC 37.
[46] SC 38.

can aid in the appreciation of this conciliar vision and its implementation in the reformed rites.

Juridical

Study of liturgy under its juridical aspect considers liturgy as the public worship of God celebrated by ministers acting in the name of the Church according to rites and texts approved by the Church. The liturgical reforms of the Second Vatican Council require new ways of approaching the laws and rubrics that govern the celebration of liturgy. Approaches that are oriented to the pastoral and spiritual good of the faithful need to be prominent, as evidenced from the liturgical books and the *Code of Canon Law*.[47] From the relative uniformity and few options of the liturgical books prior to the council, liturgical books of the reformed rites offer various kinds of options to be determined by different individuals or groups (for example, bishops' conferences, diocesan bishops, presiders). In reaction to the overly juridical approach to liturgical studies that dominated the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, there may be a temptation to overlook the importance of this aspect. Overlooking the juridical aspect can be especially problematic for pastoral ministers because the options and variety presented in the reformed laws and rubrics require a complex set of knowledge about who can make decisions, where there are truly options to be discerned, and most importantly, how to decide among options based on the pastoral and spiritual good of the faithful. General studies on the new laws are available to introduce the needed approaches for the laws of the reformed rites, and guides for celebration can be helpful for orienting seminarians to the complex array of liturgical norms and rubrics provided in the liturgical books.[48]

Seminarians thus need careful instruction and guidance in liturgical laws, beginning with the foundation emphasized in the *Program of Priestly Formation* that "[t]he laws and prescriptions of approved liturgical books are normative."[49] Further, "[s]eminarians must learn to celebrate the Church's sacred rites according to the mind of the Church, without addition or subtraction."[50] Pope Francis recognizes this when he reasserts magisterial teaching since Vatican II: "every aspect of the celebration must be carefully tended to (space, time, gestures, words, objects, vestments, song, music…) and every rubric must be observed."[51] At the same time, the pope challenges, "even if the quality and the proper action of the celebration were guaranteed, that would not be enough to make our participation full."[52]

[47] For example, on the Eucharist see the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, in *The Roman Missal*, third amended typical edition (2010), nn. 23, 111, 201, 321, 352, 357, 359-361, 365, 374, 376, 385, 396. In general, see *Code of Canon Law* (1983), bk. 4.

[48] For example, see Paul Turner, *Let us Pray: A Guide to the Rubrics of Sunday Mass*, upd. ed. (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2012).

[49] PPF 248.

[50] PPF 342.

[51] DD 23.

[52] DD 23.

Seminarians who are well trained in the requisite liturgical laws is not enough to fulfill the vision of Vatican II for the fully conscious and active participation of the faithful. On the one hand, "it is necessary that the faithful come to [liturgy] with proper dispositions, that their minds should be attuned to their voices, and that they should cooperate with divine grace lest they receive it in vain."[53] On the other hand, something more is needed of liturgical presiders, namely, presiding according to an *ars celebrandi*. Thus, complementing juridical guides with resources on *ars celebrandi* can be useful for seminarians learning how to preside as ordained ministers.[54] In *Desiderio desideravi* Pope Francis treats *ars celebrandi* in some detail, and his comments on the "characteristic participation" of the priest and how the liturgical *ars celebrandi* forms him provide abundant fruit for reflection and further development.[55]

Spiritual

Under the spiritual aspect, study of liturgy examines the way in which liturgy orders and prioritizes the means that Christians take up in striving toward perfection through grace and virtue.[56] Or, as the liturgical theologian Kevin W. Irwin describes, "spirituality derived from liturgy is essentially integrative" of Christian life and "the integral vision of the Christian life experienced in liturgy derives from and leads to continuing to experience that integration in all of life."[57] Liturgy orders and prioritizes the means for striving toward perfection through grace and virtue; it integrates Christian life and actualizes an integral vision of it.

In liturgy, sanctification is received from the Father, through the Son, in the Spirit and worship is offered in the Spirit, through the Son, to the Father; liturgy thus provides a Trinitiarian order and priority for man's relationship and encounter with God. Liturgy orders and prioritizes according to the mediation of Christ, for liturgical prayer is always offered "through Christ our Lord," "through our Lord Jesus Christ," etc. Liturgy integrates Christian life and holds an integral vision for it according to the corporate ecclesial context of salvation because the praying subject of liturgy is the whole Christ, Head and Body, hierarchically ordered. Liturgy forms Christian spirituality by making actively and objectively present God and His salvation to the believing worshipper outside of himself or herself. Liturgy forms spirituality ac-

"Liturgy forms spirituality according to the wholeness of the human person by engaging human intellect and will, as well as the body and the senses."

[53] SC 11.

[54] For example, see Paul Turner, *Ars Celebrandi: Celebrating and Concelebrating Mass* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2021).

[55] DD 56-60.

[56] See Vagaggini, *The Theological Dimensions of Liturgy*, chap. 21.

[57] Irwin, *Context and Text*, 556.

cording to the wholeness of the human person by engaging human intellect and will, as well as the body and the senses.

Many avenues are available for pursuing the study of the spiritual aspect of liturgy, and essential to these are the key teachings of the Second Vatican Council regarding liturgy as source and summit of Christian life yet not exhaustive of it and the harmony of liturgy and popular devotions. However, Pope Francis has identified two specific sets of challenges for the contemporary Church.

In the first set of challenges, Francis warns against the "spiritual worldliness" of Gnosticism and neo-Pelagianism.[58] Gnosticism, he clarifies, "shrinks Christian faith into a subjectivism that 'ultimately keeps one imprisoned in his or her own thoughts and feelings'."[59] Against Gnosticism, "the liturgical celebration frees us from the prison of a self-referencing nourished by one's own reasoning and one's own feeling" because "[t]he action of the celebration does not belong to the individual but to the Christ-Church, to the totality of the faithful united in Christ."[60] The liturgical action "takes us by the hand, together, as an assembly, to lead us deep within the mystery that the Word and the sacramental signs reveal to us."[61]

Neo-Pelagianism, Francis writes, "cancels out the role of grace and 'leads instead to a narcissistic and authoritarian elitism."[62] Against neo-Pelagianism, "the liturgical celebration purifies us, proclaiming the gratuity of the gift of salvation received in faith" because "[p]articipating in the Eucharistic sacrifice is not our own achievement, as if because of it we could boast before God or before our brothers and sisters" and "is the gift of the Paschal Mystery of the Lord which, received with docility, makes our life new."[63] These forms of spiritual worldliness, as well as others (materialism, individualism, moral relativity, etc.), impact the faithful for whom seminarians will eventually minister, as well as the seminarians themselves. As the *Program of Priestly Formation* describes, seminarians come to formation "struggling intensely with particular cultural counterpoints to the Gospel, especially regarding sexual permissiveness, the drive to acquire and consume material resources, utilitarianism, and the exaltation of freedom as merely personal and individual autonomy, divorced from personal responsibility and objective moral standards."[64] Teaching on liturgy that addresses spiritual worldliness can bolster the contribution of intellectual to spiritual formation "by helping

[58] DD 17; also see Pope Francis, "Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium* on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World (24 Nov 2011) https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html, nn. 93-97. Henceforth, *Evangelii Gaudium* is cited as EG with article numbers.

[59] DD 17.
[60] DD 19.
[61] DD 19.
[62] DD 17.
[63] DD 20.
[64] PPF 22.a.iv.

the seminarian grow in the love of the truth, who is the person of Jesus Christ."[65]

A second set of challenges Francis identifies concerns contemporary man's capacity for symbols. Influenced by Romano Guardini, Francis diagnoses, "modern people—not in all cultures to the same degree—have lost the capacity to engage with symbolic action, which is an essential trait of the liturgical act,"[66] and he questions, "how can we become once again capable of symbols?"[67] Against materialism on the one hand and spiritualism on the other, liturgy is the Church being joined to Christ to raise up creatures and works of human hands to the Father in the Spirit so that they might be given back to us for sanctification and worship.[68]

As one step in recovering symbolic capacity, the pope urges that we "reacquire confidence about creation," for "[f]rom the very beginning, created things contain the seed of the sanctifying grace of the sacraments."[69] Thus, rich theologies and spiritualities of creation, of sacramentality, and of human responsibility toward creation become important. Another step in recovering symbolic capacity is that we "acquire the interior attitude that will let us use and understand liturgical symbols."[70] This requires guidance from parents, grandparents, pastors, and catechists in learning the symbolic language of liturgy, intentionality in their enactment, and trust in the work of the Holy Spirit.[71] Teaching in the classroom can also provide a clearer understanding of what signs and symbols are and how they function in wider socio-cultural contexts, even if only in very mitigated forms, for the signs of liturgy are themselves derived from "daily and domestic things."[72] Thus, interdisciplinary collaboration with such fields as contemporary semiotics and anthropology, among others, can prove useful.

Pastoral

Study of liturgy's pastoral aspect, another major subdiscipline of liturgical studies, focuses on how liturgy can be brought to the People of God and how the People of God are led to liturgy. Formation in seminary is strongly driven by the pastoral, as clearly articulated in Vatican II's *Optatam Totius* and reiterated in John Paul II's *Pastores Dabo Vobis* and again in the *Program of Priestly Formation*: "The whole training of the students should have as its object to make them true shepherds of souls after the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, teacher, priest, and shepherd."[73] This is equally applicable to liturgical

[65] PPF 232.

[66] DD 27.

[67] DD 45.

[68] See Kevin W. Irwin, *A Commentary on "Laudato Si':" Examining the Background, Contributions, Implementation, and Future of Pope Francis's Encyclical* (New York: Paulist Press, 2016), 238-240.

[69] DD 46.

[70] DD 47.

[71] See DD 47.

[72] See David Power, *Unsearchable Riches: The Symbolic Nature of Liturgy* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2008).

[73] Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican, "Decree *Optatam Totius* on Priestly Training" (28 Oct 1965) https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651028_optatam-

formation, for fostering the growth of the faithful in liturgy is among the "chief duties of a faithful dispenser of the mysteries of God."[74]

The liturgical reforms called for by the Second Vatican Council and implemented under the direction of the popes have greatly aided the work of pastoral liturgy. In the first place, the bringing of liturgy to the People of God through the simplification of rites and, eventually, translation of texts opened more widely the door to the fully conscious and active participation of all who are gathered to celebrate. However, the impact of these pastoral reforms cannot be fully appreciated apart from their theological background, once again highlighting the deep interconnection between theological foundations and pastoral motivations.

For example, in *Desiderio desideravi* Pope Francis criticizes a "vague 'sense of mystery'" that, when applied to liturgy, overemphasizes the mysteriousness of external rituals.[75] Rather, the mystery into which the faithful are drawn is none other than the Paschal Mystery of Christ, which is actively present through the rituals. A similar issue arises with respect to beauty, which has the pastoral value of drawing people to liturgy and into its truth.[76] Like mystery, the primary emphasis on beauty in liturgy is too often misplaced on the external ritual. This misconception can lead to the obscuring of the true object of enjoyment, the Triune God. According to Francis, pastoral consequences following from the confusion of these vague senses with theologically full concepts range from issues in the celebration of liturgy to serious divisions within the Church.

Regarding the bringing of the People of God to liturgy, Pope Francis emphasizes the importance of *ars celebrandi*. On the one hand, the way in which an ordained minister presides forms the minister, as noted above, and it impacts how the liturgy is celebrated and received by the faithful. The pope observes that the faithful's "way of living the liturgical celebration is conditioned—for better or, unfortunately, for worse—by the way in which their pastor presides in the assembly."[77] On the other hand, the pope expands the notion of *ars celebrandi* to include the entire assembly, calling it "an attitude that all the baptized are called to live."[78] Here, Francis provides a renewed perspective for the task of pastoral liturgy, namely, to form the People of God in appreciating and

"[I]nstructors in liturgy might look for ways to contribute to ongoing academic instruction for priests who are already active in pastoral ministry."

totius_en.html, n. 4; John Paul II, "Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhoration *Pastores Dabo Vobis* on the Formation of Priests in the Circumstances of the Present Day" (15 Mar 1992) https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_25031992_pastores-dabo-vobis.html, n. 57; PPF 369.

[74] SC 19.

[75] DD 25.

[76] See DD 1, 10, 16, 21-22, 24-25, 62, 65.

[77] DD 54.

[78] DD 51.

enacting the *ars celebrandi* proper to them. It requires helping the baptized attain and foster both "technical knowledge" of the rubrics and "inspiration" in participating in the liturgical celebration in such a way that the they do not possess what is celebrated—the Paschal Mystery of Christ—but are "possessed by it."[79] What is taught for liturgical presiders regarding intentionality in word and deed needs to be adapted for the celebrating assembly.[80] Such formation is also beneficial for the seminarians' own formation during their time in seminary.[81]

Running throughout these considerations is the conviction that responsiveness to contemporary ecclesial contexts is essential.[82] Only by accounting for today's contexts can the content proper to the classroom setting be presented in ways that, even if not immediately accessible to the entire People of God, are able to be adapted by seminarians, with guidance and assistance, to the parish situation. Similarly, teaching can incorporate best practices for discerning accurately and objectively the pastoral needs of the faithful by "taking into account their age and condition, their way of life, and standard of religious culture"[83] and by making use of appropriate tools and strategies from the social sciences.[84] Special attention in liturgy courses can be given to how best to discern the actual state of the faithful as concerns their understanding of liturgy and actual participation in it.

Finally, no dimension of formation ends with the conferral of a degree or ordination. Thus, instructors in liturgy might look for ways to contribute to ongoing academic instruction for priests who are already active in pastoral ministry. Here, advantages and disadvantages of distance learning can be weighed.

Conclusion

The updated *Program of Priestly Formation* and Pope Francis' *Desiderio desideravi* provide new directions and challenges for teaching liturgy in seminaries. First, the intellectual study of liturgy is situated within the wide framework of seminary life. The academic study of liturgy requires collaboration among diverse academic disciplines and attentiveness to the intersection of intellectual formation with human, spiritual, and pastoral formation. Further, formation for liturgy depends on formation by liturgy, meaning that experiences of liturgy in the seminary chapel, parishes, and everywhere that students celebrate influence how they approach liturgy in the classroom.

Second, in *Desiderio desideravi* Pope Francis highlights numerous challenges that bear upon how the theological, historical, juridical, spiri-

[79] DD 50.

[80] See DD 50-53.

[81] PPF 250; also see PPF 251.

[82] See PPF 17-22.

[83] SC 19.

[84] For example, see the work of Georgetown's Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (https://cara.georgetown.edu/), as well as resources such as Charles E. Zech et al, *Catholic Parishes of the 21st Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

tual, and pastoral aspects of liturgy are studied. Scholars and pastoral ministers will need to work together to discern and develop ever more adequate responses to these challenges in ways that meet the present needs of the Church. At the same time, these challenges need to be acknowledged and discussed in seminary classrooms sooner rather than later. In this way, faculty who teach liturgy will aid in the formation of ordained ministers who will be prepared to strive always toward excellence in their pastoral-liturgical ministry, an excellence which is summarized in a striking way by Pope Francis:

> Ordained ministers carry out a pastoral action of the first importance when they take the baptized faithful by the hand to lead them into the repeated experience of the Paschal Mystery. Let us always remember that it is the Church, the Body of Christ, that is the celebrating subject and not just the priest. The kind of knowledge that comes from study is just the first step to be able to enter into the mystery celebrated. Obviously, to be able to lead their brothers and sisters, the ministers who preside in the assembly must know the way, know it from having studied it on the map of their theological studies but also from having frequented the liturgy in actual practice of an experience of living faith, nourished by prayer — and certainly not just as an obligation to be fulfilled. On the day of his ordination every priest hears the bishop say to him: "Understand what you will do, imitate what you will celebrate, and conform your life to the mystery of the Lord's Cross."[85]

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[85] DD 36, citing *De Ordinatione Episcopi, Presbyterorum et Diaconorum* (1990).

Teaching Scripture in a Catholic Seminary

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According to *Dei Verbum*, "the study of the sacred page is . . . the soul of sacred theology."[1] This is often abbreviated simply to mean that Scripture is the soul of theology. If one way to define theology is "the study of God and of all things in relation to God," then we would also contend that *Dei Verbum* and other Church documents propose that Scripture and scriptural study also constitute the soul of homiletics, moral theology, spirituality, and more.[2] For this reason, it is imperative that Scripture be taught well, which means in ways that are appropriate to its nature and to its role in the Church. Moreover, in a Catholic seminary, it is imperative that Scripture be taught *formationally*; that is, in ways that appropriately form future priests.

"[I]t is imperative that Scripture be taught well, which means in ways that are appropriate to its nature and to its role in the Church."

We propose, therefore, that starting at the end—at the formational *telos*—of teaching Scripture is the best way to understand the *what* and the *how* of that teaching. This essay therefore begins with that telos and its corollary Catholic hermeneutical principles; it then proceeds to the critical question of exegetical approaches and methods, with special reference to the historical-critical method; and it concludes with the practical question of pedagogy.

Formational Goals

The new (sixth) edition of *The Program of Priestly Formation* continues to identify four dimensions of priestly formation: human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral.[3] In light of these, the Scripture department at St. Mary's Seminary & University has formulated six departmental goals, or desired outcomes, for our seminarians. These goals drive the content and the methods of our Scripture teaching, and we think it will be useful to start by listing them. At the end of their scriptural studies, we aim for seminarians to be able to:

[1] *Dei Verbum*, no. 24.

[2] See *The Program of Priestly Formation in the United States of America*, 6th ed. (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2022; hereafter abbreviated *PPF*), no. 322: "The various theological disciplines should recognize Sacred Scripture as foundational: as the point of departure from and as the soul of all theology." See also no. 331.

[3] *PPF*, nos. 5–6.

1. Pray with Scripture, using methods such as *lectio divina*. We may refer to this goal as *Scripture-infused prayer*.[4]
2. Articulate the overall scriptural narrative of salvation history and of the theological message of the various biblical books. We may refer this goal as *scriptural knowledge*.[5]
3. Describe the main perspectives on Scripture and its interpretation presented in major Catholic documents. We may refer to this goal as a *Catholic scriptural hermeneutic*.[6]
4. Employ an integrated method of exegesis, or close reading, that focuses on the final form of the text; reflects the best ancient (e.g., patristic) and current practices of exegesis and hermeneutics; pays careful attention to the text's historical, literary, canonical, and contemporary contexts; and makes appropriate use of exegetical and homiletical resources. We may refer to this goal as *sound scriptural exegesis*.[7] At a seminary, this approach to exegesis cannot be merely analytical but must be engaged, self-involving, participatory.[8]
5. Articulate the theological, spiritual, and pastoral significance of a scriptural text in order to communicate it wisely in preaching, teaching, sacraments, counseling, and other ministerial contexts. We may refer to this goal as *scripturally informed practices of ministry*.[9]
6. Demonstrate a desire and ability to construct Scripture-shaped lives and ministries. We may refer to this goal as *scriptural actualization*.[10]

These six goals correlate with the PPF's dimensions as follows:

- Human and spiritual formation: (1) Scripture-infused prayer; (6) scriptural actualization

[4] See *PPF*, nos. 43a, 229e, 235, 249.

[5] See *PPF*, nos. 268, 299 (propadeutic stage); 285, 289, 308 (discipleship stage).

[6] See *PPF*, nos. 324–25.

[7] One attempt to teach and demonstrate such an integrated method is Michael J. Gorman, *Elements of Biblical Exegesis: A Basic Guide for Students and Ministers*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020), which we use in various courses.

[8] Gorman, *Elements*, 9–26. See also Matthew D. Levering's provocative *Participatory Biblical Exegesis: A Theology of Biblical Interpretation* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008).

[9] See *PPF*, nos. 326, 370a, 391. In our contemporary world, learning scriptural interpretation for ministry should include sensitivity to ecumenical and interfaith relations, with special emphasis on how both other Christians and Jews interpret key biblical texts differently. See, e.g., PBC, "The Jewish People and Their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible" and the "Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification," issued in 1999 by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the Lutheran World Federation. In accord with its long history of ecumenical commitments, St. Mary's Scripture department includes Protestant as well as Catholic scholars. In addition, seminarians must take at least one course (and may take more) in St. Mary's Ecumenical Institute.

[10] See *PPF*, nos. 43b, 204–15.

- Intellectual formation: (2) scriptural knowledge (3) Catholic scriptural hermeneutic; (4) sound scriptural exegesis
- Pastoral formation: (4) sound scriptural exegesis; (5) scripturally informed practices of ministry

There is of course overlap among all of these areas, but we have deliberately connected "sound scriptural exegesis" to both the intellectual and the pastoral dimension of formation. This is one way of stressing that the goal of our scriptural instruction is not to produce Scripture scholars but to develop scripturally informed practitioners, whose exegetical skills are well honed but also ultimately directed toward preaching, teaching, and other aspects of pastoral ministry. We will have more to say later about the nature of exegesis in our discussions of general principles of scriptural interpretation and of the historical-critical method. As we will also suggest below, in considering pedagogical strategies, different courses offered by our (or any) Scripture department will focus on these six goals to varying degrees and with various pedagogical tools, but at least in principle, these six desired outcomes should shape the content and the methodologies for every Scripture course.

Principles of Scriptural Interpretation for a Catholic Seminary Context

Ronald Witherup lists eight key Catholic documents regarding Scripture issued since 1893.[11] These include three papal encyclicals: *Providentissimus Deus*, or "Encyclical Letter on the Study of Sacred Scripture" (1893, Pope Leo XIII); *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, or "Encyclical Letter Promoting Biblical Studies" (1943, Pope Pius XII); and *Verbum Domini: Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church* (2010, Pope Benedict XVI).[12] In addition, there are four texts from the Pontifical Biblical Commission (PBC): *Sancta Mater Ecclesia*, or "Instruction on the Historical Truth of the Gospels" (1964); "The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church" (1993); "The Jewish People and Their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible" (2001);

"If a Catholic approach to Scripture is ultimately committed to both historical ("human") and theological/ spiritual/formational ("divine") aspects of the text, how does that work in practice?"

[11] Ronald D. Witherup, "Roman Catholic Biblical Interpretation," in Michael J. Gorman, ed., *Scripture and its Interpretation: A Global, Ecumenical Introduction to the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017), 240–55; here 242. To these eight, others could be added and discussed if space permitted. See, for example, the 2008 PBC text titled "The Bible and Morality: Biblical Roots of Christian Conduct," which deals with both scriptural content and contemporary interpretation.

