

## Seminary Formation



# Seminary Formation

Recent History—  
Current Circumstances—  
New Directions

Katarina Schuth, OSF

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1            2            3            4            5            6            7            8            9

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With deep gratitude to Pope Francis  
for his great inspiration to the church and the world  
and for his compassionate care for the people of God



# Contents

List of Tables ix

Foreword by Archbishop Blase J. Cupich xi

Acknowledgments xv

Frequently Used Documents, Abbreviations, and Terms xix

## Part I. Context

Introduction 3

Chapter 1. The Effects of Vatican II on the Present State of Seminaries  
and Theologates 9

## Part II. Organization and Personnel

Chapter 2. Mission, Vision, and Structures 35

Chapter 3. Leadership: Boards, Administration, and Faculty 42

## Part III. Students Preparing for Ministry: Enrollment and Programs

Chapter 4. Seminarians and Lay Students 75

Chapter 5. Human and Spiritual Formation Developments 88

Chapter 6. Intellectual and Pastoral Formation Programs 100

## Part IV. Conclusion and Commentaries

Chapter 7. New Directions in the Future 117

Toward a Spirituality of Ecclesial Leadership,  
*Ronald Rolheiser, OMI* 122

Generational Differences: A Crucial Key, *Thomas Walters* 