[12] For an exploration of the consequences of *Verbum Domini* for the relationship between exegesis and theology and for seminarian formation, see Scott Carl, ed., Verbum Domini *and the Complementarity of Exegesis and Theology* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2021; orig. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015).

and "The Inspiration and Truth of Sacred Scripture" (2014). Finally, there is one conciliar document from the Second Vatican Council: *Dei Verbum*, or "Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation" (1965).

Of these eight documents, the one with the greatest authority is *Dei Verbum*, to which Witherup has dedicated two entire books.[13] He proposes three "major characteristics of Catholic biblical interpretation" that derive from *Dei Verbum* and that are enshrined in The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (nos. 112–14): Catholics must "pay attention 'to the content and unity of the whole of Scripture,'" "interpret the Bible within 'the living Tradition of the whole Church,'" and "pay attention to the 'analogy of faith'—that is, 'the coherence of truths' contained in God's revelation."[14]

In light of the Scripture documents and the Catechism, Witherup then proposes seven distinctives of Roman Catholic biblical interpretation,[15] with which we are in fundamental agreement. For this essay, however, we have reordered, combined, and lightly edited some of Witherup's principles, and we have given them our own headings to leave us with four main principles associated with his contribution. In addition, we have supplemented those four with a fifth principle. Furthermore, we wish especially to affirm with Witherup and a growing number of biblical scholars (not only Catholic but also Orthodox and Protestant) the value of certain premodern attitudes to scriptural interpretation, even though none of us is an expert in this area. Thus we draw here also on Luke Timothy Johnson's essay entitled "Rejoining a Long Conversation."[16]

These five principles of Catholic scriptural interpretation are:[17]

1. *Scripture and Tradition*. Catholic biblical interpretation acknowledges that there is one source of Revelation communicated through two channels, Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition.[18] It affirms that the canon of Scripture was the result of divine guidance. And it acknowledges that the Church's magisterium has as its primary task the authentic interpretation of the Word of God.
2. *Inspiration and Truthfulness*. Catholic biblical interpretation begins with the

[13] Ronald D. Witherup, *Scripture:* Dei Verbum (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 2006); Witherup, *Scripture at Vatican II: Exploring* Dei Verbum (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2014).

[14] Witherup, "Roman Catholic Biblical Interpretation," 247; original emphasis has been removed. These three characteristics are quoted also in *PPF*, no. 325.

[15] Witherup, "Roman Catholic Biblical Interpretation," 247–49.

[16] Luke Timothy Johnson, "Rejoining a Long Conversation," in Luke Timothy Johnson and William S. Kurz, *The Future of Catholic Biblical Scholarship: A Constructive Conversation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 35–63.

[17] It is worth noting the structure we have given these five principles: "X and Y." This reflects what Luke Johnson refers to as "the spirit of Catholicism" (or of "Catholicity")—a "conjunctive" spirit of "both/and" rather than a "disjunctive" spirit of "either/or"—that does, or should, operate in Catholic scriptural interpretation ("What's Catholic about Catholic Biblical Scholarship?" in Johnson and Kurz, *Future*, 3–34; here 5 [see also 19, 27, *et passim*]).

[18] *Dei Verbum*, nos. 8–10.

claim that Scripture is the inspired Word of God in human words, and that its truthfulness, or "inerrancy," refers to the claim that Scripture presents "solidly, faithfully, and without error that truth which God wanted put into sacred writings for the sake of salvation."[19]

3. *Human and Divine Character*. Catholic biblical interpretation therefore recognizes the need to discern both the human and the divine aspects[20] of the scriptural texts by both (a) using all appropriate interpretive methodologies to understand the literal sense of the text and (b) considering additional dimensions of the text, including (though not limited to) the other components of the fourfold sense of Scripture (allegorical, or doctrinal; tropological, or moral; and anagogical, or eschatological). That is, interpretation involves asking about what the text teaches about faith, love, and hope, especially in light of Christ.[21] This means that Catholics recognize that there is often "a deeper meaning of the text, intended by God but not clearly expressed by the human author."[22] The "deeper senses of Scripture [are] beyond but not contradictory to the literal sense."[23]
4. *Ancient and Contemporary Hermeneutic*. Thus, Catholic interpretation does not ignore but embraces the history of interpretation (e.g., patristic, medieval, scholastic) while also benefitting from, and even highlighting, modern and postmodern approaches to the text. The latter category includes the historical-critical method (about which we have more to say below) but also recent literary, rhetorical, and social-scientific methodologies as well as certain kinds of "interested" or culturally specific reading strategies. It is especially critical today for seminarians to be exposed to scriptural interpretation from various perspectives and cultures, both within their own country and in the

[19] *Dei Verbum*, no. 11. Johnson reminds us that a basic premise of premodern interpretation was that "the Bible, as Word of God, is authoritative" ("Rejoining," 55), and that its hermeneutic was one of "generosity or charity" rather than suspicion (59). This is what Richard B. Hays has called a "hermeneutic of trust" (e.g., in his *Reading with the Grain of Scripture* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2020], 391–402).

[20] See *Dei Verbum*, no. 12. This Chalcedonian analogy has its limitations and potential misuses, but we find it nonetheless heuristically helpful. Johnson states that the "first premise of premodern biblical interpretation" is the unity of the Old and New Testaments "grounded in the singleness of divine authorship" ("Rejoining," 47). See also *PPF*, no. 324, referring to *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 109 and *Dei Verbum*, no. 12.

[21] One of the present writers often uses this framework ("What does the text say about what we are called to believe, do, and hope for?") in exegetical teaching and writing.

[22] PBC, "The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church," no. II. B. 3.

[23] Witherup, "Roman Catholic Biblical Interpretation," 248. See also Johnson, "Rejoining," 57: premodern interpreters claimed that "Scripture speaks in many ways and at many levels." These "deeper" senses would include an acknowledgment of a *sensus plenior* in certain texts. See further below.

world more broadly.[24] These methodologies and strategies can co-exist with an appropriately historical, as well as theological, interest.

5. *Intellectual and Pastoral-Spiritual*. Finally, Catholic biblical interpretation is committed to rigorous, historically grounded exegesis that does not negate or impair its primary end: the inspiration and formation of the people of God. Luke Johnson's words are apropos here: "If Scripture is ever again to be a living source for theology, those who practice theology must become less preoccupied with the world that produced the Scripture and learn again to live in the world that Scripture produces."[25]

What these principles imply is a decidedly *theological* approach to scriptural interpretation.[26] Neither Luke Johnson nor Ron Witherup nor we are suggesting in any way the abandonment of historical inquiry; it is, to be sure, critical, as all the Church's documents say.[27] But we come to the conclusion of this first part of the essay with a "both/and" comment that raises a serious question: If a Catholic approach to Scripture is ultimately committed to both historical ("human") and theological/spiritual/formational ("divine") aspects of the text, how does that work in practice? What is the role of historical-critical work within a Catholic seminary's teaching of Scripture for formational and ultimately pastoral purposes?

[24] See, for instance, John J. Collins, Gina Hens-Piazza, Barbara Reid, and Donald Senior, eds., *The Jerome Biblical Commentary for the Twenty-First Century*, third fully rev. ed. (New York: T&T Clark, 2022). In their introduction (x–xi), after noting that historical critical and literary interpretive methods are "secure" as the foundation of Catholic biblical scholarship, the editors emphasize that "biblical scholarship has extended the repertoire of methodologies appropriate for biblical interpretation"; that "awareness of the key relationship between the text and the reader has led to more attention to the social, political, and cultural status and assumptions that interpreters bring to their reading of the biblical text"; and that the "diversity of biblical methodologies also reflects the stronger awareness of diversity across the global Church itself," including the contributions of laity, women, and international and minority voices.

[25] Johnson, "Imagining the World That Scripture Imagines," in Johnson and Kurz, *Future*, 119–42; here 119.

[26] As "The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church," no. III. D says, exegesis is a "theological discipline." From the Protestant and yet "catholic" (lowercase "c") side, see especially Richard B. Hays, "Reading the Bible with Eyes of Faith: The Practice of Theological Exegesis," *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 1, no. 1 (Spring, 2007): 5–21 (reprinted in *Reading*, 29–46). He writes (11), "What makes exegesis 'theological'? Theological exegesis is not a 'method.' It is not a set of discrete procedures that could be set alongside, say, textual criticism or redaction criticism. Rather, theological exegesis is a complex practice, a way of approaching Scripture with eyes of faith and seeking to understand it within the community of faith." Hays then offers twelve "identifying marks" of theological exegesis (11–15), many of which overlap with the Catholic principles offered above. See also Gorman, *Elements*, 163–70.

[27] See also Hays ("Reading," 12): "historical study is internal to the practice of theological exegesis"; and "[h]istory . . . cannot be either inimical or irrelevant to theology's affirmations of truth."

The Historical-Critical Method and Beyond

Having discussed the *telos* of teaching Scripture in the seminary as well as the basics of Catholic hermeneutics, and before addressing the *how* of teaching the subject, we now turn in this section to the subject itself, the *what* of teaching Scripture in seminary with a special focus on the thorny topic of the historical-critical method, which has been criticized for various reasons.

We will argue that some of the works using this method may be incompatible with Catholicism. Others may be compatible with Catholicism but are quite technical and therefore beyond the concerns of most believers. Nevertheless, *Dei Verbum,* the PBC's 1993 document "The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church," and other Church documents consistently and emphatically call for the use of the historical-critical method.

At the same time, these documents point out that historical criticism is not enough.[28] What is needed is a broader approach. In the words of Pope Benedict XVI, "[W]e need a synthesis between an exegesis that operates with historical reason and an exegesis that is guided by faith."[29] Thus, this section ends with references to other methods and approaches (including synchronic methods and theological exegesis), in addition to historical criticism, that can be of help in seeking that "exegesis guided by faith."

Revisiting the Historical-Critical Method

As stated above, historical criticism has its critics—and not without reason. Scott Hahn and others argue that some of the figures in history who were instrumental in developing the method were politically motivated opponents of the Church. Some had presuppositions and agendas antithetical to Catholicism, which often enough denied the possibility of miracles and the divinity of Christ. These perspectives seriously challenged some Catholic doctrines, producing deleterious effects on the faith of ordinary believers and also some Church scholars.[30]

"[T]he Church clearly endorses the use and the value of historical criticism, and it is therefore an essential dimension of scriptural instruction in the seminary."

[28] Space does not allow us to differentiate at length between "the historical-critical method" and the more general term "historical criticism" (historical investigation), but Church documents use both terms and expect both to be practiced. The latter term certainly means that historical work cannot be limited to the question of reconstructing the evolution of texts (i.e., a strictly diachronic approach).

[29] Pope Benedict XVI, *Light of the World: The Pope, the Church, and the Signs of the Times, A Conversation with Peter Seewald*, translated by Michael J. Miller and Adrian J. Walker (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2010), 172.

[30] Two books, co-authored by Scott Hahn, make this case against historical criticism in a comprehensive study covering 1300 to 1900: Scott W. Hahn and Benjamin Wiker, *Politicizing the Bible: The Roots of Historical Criticism and the Secularization of Scripture 1300–1700* (New York: Crossroad, 2013); and Scott W. Hahn and Jeffrey L. Morrow, *Modern Biblical Criticism as a Tool of Statecraft*

Nevertheless, in evaluating the conclusions of such historical-critical scholars, it is important not to "poison the well." Yes, such authors—indeed all biblical scholarship—should be read critically; but, obviously, even the most thoroughgoing opponents of Catholicism who practiced historical criticism can, and did, say things about the Bible that are nevertheless valid and compatible with the Catholic Faith. In other words, just because authors might have had an anti-Catholic agenda does not mean that any given arguments they made are invalid or anti-Catholic; on the contrary, some of their conclusions could be true (or at least plausible), in harmony with Catholic teaching, and even crucially important.

Moreover, in evaluating the historical-critical method it is important not to paint with too broad a brush. Although some opine that secular presuppositions are actually inherent in the method itself,[31] many scholars who have used the historical-critical method in recent decades are faithful Catholics (and other practicing Christians) who have sought to use the tools of historical criticism without presuppositions that are incompatible with the Faith.[32] To the extent that they have been able to do so, their work has yielded good fruit that is both academically sound and compatible with the teachings of the Catholic Church. This sort of historical criticism, free of secular prejudices, should not be lumped together with the historical criticism that is governed by those presuppositions.[33] In other words, the problem is not with historical criticism *per se*, but with the secular presuppositions wittingly or unwittingly smuggled in.

Although he did not use the term "historical criticism," Pope Pius XII spoke of just such a legitimate use of the tools of historical, or "scientific," criticism: "Catholic exegetes, by a right use of those same scientific arms, not infrequently abused by the adversaries, proposed such interpretations, which are in harmony with Catholic doctrine and the genuine current of tradition, and at the same time are seen to have proved equal to the difficulties, either raised by new explorations and discoveries, or bequeathed by antiquity for solution in our time."[34]

If certain works of historical criticism are legitimately criticized for having philosophical presuppositions that lead to results incompatible

(1700–1900) (Steubenville, OH: Emmaus Academic, 2020). We have found these books significant even if we do not arrive at all of the same ultimate conclusions.

[31] See Hahn and Wiker, *Politicizing,* 1–2: "Which is it, then? A neutral, objective method, or a method largely defined by some proper philosophical commitment (a commitment that can and should be the subject of critical analysis)? We argue that it is the latter, and we hope that our account of the history of historical criticism's roots will clarify the philosophical and (even more important) political commitments *inherent* in the core foundations of the method itself" (emphasis added).

[32] Total objectivity in scholarship is never possible, even in the "hard sciences," which answer the questions of interest to their practitioners and from their particular epistemological framework and (limited) knowledge. Thus, as Hahn and Wiker point out (as quoted in the previous footnote), the historical-critical method can never claim to be completely objective.

[33] "For a long time now, scholars have ceased combining the method with a philosophical system." PBC, "The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church," no. I. A. 1.

[34] Pope Pius XII, *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, no. 42

with Catholicism, a perhaps less serious concern raised by some, but one that may be more difficult to answer, is that much of historical criticism has yielded results of little benefit to believers and future teachers of the Faith. For example, the prominent New Testament scholar Luke Timothy Johnson has said, "The study of the Bible . . . is increasingly an academic activity that is removed from the existential concerns of communities of faith."[35] In seminarian classrooms, scholars who may be addressing one set of academic questions are teaching future pastors who have (or should have) quite different questions as future preachers and teachers of the Word of God.[36] Pope Benedict expressed concern about the effects of a "profound gulf" (dichotomy) between "scientific exegesis and *lectio divina*," on priests and seminarians: "All this is . . . bound to have a negative impact on the spiritual life and on pastoral activity. . . . It must also be said that this dichotomy can create confusion and a lack of stability in the intellectual formation of candidates for ecclesial ministries."[37]

In other words, some wonder, granted that historical criticism has been practiced without secular presuppositions, has it been successful and is it worth pursuing? Are there reasons to continue with a method that has been accused of yielding paltry results *vis-à-vis* the concerns of people of faith? More to the point of this article, should the historical-critical method be taught in the seminary? What does the Church say about the method?

Despite the above-mentioned concerns, the Church clearly endorses the use and the value of historical criticism, and it is therefore an essential dimension of scriptural instruction in the seminary. The most authoritative twentieth-century Catholic document on Sacred Scripture is the Second Vatican Council's "Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation," *Dei Verbum*. In *Dei Verbum*, no. 12, the council fathers point to the importance of the literal sense and to discovering it using the tools associated with the historical-critical method:

> [S]ince God speaks in Sacred Scripture through men in human fashion, the interpreter of Sacred Scripture, in order to see clearly what God wanted to communicate to us, should carefully investigate what meaning the sacred writers really intended, and what God wanted to manifest by means of their words.[38]

[35] Johnson, "What's Catholic," 26.

[36] Johnson, "What's Catholic," 39.

[37] Pope Benedict XVI, *Verbum Domini*, no. 36c.

[38] The council fathers continue in *Dei Verbum*, no. 12: "To search out the intention of the sacred writers, attention should be given, among other things, to 'literary forms.' For truth is set forth and expressed differently in texts which are variously historical, prophetic, poetic, or of other forms of discourse. The interpreter must investigate what meaning the sacred writer intended to express and actually expressed in particular circumstances by using contemporary literary forms in accordance with the situation of his own time and culture. For the correct understanding of what the sacred author wanted to assert, due attention must be paid to the customary and characteristic styles of feeling, speaking and narrating which prevailed at the time of the sacred writer, and to the patterns men normally

Less authoritative, but by no means negligible, is the clarion call, briefly noted earlier, for the use of the historical-critical method found in the PBC's 1993 document, "The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church":

> The historical-critical method is the indispensable method for the scientific study of the meaning of ancient texts. Holy Scripture, inasmuch as it is the "word of God in human language," has been composed by human authors in all its various parts and in all the sources that lie behind them. Because of this, its proper understanding not only admits the use of this method but actually requires it.[39]

"Catholic scriptural interpretation *requires* and *benefits from* historical criticism. Properly understood, it is an essential element in teaching Scripture in a Catholic seminary."

Historical study, including the various means of analysis ("criticisms") that together comprise the historical-critical method, can yield perspectives on the meaning of the ancient texts that are valuable for responsible interpretation. Careful study of the social worlds, historical contexts, and literary forms associated with the scriptural writings provides interpreters with vital knowledge that sheds light on those writings.

To summarize: Catholic scriptural interpretation *requires* and *benefits from* historical criticism. Properly understood, it is an essential element in teaching Scripture in a Catholic seminary. Seminarians, some of whom may be wary of this approach to Scripture, need to be shown its necessity and its value when used appropriately.

"Exegesis Guided by Faith": Beyond the Historical-Critical Method

The Church's call for the use of historical criticism, however, is not without qualification. The PPF recognizes the value of the tools of historical criticism even as it points out their limitations. Citing the PBC 1993 document, it states,

> In their work of interpretation Catholic exegetes must never forget that what they are interpreting is the *word of God*. Their common task is not finished when they have simply determined sources, defined forms or explained literary procedures. They arrive at the true goal of their work only when they have

employed at that period in their everyday dealings with one another."

[39] PBC, "The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church," no. I. A. (This is the first sentence in Part I of the document.) For detailed discussion, see no. I. A. 1–4.

> explained the meaning of the biblical text as God's word for today.[40]

In a similar vein, *Verbum Domini* states,

> In a word, while acknowledging the validity and necessity, as well as the limits, of the historical-critical method, we learn from the Fathers that exegesis "is truly faithful to the proper intention of biblical texts when it goes not only to the heart of their formulation to find the reality of faith there expressed, but also seeks to link this reality to the experience of faith in our present world."[41]

Thus, Catholic readers of Scripture are, or should be, "both/and" interpreters: practicing historical and literary analysis, considering historical and theological/spiritual dimensions, and so on. Again, Pope Benedict: "Only where both methodological levels, the historical-critical and the theological, are respected, can one speak of a theological exegesis, an exegesis worthy of this book."[42]

So, how does the seminary Scripture professor "link this reality to the experience of faith in our present world?" The PBC's 1993 document "The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church" includes many additional methods of interpretation to supplement the use of historical criticism. These include what the document calls

- new synchronic methods of literary analysis: rhetorical, narrative, and semiotic;
- approaches based on tradition: canonical, Jewish traditional, and *Wirkungsgeschichte* (reception history);
- approaches that use the human sciences: sociological, cultural anthropological, and psychological; and
- contextual approaches: liberationist and feminist.[43]

Building on this portion of the PBC's text, the editors of and contributors to *The Jerome Biblical Commentary for the Twenty-First Century* deploy a variety of approaches to the text, as Catholic scholarship in the U.S. and globally feels that this is both permitted and necessary.[44] As with the historical-critical method, the PBC document makes it clear that no method is without limitations and that Catholics cannot embrace aspects of any method that are contrary to the Catholic Faith.

If looking at the text through a historical-critical lens (historical criticism) is primarily a diachronic exploration of the world *behind* the text, synchronic approaches (such as rhetorical

[40] *PPF*, no. 325, quoting PBC, "The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church," no. III. C. 1 (emphasis original); quoted also in Pope Benedict XVI, *Verbum Domini*, no. 33.

[41] Pope Benedict XVI, *Verbum Domini*, no. 37, in part quoting PBC, "The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church," no. II. A. 2.

[42] Pope Benedict XVI, *Verbum Domini*, no. 34, quoting his own *Intervention at the Fourteenth General Congregation of the Synod* (14 October 2008): *Insegnamenti* IV, 2 (2008), 493.

[43] PBC, "The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church," no. I. B–E. See also Johnson, "What's Catholic," 28. Thirty years later, of course, there are additional "new" methods, such as postcolonial criticism and ecological hermeneutics.

[44] See also note 24 above.

"Methods that consider historical and literary contexts for a text are … necessary but limited and insufficient. For theological and formational purposes, we must also interpret Scripture within its additional contexts."

criticism and narrative criticism) deal with the world *of*, or *within*, the text, and reception history and contextual approaches (broadly understood) seek to discover the world *before*, or *in front of*, the text—that is, how it has been interpreted through the ages and continues to be interpreted today.[45]

We would propose that the seminarian should be taught to engage each of these textual worlds, all with the aim of recognizing "the word of God in human language." This includes what Catholics have traditionally called "the spiritual sense" of Scripture and its *sensus plenior*.[46] The PBC defines the spiritual sense as "the meaning expressed by the biblical texts when read under the influence of the Holy Spirit, in the context of the paschal mystery of Christ and of the new life which flows from it." The spiritual sense "can never be stripped of its connection with the literal sense," which is its "indispensable foundation." Moreover, the spiritual sense "is not to be confused with subjective interpretations stemming from the imagination or intellectual speculation."[47] The *sensus plenior*, or "fuller sense," is "a deeper meaning of the text, intended by God but not clearly expressed by the human author."[48]

One way of expressing our concern about the strengths and limitations of the historical-critical method, and the benefits of other approaches, is to understand scriptural interpretation as taking place with respect to multiple contexts. These include the text's historical and literary contexts, its canonical context, the relationship of the text to the Church's creeds and doctrine, the text's reception throughout history, and the particular contemporary context of the interpreter and the interpreter's community. Methods that consider historical and literary contexts for a text are, therefore, necessary but limited and insufficient. For theological and formational purposes, we

[45] For these three worlds of the text, see, e.g., Sandra M. Schneiders, *The Revelatory Text: Interpreting the New Testament as Sacred Scripture*, 2nd ed. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999).

[46] See PBC, "The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church," no. II. B. 2–3.

[47] PBC, "The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church," no. II. B. 2

[48] PBC, "The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church," no. II. B. 3. The *sensus plenior* can be thought of as "another way of indicating the spiritual sense of a biblical text in the case where the spiritual sense is *distinct from* the literal sense. It has its foundation in the fact that the Holy Spirit, principal author of the Bible, can guide human authors in the choice of expressions in such a way that the latter will express a truth the fullest depths of which the authors themselves do not perceive" (no. II. B. 3; emphasis added). But caution and even appropriate control must be exercised, "by an explicit biblical text or by an authentic doctrinal tradition," to avoid "subjective interpretations deprived of validity."

must also interpret Scripture within its additional contexts.

Various scholar-teachers will use different methods and approaches in addition to the historical-critical method in their biblical instruction. All methods, we stress, are means to theological and formational ends in the seminary; none is an end in itself. *How* this instruction is best done is the topic of the third section of this article.

Pedagogy for Formation in a Catholic Seminary

If the goal of teaching Scripture in a Catholic seminary is the formation of future priests, and if proper understanding of the biblical text both requires the historical-critical method and recognizes its limitations, it is necessary that pedagogical approaches incorporate historical-critical inquiry into study of Scripture in ways appropriate to those ends. In fact, the limitations of historical criticism and the reality that, in a Catholic context, exegesis is a "theological discipline,"[49] require that historical-critical work be supplemented with other approaches and methods. All of this has important implications for thinking about the curriculum in relationship to the Scripture courses, along with both classroom instruction and assessment of student learning.

Scripture Curriculum

Before we consider individual courses and teaching strategies, it is helpful to think about the whole Scripture curriculum as it relates to the various Scripture courses. At the beginning of this article, we outlined six goals of the Scripture department at St. Mary's. Developing departmental goals related to formation, and considering a seminary's Scripture curriculum in relationship to those goals, has a number of advantages, including:

1) It provides a way to plan with the end in mind. If the *telos* is formation of men for priesthood, it is essential to look across all Scripture courses offered, to consider how courses are sequenced, and to determine whether courses work together in the service of all aspects of formation (human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral). Thus, no one course needs to accomplish all formational goals at once, but in the aggregate, all goals should be addressed.
2) It allows course sequencing to offer a hermeneutical framework, and it ensures that ideas and texts are introduced and reinforced throughout the curriculum in a logical manner. In the case of St. Mary's, for example, there is an early Scripture course focused on a survey of the Bible and on helping students develop a

[49] PBC, "The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church," no. III. D; see also the text's Conclusion.

Catholic approach to scriptural interpretation (our goals 2 and especially 3, above, scriptural knowledge and a Catholic hermeneutic). This course precedes a course that offers a broad overview of exegetical methods (which addresses some of goal 4 above, sound exegesis). Both courses also introduce students to various ways of praying with Scripture (our goal 1, Scripture-infused prayer). Each of these two courses has a particular emphasis, and thus may focus especially on one or more departmental goals. Sequenced in this way, the two courses together also provide a logic for how to employ various exegetical methods and orient students toward study of subsequent individual content courses. The content courses reinforce and expand the goals of the initial courses while also addressing our goals 5 and 6 (scripturally informed ministry and scriptural actualization).[50]

Individual Course Instruction and Assessment

In a Catholic seminary, course instruction should not focus solely on relatively passive, teacher-centered learning, but also employ more interactive ways of engaging Scripture that both model and foster spiritual, intellectual, pastoral, and human formation. Similarly, across various courses, assessments should not focus simply on intellectual formation, but throughout the curriculum as a whole, they should also measure development in all aspects of priestly formation. Finally, Bible courses should incorporate global perspectives on interpretation of Scripture, recognizing the diverse communities from which seminarians come, and the wide variety of ministry contexts for which they are being prepared. Below are some suggestions for ways to think about a holistic approach to formation in the context of seminary Scripture courses, many of which are drawn from practices at St. Mary's Seminary & University:

"In a Catholic seminary, course instruction should . . . measure development in all aspects of priestly formation."

In-Class Prayer

Using Scripture in class as part of corporate prayer or as part of a course assignment helps to meet the goal of Scripture-infused prayer, and may take a variety of formats:

- Engage together as a class in group *lectio divina*.
- Ask a student each class period to offer the opening prayer, integrating the focal

[50] These last two goals are not limited to particular courses or even to Scripture courses alone.

text for the day, ideally after a professor models it.
- Ask students to write a psalm (particularly in a Psalms course) and to reflect on how the language of the biblical text shaped their own prayer (i.e., what metaphors, formal elements, theological themes, etc. informed their own psalm).
- Ask students to select and use a biblical text (from the portion of the canon in focus) for prayer in a specific pastoral context (e.g., with someone suffering from an illness, or after the loss of a loved one) and to reflect on the process of selecting and using the text as prayer language.
- Ask each student to write a prayer and reflection based on a Scripture text that the professor then compiles as part of a class Advent or Lenten guide to prayer (which could be shared within the seminary as a resource).

Interactive Lectures and Seminar-Style Classes

At St. Mary's, many of our larger classes are primarily interactive lecture courses, while smaller classes tend to be more seminar-like. Both styles are especially appropriate for the study of scriptural texts. Some suggestions for student-directed learning in lectures or seminar classes include:

- Ask students to prepare a page of insights and questions for discussion (bullet points or paragraphs), considering such matters as: What new things did I learn from reading the assigned scriptural texts (and possibly also secondary readings such as commentaries and articles)? What points do I wish to be clarified? What surprised me? What would I like to hear my classmates' opinions on? What did I learn that resolved a question I had?

- Ask one student each class period to present a one-page exegetical and theological overview of the text for the day, including two or three questions for discussion.

- Ask students to engage global perspectives on scriptural interpretation by doing an oral book review from a non-western scholar.

- Ask students to do an "entrance" or "exit" question at the beginning or end of each class. Examples of entrance/exit tickets include:

    - What theological themes from the text are most relevant to contemporary readers? Why?
    - What new insight did you gain from discussion of the text?
    - What did you notice in the text that you hadn't previously?
    - Are there any elements of the text discussed today that would be challeng-

ing to preach? If so, why, and how might you handle that challenge?
    - What questions do you still have after class discussion of the text?
    - What contemporary pastoral questions are addressed by this text?
    - How might one's social location impact the interpretation of this text?

Small-Group Discussions

Small groups can be a particularly effective pedagogical strategy. Some suggestions for how to incorporate this:

- Divide the class into groups that meet monthly for discussion of spiritual, theological, and pastoral issues related to what has been studied that month. Students rotate leadership of the discussion, preparing discussion questions (to be approved by the instructor) in advance, to which students must prepare brief responses before the discussion.

- Organize the class into small groups, with each group connected to a particular pericope on which each member of the group will eventually write an exegesis paper. Provide the groups opportunities to reflect together on various aspects of the text (formal elements, literary context, theological themes, etc.) throughout the semester as they work independently on their own exegesis.

- Pair students together around a specific exegetical question and ask them to discuss it and then share insights with the larger class. For example:
    - ask students to outline a given Scripture text, and then describe how the structure they have identified contributes to the text's theological message;
    - ask students to examine a text in relationship to its historical context, and to consider whether and how understanding the historical context of the text helps to nuance or inform their understanding of the text's message;
    - invite students to consider which pastoral challenges are presented by a pericope.

- Assign three or four groups to each read a different interpretation of a biblical text, choosing from such secondary sources as recent scholarly works (which should include readings from different social locations), contemporary homilies, patristic writings, children's books, movies, etc. that engage a particular passage. Ask students to discuss their reading (or review) of those interpretations in small groups, and then share insights, reflections, and questions with the larger class.

In-Class Oral Presentations

- Ask students to do an exegetical research project, share their research findings in a 20-25-minute presentation, and then answer questions for 10 minutes. Scriptural knowledge, a Catholic scriptural hermeneutic, and sound scriptural exegesis are the main goals addressed in this pedagogical practice, but also sometimes scripturally informed practices of ministry.

- Ask students to present on a significant theological theme from the biblical book(s) studied in the course and to identify two or three important texts that develop that theme.

- Ask students to prepare a PowerPoint presentation for a parish Bible study, covering contextualization of the pericope in its historical setting, the text as a source for understanding the history of Israel or the early Church, assessment of the text's value as an historical source, the text's major theological themes, and the role of the text in the Church's lectionary cycle.

Reflection Papers

Scripturally informed practices of ministry and scriptural actualization are goals that can be addressed by reflection papers, which might include such assignments as:

- Ask students to write a short paper connecting a theme or text in one book of Scripture to a contemporary issue in the Church.
- Ask students to choose a passage about ministry and relate it to contemporary priestly ministry.

Exegesis Papers

A number of different approaches to exegesis papers can enrich learning and contribute to the formation of priests in a seminary context. It may be appropriate for some exegetical assignments to focus especially on intellectual formation, while others incorporate pastoral or spiritual formation as a part of the assignment. Ideally, exegetical assignments that emphasize academic knowledge will be paired with other course assignments attending to other aspects of priestly formation. Some options for exegetical papers used at St. Mary's have included:

- an exegesis paper that focuses especially on use of historical-critical methods, including word study, source criticism, literary context, form criticism, and historicity, and to present each of these five sections sequentially (this may be accompanied by an oral presentation to the class);
- an exegesis paper that asks students to focus on literary aspects of the text (metaphor, literary structure, etc.);

- an exegetical paper that asks students to incorporate both literary and theological approaches, along with a final homily.

"[T]he one intangible item that makes for excellence in the teaching of Scripture in a Catholic seminary is passion."

Reception History

A Catholic hermeneutic values the tradition of scriptural interpretation. There are many ways to incorporate aspects of the reception history of a text into class presentations and papers. In addition, the following activities may be helpful in increasing student awareness and appreciation of the long history, and various modes, of biblical interpretation:

- Ask students to report on the interpretation of a particular text in the patristic, medieval, reformation, and contemporary periods.
- Have students listen to music or contemplate visual art that interprets a particular scriptural passage, and then discuss their understanding of the interpretation offered by the artist.
- Have students watch a video (or part of a video), or read a printed copy, of a homily or sermon on a biblical text and then discuss the preacher's interpretation of the text.
- Have students compare and contrast two or three very different interpretations of a biblical text (e.g., in several commentaries) and then discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each interpretation.

Homilies

Several courses at St. Mary's require the writing of homilies, sometimes at the conclusion of an exegetical paper (as noted above) and sometimes as stand-alone projects after the student does appropriate research and exegesis. Scriptural knowledge, a Catholic scriptural hermeneutic, sound scriptural exegesis, and scripturally informed practices of ministry are all assessed in these homiletical exercises.

Conclusion

In this essay, we have discussed the theory and practice of teaching Scripture in a Catholic seminary—the "soul" of theology—in light of Church documents. We have argued that this fundamentally means teaching Scripture *formationally*. After discussing St. Mary's formational goals in connection with the sixth edition of the PPF, we proposed five two-part hermeneutical principles that emerge from Church documents about Scripture. We then considered the necessity and value, but also the limits, of historical criticism and the historical-critical method, exploring what else is necessary for Catholic exegesis to be "guided by faith." We concluded with some suggestions, from our own experience, for ways to

teach Scripture formationally in light of Catholic hermeneutics and Church documents.

Perhaps a final word would be this: appropriate hermeneutical principles and sound exegetical methods are critical, and good pedagogy is essential. But the one intangible item that makes for excellence in the teaching of Scripture in a Catholic seminary is passion: passion for the Word of God, for Christ himself, for the life of the Church, and for the priestly ministry of the Sacred Scriptures. This passion is what makes a seminarian love Scripture and see it as the soul, not only of the Church's theology, but of his life—and of the lives of all the faithful. In the words of Pope Benedict XVI,

> The faithful should be able to perceive clearly that the preacher has a compelling desire to present Christ, who must stand at the centre of every homily. For this reason preachers need to be in close and constant contact with the sacred text; they should prepare for the homily by meditation and prayer, so as to preach with conviction and passion.[51]

And as Pope Francis has said,

> When we take time to pray and meditate on the sacred text, we can speak from the heart and thus reach the hearts of those who hear us, conveying what is essential and capable of bearing fruit. May we never tire of devoting time and prayer to Scripture, so that it may be received "not as a human word but as what it really is, the word of God" (*1 Thess* 2:13).[52]

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[51] Pope Benedict XVI, *Verbum Domini*, no. 59.

[52] Pope Francis, *Aperuit Illis*, no. 5.

Teaching Systematic Theology in a Catholic Seminary*

Robert F. Leavitt, P.S.S., S.T.D.

Introduction

This article will discuss the nature and the role of Systematic Theology ("systematics") in seminary intellectual formation. More specifically what contribution does systematics make to the intellectual outcomes expected in the new *Program of Priestly Formation*? How and why does the outcome of theological integration and synthesis disproportionately depend on systematics?

In 1991, the *Atlantic Monthly* published an article "Can Poetry Matter?"[1] That sparked more letters to the editor than anything published in the magazine's history! A glance at any seminary catalog will tell you systematics matters. More credits are set aside in systematics than in any other subject. Joseph Ratzinger taught systematics at the University of Bonn and the University of Munster and published important books in the field. He later served as cardinal-prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith for twenty-four years. The biggest names in the post-conciliar period were in systematics – Karl Rahner, Edward Schillebeeckx, Henri de Lubac, Bernard Lonergan, Hans Urs von Balthasar, Joseph Ratzinger, and Walter Kasper. In the United States, one thinks of Avery Dulles, David Tracy, and Francis Schüssler Fiorenza. A seminarian who completed a degree in theology without having read something written by these figures cannot understand where the discipline has been and is today.[2]

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* See John W. O'Malley, *Trent: What Happened at the Council*, Harvard University Press, 2013. The Council of Trent (July 15, 1563) issued the first ever decree on the training of priests. The counter-reformation for priestly formation had begun. Before Trent, seminaries did not exist. Mediaeval universities educated Dominican and Franciscan religious in theology. Secular (diocesan) priests did not attend universities but learned theology like a trade – by a hands-on "pastoral" apprenticeship with an ordained priest. Even after Trent, the academic demands on future priests were minimal at best. In the 16th and 17th centuries in Milan and later in Paris, under the Sulpicians, new models were invented for theological and spiritual formation of priests. Four hundred years after Trent, Vatican Council II (1965) promulgated two decrees on priesthood: The *Decree on the Priesthood* (*Presbyterorum Ordinis*) and the *Decree on Priestly Formation* (*Optatam Totius*).

[1] See Dana Gioia, *Can Poetry Matter? Essays on Poetry and American Culture*, Tenth Anniversary Edition, Minneapolis: Graywolf Press, 2002, xi.

[2] For example, Karl Rahner, *Foundations of the Christian Faith*, Joseph Ratzinger *Introduction to Theology*, Edward Schillebeeckx *The Understanding the Faith: Interpretation and Criticism*, Walter Kasper, *An Introduction to Christian Faith*, Avery Dulles, *Models of Revelation* and *The Craft of Theology*, David Tracy *A Blessed Rage for Order* and *The Analogical Imagination*, Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, *Foundational Theology*.

"[S]ystematic theology … is the only discipline responsible for explaining the sources, logic, and reasons for the teachings in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*."

The unique role systematics plays in seminary intellectual formation is to provide conceptual and methodological "Velcro" for theological investigation. The doctrinal teachings of the Catholic Church require a discipline that studies the overall coherence and logic of doctrine. The *Ratio Fundamentalis* (2016) and the new *Program of Priestly Formation* (PPF 2022) stress integration in all four pillars of formation. The humanity, prayer life, theological vision, and pastoral competencies of a seminarian need to be formed and assessed at the same time. The name for the concluding stage of seminary formation is a "synthetic stage." The word "synthesis" hardly means a seminarian at the end of his studies could write a *Summa theologiae*. At the best, it might mean that he could make sense of passages extracted from St. Augustine on grace, from St. Thomas on sacraments, from Karl Rahner on Trinitarian monotheism, from Hans Urs von Balthasar on how the category of beauty applies to faith. At the least, it means he could preach what the Church teaches and make sense of it in the ordinary course of his ministry for well-educated professional Catholics.

Academic catalogs are notoriously difficult to decipher. But, to give some idea of the importance of systematics, out of 109 total credit hours in theology at St. Mary's Seminary & University, 35 credits are in systematic-liturgical theology, 19.5 each in scripture and moral theology, 12 in pastoral studies, 9 in church history. 30 credits are required in philosophy alone. Core courses in systematics include Fundamental theology, God and Trinity, Christology, and Pneuma-tology following the logic in the great creeds. Subjects circling around this Trinitarian nucleus are the doctrines of Creation, Theological Anthropology, Sin and Grace, Redemption, Ecclesiology, the Sacraments, especially Priesthood, the Doctrine of Mary, Missiology, and Eschatology.

Faculty with doctoral level expertise teach all these courses. Despite best intentions, such a list can seem a potpourri of facts, methods, and ideas mattering to each professor but disconnected for seminarians. Different theological subjects like philosophy, scripture, church history can easily pass like ships in the night, each carrying important cargo, all hoping to dock and unload at the same port. If there is one discipline in seminary that ought to be able to bring it together, it is systematic theology. It is the only discipline responsible for explaining the sources, logic, and reasons for the teachings in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

The *Program of Priestly Formation* 6th edition spells out the requirements, benchmarks, and norms for theology. That still leaves considerable room for deans and professors to figure

out how to approximate integration across this scattering of theological disciplines. Having spent five decades teaching systematics in a seminary, and then serving as its president rector, I welcome the synthetic ambitions in the PPF. [3]

Methodology answers the question – how do you do that? It is the key in any science, discipline, or trade. Specializations in theology may presume or obscure methodological issues. If there is to be intellectual rigor in theological reasoning, seminarians need to see how it's done in scripture, moral or systematic theology. Theology is no longer the "seamless garment" it once was. But it can strive for a methodological redundancy so seminarians can see all theology as scientific. The merry-go-round of coursework should let everyone enter and get off at the same methodological gate – How do you explain that? How should I understand that? Can I critique that? How can I pull all that together?

One final observation on method. *Dei Verbum*, *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*, and *Verbum Domini* are methodologically significant for systematics. If Sacred Scripture is to be the "soul of theology," what does such a metaphor imply? [4] If philosophy has been praised as the "handmaiden of theology," how does that metaphor affect theology's "scriptural soul"? Every one of the courses in systematics needs to answer those questions.

On Systematic Theology

I. General Remarks on Theology [5]

The genus "theology" has many species in it. St. Anselm's definition "faith seeking understanding" (*fides quaerens intellectum*) is as general as it is succinct. The word faith, in an economical fashion, covers both the *deposit of faith* and the *act of faith* of a believer in what the deposit affirms. Faith, in the Catholic sense, is a *personal* act and an *ecclesial* act at the same time. Those who teach theology in a seminary require a license (*mandatum*) from a bishop authorizing them to do so in the name of the Church. Theology is one field, but the special disciplines in it are multiple. There is biblical theology, historical theology, dogmatic theology, moral theology, liturgical theology, and systematic theology, and the systematics of each doctrine in a hierarchy of doctrines. Each of these focuses on a specific subset of theological material and questions related to specific areas in the faith – in scripture, in the writings of major theologians, in dogmatic teachings of the Church, in Catholic moral principles, in worship and sacraments, in the overarching

[3] Immediately following priestly ordination in 1968, I began teaching fundamental theology. In 1980, I became the seminary's president-rector and continued teaching systematics until 2017.

[4] The Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church* (St. Paul Books and Media, 1993), 28.

[5] See, *Fundamental Theology*, 1060-1080. See also, *Handbook of Catholic Theology*, edited by Wolfgang Beinert and Francis Schüssler Fiorenza (New York: Crossroad, 1995), 699-703.

search for principles and methods of theological reasoning which apply across the board in every theological discipline.

To be scientific, theological reasoning requires what David Tracy calls "criteria of appropriateness" and "criteria of intelligibility."[6] Because the primary evidence of the faith is handed down in Tradition, its classic written expressions in Sacred Scripture, in sacramental liturgy, in authoritative creeds, in dogmatic definitions of councils and popes, in the Church Fathers and other theological writings provide theology's source material. All written texts, from laws to poems, require methods of interpretation appropriate to them. For that reason, theology looks to historical sciences, to exegetical methods in literary criticism, to metaphysics, to philosophical hermeneutics, to legal theory, even to aesthetics as auxiliary disciplines. The concept of literary form, familiar from modern scripture studies, finds its counterpart in systematics and dogmatics in the interpretation of the weight of conciliar, synodal, and papal teaching.[7]

Philosophy is Catholic theology's closest cognate discipline. It serves to ground doctrine in metaphysical principles to make clear that faith is about a reality not a mere subjective feeling. A philosophy of knowledge explains the Church's conviction that the mind can know the metaphysical truth about the reality of God and human beings. That truth can be known, argued for, and clearly stated in words. Hermeneutical philosophy educates faith about language as the tool by which human beings express their grasp of reality, including realities which exceed the resources of the physical sciences. The philosophy of aesthetics has recently emerged as another way of doing theology more concerned with faith's aesthetic forms (e.g., in architecture, art, music, drama and poetry).

"For seminarians, learning to think theologically about faith means learning to translate mysteries into the defined categories of a tradition."

Theology is human reason applied to the belief in divine revelation. *Dei Filius* from Vatican Council I (1870) stated that divine revelation transcends reason. It transcends as a mystery, as a *surplus of meaning and truth* which always await further articulation. Revelation is not a Sphinx, an enigma meant to baffle, defy, much less to mock human reason. An act of faith which withdraws into the world of private religious sensibility by refusing to speak publicly has not yet become a *theological faith*. Theology aims to speak the truth about divine revelation in a coherent if analogical form. Sometimes, in mystical

[6] David Tracy, "Approaching the Christian Understanding of God," in *Systematic Theology: Roman Catholic Perspectives*, Vol. I (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, Second Edition, 2011), 142-144.

[7] *Handbook of Catholic Theology*, "Ecclesial Magisterium," 194-199. See also, Francis Sullivan, *Magisterium: Teaching Authority in the Church*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1983). This is an excellent treatment of an essential concept which still causes misunderstandings.

theology, it resorts to apophatic forms of speaking to underscore the divine mystery, to shock faith out of fundamentalism.

For seminarians, learning to think theologically about faith means learning to translate mysteries into the defined categories of a tradition. Like any science, theology has its dictionaries of lexical terms. God-talk expresses itself first biblically and liturgically. The aim of systematics is to capture in precise theological and philosophical language what revelation gives as a mystery often in narratives and metaphors. Seminarians need to learn how to question revelation and at the same time feel subordinate to it. They must learn how to ask intelligent questions in a critical manner about faith and not be fearful of losing obedience to it. The best theological thinking enriches personal faith by purifying it of idolatry. It does not water it down. On the contrary, it fortifies it against unbelief.

Finally, to teach theology effectively as a science of faith demands that professors know the *pre-theological* presuppositions seminarians bring with them. If those biases are unknown at the time of admission, teaching faith theologically will prove frustrating. Moving from first naïveté to second naïveté in faith is not easy. A class of first-year theologians will have its share of seminarians ignorant of basic catechetics as well as others, often more intelligent and curious about theology, who have forged a synthesis for themselves already. Some seminarians will come searching for answers, not for more technical questions. Critical thinking in theology can feel uninspiring and dry. The enrichment that studying critical theology gives to personal prayer and faith takes time.

Controversies in Catholic theology since 1900, when the ecclesial magisterium had to address theological problems as rearguard attacks on faith, may cause seminarians to regard theology with suspicion. The "hermeneutic of suspicion" works two ways: from without as a secularized hermeneutic demystifying faith; or from within by a hermeneutic suspicious of theological exploration as a fifth column within the Church. Teaching theology, in this context, is like fighting a war on two fronts. [8]

II. A Brief History of Systematic Theology

Let me offer remarks on the historical development of theology to put systematics in its proper context. Sacred Scripture thinks theologically but not in a "systematic" fashion. Pre-systematic theological themes and emergent trajectories of meaning are everywhere in the Bible. What we have there are nascent theologies in the form of narratives, moral and juridic injunction, hymns, in glorious prophetic visions of hope and in terrible threats, even as legends, parables and proverbs. Theological thinking becomes keryg-

[8] Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007). This philosophical study of the social history of the idea of secularity has become the standard work in the field. For its a relationship to the New Evangelization, see Robert F. Leavitt, *The Truth Will Make You Free: The New Evangelization for a Secular Age*, (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2019).

matic (proclamatory) in the Gospels. It verges towards catechesis and argumentative rhetoric in St. Paul's Letters. In the Johannine literature, theological thinking becomes self-consciously symbolic and almost metaphysical. In these biblical books, theological reasoning is done in the form of scriptural quotation.

It is the task of a biblical theology to organize and arrange these pre-systematic discourses for systematics. In the post-apostolic period, Christian thinkers had to answer objections to the faith, so they had recourse to another vocabulary and other arguments. The closing of the biblical canon in the second century created the Christian Bible and, in one stroke, defined where any subsequent theological argument had to appeal for justification. [9] The Hebrew Scriptures, now called the Old Testament (or First Testament), made their way into the Christian Bible in the light of the story of Jesus Christ.[10]

The first Christian confessional formulas in the New Testament are already indicative of a theological transition to a synthetic creedal summary of the faith. [11] Heretical ideas, as we know from the Gospels and St. Paul, often sprang up first. They required that bishops and theologians clarify the faith's most basic concepts. The doctrine of Monotheism we take for granted today had to survive the atheisms and polytheisms of the ancient world. Confessing the true humanity and divinity of Jesus Christ demanded rejecting a Docetic Christology by employing a philosophical dictionary the Bible lacked. The Holy Trinity was simply unthinkable for a monotheistic faith until the word "person" was philosophically redefined. To accomplish these three shifts alone in the first four centuries of the Christian era in theology was monumental. In short, concepts taken from a Hellenistic philosophical lexicon helped biblical Christians resolve the most fundamental semantic aporias of faith in Christ. The doctrine of the Holy Spirit would take far longer to articulate and, even then, would end up splitting Greek from Latin Christianity. Some theologians argue that the theology of the Holy Spirit remains the most important area of systematic reflection. The idea of Tradition depends on it.

The biblical exegete and commentator Origen wrote *On First Principles* – sometimes called the first systematic theology. St. Augustine's genius wedded Latin rhetoric and Plotinus to the Four Gospels, St. Paul's Letters, and the Psalms to compose the greatest statement of Christianity

[9] See Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty (ed.), *The Critical Study of Sacred Texts*. Berkeley: Berkeley Religious Studies Series, 1979. The final essay, "Epilogue: The Sacred Text and the Community," 271-276, by Paul Ricoeur explains the complexities involved in studying a "human text" which the ecclesial community considers essentially as a "sacred text."

[10] See, The Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Jewish People and their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible* (2002). The Preface to this text by Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger makes very significant points about historical and theological interpretation of the Old Testament.

[11] Vernon H. Neufeld, *The Earliest Christian Confessions* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1963). Also, Jaroslav Pelikan, *Credo: Historical and Theological Guide to Creeds and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).

in Late Roman Antiquity. In the Christian East, Greek theologians from Athanasius through the Cappadocian Fathers to Pseudo-Dionysius worked out different theologies of a more mystical character. Theology in the first millennium had not yet reached the stage of the *Summa theologiae* of St. Thomas Aquinas nor that of the theological specializations we have today.

Only in the mediaeval period did theology became systematic in the proper sense. The Arabic translations of Aristotle made the *Summa theologiae* of St. Thomas possible. He worked out a set of logical, metaphysical, and ethical categories as a philosophical loom on which to weave a scientific synthesis. St. Thomas perfected the Anselmian definition of theology by demonstrating how to translate a biblical faith ontologically and synthetically. The genius of that achievement has lasted a millennium.

"Our best systematic theologians have set out to build a bridge from Catholic thought to secular and ecumenical thought. A proper Catholic theological education for seminarians cannot neglect walking them across that bridge."

After St. Thomas, the context for theology underwent too many changes to mention here. The rise of banking and economics, of higher mathematics and the physical sciences, and various philosophical rationalisms altered the perception of theology's truth-claims. The Protestant Reformation limited the source of theological reflection and argument in the doctrine of *Sola Scriptura*. The Enlightenment threw the ultimate gauntlet down before theology by categorically denying biblical revelation and by contesting metaphysical reason. Catholic theology and Protestant theology, in their own ways, would withdraw into comfortable confessional enclaves of their own. Protestant authorities composed confessions to give faith a point of theological synthesis. The modern secular university can recognize a scholarly field of Religious Studies and the Philosophy of Religion, but the confessionalism of Christian faith disqualifies any theology as scientific in its eyes. There are private universities, with well-endowed Divinity Schools and chairs in Catholic Theology, to represent the discipline exiled now from public higher education. Newman Centers on campus serve as redoubts against an encroaching secularism.

The language of faith informed by reason, and the languages of the modern physical and social sciences lack a common grammar. Our best systematic theologians have set out to build a bridge from Catholic thought to secular and ecumenical thought. A proper Catholic theological education for seminarians cannot neglect walking them across that bridge. The dialogue of faiths is only possible for a theology with a long memory and the theological tools to decipher confessional agreements and disagreements.

III. Teaching Systematic Theology in the Post-Reformation

The Reformation and Enlightenment narrowed Catholic systematics to an apologetics directed chiefly against Protestantism and philosophical rationalism. Theology split into sub-disciplines (dogmatics, moral theology, spiritual theology, mystical theology). Most important was the invention of a pedagogical genre for seminaries called the *dogmatic manual.*[12] "Manualist theology" differed from how St. Thomas did theology. The *Summa* posed theological questions, answered them, and responded to objections to those answers. The *dogmatic manuals*, on the other hand, did theology defensively by asserting church teaching and defending it. The teaching as stated was presumed to have resolved all theological inquiry in-advance. The concept of dogmatic development did not exist. The Vincentian Canon once defined faith as "what was believed everywhere, always, and by all" (*ubique, semper, ab omnibus*). Nothing ever changed, neither dogma nor the theology supporting it. History itself would topple this schema.

Systematics saw itself as a deductive discipline. Doctrines played the role of major premises in a syllogism from which logical or "fitting conclusions" could be drawn. For each doctrine of the church, the dogmatic manual supplied a precise dogmatic value. Theological opinions were classified as certain, safe, dangerous, or erroneous interpretations. The most respected manuals were those written by R. Garrigou-Lagrange, H. J. Diekmann, S. Tromp, M. Nicolau, C. Pesch, A. Tanquerey, and L. Lercher.[13] Seminarians studying theology in Catholic seminaries after Trent until Vatican Council II learned their systematics from one of these dogmatic manuals.

Prior to Vatican II, teaching systematics was teaching from a dogmatic manual. In the early 1960s, the Latin dogmatic manuals of the Spanish Jesuits under the auspices of the University of Salamanca were our textbooks.[14] In dogma, a professor translated the Latin and explained terms to make sure we got it. The only scripture was a paragraph or two of biblical proof-texts. The bell rang. We went to Old Testament class. It was taught by a professor who had us read a fascinating book on the History of Israel, walked us word by word through Genesis 1-3, parsed the Hebrew, had us read two Ancient Near Eastern creation myths, defined what human authorship in the Book of Genesis really amounted to, made distinctions between how ancients might have read these chapters and how theologians do

[12] See, Jared Wicks, "Manualist Theology," in *Fundamental Theology,* 1102-1105, and Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, "Systematic Theology: Task and Methods," in *Systematic Theology: Roman Catholic Perspectives*, Vol. I (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, Second Edition, 2011), 20-26.

[13] Jared Wicks, "Manualist Theology," in *Fundamental Theology*, 1102.

[14] *Sacrae Theologiae Summa*, Vol 1-4, Biblioteca de Autores Christianos, Matriti, MCMLXII. The titles of the individual volumes: Vol. 1: *Introductio in Theologiam. De vera religione. De ecclesia Christi. De sacra Scriptura*; Vol. II *De Deo uno et trino. De Deo creante et elevante*; Vol. III *De Verbo incarnato. Mariologia. De gratia. De virtutibus infusis*; Vol. IV *De sacramentis. De Novissismis*.

today. The class hours spent in dogma on *creatio ex nihilo* and *peccatum originale* and the class hours on the creation and fall narratives in the Book of Genesis were not yet on speaking terms. After Vatican II, professors set the Latin manuals aside; most seminarians tossed them out. A professor's lecture notes and readings from translated French and German theological monographs were how systematics was taught. The discipline of theology in the very course of its own conceptual metamorphosis jumped off the page at us.

I began teaching systematics in 1971. *Sacrae Theologiae Summa I, Theologia Fundamentalis* of the Spanish Jesuits still sat on my bookshelf. But Karl Rahner and Joseph Ratzinger were the textbooks I used. To point up the differences, I xeroxed pages from the *Summa* and the Spanish Jesuits dogmatic manual to show seminarians how theology was once written. The manuals had useful information in them like the dogmatic weight of a particular doctrine, the state of the question (*status quaestionis*) in theology, the degrees of certitude about theological opinions ranging from certain to controversial and dangerous. These "exhibits" from the mediaeval period and the recent past of seminary dogmatics proved enlightening.

In the 19th century, philosophical agnosticism and a pale Deism led Pope Leo XIII to call for a reinvigorated Thomism. Engaging the way that historical criticism of the Bible played itself out then led Pope Pius X to condemn biblical and theological Modernism. The theological interest in personal faith and the believing person led theologians to connect Thomism to a Kantian, existentialist, and phenomenological method. Ecclesial suspicions extended to Patristic studies of Origen and St. Augustine in the 1940s labelled polemically as a *nouvelle theologie*.

Systematics prior to Vatican Council II was far from dormant. The work of figures like Jean Danielou, Yves Congar, Henri de Lubac, John Courtney Murray, Augustin Bea, and Karl Rahner prepared the way for further theological development leading to the four major Constitutions and the various Decrees and Declarations of Vatican II. The aftermath of the council would not be an easy one for seminaries or theology.

Before Vatican II, Hans Kung called for reform in the Church. Hans Urs von Balthasar compared Kung to Hercules cleaning out the Augean Stables![15] Like Trent, Vatican II had house cleaning to do, liturgical changes to implement, major dogmatic teachings on revelation and the church to refresh with new expressions, pastoral challenges to define and meet. Like Trent, theological experts (*periti* like Hans Kung, Karl Rahner, and Joseph Ratzinger) helped to shape the language of the documents.

At the end of the decade, however, Kung would symbolize an emergent *hubris* in theology

[15] As cited in *Systematic Theology: Roman Catholic Perspectives*, Vol. I and Vol. II (Fortress Press, Second Edition, 2011. James C. Livingston, Francis Schüssler Fiorenza with Sarah Coakley and James H. Evans, Jr. *Modern Christian Thought Volume II* (Second Edition) Prentiss-Hall, 2000), 256.

when he challenged the papal teaching on birth control and infallibility. A public struggle between the embattled Pope Paul VI and theologians ensued. Pope John Paul II with Joseph Ratzinger would rebalance the scales after the Augean stables had been swept out.

The story of the post-conciliar chapter in Catholic systematics is unfinished. The plotline, as I just stated, is familiar. The first chapter came in 1968 with *Humanae vitae* where Paul VI found himself challenged by his own cardinals and moralists. Liberation theology was already making its mark in Latin America. Soon feminist theology would come alive in the United States. The wineskins of traditional theology could not easily accommodate the new wine bubbling up on the peripheries of the Church. John Paul II and Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, with the theological resources of the Vatican, could not allow theology, no matter how brilliant and innovative, to usurp the role of magisterium. They insisted on systematic theology and moral theology evidencing a clear ecclesial identity. It was not beholden to what might, on any given topic, strike individuals as plausible in secular culture. Traditionalists unhappy with Vatican II would feel emboldened. A long theological drama would unfold.

When *Dei Verbum* endorsed the appropriate application of critical biblical studies to Sacred Scripture, it also established an important pivot for systematics. Theologians had to become fluent in biblical studies to understand the dogmatic trajectories latent there.[16] Theological work on the concept of Tradition had gained new momentum. The Holy Spirit is the living grace of God animating the life of the Church. Revelation is the Word of God in Sacred Scripture and Tradition. Theological and magisterial interpretation of God's Word happens concurrently in a spirit of ecclesial communion. [17]

A pre-theological advantage for systematics exists in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. It offers a clear starting point for further theological reflection and understanding. But catechetics is not systematic theology in the sense we are using it here. Questions that are well-framed and based on facts are what drive theological discovery and further understanding of the faith. The seminary needs to prepare seminarians to understand those questions, facts, and discoveries so they know how to preach and teach a living faith. The threshold of competency for priestly ordination requires

"Systematics professors need to pay attention to all that is going on in the Church by reading, digesting, organizing, and filtering the best theological thinking for seminarians."

[16] The Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum*, 24. The language in the text about the relationship of Scripture to Tradition is vague so the precise nature of the relationship remains an open question in Catholic theology.

[17] See Francis Schüssler Fiorenza on the theology of Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger in *Modern Christian Thought Volume II* (Second Edition) Prentiss-Hall, 2000), 260-263.

reevaluation. Private preferences in religion do not rise to the level of theological arguments. The way a pastor preaches and leads his people is effectively his systematics and ecclesiology in action. The way he preaches is exegesis and systematics done rhetorically.

Thanks to what the Pontifical Biblical Commission has published on exegesis, scripture courses in seminaries enjoy an enviable methodological redundancy across the curriculum. Historical criticism, literary criticism, rhetorical analysis, narrative analysis, semiotic analysis, canonical analysis, sociological and contextual analysis of texts yield valuable insights for the future preacher. A systematics course thoughtfully attentive to those developments will have its thinking and arguments refreshed.

IV. A Personal Intermezzo

At St. Mary's Seminary in 1964, a thirty-six-year-old biblical scholar gave a library tour to our first theology class. He was telling us *how to do term papers*. What we ended up learning was *how to do theology*. Theological science, as Raymond Brown, S. S., understood it, begins in the library where a seminarian's faith seeking understanding is scanning the dictionaries and encyclopedias of the Reference Collection. We got the message. Park your opinions elsewhere until you have read enough of what is in these pages to know what you're talking about. Every seminary should assign its best theological mind to conduct that tour for all incoming seminarians. The seminary's theological library is the archives of the faith it celebrates in the chapel. A holy hour in a chapel pew will mean more after a year if a seminarian puts five hours in at a library carrel. Sacraments, liturgies, devotions – they all need dogmatics.

Systematic theology is based on divine revelation and Church teaching. It is resourced from the pooled results of other disciplines, especially exegesis, history, culture, metaphysics, and hermeneutic philosophy. Scholarly information is flowing downstream demanding systematic reflection and integration. A Swiss priest spent his life outside the academy reading artistic classics to write a modern theological aesthetics. A Jesuit priest took courses in philosophy at Freiburg to recapture the spirit of St. Thomas. The ecclesial magisterium is weighing in on it periodically and fulfilling its responsibilities to safeguard faith from misinterpretation and error. Systematics professors need to pay attention to all that is going on in the Church by reading, digesting, organizing, and filtering the best theological thinking for seminarians. It's a difficult but rewarding task to help future priests develop a faith and an intellectual life to support it.

V. Teaching Systematic Theology and the Ecclesial Magisterium

Systematic theologians, along with other faculty in a Catholic seminary, teach in obedience to and communion with the ecclesial magisterium. Since the 19th century and because of theological

controversies, systematics has periodically come under ecclesiastical scrutiny. A modern trove of papal teachings about questionable theological theories originated with the *Syllabus of Errors* (1864), the papal condemnations of Modernism in *Lamentabili* and *Pascendi* (1907), and later the theological concerns in the encyclical of Pope Pius XII *Humani Generis* (1950). Prominent theologians were disciplined by the Church for their writings which simply did not appear to conform to the teachings then of the Roman School.

With theological questions about infallibility and dissent after Vatican II, the magisterium stepped in again. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in response published its Declaration *Mysterium Ecclesiae* about infallibility in 1973. An enormous amount of magisterial teaching in various forms (apostolic constitutions, apostolic letters, encyclical letters, and apostolic exhortations, not to mention papal speeches) have come from the second longest papacy in Church history – Pope John Paul II (1978-2005). Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger led the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith throughout that pontificate. In that capacity, he published in 1990 the *Instruction on the Ecclesial Vocation of a Theologian* (*Donum Veritatis*). While acknowledging the legitimate role of theological exploration, it clearly distinguished the vocation of the Catholic theologian from that of a secular intellectual. The ecclesial magisterium is authoritative in matters of faith and morals.

The basis for a magisterium in the Gospel is not for theological policing, but for ecclesial communion in professing one faith. Because of theology's recent past, seminarians may only see magisterial authority as investigative and disciplinary. They may hear of theologians who resent or fear Rome's interference in their scholarship. In reaction, they may parrot magisterial teachings as if the last word has been written. A handful of them may consider theology itself dangerous, even pointless – except for ultra-orthodox names. The faculty needs to enlighten seminarians about the best theology concerning the magisterium, its purposes, its authority, its modes of teaching, and the response of assent to it expected by the faithful.[18] The writings of Francis A. Sullivan especially go into great analytical detail about magisterium to clarify misunderstandings about what level of weight attaches to specific magisterial teaching about faith. The more popular work of Avery Dulles also offers seminarians a balanced view of the nature and the exercise of magisterium.

The library staff rely on faculty recommendations about important acquisitions in systematics to keep the theological collection up to date. In an ecumenical age, seminarians need to know what major thinkers in the Anglican, Lutheran, Methodist, and Calvinist traditions have written

[18] Francis A. Sullivan, *Creative Fidelity: Weighing and Interpreting Documents of the Magisterium* (New York: Paulist Press, 1996). See also, Richard R. Gaillardetz, *By What Authority? A Primer on Scripture, the Magisterium, and the Sense of the Faithful* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2003).

on topics where their contributions have had an important theological impact in Catholicism.

Systematic theology in the post-conciliar period has experienced a renewal of energy globally from biblical, philosophical, and cultural studies. Some innovative and some risky speculative constructions have come out of it. This led the ecclesial magisterium to carefully examine certain theological publications to determine their conformity with traditional teaching on dogmatic or moral matters central to the faith. Systematics needs to educate seminarians well about the theological justification for and the ministry of the ecclesial magisterium. The local Bishop and the Roman Curia in service to the Holy Father perform that ministry.

Pope Francis in the recent Apostolic Constitution, *Preach the Gospel* (*Praedicate Evangelium*) reformed the Roman Curia. The Curia includes the Secretariat of State, 16 different Dicasteries, and other Institutions. The Dicasteries (formerly identified as Congregations) which are most immediately concerned with matters affecting systematics are : the Dicastery for Evangelization, the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith (within which are the Pontifical Biblical Commission and the International Theological Commission and the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors), the Dicastery for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments, the Dicastery for the Clergy (which has responsibilities for seminaries), the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life, the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity, the Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue, and the Dicastery for Culture and Education.[19] These offices must read up on and keep informed about an enormous volume of information and developments in their respective areas. They provide a great service to the pope in fulfilling the Petrine office. Teachers should keep seminarians abreast of important publications of these Dicasteries.

The International Theological Commission alone has published thirty documents since Vatican II on a host of questions ranging from theological pluralism, the interpretation of dogmas, and the current state of theology, its principles, and criteria. "Theology Today: Perspectives, Principles and Criteria" ITC (2012) would be a good assignment for seminarians in a systematics class. Professors can and will certainly favor the approaches taken by reputable Catholic theologians to the courses they are teaching. It is not good, however, to ignore respectable schools of contemporary Catholic theology on that account. Seeing where theologians agree and disagree is educational. Most seminarians are not reading widely in the field of systematics on their own.

"Systematics makes contributions to priestly intellectual formation which no other discipline in the seminary claims to make."

[19] See, The Apostolic Constitution *"Preach the Gospel" Predicate Evangelium*, with an Appraisal of Francis' Reform of the Roman Curia by Massimo Faggioli (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2022).

They are reliant on what their professors consider important and trustworthy in theological literatures. The crucial decision about which authors and textbooks to use depends on the judgment of the professor and the academic abilities of the seminarians. I will address that issue below.

Let me again reiterate the importance of the Pontifical Biblical Commission text, *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*. It not only addresses the application of diverse exegetical methods to Sacred Scripture but comments as well on philosophical hermeneutics. That philosophical discipline is well suited to a faith expressed in writings supported by written commentary and interpretation. Hermeneutics is the philosophy behind text-interpretation. It points towards an implied ontology by way of language, symbol, and analogy. This PBC document goes out of its way to mention the hermeneutical approaches of two twentieth century non-Catholic philosophers – Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur. Their hermeneutic theories belong in the syllabi of systematics courses. Interpreting, understanding, and appropriating the meaning and truth of Sacred Scripture in a Catholic sense not only involves what a text once meant, even to the scribe who wrote it, but also what it has meant in the Church's later received Tradition which in turn needs to be weighed against the current explanation of its biblical context and meaning. Important scriptural texts inaugurate unforeseen trajectories of theological relevance. Ricoeur has indicated how his philosophical hermeneutics relates to biblical, metaphysical, and theological thinking. [20]

In 1999, the Pontifical Council for Culture (now the Dicastery for Culture and Education) published *Toward a Pastoral Approach to Culture*. That text addresses the cultural situations which call for a New Evangelization. Systematic courses need to specify for seminarians in syllabi what the pastoral outcomes are for studying specific doctrines. If a pastor does not know how to read the signs of the times in his own ambient culture, he cannot address them intelligently in preaching and teaching.

The recent magisterial circumstance in the Church of two successive popes having been before their election respected intellectuals and theologians is worth noting here. It was inevitable that each would put the stamp of his own theological emphases in what he wrote. To complicate matters more, many in the Church in the pre-conciliar, conciliar, and post-conciliar period have compared, contrasted, and even set in opposition different popes. A regrettable polemical nuance now attaches to the papal magisterium itself. Systematics professors need to inform seminarians how this happened and why it is uncatholic.

[20] See Paul Ricoeur, *Figuring The Sacred: Religion, Narrative, and Imagination* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995). The book has translations of twenty-one essays by Ricoeur on faith which clarify his overall hermeneutical orientation. For an example of a biblical exegete and a philosopher of hermeneutic theory collaborating on the interpretation of the same Old Testament texts, see André LaCocque and Paul Ricoeur, *Thinking Biblically: Exegetical and Hermeneutical Studies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998)

Systematics makes contributions to priestly intellectual formation which no other discipline in the seminary claims to make. The dogmatic unity of faith is its concern. Explaining how that occurs through the prism of various theological disciplines and methods is a challenging business. Only by reading well-argued theological literature will a seminarian come to understand the discipline at its best. It is not possible to teach systematics, as I have already said, without seminarians reading passages from St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas, Karl Rahner, Joseph Ratzinger, Hans Urs von Balthasar, Avery Dulles, and David Tracy.

"Many questions in Church life affecting faith and morals depend on the interpretation of revelation in the light of supporting background theories in philosophy and the concept of natural law."

The bishops and seminary faculties after Vatican II realized that a new approach to systematics was required to help seminarians understand the history of doctrines and the rationale for the development of doctrine at Vatican Council II. Seminarians needed to know the scholarly progress that had taken place in biblical, historical, philosophical, and theological studies since the 19th century.

Only in that way could they appreciate one dogmatic fact with an implied synthetic question. The fact is that the Catholic Church addressed and approved dogmatic definitions on the same subject of divine revelation at two different ecumenical councils held less than a century apart. The question is why? Why did *Dei Filius* at Vatican Council I (1870) propose what it did on divine revelation in the form of a propositional understanding of the divine self-communication and why did *Dei Verbum* at Vatican Council II (1965) propose an historical, literary, and personalist view of revelation without denying truth in a partial propositional account? The dogmatic propositional view was true, but in the light of further philosophical and theological development radically inadequate. The differences between two dogmatic statements on something as central to the faith as divine revelation demands explanation in the systematics curriculum.[21] Many questions in Church life affecting faith and morals depend on the interpretation of revelation in the light of supporting background theories in philosophy and the concept of natural law.[22]

[21] See Joseph Ratzinger, *Theological Highlights of Vatican II* (New York: Paulist Press, 1966).

[22] Avery Dulles, "Faith and Revelation" in *Systematic Theology: Roman Catholic Perspectives*, Vol. I, 79-108; For a philosopher writing from a French Protestant perspective, see Paul Ricoeur, "Toward a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation," in *Harvard Theological Review* 70: 1-2, April 1977, 1-37. This is at once a critique of the total autonomy of human reason and the contamination of the idea of revelation and faith by excess stress on magisterial authority.

VI. Teaching Systematics Today: The Best Resources[23]

Systematic theology is an umbrella term covering all the courses in the seminary which treat defined dogmas of the Catholic Church. For each of them, Catholic theologians have published excellent individual monographs and scholarly articles. The professor teaching that dogma needs to know the best literature on it for teaching seminarians. No monograph or textbook can cover everything, so I recommend here resources to supplement other materials. Having visited the offices of enough priest alumni of the seminary to get an idea of what they have for reference, I would go so far as to suggest professors require seminarians to purchase some of these encyclopedic resources. The following titles, briefly annotated, will serve as a basic library in systematics during seminary studies and later in priesthood.

Dictionary of Fundamental Theology, edited by Rene Latourelle and Rino Fisichella, English language edition edited and introduced by Rene Latourelle (Crossroad Publishing Company, 1995, 1222 pp). This is an extraordinary one-volume resource for all Catholic theology, not simply fundamental theology as its title suggests. The table of contents is exhaustive. Despite its expense, this is an essential resource.

Handbook of Catholic Theology, edited by Wolfgang Beinert and Francis Schüssler Fiorenza (Crossroad Publishing Company, 1995, 783pp). There is a wealth of biblical, historical, and theological information packed into the brief articles of this *Handbook*. The "List of Tables" and charts in it allow a student to absorb essential material in compact form. It covers in a schematic way the history of theology and theological systems in the Church.

The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, edited by F. L. Cross and E. A Livingstone, 3rd. edition (Oxford University Press, 1997, 1786 pp). ODCC is the most comprehensive one-volume ecumenical resource about historical Christianity. With that, the seminarian or future priest can check facts about every aspect of Christian history, including the biographies of saints, to make preaching on the feast days of theologically important saints historically illuminating and spiritually inspiring.

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[23] *Systematic Theology: Roman Catholic Perspectives*, Vol. I and Vol. II (Fortress Press, Second Edition, 2011. James C. Livingston, Francis Schüssler Fiorenza with Sarah Coakley and James H. Evans, Jr. *Modern Christian Thought Volume II* (Second Edition) Prentiss-Hall, 2000). See Chapters 7, 8, 9 and 11 by Francis Schüssler Fiorenza summarizing major Roman Catholic theologians since Vatican II. Volume I is *The Enlightenment and the Nineteenth Century*. John W. O'Malley, *Trent: What Happened at the Council*, Harvard University Press, 2013. John W. O'Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II* (Harvard University Press, 2008). Norman P. Tanner, S.J., (Editor) *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, Volume Two (Sheed & Ward and Georgetown University Press, 1990). *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, (Interdicasterial Commission for the Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1994). Avery Dulles, S.J., *The Craft of Theology: From Symbol to System*, (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1992). This has twelve essays by Dulles ranging over a postcritical theology, methods and models, Scripture, Tradition, and philosophy. *Compendium on the New Evangelization: Texts of the Pontifical and Conciliar Magisterium 1939-2012* (Washington, D.C: USCCB, 2015).

Systematic Theology: Roman Catholic Perspectives (2nd edition, edited by Francis Schüssler Fiorenza and John P. Galvin, Fortress Press, 2011, 661pp). Unlike the resources just named, this is in fact a textbook. The opening chapter "Systematic Theology: Task and Methods" provides the simplest, clearest, and most balanced treatment of classical and contemporary Catholic theology I know. Schüssler Fiorenza displays an expert grasp of all the major theological systems and methods, their strengths, and their limitations. The theologies of St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas are set off against Neo-scholastic and Manualist Theology.

In Schüssler Fiorenza's survey, contemporary systematics may be reduced to five typical forms which can be combined: (1) the transcendental form focusing on the subjectivity of the believer, (2) the hermeneutical form emphasizing the interpretation of written texts and symbols, (3) the analytical form using theological models and methods, (4) the correlational form investigating the interface between the languages of faith and culture, and (5) the liberationist form concentrating on the relation of the Gospel to social and political freedom. Seventeen chapters follow this synthetic introductory chapter on every major Catholic doctrine from Revelation and Magisterium to God and Trinity to Church and Sacraments (including Priesthood) to Grace, Mariology, and Eschatology each written by a competent Catholic theologian.

James C. Livingston, Francis Schüssler Fiorenza with Sarah Coakley and James H. Evans, Jr. *Modern Christian Thought Volume II* (Second Edition) Prentiss-Hall, 2000). Chapters 7, 8, 9 and 11 are short summaries of the thought of major Roman Catholic theologians who have dominated the discipline since Vatican II. *Volume I* is *The Enlightenment and the Nineteenth Century*. Schüssler Fiorenza writes lucidly about every figure and theological movement.

Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils, Vol. I and II, edited by Norman P. Tanner, S.J. (Original texts established by G. Alberigo, J.A, Dossetti, P.-P. Joannou, C. Leonardi, and P. Prodi, in consultation with H. Jedin (Sheed &Ward and Georgetown University Press, 1990). This gives the original conciliar text in Greek or Latin on one page with the English translation on the facing page. One can also simply require *The Documents of the Second Vatican Council.*[24]

The Catechism of the Catholic Church. Pope John Paul II undertook the project of a new Catechism to bring order and catechetical clarity to the presentation of Catholic magisterial teaching. There are 2865 paragraphs of teachings in the *Catechism*. The authority of each item is not the same. The encyclical letters of John Paul II which are especially important for systematics are *Fides*

[24] Vatican Council II: The Basic Sixteen Documents (New York: Costello Publishing Company, 2007). See also, *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, Vol. 1-5, Herbert Vorgrimler, General editor (New York: Herder and Herder, 1966). Also, John W. O'Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008).

et Ratio, *Redemptor Hominis*, *Evangelium Vitae*, and *Veritatis Splendor*.

The Compendium on the New Evangelization: *Texts of the Pontifical and Conciliar Magisterium 1939-2012* (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2015, 1126 pp.) This comprehensive document was composed under the auspices of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization and its president, Archbishop Rino Fisichella. The excerpted texts and the Index make it easy to use and reference.

"Systematic theology, in the striking expression of Heinrich Ott, is 'the conscience of preaching and preaching is the conscience of theology.'"

VII. General Remarks: Outcomes from the Study of Systematics

The new *Program of Priestly Formation* is intent on personal integration and a synthetic appreciation of faith. Synthesis is an ambitious word. It might be achievable if 3rd and 4th year seminarians and deacons could preach well on doctrines and biblical texts with dogmatic implications. Seminaries should rebuild their homiletics programs towards that goal. Sacramental-liturgical studies in systematics enjoy an obvious priority in the training of priests. Because the Eucharist is an act of ritual recitation, only the homily can tell a congregation how much or how little the celebrant knows and understands of what he is reciting. The sermon-genre vanished with Vatican II. Systematics then lost the sole rhetorical platform it had for oral competence and performance. Seminarians can learn how to preach doctrinal homilies persuasively in a series on the Creed and the Catechism.

Systematic theology, in the striking expression of Heinrich Ott, is "the conscience of preaching and preaching is the conscience of theology." Systematics guides preaching with an implied theological ontology in biblical passages. Doctrines are conceptual guardrails. They shape and constrain homiletic imagination.[25] Before the ecclesial magisterium itself needs to step in, systematics must clean out the Augean Stables of a pastor's teaching ministry for him.

[25] See, Heinrich Ott, *Theology and Preaching*, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1961). The book's subtitle is "A programme of work in dogmatics arranged with reference to Questions 1-11 in the Heidelberg Catechism." Heinrich Ott was Professor of Dogmatics at the University of Basel where he succeeded Karl Barth. He was also an expert on the thought of Martin Heidegger. Regarding preaching and dogmatics, Ott writes (p. 13-14): "Rightly understood, hermeneutics and ontology are bound up with each other in the closest possible way. Hermeneutically we inquire into the specific *modus loquendi*, the mode of speaking (and therewith into the 'whence' of the individual Biblical testimonies); ontologically we inquire into the specific *modus essendi*, the mode of being, the reality to which they testify."

Six Considerations in Teaching Systematic Theology in Seminaries Today

1. Remediation and Its Implications

The 6th edition of the *Program of Priestly Formation* calls for seminaries to build a new propaedeutic year into theological programs, to add another year for a priestly sense of missionary discipleship, to top it all off with a year of synthesis. To compensate for the human, spiritual, and academic inadequacies in applicants, seminaries are now intentionally remedial institutions. Philosophical studies in seminaries have always behaved like a stepsister, not a handmaiden, much less a goad to theological questioning. Will seminaries get more serious about philosophy or not?

2. Human Character Formation

Moral character is essential in priests, as if we needed any more proof of that. The cardinal virtues, as Joseph Pieper once explained, are radically necessary in public life. The public persona of a priest badly formed in these virtues will incline individuals to greed, others to unchastity, still others to a lofty clericalism. Intellectual character requires humility. However small the ambo, a priest addressing his flock from it resembles a public intellectual. Realizing how much the intellectual credibility of the faith rests on what is said by priests at Mass, teaching systematic theology should never lose sight of that.

3. Theology and the Spiritual Life

There is no opposition between prayer and study. They are mutually enriching. The Holy Spirit is not barred from the library! A systematics attuned to scripture, liturgy, and hermeneutics will bear spiritual fruit for seminarians if we show them how. Large conceptual paradigms in systematics no doubt look uninspiring. But well-ordered religious arguments have a special beauty. Theology as *faith in search of understanding* is also theology as *hope in search of reasons* (Hebrews 3: 15) and *love in search of evidence* (1 Corinthians 13 and Matt 25). The cardinal virtues of prudence, patience, fortitude, and humility, in a testy polemical environment, provide a priest with a public moral equilibrium. St. Augustine wrote his largest work on the Psalms. Seminarians recite them daily but do priests ever preach on them? Do they read poetry at all for spiritual nourishment? The psalm genres of praise, thanksgiving, petition, contrition, and lament demand a systematics equal to them in conceptual depth. Is it possible any more to argue with God as Job did?

4. Theology and an Intellectual Life

A Catholic priest is ordained to celebrate the sacraments and to preach. What and how he preaches gives those listening a sense of his inner intellectual life. What is a priest reading? Whom can he quote in support of his arguments to make

them more persuasive? Laity have a right to priests who know what they are talking about.

a. Competency regarding theological knowledge should be evaluated in written and oral examinations where issues of accuracy in word choice and clarity of expression are paramount. Writing well is an instrument for thinking well.
b. Pastoral performance in systematics can be assessed by spontaneous "Q and A" role-playing exercises where seminarians quiz their peers on the spot as a parishioner might after Sunday Mass. Let parishes submit the questions to reflect what is on the minds of parishioners.
c. The teaching authority in the Church is a *living* magisterium. The fixed writing of a Sacred Scripture, of Tradition in the conciliar and papal definitions, of theologies written and inscribed in the witness of the saints call for authoritative interpretation. There is no appeal of a dead pope against a living pope, of an earlier council against a later one. The moving spirit of Tradition in the Holy Spirit forbids it. The living teaching office serves priests as a dependable referee in doctrinal and ecclesial life.

5. *Systematics in Search of a Pastoral Hermeneutic*

Defining the pastoral outcomes from systematics is an urgent one for seminary faculties to spell out. Pastoral cannot mean dumbing down any theological discipline. Systematics needs a pastoral hermeneutic for faith and culture. The Dicastery for Culture and Education studies the whole field of human culture as it affects faith. Professors of systematics need to keep one eye trained on the work of this Dicastery and another eye on the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith. Contextual exegesis and liberation theologies have important roles to play in a responsible pastoral hermeneutic of faith. The work of Johann Baptist Metz in *Faith in History and Society: Toward a Practical Fundamental Theology* complements the correlation systematics of David Tracy.

6. *Forming a Priest for the New Evangelization*

Pope Paul VI summoned the Church to focus on *evangelization* in 1974. Doctrinal and moral controversies called for better catechetics. Pope John Paul II called for a *new evangelization* marked theologically by orthodox teaching in an ecclesial spirit. Pope Benedict XVI established the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization in 2010. Pope Francis wrote the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the new evangelization, "The Joy of the Gospel" (*Evangelii Gaudium*) in 2013. Teaching systema-

tics to form priests into missionary disciples means equipping them intellectually and rhetorically for a preaching ministry.

"[A] seminary must not shortchange a seminarian of a demanding theological education. That would cheat him and the lay faithful he will serve."

In the recent reform of the Roman Curia, the Dicastery for Evangelization is the first dicastery mentioned followed by the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith. It is a sign of the priority that the preaching of the Gospel has over the necessary magisterial responsibility of evaluating theological argumentation.

CONCLUSION

Teaching systematics in the seminary has changed radically over the years. Dogmatic manuals served their purposes once but had to yield to new developments in scripture and patristics. Scripture scholarship has profoundly impacted Fundamental theology about revelation. It has changed Christological reflection. No doctrinal area has been left untouched. A systematics professor today faces an abundance of riches in the library. The irony is that too many applicants come to seminary without the background to appreciate the best of it. Nevertheless, a seminary must not shortchange a seminarian of a demanding theological education. That would cheat him and the lay faithful he will serve. Piety alone is no substitute for critical systematic theological reflection.

The metaphysical tradition in Catholic theology will be enriched by exegetical studies and a hermeneutic philosophy suited to it. We need to teach the discipline so seminarians can make use of it. Vatican Council II emerged from recent scriptural scholarship and new philosophical outlooks congenial faith experience and religious language. These theological innovations have put new tools in the pastor's toolbox. Those teaching systematics need to sharpen the tools for those who will preach the gospel.

The ecclesial magisterium has exercised its proper role in defining the vocation of a theologian as scientific and ecclesial at one and the same time. *The Program of Priestly Formation* has spelled out the benchmarks and goals in the intellectual formation of future priests. Based on my long experience, I would be happy if, after four years studying systematics, a seminarian had these 7 values and habits ingrained in him.

- A taste for philosophical reflection about the mystery of human existence in the world and its relation to God and the Incarnation of God's Son.
- An appreciation of how systematic theological thinking happens, what methods it employs, and how personal and ecclesial faith are enriched by them.
- The ability to explain in their own words the true meaning of the fundamental

articles of Catholic faith and why they matter.

- The ability to recite with deep theological understanding the Liturgical Prayers with a personal-spiritual sense of the sacred mysteries.
- The habit of researching, preparing, and preaching their own (not plagiarized) homilies using systematic resources as well as biblical commentaries.
- The habit of reading thoughtful theological literature to enlarge the horizon of their faith and to deepen their prayer life and preaching.
- The habit of practicing priestly ministry, as a gift of Christ and the Holy Spirit, in the Church to enable Catholics to believe as adult, thoughtful, and committed disciples.

The next generation of Catholic men and women deserve to have their priests competently formed in systematic theology. Recognizable as such or not, it is the discipline fastening together the doctrinal texts of faith with the pastoral fabric of priestly ministry.

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Teaching Moral Theology in a Catholic Seminary

Dennis J. Billy, C.Ss.R., D.Min., Th.D., S.T.D.

What role does teaching moral theology play in Catholic seminary formation? What is its function? What is its intended purpose? What does it wish to communicate? How does it do so? And to what end? At first glance, such questions may seem easy (even obvious) to answer. Courses in moral theology in Catholic seminaries seek to immerse students in the moral tradition of the Church. Their purpose is to give seminarians a solid grounding in the fundamental principles of Catholic moral life and help them to apply them to concrete situations facing them and the people they are called to serve. Their goal is to educate future pastors and Church ministers in the intricate warp and woof of Catholic moral life, with all the challenges that living in a postmodern (even post-Christian) world presents.

Answers such as these are fine as far as they go. I wonder, however, if they go far enough. They seem to be missing something obvious: the quest for goodness and holiness. As it says in the Gospel of John: "This is my commandment: love one another as I love you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command" (Jn 15:12-14).[1] The primary purpose of Catholic moral theology, to my mind, should be to shape the hearts and minds of seminarians in such a way that they are conformed in friendship to the heart and mind of Christ and his Church. Courses in moral theology should do more than merely impart information and train students in becoming adept at solving concrete moral dilemmas. They should be more than courses in moral problem-solving. Doing so is most definitely a part of their purpose, a very important part. However, they should try to do much more. They should try to impart a way of thinking with the mind of the Church and acting accordingly. For this to happen, they should be designed in such a way that challenges students to reflect upon the wide range of the Church's moral teachings, ponder them, and ultimately embrace them as their own. For this to happen, students need to be encouraged to discuss openly the kind of persons they wish to become. Moral action flows from a person's character which, in turn, is further shaped by such action. This reciprocity calls for a deeper reflection on the relationship between moral theology and spirituality, between quandary ethics and virtue ethics, between casuistry

[1] All Scripture quotations come from *The Catholic Study Bible: New American Bible Revised Edition*, 2d ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

and the place of the gifts and fruits of the Spirit in the moral life.

In Search of Renewal

It bears noting that moral theology as a separate theological discipline is a relatively recent development in the history of the Church. It arose during the reforms of the Council of Trent and the creation of the seminary system that sought to ensure priests were trained in the various aspects of the faith. To do this, courses in dogma, moral, ascetical, and mystical theology were created to cover the wide range of topics that no single professor could ever hope to master, let alone convey to his students in competent and orderly fashion. For all the good the seminary system produced in raising the level of education given to the local clergy, an unwanted side effect was the gradual separation of the theological disciplines from one another. Over time, they lost touch with each other and went their own way. This was especially true of moral theology, which lost touch with the dogmatic roots of the Church's moral teaching, as well as its ascetical and spiritual ramifications.[2]

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This problem, moreover, was compounded by the nominalism of William of Ockham, whose principle of parsimony ("Ockham's razor," as it has come to be called) denied the existence of universals, affirmed the existence of particulars alone, and in one fell swoop deconstructed the Christian Neoplatonic and Aristotelean syntheses created respectively by Augustine and Aquinas. What resulted in succeeding centuries in Catholic moral thought was an exaggerated emphasis on law, obligation, and authority that provided the interpretive lens through which moral action was viewed and analyzed. The rise of moral casuistry in Catholic moral theology arose, to a large extent, from the stranglehold that Ockham's nominalist thought had over mindset of the late medieval and early modern Western world. The writings of Aquinas became truncated when read through this nominalist lens, and his emphasis on the virtues and the gifts of the Spirit receded to the background as questions of one's obligation under the law and how to deal with one's doubt before the law became a primary concern. The moral systems of probabilism, equiprobabilism, and probabiliorism also developed due to this exaggerated concern over

[2] See Servais Pinckaers, *The Sources of Christian Ethics*, trans. Mary Thomas Noble (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1995), 259-66.

one's obligations before the law. These approaches to the moral life grew up alongside the development and early evolution of the seminary system, were handed down through moral manuals, and were the mainstay of Catholic moral theology curricula up until the decades immediately preceding the Second Vatican Council.[3]

It was only after the end of the Second World War and the publication of works such as Bernard Häring's multivolume work, *The Law of Christ* (1954),[4] which emphasized the role of conversion Christian moral life, and Gérard Gilleman's *The Primacy of Charity in Moral Theology* (1959),[5] which looked to the centrality of love in the same arena, that the Catholic moral theology's focus shifted from an emphasis on law and obligation to a renewed focus on the role played by the theological and cardinal virtues. G. E. M. Anscombe's works in analytical philosophy *Intention* (1957)[6] and "Modern Moral Philosophy" (1959),[7] moreover, brought an interest in virtue ethics to the fore of Catholic philosophical inquiry and would, in time greatly influence the work of later Catholic moral theologians. Finally, Vatican II's "Decree on Priestly Training" (*Optatam Totius*, 1965)[8] called for a renewal of moral theology that would "draw more fully on the teaching of holy Scripture" and "throw light upon the exalted vocation of the faithful in Christ and their obligation to bring forth fruit in charity for the life of the world."[9]

Not without Controversy

In the years following the close of the Council, Catholic moral theology moved away from its use of moral manuals with their focus on one's obligation under the law to an approach that sought to be more firmly rooted in the Scriptures and integrated with the other theological disciplines.

This shift in focus, however, did not come without controversy. Paul VI's encyclical, *Humanae Vitae* (1968),[10] which upheld the Church's teaching against the use of artificial birth control as an objective moral evil, was poorly received by a large part of the Catholic moral theological community and responded to with outright public and open dissent. A reinterpretation of the

[3] Pinckaers, *The Sources of Christian Ethics*, 266-79. See also Paulinus I. Odozor, *Moral Theology in an Age of Renewal: A Study of the Catholic Tradition since Vatican II* (Notre Dame, Ind: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003), 1-6.

[4] Bernard Häring, *The Law of Christ*, 3 vols. (Westminster, Md.: Newman Press, 1961-66).

[5] Gérard Gilleman, *The Primacy of Charity in Moral Theology*, trans. William F. Ryan and André Vahon (Westminster, Md.: Newman Press, 1959).

[6] G. E. M. Anscombe, *Intention* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1957).

[7] G. E. M. Anscombe, "Modern Moral Philosophy" in *The Collected Philosophical Papers of G. E. M. Anscombe*, vol. 3 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981), 26-42.

[8] Vatican Council II, *Optatum Totius* in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, gen. ed. Austin Flannery (Collegeville, Ind.: The Liturgical Press, 1992), 707-24.

[9] Vatican Council II, *Optatum Totius*, no. 16.

[10] Pope Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae* in *Sexuality, Marriage and Family: Readings in the Catholic Tradition*, ed. Paulinus I. Odozor (Notre Dame, Ind., 2001), 464-84.

principle of double effect gave rise to the use of proportionalism in dealing with one's response to premoral (or ontic) evil, thereby allowing for the commission of intrinsically evil acts to achieve a higher (and more proportional) end and good. Theories such as the fundamental option raised questions about whether any single action could by itself change a person's underlying choice for and orientation towards God, thus calling into question the Church's teaching on mortal sin. In their search for renewal of Catholic moral theologians began experimenting with new ideas from the empirical and social sciences that called into question some of the deepest convictions of the Catholic moral tradition. Some even proposed the existence of a dual magisterium, one that could speak on pastoral issues and the other on issues more directly linked to scholarship in the academy.

Such ideas gave rise to a considerable amount of confusion in among Catholics at large and were particularly noticeable in theological faculties of Catholic universities and, ultimately, in several prominent Catholic seminaries. It was not until John Paul II stepped in with his encyclicals *Veritatis Splendor* (1993)[11] and *Evangelium Vitae* (1995)[12] that the magisterium dealt head on with the controversies and restored a reasonable amount of order to Catholic moral theology. In these documents, the pope pointed out the deficiencies in proportionalism and the fundamental option and reiterated the Church's position on the existence of intrinsically evil actions. He also outlined the proper relationship of the theologian to the magisterium and their need to give *obsequium animi religiosum* ("religious submission of mind") to non-infallible (and therefore reformable) magisterial teaching. What is more, he reaffirmed the existence of a single, divinely instituted magisterium whose purpose was to teach all that God had revealed through Scripture and Tradition that related to faith and morals.[13]

"Catholic moral theology … is *fides quaerens intellectum actione* ("faith seeking understanding with respect to action"). It presupposes faith, involving a search for truth that leads to an understanding of how I should live my faith out in my daily existence."

Although John Paul II did not put an end to the controversies that raged in Catholic moral theology in the post-Vatican II era, he certainly brought clarity to magisterial teaching and emphasized how, when questions (even doubts) arose about specific issues, Catholic moral theologians should conduct themselves by focusing on arriving at a more profound understanding of the Church teaching rather than trying to

[11] Pope John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor* (Vatican City State: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1993).

[12] Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae* (Vatican City State: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1995).

[13] See Pope John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor*, nos. 37, 71-75, 79-83.

undermine it through open dissent. They should, in the words of Pope Benedict XVI approach magisterial teaching with a "hermeneutics of faith" rather than a "hermeneutics of suspicion."[14]

Moral Theology in Today's Catholic Seminary

Given this brief overview of the status of moral theology in Catholic seminary education since its origins in the aftermath of the Council of Trent, we are now able to look at its place in today's Catholic seminary. What follows are some observations about its role in the current program of priestly formation and the impact it should have on the seminarians themselves and the people they serve.

To begin with, to understand the role of moral theology in the seminary classroom, it would be important to have a sound understanding of just what it is, a definition, if you will. There have been many attempts at defining this theological discipline, one of the best of which comes from Servais Pinckaers in *The Sources of Christian Ethics* as: "…the branch of theology that studies human acts so as to direct them to a loving vision of God seen as our true, compete happiness and our final end. This vision is attained by means of grace, the virtues, and gifts, the light of revelation and reason."[15] This definition covers all the main features of authentic Catholic moral discourse and can be used as a solid point of departure for teaching moral theology in the seminary classroom. It also complements very well a simpler definition which I would like to adapt from Anselm of Canterbury's description of theology as *fides quaerens intellectum* ("faith seeking understanding").[16] Catholic moral theology, in my opinion, is *fides quaerens intellectum actione* ("faith seeking understanding with respect to action"). It presupposes faith, involving a search for truth that leads to an understanding of how I should live my faith out in my daily existence.

To understand to role of moral theology in the seminary classroom it would also be important to have a clear idea of what a Catholic seminary is. These two terms, "Catholic" and "seminary" point the way. The word "seminary" comes from the Latin *seminarium* or "seed plot." The English words "seminal," "semen" and "seed" are derived from it. A seminary, in other words, is a kind of greenhouse, a place with a controlled atmosphere, the purpose of which is to grow priestly vocations. When seen in this light, a "Catholic" seminary is a place where vocations are nurtured and grown in the light of the official teachings of the Catholic faith. Catholics believe that the Christ's Mystical Body is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic, and subsists in the Catholic Church.

[14] Pope Benedict XVI, "Address to the Fourteenth General Congregation of the Twelfth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops" (October 14, 2008), https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2008/october/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20081014_sinodo.html (accessed February 16, 2023).

[15] Pinckaers, *The Sources of Christian Ethics*, 8.

[16] Anselm of Canterbury, *Proslogion,* chap. 1.

The role of the Catholic seminary is to help men discern if they have a vocation to the priesthood. Years of preparation are given to this discernment under the care of formators, spiritual directors, and a dedicated residential faculty. During this time, the growth of the seminarian is carefully monitored against the backdrop of the four dimensions of priestly formation: the human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral. Distinct yet also related, these four dimensions coinhere and cannot be considered in isolation from one another. For this reason, moral theology, although specifically aligned with the intellectual dimension of priestly formation, cannot ignore the other three and needs to address them in some way in the classroom experience.

Putting the two ideas of "moral theology" and "Catholic seminary" together, it becomes clear that teaching the former in the latter involves a special kind of learning. It presupposes the theological virtue of faith and distinguishes itself from a secular program of religious (or even Catholic) studies, which seeks to examine the Catholic moral discourse from the outside looking in rather than from the inside looking out. Although related, teaching moral theology in the Catholic seminary is also not the same as teaching it on a theological faculty in a Catholic college or university. While both presuppose faith their approaches to current concerns can be very different. In Catholic colleges and universities, the tendency is to start with the issues of contemporary concern, analyze them often with tools from the empirical and social sciences, with the hope of arriving at a theory or mode of action that adapts Catholic teaching today's concerns. They start with the present and work their way backwards towards the tradition and, at times, push the envelope in a way the crosses the boundaries of authentic Catholic teaching. In the Catholic seminary, by way of contrast, the moral theologian seeks to immerse the seminarians in the tradition of the Church with a special emphasis on magisterial teaching and the great theologians of the Catholic tradition (e.g., Augustine, Aquinas, Alphonsus Liguori, John Henry Newman). After doing so, they proceed to treat the moral concerns of the day by approaching them with the wisdom from the past. They start from the tradition and work their way to the present—not vice versa. These different methodological approaches are equally valid and mutually beneficial. They require mutual respect, dialogue, and an awareness that a moral theologian's concrete classroom experience may shape his or her mode of moral inquiry.

When teaching in the seminary classroom, moral theologians should be conscious of the interdisciplinary nature of their courses, especially regarding Vatican II's call to root the scientific presentation of their discipline in Scripture. Documents such as the Pontifical Biblical Commission's *The Interpretation of the Bible in the*

Church (1993)[17] and *The Bible and Morality: Biblical Roots of Christian Conduct* (2008)[18] can be a great help in this regard, especially when it comes to understanding the interpretive approaches to Scripture and the various fundamental and specific criteria to be used when dealing with current moral issues. Since moral theology employs reason as well as revelation in its approach to the moral life, it is also important for seminarians to have a solid foundation in the principles of natural law. The International Theological Commission's *In Search of a Universal Ethic: A New Look at the Natural Law* (2009)[19] does a fine job in showing how natural law can serve as a point of departure for dialoguing with member of other ethical, philosophical, and religious traditions. Furthermore, the need to integrate moral theology with systematics, while at the same time maintaining its distinct identity, is yet another challenge facing the discipline today. A similar task involves reuniting moral theology with spirituality and the gifts of the Spirit. Aquinas' *Summa theologiae* offers an excellent way in which the virtues necessary for the moral life find their perfection in the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit. If this integrated outlook was lost in later centuries on account of moral theology's obsession with law and obligation, its renewed interest in virtue ethics should lead it to a further interest in how, for a Christian, the virtuous life is perfected by grace and manifested in the gifts of the Spirit and his manifold fruits.

Catholic moral theology in the seminary classroom also needs to find a way of integrating its dual concern for both virtue and quandary ethics. Students should be taught not only the basic principles that allow them to address the serious moral problems the world is facing today, but also the specific dispositions of mind and heart that will enable them to find their way in a world beset by the forces of postmodernism, secularism, and an exaggerated individualism. Such forces must be offset by a concern for the theological (faith, hope, love) and cardinal (prudence, justice, fortitude, temperance) virtues, as well as a willingness to examine concrete cases that would reveal how moral problem-solving can be enhanced by looking at the proper dispositions of the soul that enlighten the mind, strengthen the will, and temper the emotions in such a way that a just and

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[17] The Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church* (Vatican City State: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1993.

[18] The Pontitfical Biblical Commission, *The Bible and Morality: Biblical Rooots of Christian Conduct* (Vatican City State: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2008).

[19] The International Theological Commission, In Search of a Universal Ethic: A New Look at Natural, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20090520_legge-naturale_en.html (accessed February 16, 2023).

equitable manner. Casuistry, in other words, needs virtue ethics—and vice versa. What is lacking in one is offset by the other. Catholic moral theology has reached a point where it can integrate these two approaches to the moral life in way that would make them two poles around which the entire project of Catholic moral discourse revolves. In its concern for preparing men with enlightened minds and strengthened heart for pastoral ministry in the Church, the Catholic seminary would be an ideal place where the concern for *fides quaerens intellectum actione* ("faith seeking understanding with respect to action") could take root and even flourish.

Another way of looking at the relationship between virtue and quandary ethics is to look at the connection between character and moral action. Moral action flows from character: "A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a rotten tree bear good fruit" (Mt 7:18). When seen in this light, virtue ethics has a certain priority over casuistry. As important as it is to know how to apply the principles of Catholic moral theology to the specific cases that arise in daily life, it is much more important that the person applying these principles do so with the dispositions of goodness and holiness proper to a life of virtue. That is not to say that the capacity to apply such principles does not have a reciprocal effect on a person's inner dispositions. Moral action flows from a person's character but also plays a role in either deepening that person's moral dispositions or deforming them. This reciprocal relationship between character and moral action needs to be taught in the seminary classroom, especially since the goal of seminary formation is not merely to communicate a set list of principles but also form good, holy priests with a focused will and deep desire to serve. When this reciprocal relationship is overlooked one of two outcomes often results. Seminarians are trained intellectually but, lacking the virtuous dispositions of mind and heart, end up living fragmented (and possibly even double) lives. Or they lead good, holy lives but, lacking the proper intellectual training in the field of moral theology, are of little help pastorally to those who come to them for help. Holiness and intellectual acumen, in other words, belong together and need to be fostered in an integrated way in the seminary classroom.

"Holiness and intellectual acumen … belong together and need to be fostered in an integrated way in the seminary classroom."

An important corollary of the above insight is that character and moral action are both individual, communal, and universal. This truth is rooted in the doctrine of the Trinity (which affirms the existence of Three Persons and One God), in the doctrine of the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ (which holds that there are many members in one body), and in the doctrine of Creation, (which affirms both the dignity of the human person and its origins in one common humanity). Although God is both one and many (and therefore always acts as one), each of the

three great actions of love flowing from his Being is normally attributed to the one Person in particular. Creation, to the Father; Redemption, to the Son; and Sanctification, to the Holy Spirit. Similarly, although the members of Christ's body, the Church, retain their individual identity and perform their proper functions within the body, they work together with Christ as their head and the Holy Spirit as their guiding principle of life to perform one single missionary action in the world. Human beings, moreover, act as individuals, groups, and out of their common humanity. When seen in this light, moral theologians need to focus on individual moral actions of individuals, those corporate structures and institutions in society that promote structures that perpetuate social injustice, as well as fallen humanity which is the root cause of these evils. Because sin is an analogous concept found on the universal (original), societal (social), and individual (personal) levels, it is important for moral theologians to help their students to identify the various operative levels where action, flowing from being, manifests itself in the world.

Moral theologians also need to adapt their classroom pedagogy to the concerns of seminary training. Given the coinherence of the four dimensions of priestly formation as outlined in the *Program for Priestly Formation* (approved 2019)[20]—the human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral—care must be taken to teach in a way that will integrate these facets of seminary training in the course methodology. Each class should begin with a moment of silence and a prayer that seeks to engage the spiritual side of all present. The professor, moreover, should recognize that learning involves not only the mind but also the heart, emotions, and even the body. The intellectual, in other words, should not be divided from the human and should also seek to make concrete applications to the lives of the seminarians and to the people they are destined to serve. Since priests should be comfortable with speaking in public, opportunities should be given seminarians to make oral presentations about the Catholic moral life that are practical in nature and geared to a popular audience. Since they should also be encouraged to be able to think on their feet, it would be appropriate, at times, to give them oral exams in addition to the usual written work requited in a professional graduate school of this kind. Most importantly, a dialogical teaching method that incorporates discussion on the assigned readings should complement the lecture material presented by the professor. The methodology followed should be one that emphasizes a common search for moral truth on the part of all present rather than a one-way imparting of knowledge from the professor to the students. Professors need to recognize that they can learn from their students and encourage them to join him in a common search for truth in the light of

[20] United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Program of Priestly Formation*, 6th ed. (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2022).

their relationship with Christ and his body, the Church.

When teaching moral theology in the seminary, professors also need to remember that the theological locus of the discipline has changed over the years from a focus on training priest to be competent confessors to a wide range of other purposes and foci. The discipline has a home in the seminary, but it also has an important place in Catholic colleges and universities, as well as in hospitals, Catholic think tanks, publishing houses, diocesan advisory boards, and episcopal conferences. What is more, in the post-Vatican II era, the laity have increasingly numbered among those educated in the discipline and, who as a result, have examined concerns that go far beyond the clerical concerns of the pre-Vatican II era when the moral manuals were the main instruments of instruction and were primarily geared to helping priest make sound decisions in the confessional. It is not uncommon to find lay and religious (both men and women) theologians on the faculties of Catholic colleges, universities, and even seminaries. Their presence there has contributed greatly to a widening the makeup of the faculties and have brought a welcome sense of diversity to the seminary culture. Such diversity can either be a strength or a weakness. For it to be a strength, it is essential that the faculty strive to cultivate a real sense of being a community of learning both among themselves and among their students. Efforts should also be made to reach out to the moral theology departments of other seminaries to build a sense of common purpose and cooperation rather than a divisive, competitive spirit that, if care is not taken, could easily develop.

When teaching moral theology in the Catholic seminary, professors would also do well to well to convey to their students the various ways in which Christianity has envisioned itself as relating to the world. H. Richard Niebuhr's *Christ and Culture* (1951)[21] can be of great help in this regard. In this book, the author identifies five ways in which Christians over time have conceived of their relationship to the world and the cultures it embodies: (1) *Christ against culture* views the world as evil and something to counteract and, if necessary, even retreat from; (2) *Christ of culture* envisions a Christian civilization which has imbued the world with its values; (3) *Christ above culture* understands Christianity to be something that is not of this world and hence above it; (4) *Christ and culture in paradox* sees a strained tension between the two, whereby Christianity is in the world but not of it; and (5) *Christ the transformer of culture* conceives Christianity as a leaven that lifts the cultures of the world to a higher level and ultimately transforms them.[22] At any given time and depending on the culture (or cultures) in which Christians find themselves, one or more of these models may be in play. Professors of moral theology should help their students to identify which model (or models) they need to embrace

[21] H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper & Row, 1951).

[22] Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 39-44.

as a way of promoting and preserving the Gospel message in their moment in time. It is important for them to understand the culture in which they live. Only then will they be able to decide if they should retreat from it, engage it, ignore it, live in tension with it, or transform it. Their attitude toward the culture in which they live will determine, at least in part, how they go about living out their Christian calling.

There are other works that Catholic moral theologians can use to help their students to understand how Christianity relates to the world around them. In *Biomedicine & Beatitude: An Introduction to Catholic Bioethics* (2021),[23] Nicanor Pier Giorgio Austriaco says today's Western culture is postmodern (in that it has lost its faith in reason), secular (in that it has lost its sense of the sacred), and liberal (in that it exalts individual autonomy and lost its sense of the common good).[24] In *The Relevance of the Stars: Christ, Culture, Destiny* (2021),[25] moreover, Lorenzo Albacete warns against reducing reason to the merely empirical and the heart to mere feelings. Citing Hans Urs von Balthasar, he speaks of the three polarities that mark the drama of human existence: spirit/body, male/female, and individual/community. He also points out that Christianity is neither an ideology nor a rigid moral code, but an encounter with a person, Jesus Christ, whom Christians believe is the Word of God who entered our world by means of a process of kenotic self-emptying to redeem it by means of a process of humanity's divinization or *theosis*.[26] "God," to quote St. Athanasius of Alexandria, "became human so that humanity might become divine."[27] When teaching moral theology to Catholic seminarians, professors would do well not only to identify these cultural traits and polarities of human existence to their students but also convey to them in as convincing manner as possible that the moral life is a response to an encounter with the person of Jesus Christ. Without this encounter, the Church's teachings are viewed in an entirely different way.

"The discipline of Catholic moral theology is both an art and a science. Thinking with the mind of the Church, seminary professors employ faith and reason, revelation and natural law, Scripture and tradition, to the pressing moral issues of the day."

Finally, when teaching moral theology, professors should try to place their discipline in the context of the overall goal of the Catholic seminary life: to form well-rounded, holy priests who think with the mind of the Church and can convey that thinking to others

[23] Nicanor Pier Giorgio Austriaco, *Biomedicine and Beatitude: An Introduction to Catholic Bioethics*, 2d ed., (Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2021).

[24] Austriaco, *Biomedicine and Beatitude*, 5, 368-70.

[25] Lorenzo Albacete, *The Relevance of the Stars: Christ, Culture, Destiny*, eds. Lisa Lickona and Gregory Wolfe (Eugene, OR: Slant, 2021).

[26] Albacete, *The Relevance of the Stars*, 13, 54,

[27] Athanasius of Alexandria, *De incarnatione*, 54.3.

in a loving and pastoral manner. They should remember that their discipline, important as it is, is but one of many in the seminary curriculum and that it is important to place the discipline in relationship to Scripture, Tradition, and the interpretative role held by the Magisterium. It is also important for them to place it in the overall context of Jesus' call to follow him, the four dimensions of priestly formation, and the other theological disciplines taught in the seminary (especially spirituality and systematics). For this to happen, professors need to be in communication with the other faculty members in their department and in the faculty as a whole. They should view their discipline not as an isolated entity, but as a part of a larger project, a greater whole. Most importantly, they need to embody what they teach and do so in such a way that the students see that teaching moral theology in a Catholic seminary is not a mere job, but a calling, a veritable vocation within a vocation. In doing so, they will show that their love of moral theology is rooted in their zeal to follow Christ and the community of believers that form his Mystical Body.

"[M]oral theology needs to be integrated with the other theological disciplines, especially with what it means to be rooted in the friendship of Christ and life in the Spirit."

Conclusion

Catholic moral theology is a most difficult and challenging theological discipline. It focuses not only on the application of abstract principles to the concrete moral concerns of daily life, but also on the interior dispositions of soul (virtues) necessary for making such applications in truthful and authentic Christian manner. If seminary professors have in the past emphasized one of these tendencies over the other (possibly even to the exclusion of the other), the challenge for them today is to maintain a delicate balance between the two. Doing so is a difficult yet essential task for its health and well-being as a theological discipline. Virtue ethics and quandary ethics, in other words, need each other: one provides what the other lacks—and vice versa. They should be viewed as complementary approaches to the moral life, not as opponents vying for dominance.

The discipline of Catholic moral theology is both an art and a science. Thinking with the mind of the Church, seminary professors employ faith and reason, revelation and natural law, Scripture and tradition, to the pressing moral issues of the day. They view the polarities of spirit/body, male/female, and individual/community through the lens of an authentic Christian anthropology that recognizes humanity's creaturely and fallen status before God yet lives in the hope of one day experiencing the fullness of life because of the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. They present their discipline not as a rigid system of laws and obliga-

tions, but as a response to a personal encounter with Jesus Christ. For this reason, moral theology needs to be integrated with the other theological disciplines, especially with what it means to be rooted in the friendship of Christ and life in the Spirit.

When all is said and done, Catholic seminary professors of moral theology are responding to a call within a call within a call. To be a Catholic moral theologian is itself already a call within the broader call of one's Christian vocation. Seminary professors of the discipline, whatever their state in life (religious, lay, deacon, or priest), go one step further. They have a special calling as moral theologians to prepare men who will one day serve as servant leaders for the people of God. For this reason, they need to steep their students in the tradition of the Church with a special emphasis on magisterial teaching and the great theologians of the past. They also need to be able to integrate spirituality and morality in a way that shows the intrinsic unity of the Church's teaching on faith and morals. Their focus should be on helping their students to find practical ways of communicating and living out the Church's moral teaching to the people they will one day be called to serve. Teaching moral theology in a Catholic seminary has a special focus that sets it apart from teaching the discipline in a college or university setting. May those who teach Catholic seminarians such courses as fundamental moral, the virtues (theological and cardinal), the Church's social doctrine, Catholic sexual ethics, and medical ethics, be up to the task of this special calling.

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Teaching Canon Law in the Seminary

Phillip J. Brown, P.S.S., J.D., J.C.D.

A little Learning is a dangerous thing;
Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian Spring[*]

Introduction

Canon law courses are part of the core curriculum of every seminary program. One of the challenges in administering the curriculum is to offer enough canon law to prepare seminarians well for ordination and the pastoral responsibilities they will one day assume, but not more than they need or would be able to absorb at the seminary stage of their formation. As Alexander Pope proclaims in his *Essay on Criticism* "A little learning is a dangerous thing". His observation is perhaps nowhere truer than with respect seminary courses in canon law. Students enter the seminary with various notions about canon law that are quite inaccurate, if not simply wrong, that they must be disabused of before it will be possible to teach them the actual principles and norms they will be responsible for knowing as priests and one day as pastors.

"The ultimate objective is that seminarians will leave seminary with an adequate but not over-confident grasp of the most important aspects of canon law necessary for carrying out parochial ministry competently, sensitively, and effectively."

Parish priests' primary focus should be on providing pastoral ministry, not enforcing canon law. Seminary canon law courses are not designed to make seminarians canonists, but to develop in them appropriate pastoral sensitivity and responsibility in resorting to the norms of canon law in the course of their ministry; to carry out the norms as required by the law, but also to see them as useful guides in carrying out pastoral ministry effectively and to forming the people of God in their apprehension and practice of the Christian faith as members of the Catholic Church.

There are two schools of thought among canonists regarding the nature of canon law. One considers canon law a species of legal science, to be understood and applied as such; that

[*] Pope, Alexander (1963). Butt, John (ed.). *The Poems of Alexander Pope* (a one-volume edition of the Twickenham text ed.), lines 215-216. Yale University Press. ISBN 0300003404. OCLC 855720858.

canon law has nothing to do with theology, but rather is simply a collection of legal norms put in place for the sake of regulating the life of a community while protecting the rights and enforcing the obligations of members of the community. The other point of view considers canon law as an extension of the Church's theology, designed to integrate theological insights regarding the nature of the Church as a community comprised of the people of God constituting the Body of Christ. It sees the most important role of canon as a means of carrying out in a sensitive and nuanced way the pastoral ministry of the Church. The norms of the law, according to this view, are not merely regulatory norms but may also be instructive and exhortative, embodying the fundamental values of the community and designed to shape its life according to those values, not only through the enforcement of behavioral norms, but also by integrating those values into the life of the community; this view could be referred to as "the law as teacher", not merely as protector of rights and enforcer of duties. This latter view represents the context within which canon law is taught at St. Mary's Seminary & University and is believed to be consistent with the views of Pope St. John Paul II expressed in *Sacrae disciplinae legis (SDL)*, the decree of promulgation of the 1983 Code of Canon Law (CIC 1983).[1] John Paul II liked to refer to CIC 1983 as "the last document of Vatican II".[2]

We will start with a couple of examples of how a little knowledge is a dangerous thing in canon law, examples of how many seminarians come to the study of canon law with a compendium of "folk knowledge" that does not reflect accurately the norms of the law or how it is intended to be understood and applied in the exercise of pastoral ministry. Such "folk knowledge" presents a major hurdle in helping students to understand canon law correctly. The ultimate objective is that seminarians will leave seminary with an adequate but not over-confident grasp of the most important aspects of canon law necessary for carrying out parochial ministry competently, sensitively, and effectively.

Tendencies to Overcome

Legalism

Most seminarians start canon law courses with tendencies professors know need to be redirected. The first is legalism in the student's grasp and interpretation of canonical principles and norms. On the other hand, some enter considering canonical norms mere "suggestions" but not really mandatory; that anything and

[1] John Paul II, Apostolic Constitution *Sacrae disciplinae leges*, 25 January 1983, in AAS, 75, part II (1983), pp. VII-XIV. See also *Code of Canon Law Latin-English Edition*, *New English Translation*, Canon Law Society of America, Washington, D.C., 1989, xxvii-xxxi.

[2] See: Address to participants in a course at the Pontificial Gregorian University in Rome on the new *Code of Canon Law*, given on November 21, 1983, "*Ai partecipanti al corso sul nuovo Codice di Diritto Canonico* (21 nobembre 1983), Giovanni Pauolo II, n. 2" *w2.vatican.va.*

everything can be dispensed or disregarded. The intention of the Church is that canonical norms be respected and followed, most importantly as a guide to good pastoral practice. Sometimes canonical norms *are* mandatory and *must* be followed.

The other tendency is to rely on "folk knowledge" about canon law, not an accurate understanding of what the requirements of canon law really are. Professors are thus faced with the challenge of redirecting students' thinking away from legalism towards a more nuanced and discerning attitude, and also to get them to disregard the "folk knowledge" they bring with them and learn how to focus on the actual norms of the law and understanding them correctly. The danger of "folk knowledge" is that it can mislead priests in their pastoral ministry and also cause parishioners to misunderstand their actual responsibilities and rights as members of the Christian faithful.

Two examples of this kind of "folk knowledge" that will be addressed more specifically below concern 1) the so-called "Easter duty"; and, 2) the Church's teaching and canon law regarding divorce.

Folk Knowledge

The Easter Duty

When professors ask seminary canon law students about the "Easter Duty", the most common answer they get is "All Catholics must go to confession and receive Holy Communion at least once a year during Easter Season." For generations Catholics have understood that "canon law requires that you must go to Confession and receive Holy Communion at least once a year during Easter Season". That is not exactly what canon law prescribes, however. The canonical norms are a little more complicated than that, although it is understandable where this "folk knowledge" came from.

Canon 906 of the 1917 Code of Canon Law (CIC 1917), following a norm established by the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, provided that "Each member of the faithful, of both sexes, after he or she has reached the years of discretion, is to confess individually all his or her sins at least once a year", a norm which did not distinguish between *grave* sins and *venial* sins.[3] The current norm of c. 989 is that "After having reached the age of discretion, each member of the faithful is obliged to confess faithfully his or her grave sins at least once a year."[4] Catholics are *not* required to go to confession at least once a year. Rather, they are required to confess their *grave* sins at least once a year. If a member of the

[3] Codex Iuris Canonici 1917 (CIC 1917), c. 906: *Omnis utriusque sexus fidelis, postquam ad annos discretionis, idest ad usum rationis, pervenerit, tenetur omnia peccata sua saltem semel in anno fideliter confiter.*

[4] Codex Iuris Canonici 1983 (CIC 1983), c. 989: *Omnis fidelis, postquam ad annos discretionis pervenerit, obligatione tenetur peccata sua gravia, saltem semel in anno, fideliter confitendi.*

faithful has not committed a grave sin, there is no obligation to confess at all, even once a year.[5]

Another source this "folk knowledge" is the norm of c. 920, which requires that "After being initiated into the Most Holy Eucharist, each of the faithful is obliged to receive *holy communion* [emphasis added] at least once a year." If a Catholic has not yet confessed and been absolved of a grave sin, he or she is not, of course, properly disposed to receive the Most Holy Eucharist. She or he would not, therefore, be able to fulfill the obligation to receive Holy Communion at least once a year. In that situation, therefore, there is an obligation to confess one's sins before receiving Communion. And all Catholics are to receive communion at least once a year.

Section two of canon 920 provides further that "This precept must be fulfilled during the Easter season unless it is fulfilled for a just cause at another time during the year." Now we can see where the frequently misunderstood "Easter duty" comes from. A Catholic is canonically obligated to receive Holy Communion at least once a year; this obligation is to be fulfilled during Easter season, unless a just cause allows it to be fulfilled at some other time. If the individual is guilty of a grave sin that has not be absolved, he or she would have to confess before receiving Holy Communion before fulfilling the obligation to receive Communion, whether during Easter Season or at some other time if permitted. Hence, there is no "Easter duty" to "go to Confession" and receive Holy Communion during Easter season, only to receive Communion during Easter Season unless permitted at another time of the year. There is no obligation to confess in Easter season, or anytime, unless one has grave sins to confess.

The norms of CIC 1917 were even more detailed regarding these obligations, but the point here is that many seminarians start out believing that all Catholics are required by canon law to "go to confession" during Easter season, but they in fact are not: this is required only if they have *grave* sins that have not yet been absolved so they can receive Holy Communion during Easter season.

Divorce

What about divorce? It is a commonplace of Catholic culture for people to say the Catholic Church does not recognize divorce; that married Catholics are never allowed to divorce. This is another bit of Catholic "folk knowledge" that is not exactly true. It is true that the Catholic Church does not recognize *civil* divorce as dis-

[5] CIC 1983 does, nevertheless, recommend to the Christian faithful that they also confess venial sins, but there is no canonical *obligation* to do so: Canon 988 §2. *Commendatur christifidelibus ut etiam peccata venialia confiteantur.* The distinction between grave and venial sins is a question of moral theology, not canon law, and in fact one that canon law is incapable defining for purposes of compliance with canonical norms. When the obligation to confess grave sins arises is a matter for the conscience of individual members of the faithful to determine, ordinarily one would hope, if not expect, with the sound counsel of a sound spiritual guide or confessor.

solving or annulling the marriages of Catholics. Is it true, however, that the Catholic Church does not ever recognize divorce? Most seminarians before they take a canon law of marriage course believe it does not; but it in fact, the Church not only recognizes some divorces but actually grants them itself. The Church does dissolve valid marriage bonds in certain circumstances; so, the fact is there is such a thing as "Catholic divorce".

A highly placed prelate of the Catholic Church, who is no slouch as a canonist, Cardinal Raymond Burke has railed against the notion of Catholic "divorce".[6] The real source of Cardinal Burke's umbrage is not that there is no such thing as Catholic "divorce", or "dissolution" of the bond of marriage, but rather careless use of terminology that equates annulments granted by a Church tribunal with the idea of "Catholic divorce".

An annulment is not a divorce. This has to be explained carefully to every seminarian in canon law of marriage classes. An "annulment" is a declaration that a marriage was never valid in the first place because of some defect in the consent exchanged, or discovery of a previously unknown impediment standing in the way of valid marriage consent, or a defect in the form in which consent must be exchanged by Catholics according to Church law. "Divorce" is the dissolution of a valid marriage bond leaving the parties free to marry another person. Annulment concerns a marriage that never came into being validly. A divorce, or dissolution, involves a valid marriage that did come into being, but which the Church allows to be dissolved for some reason. There are instances in which the Church dissolves valid marriage bonds. Annulment concerns a marriage that never really was. Divorce concerns a marriage that the Church releases the parties from by "dissolving" the bond.

The Church dissolves valid marriage bonds when consent was exchanged but the marriage has not yet been consummated by the marital act (called *ratum et non consummatum*); marriages between two non-baptized persons, when one is later baptized but the other refuses to support that decision and live at peace with the Christian spouse (*Pauline Privilege*); marriages of spouses separated by exile, where it is not foreseen they will ever be reunited; and one or two other circumstances. It is true that the Church does not generally recognize divorce, but there are exceptional circumstances, such as these, where the Church does in fact itself grant a true divorce, exercising what it refers to as "the power of the keys". It is "folk knowledge" therefore to say the Church never recognizes divorce. Much more common, of course, are annulments where a Church tribunal finds that a valid marriage never came into being in the first place because of something that was missing.

[6] See, for instance: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fWI-k42ltjs, accessed November 17, 2022.

The Pastoral Context of Canon Law

Pope St. John XXIII announced in 1959 that the entire corpus of canon law of the 1917 Code was to be reformed at the same time he convoked a synod of the Diocese of Rome and announced the ecumenical council now known as the Second Vatican Council. The new Code of Canon Law was promulgated in 1983. John Paul II points out in *SDL* that these two events (the revision of the Code and Vatican II) are inextricably intertwined. The revision of the Code was to integrate in canon law the teachings of Vatican II as much as possible. The 1983 Code and its norms cannot, therefore, be understood apart from the teachings of Vatican II.

In 1967, the code consultors developed principles for the revision of the Code which Pope St. Paul VI approved and presented to the Synod Bishops, which approved them almost unanimously. These principles guided the revision process and are principles for interpreting the 1983 Code.[7] Among the most important for seminarians, because they touch so closely on the ministry they will engage in, are principles 1 and 3:

"[R]ecourse to canonical norms is more for gaining insight into the deeper meaning of the teachings that underlie the law than for achieving mere external obedience."

1. In renewing the law the juridic character of the new Code, which the social nature of the Church requires, is to be retained. Therefore, the Code is to furnish norms so that the members of the Christian faithful in living the Christian life may share in the goods offered by the Church to lead them to eternal salvation. Hence, in view of this end, the Code must define and protect the rights and obligations of each person towards others and towards the ecclesiastical society to the extent that these rights and obligations pertain to divine worship and the salvation of souls.

3. To foster the pastoral care of souls as much as possible, the new law, besides the virtue of justice, is to take cognizance of charity, temperance, humaneness and moderation, whereby equity is to be pursued not only in the application of the laws by pastors of souls but also in the legislation itself.

[7] Code of Canon Law Latin-English Edition, xxxvi-xxxviii.

While defining rights and obligations, the norms of the law were to be directed most importantly, and as much as possible, toward the pastoral care of souls. The pastoral care of souls is to be seen as the main objective of canon law, not norms for the regulation and enforcement of behavior. While not disregarding the virtue of justice, canonical norms are to take cognizance of charity, temperance, humaneness and moderation. Canon law exists to foster Christian life, lived not so much in obedience to the law as reflecting the values and virtues it promotes. To that end, recourse to canonical norms is more for gaining insight into the deeper meaning of the teachings that underlie the law than for achieving mere external obedience. "Reception" of the law, in the juridic sense, is to be preferred to mere compliance with norms.

These principles call for greater tolerance when there is a lack of compliance with norms. Pastors of souls are charged with the difficult task of leading those they serve to deeper insights into and acceptance of the norms of the law, and conformity with them as a means of configuring one's life to that of a true Christian. As the author likes to say in canon law class "Canon law is *not* about driving people away from the Catholic Church; it's about drawing them into a deeper and more heartfelt practice of the faith." Or, as he also likes to put it, "You will be ordained to be a pastor, not a policeman; so, understand and resort to canon law as a pastor would, not as a policeman or prosecutor."

"It is important for seminarians to learn to recognize when a canonical question is beyond their competence and to consult a competent canonist when they do."

What Seminary Canon Law Students Don't Need to Know

It should be kept in mind that seminarians are not being trained to be canon lawyers, but pastors. When they finish their canon law courses they will not be competent to interpret canon law beyond a very narrow range, limited to how it serves their pastoral ministry. This is the first and most important thing for seminary canon law students to be taught and to learn. It is more important for seminarians to understand that nuance in the interpretation of canon law is something competent canonists are capable of but they, generally, are not, at least not without further training. Every canon law professor in America tells his or her students that the most important thing for them to learn in their canon law classes is the phone number of the Chancery! It is important for seminarians to learn to recognize when a canonical question is beyond their competence and to consult a competent canonist when they do. Every diocese has at least one trained canonist, the "go-to" person whenever anything other than basic, uncomplicated canon law issues come up in pastoral ministry.

Seminarians don't need to know a lot of canon law to be good pastors, but some things they *do* need to know (addressed in the next section of this article). Seminarians literally do not need to know the canon law of processes at all (Book VII of the Code). Book VII of the Code concerns technical matters of procedure in canonical proceedings and can be dispensed with entirely in seminary canon law courses. There are some interesting particularities of processes that contrast with civil law that might be interesting to note, but there is always the risk that doing so will give seminarians the impression they know more about these processes than they really do. So, best to avoid teaching anything from Book VII in seminary courses altogether.

Likewise with sanctions (delicts and penalties; Book VI), although a little bit may be helpful so seminarians know what things could get them into serious trouble once ordained, or how to recognize things that ought to be brought to the attention of the competent authority. Nothing has caused more *bruhaha* in the life of the Church than the norm of c. 915 that "those who have been excommunicated or interdicted after the imposition or declaration of the penalty and others obstinately persevering in manifest grave sin are not to be admitted to holy communion". Politicians seen as supporting political agendas and legislation favorable to legal abortion have been subjected to calls that they must be denied Holy Communion. Some priests and other communion ministers have felt that decision ought to be made at the communion rail, so to speak, by the minister on a case-by-case basis. The canonical issues involved in this are extremely complicated. Denial of Holy Communion is, in fact, a penalty, and penalties are generally not allowed to be carried out without a proper canonical process and formal imposition of the penalty (see cc. 1321-1330;1341-1353; see also c. 843). Members of the Christian faithful, all baptized Catholics, have a general right to receive the sacraments. Denial of a sacrament is a very serious matter, which the law hedges about with technical requirements that require the specialized knowledge of a well-trained canonist to understand and interpret. The idea that communion ministers should be making judgements at the communion rail about the state of an individual's soul presenting himself or herself for reception of Holy Communion, and the person's proper disposition, is so fraught with canonical and moral implications and complications that most canonists consider it wrongheaded that communion ministers should ever make such judgments at the communion rail. This is an example of a notion seminarians may need to re-think before

"What seminarians do need to know about canon law is everything that pertains to faithfully and correctly carrying out their pastoral responsibilities, not how to enforce every canonical obligation and vindicate every right."

they are ordained and find themselves in the middle of a very complicated and contentious issue.

What seminarians do need to know about canon law is everything that pertains to faithfully and correctly carrying out their pastoral responsibilities, not how to enforce every canonical obligation and vindicate every right. This includes canonical norms that affect the validity of sacraments and other acts proper to a priest or pastor, so there is still a considerable body of knowledge seminarians should master before completing their seminary studies.

What Seminarians *Do* Need to Know

Where to begin

There are two basic approaches to making inroads into seminarians' lack of knowledge about canon law. One begins at the beginning of CIC 1983, *Book I: General Norms*. "General norms" are fundamental norms and principles applied throughout the Code. Many have to be followed to assure the validity of actions with canonical consequences. The problem teaching them is that general norms are extremely dry and abstract, boring, and tedious to understand. Some professors want to begin with general norms because they are foundational for everything else in the Code, but because they can be extremely difficult to teach, others prefer to begin somewhere else, giving seminarians a grounding in some practical aspects of the law that are more interesting, and then come back to general norms when they will make more sense and be easier to study. The most common alternative is to begin with *Book II: The People of God.*

The Church is a community in need of structure and norms regulating the conduct of persons vis-à-vis one another, with regard for those elements that define membership in the community, those qualities that define the identity of members of the community, and the rights and obligations of those subject to the Code of Canon Law. Starting with Book II grounds students in the teaching of the Second Vatican Council that the Church is to be thought of first and foremost of all as that community made up of the Christian faithful, the people of God, that represents the Body of Christ on earth. Earlier ways of describing the Church emphasized its hierarchical structure. Vatican II and CIC 1983 emphasize that the most fundamental reality constituting the people of God as the Church is baptism. It is baptism, more properly Christian initiation, that constitutes a person a member of the Church and subject to the Church's canon law which sets forth the rights and obligations of members of the Christian faithful.

Many seminarians enter formation with a very hierarchical understanding of the Church and church membership. The teaching of the Second Vatican Council, and the organization of the Code of Canon Law rely on a more egalitarian understanding of membership and the constitution of the people of God, with the

Church's hierarchical structure understood as a secondary consideration existing in service to the people of God for purposes of good order in the life of the community. Starting with consciousness of the Church's hierarchical ordering of governance risks getting things somewhat backwards. The fundamental reality is the people of God, all of whom are equal in baptism; the hierarchical structuring of the governance of this community is of secondary importance.

Particular legal rights and duties are determined by one's status in the community. The idea that rights and obligations exist in relation to status is new to many seminarians, although this is true in all legal systems. For instance, married couples have different canonical rights and obligations than unmarried persons, because of their *status* as married persons. A priest has different rights and obligations than non-priests; and so on and so forth.

It is important for seminarians to become familiar with various general norms, but equally, if not more importantly, to come to understand the structure of the Church as the people of God, as reflected in Book II of the Code, so they can be formed to serve their particular role as ordained priests one day while respecting the roles, rights and obligations of all of the other members of the Body of Christ according to their proper status.

At St. Mary's, canon law courses begin with consideration of the Church as the people of God, the Body of Christ, in which all members are essentially equal in baptism, but each with particular rights and responsibilities that derive from her or his particular status in the community that is the Church. Approaching things in this way helps seminarians learn to respect the rights of all, and that all are expected to fulfill the obligations related to their status in the community. Once seminarians understand this, they are prepared to study the more specific norms relating to carrying out their function one day as ordained priests. At St. Mary's the canon law faculty begins by addressing the organic unity and structure of the Church as the People of God, and then addresses the general norms that apply throughout the Code.

Specific Areas of Canon Law

Most seminary curricula today include two or three canon law courses. Usually an introductory course giving an overview of the entire Code except for the sacraments. The treatment of processes and sanctions, if addressed at all, normally involves only very basic principles of procedural and delictual law. Greater attention is given to Book III, The Teaching Office, and Book V, Temporal Goods, since priests are usually involved in Catholic education in one way or another, and parish administration always involves the administration of temporal goods. However, given the extensive amount of material to be covered in a general survey course, it is always difficult to provide as detailed instruction in these areas as would otherwise be desirable. These two areas can be treated in ongoing education courses after seminarians have been

ordained, which they should be encouraged to participate in. *Book II: The People of God* is ordinarily covered in the general course. While it would be possible to offer elective courses in these areas, the time available for elective courses is very limited, even more so under the 2019 *Ratio fundamentalis institutionis sacerdotlis* and the Sixth Edition of the *Program of Priestly Formation* of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. The better option for most seminarians will be to wait for more detailed treatment of this material through ongoing education programs after ordination.

All seminaries have a course on the canon law of marriage, or marriage and the other sacraments. The challenge is how to cover everything seminarians need to know to engage in priestly ministry competently and effectively in the amount of time available. The general survey of canon law is normally a three-credit hour course, marriage and the sacraments one or possibly two three-credit hour courses, or one three-hour and one two-hour course. It is quite difficult to cover marriage and all the sacraments in one three credit hour course, even marriage and just the Sacraments of Initiation. St. Mary's has experimented with a three-credit hour introductory course, a three-credit hour course on Marriage, and a three-credit hour course on the other sacraments, or a two-credit hour course on just the Sacraments of Initiation, with the canonical aspects of the other sacraments addressed in the sacramental theology courses, and is now considering a two-hour course on all of the sacraments other than marriage.

General Norms

The introductory course's treatment of general norms at St. Mary's includes more detailed treatment of the law of persons so students will have a good grasp of how the law applies to a person's status; juridic acts, so they will know what exercises of ecclesiastical power have juridic effects; and "juridic persons", so they will understand how collective entities of persons or things are dealt with under canon law, important concepts when it comes to administering a parish. Some attention is given to the power of governance, and laws and other modes of regulating the behavior, protecting the rights, and enforcing the obligations of members of the Christian faithful, since there will be times when understanding these provisions will be important in carrying out the function of priest or pastor. Canonical elections are always an area of interest to seminarians, and the rules for conducting a valid election are generally covered, as are the provisions regarding the acquisition and loss of ecclesiastical office, which will affect seminarians directly once they are appointed or elected to an office.

Great attention is not given to ecclesiastical laws, general decrees and instructions, and singular administrative acts, because these norms are quite technical and are of greater concern to curial officials than to all priests, who can receive instruction about them from those offi-

cials as needed. Statutes and rules of order, likewise, do not require much instruction in the seminary because they are either easy to understand when relevant to the ministry of a priest or pastor, or once again can be explained by a canonical or administrative expert from the chancery.

The final subjects addressed in Book I, prescription and the computation of time, are also technical concepts that in practice require some interpretation and canonical expertise. The computation of time does merit adequate treatment in the seminary, however, so that when relevant to a priest's ministry he will know what norms to apply when needing to calculate a deadline. Ordinarily, however, seminarians are best advised to contact a canonist or chancery official when such questions arise.

The basic rules for the acquisition, administration, and alienation of goods in Book III are normally made known to seminarians because of their role in parish administration, but detailed treatment is best left to ongoing education after ordination because of time constraints in the curriculum. Almost every pastor will sooner or later have to administer the receipt of a bequest and will also be involved in soliciting gifts to support the parish, either during the lifetime of the donor or as a testamentary gift. Seminary students should at least be aware that there are canonical provisions regulating the reception and administration of gifts, and the crucial importance of honoring the intentions of donors.

Seminarians should be given careful instruction on the canons concerning pious foundations, in particular Mass funds (funds for the application of Mass intentions). The Church is very sensitive about these funds being administered meticulously in accord with the intentions of donors, so seminarians should know there are technical rules involved that priests and other administrators must abide by. The most common canonical issue they may encounter is when there is a desire to reduce or otherwise modify an obligation attached to a gift. A will executed in favor of a pious cause can be reduced, moderated, or commuted by the ordinary, but only for a just cause, if the donor or "founder" of the bequest has expressly entrusted this power to him. If, through no fault of the administrator's, the fulfillment of the obligations of such bequests has become impossible due to diminished revenues or some other cause, the ordinary can equitably lessen the obligations after hearing those concerned and his finance council, with the original intention of the founder preserved as much as possible. In other cases, recourse must be made to the Apostolic See (c. 1310). However, these provisions to not apply to Mass funds, that is gifts to the Church for applying particular intentions to the celebration of Masses, which the canons give particular attention to in order to assure that donors' intentions are fulfilled. These obligations can only be modified in accordance with c. 1308.

Canon 1308 provides that the obligation to say Masses for a particular intention may be

reduced only for a just and necessary cause and doing so is generally reserved to the Apostolic See (c. 1308 §1), although there are the following exceptions: If the charter of the foundation expressly provides, the ordinary can reduce Mass obligations because of diminished revenues. If the obligation to say Masses for a particular intention was established independently in a legacy or in some other way, the diocesan bishop can reduce the obligation to the level of offering established in the diocese in the case of diminished revenues for as long as the cause persists, provided there is no one obligated to increase the offering who can effectively be made to do so (c. 1308 §3). If the obligations pertain to an ecclesiastical institute, the diocesan bishop can also reduce the obligations or legacies if the revenue has become insufficient to pursue appropriately the proper purpose of the institute. (c. 1308 §4) Finally, the supreme moderator of a clerical religious institute of pontifical right possess the same powers as the diocesan bishop in these regards.[8]

The Code places a special responsibility on administrators of Church goods to assure that the prescripts of both canon and civil law, or those imposed by a founder, a donor or legitimate authority are fulfilled through due diligence (c. 1284 §2, 3°). This is especially true with respect to the fulfillment of Mass obligations. Priests are free to apply the celebration of Mass for anyone, living or dead (c. 901), and also to receive an offering to apply the Mass for a specific intention. Once an offering is accepted, it is a most serious obligation that the priest must fulfill. Because this custom has at times been neglected it is hedged about with canonical norms that should be taught in seminary canon law courses and duly impressed upon the students so they will be thoroughly familiar with them once they are in a position to accept Mass offerings. Priests must be careful to administer this privilege with all seriousness and sincerity and avoid any appearance of "trafficking" or "trading" in Mass offerings (c. 947).

No more than one offering may be applied to a given Mass, and the obligation to fulfill the intention belongs to the priest who received it. If an offering is made for the celebration of Masses without indicating the number, it is to be applied according to the norm in the place where the donor resides, unless the donor's intent can be presumed legitimately to be different (c. 950). If a priest celebrates more than one Mass on a given day, he can apply an intention to each Mass, but he may only retain one offering, transferring the others to the purposes prescribed by the Ordinary (except on Christmas

[8] An interesting bit of ecclesiastical trivia is that the will of King Henry VIII of England contains a provision for an altar over his tomb where daily Mass were to be said "as long as the world shall endure", setting out a grant £600 a year forever to assure that the Masses would be said; it contains other provisions for requiem masses and prayers for his soul as well. When the eventually more Protestant form of the Church of England prevailed and Mass offerings abrogated, Henry's bequest was invalidated and the funds directed toward other purposes.

Day, when he can retain more than one offering; see: c. 951). Likewise, if he concelebrates a second Mass on a given day, he may not accept an offering for it. Each provincial council, or the bishops of the province, are to establish for the entire province by decree the offering to be given for the celebration and application of a Mass offering. Priests are not to ask for more than that, but they are permitted to accept a larger sum if voluntarily offered. (c. 952)

An important rule to be sure seminarians understand is that no one is permitted to accept more offerings for Masses than he can satisfy with a year (c. 953). If a church or oratory has received more offerings than can be fulfilled, however, they may allow the Masses to be celebrated elsewhere in order to fulfill the obligation (c. 954). If a priest wishes to entrust the fulfillment of a Mass obligation to another priest, he must assure that the priest is trustworthy and transfer the entire offering to him. Fulfillment of the intention remains his obligation, however, until he knows that the obligation has been accepted and the offering received by the other priest (c. 955). In fact, those who entrust the celebration of Masses to others are to record without delay both the Masses they have received and those which have been transferred to others, along with the offering, and every priest must note accurately the Masses he has accepted to celebrate and those he has satisfied (c. 955). Administrators of pious causes and others obliged in any way to see to the celebration of Masses are to hand over to their Ordinary Mass obligations that have not been satisfied within a year (c. 957), as the duty and right of exercising vigilance that Mass obligations are fulfilled belongs to the Local Ordinary of the churches of secular clergy, and the superiors of churches of religious institutes and societies of apostolic life (c. 957). The pastor or rector of a church or other pious place which regularly receives Mass offerings is to have a special book in which the number of Masses to be celebrated is accurately noted, along with the intention, the offering given, and the date and occasion when fulfilled, which the Ordinary is obliged to examine each year either personally or through others (958). It is important that these rules be carefully taught to seminarians, however much it may be wondered how diligently they are being followed in practice.

Canon Law of Marriage

Most seminaries today, including St. Mary's, require a fairly comprehensive course in the canon law of marriage, given the amount of time and attention parish priests devote to marriage ministry. The context in which the marriage course is taught at St. Mary's is the pastoral ministry graduates will one day engage in. While it is important that seminarians come to understand many of the technicalities of marriage law and the law of annulments, it is considered more important to give them a grounding in the pastoral context in which their knowledge of the canon law of marriage will be applied. That pastoral context includes: 1)

preparing couples for marriage; 2) preparing them for the liturgical celebration of their marriage; 3) providing ministerial support for married couples; 4) making provision for marriage counselling, both by the pastor or other priests, but also counselling within the expertise of other parish ministers, ordained or lay, and also referrals to professional marriage counsellors when the resources of the parish are insufficient to address the issues that emerge; and 5) preliminary contact for individuals thinking about the possible annulment of their marriages, and referral to the appropriate diocesan officials to guide them through the annulment process.

"Seminarians are formed as much by the society around them as by their Catholic faith today, and there is a need to clarify as much as possible the Church's teaching regarding marriage and how it provides the foundation for the canons they will need to understand and apply in marriage ministry."

A significant challenge today concerns changes in the understanding of marriage in society in general. Seminarians are formed as much by the society around them as by their Catholic faith today, and there is a need to clarify as much as possible the Church's teaching regarding marriage and how it provides the foundation for the canons they will need to understand and apply in marriage ministry. The changes in society are so profound, especially with respect to the "definition" of marriage, that it is considered necessary at St. Mary's to begin not just with the Church's understanding of marriage and its definition, but with a philosophical discussion of definitions in general in order to get it across that from the standpoint of Church teaching, theology and canon law, defining anything, much less marriage, is not an arbitrary process but an intellectual search for truth which presupposes that the essence and nature of any given thing is an objective reality, not something that can be "defined" arbitrarily.

The Church's understanding of the definition of marriage is derived from what can be known about marriage historically, theologically, in Sacred Scripture, from the longstanding and continuous tradition of the Church regarding marriage, and from the kind of natural law reasoning that undergirds much of Church teaching and the provisions of the Code of Canon Law. It has to be pointed out that however any civil society understands and "defines" marriage, the marriage of Catholics is grounded in the teaching and canon law of the Church. Couples are to be prepared for marriage by priests who are sufficiently knowledgeable of this teaching and canon law, as well as of contrary understandings coming from the culture around them, so couples will be able to enter a valid Catholic Christian marriage.

No official witness of the Church may witness a marriage that he or she knows will not be valid. At the same time, no one is to assist at a marriage that cannot be recognized or celebrated according to the norm of civil law without the permission of the local ordinary. (c. 1072 §1, 2°) This does not suggest that compliance with civil law is in all cases required for the valid marriage of a Catholic. Rather, it seeks to avoid a conflictual relationship between the Church and civil society as much as possible, while respecting the Church's authority over the things it properly regulates. It is one of the complications of the era in which we live that fundamental matters regarding marriage and the Church's understanding and regulation of marriage often need to be clarified so seminarians will understand them correctly. Thus, for instance, it must be made as clear as possible to seminarians that marriage is a relationship between two persons only, one of whom is male and the other female (c. 1055 §1); that it is a matrimonial covenant by which the man and woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of life, ordered by its nature to the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring, which has been raised by Christ to the dignity of a sacrament. (c. 1055 §1) So-called "same-sex" marriage is not something the Church simply does not recognize, it is something that in the understanding of the Church does not and cannot exist. The Church may accede to the existence of a civil institution between people of the same gender, and other kinds of civil relationships that do not accord with Church teaching, for the purpose of living at peace with the society around it, but it would never be able to call such relationships "marriage".

One of the features of marriage that can be difficult for seminarians to grasp easily is that the sacramentality of marriage derives from baptism. This is easy enough for seminarians to understand with respect to the marriage of two baptized Catholics, but more difficult in the case of a mixed marriages, when one of the parties is Catholic and the other Protestant, a marriage that is every bit as much a sacrament as the marriage of two Catholics (if celebrated in accordance with the canonical provisions regarding form), since both of the parties are baptized Christians and that is what makes the marriage a sacrament. Even more difficult to get across to seminarians, as to non-Catholic Christians, is that the marriage of two non-Catholic Christians is considered a sacramental marriage by the Church by virtue of the baptism of the parties. Also that if one of the parties is a Catholic and the other has never been baptized, the marriage is *not* considered a sacrament by the Church, even if the parties have fulfilled all of the requirements for entering a valid marriage (that is, the Catholic has been given a dispensation for disparity of cult). All of this can be quite confusing to seminarians, as it is to many Catholics, and especially to Protestants who have been in a previous marriage, divorced, and now want to marry a Catholic. They are quite often

perplexed when they learn that they must first obtain an annulment of the first marriage which the Catholic Church considers both valid and sacramental until proven otherwise, preventing another marriage unless and until there is an annulment.

Seminarians do not have to master all of the technicalities of Catholic marriage law, but they do have to become familiar with them so they will avoid assisting at marriages involving a Catholic that it is known or should be known will not be valid. Their responsibility is to be able to fulfill their pastoral office competently, effectively, and sensitively when they become priests, not to act as canonical experts or consider that they have the responsibility of assuring that individuals who come to them are choosing the "right" partner, or that they will be deeply committed practicing Catholics. This sometimes comes as a surprise to seminarians, especially today when so many marriages break up and they have witnessed all of the pain and disorder this causes in the parties' lives and the lives of their children. Indeed, many seminarians today come from parents who divorced civilly, some who have re-married with or without an annulment, and others who have obtained annulments and remarried in the Church. Some seminarians are intent on doing all they can to assure that the parties enter not just a valid marriage, but a good marriage that will last. But alas, that is not their role or responsibility as a priest. A priest cannot and should not stand in the way of parties entering a valid marriage because he thinks it may not end up being a "good" marriage, nor should he decline to assist at a marriage because he has doubts about its being a good match or truly grounded in faith, because his duty as a priest is simply to assist the parties to enter a marriage that it appears will be valid "in the eyes of the Church". Why is that?

The canon law of marriage represents a delicate balance between the natural right of every adult person who is competent to marry, and to marry the person of his or her own choice, and the desire of the Church that couples marry in the Church and marry out of sincere faith; also that they will enter humanly and spiritually "good" and fruitful marriages. The Church does not consider it its place to prevent people from marrying the person they want to marry, however, if the marriage will meet at least the minimal requirements for validity under canon law.

Canon law students at St. Mary's are taught that the Church's bar for entering a valid marriage is pretty low, out of deference to the human rights and dignity of the parties (no greater barrier to marrying than absolutely necessary). The standards for judging the validity of a marriage on the other side of a broken relationship, however, are very high. That is, priests are not charged with undertaking an in-depth examination of the qualities of parties and the relationship to assure that the marriage will be valid and a "good" marriage at the time they wish to marry, just the basic investigation required by canon law. If it appears the marriage will be valid after completing the pre-marital investi-

gation, the priest should assist the couple to have as faith-filled, joyous, and fruitful marriage ceremony and marriage as possible, even if he doubts that it will last. This respects their natural right to marry, and to the marry the person they want to marry. If the relationship does not last and the couple later divorces, it is for the marriage tribunal to determine through in in-depth examination of all aspects of the marriage, the consent exchanged, and the possibility that there may have been an impediment not known at the time consent was exchanged.

It can be hard for seminarians to understand, and is often difficult for many Catholics to understand, why there are so many annulments today, and why the Church doesn't do more to assure that couples don't enter invalid marriages. The wisdom of the Church is that unnecessary barriers should not be put up that would impede individuals from marrying the person they want, even if the priest or others involved have serious doubts, out of respect for the basic human right to marry. Many priests have seen marriages they never thought would succeed mature into profound loving and successful marriages, whereas marriages they thought would be "perfect" break up after short duration. The annulment system makes it possible to recognize that many marriages do not work out, and for good reasons that can be determined even long after the marriage was entered into, warranting the granting of an annulment. While perhaps not a perfect approach to these fundamental human relationships, it is one that recognizes that it operates in an imperfect world of flawed human beings who are seeking happiness and often end up in relationships they thought would be good, would bring them happiness, or at least that they hoped would, but that were actually doomed from the start, often enough for reasons that were not readily apparent at the time consent was exchanged. A low bar for entering marriage protects the right to marry; the annulment process allows a closer look later and protects the pastoral ministry of the Church which looks for a way to release people from relationships that are not working and are bringing mostly unhappiness when it is possible to do so.

It is important to get across to seminarians that when they become pastors it will not be their role to look out over their married parishioners and wonder if all of them are in valid marriages. The rule of canon law is that if a marriage looks valid it is presumed valid unless and until it is proven not to be valid in a canonical process; for all practical purposes a marriage *is* valid unless and until proven invalid. Priests should not be worrying their heads about all the marriages of their parishioners that *might* not be valid. They *are* valid canonically unless and until proven otherwise. Nor should he be preoccupied with individuals in second marriages receiving the sacraments. If he knows for certain that they should not, he at most should speak with them privately; but the communion rail is never the place to embarrass people or virtue signal. Better to tolerate inappropriate reception

of communion until there is some overriding reason to address it, than to engage in sacramental perfectionism: priests are ordained to be pastors, not policemen.

In teaching the canon law of marriage, St. Mary's students are given a basic framework of the concerns of canon law respecting marriage:

a. The *Definition* of marriage.
b. *Consent* (what constitutes valid consent, consent being the mechanism that brings a valid marriage into existence.
c. *Impediments* (what things stand in the way of the possibility of entering a valid marriage).
d. The Catholic *Form* of marriage.

Seminarians can fit everything they need to know about the canon law of marriage into these categories for purposes of understanding and remembering how the canon law of marriage works. Seminarians are often surprised to hear it said that the main concerns of priests with respect to marriage are pastoral, not canonical. The canons outline various aspects of the pastoral preparation for marriage and care for married persons, but the real concern of canon law *per se* is not necessarily marriage itself, but often enough simply how to get people *out* of marriages that have not succeeded. When a marriage has been entered into well and is working, there is no need for canon law; the parties need only live out the beauty and drama of marriage and family life. It is normally only when things go wrong that canon law is resorted to, to examine if there really was a valid marriage in the first place, so parties can be relieved of being bound to a relationship that is not bearing fruit nor bringing happiness. The canon law of marriage is also, however, a sound and important source for giving pastors of souls a solid grounding in how the Church understands marriage, wishes to assist the faithful to enter into fruitful marital relationships, and what pastors need to know in order to provide the faithful instruction and effective pastoral assistance with respect to marriage and family life.

At base level, seminarians need to learn what makes for the valid and licit celebration of marriage. They need to be prepared to engage in "remote" preparation for marriage through preaching, catechetics, teaching, and other ways of making known to Catholics what Christian marriage really is and is all about. They need to be introduced to what is involved in the sound preparation of couples who come to the Church to be married, and also how to minister effectively and sensitively to those who are experiencing difficulties in their marriages. They need to know how to offer assistance to those whose marriages have not succeeded, and who may be seeking to have their marriage annulled, understanding that in many if not most cases they are entitled to an annulment so they can be free of an invalid marriage and free to marry another person if that is what they wish to do. Teaching the canon law of marriage to seminarians, along with the other topics addressed in this article, is intended mostly

to convey that there are many technicalities involved, and also that some of those technicalities must be mastered but most do not. In the end, as repeated in almost every canon law course in every seminary in the United States, if not in the world, the most important thing for seminarians to learn about canon law is the phone number of the chancery.

For Further Reading

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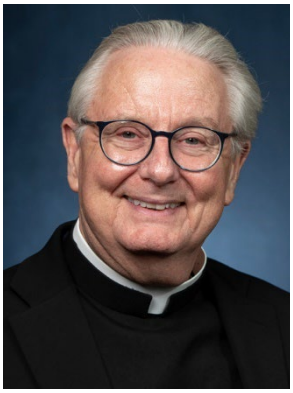

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Book Review: Parish Management and Operations: The Buck Stops Here

By Michael Brinda
Reviewed by Sebastian Mahfood, OP

Published by En Route Books & Media in March of 2018, Michael Brinda's *Parish Management and Operations: The Buck Stops Here* remains relevant for a post-Covid world as it celebrates its fifth anniversary in print. Brinda, who received an honorary doctorate in 2016 from Holy Apostles College & Seminary for his spiritual and corporal acts of mercy conducted over the course of his prison ministry, had left the corporate world he'd founded at New Horizons, a global computer training company, to devote his life full-time to pastoral work. This book contains the fruit of that engagement, a blending of the lessons learned in corporate life and the experience gained in parish ministry. The book covers such topics as delegation, parish mission statements, the art and science of strategic plan creation, hiring, firing, and dealing with failure and is a useful classroom aid for ministry of administration courses.

To listen for free to the audio version of this book, visit https://wcatradio.com/pmo/ or get your Kindle or print copy today at https://enroutebooksandmedia.com/pmo/.

Michael Brinda in February 2017 with his class at Mundelein Seminary where he taught an intensive course, originally developed for online delivery at Holy Apostles College & Seminary, on parish management and operations.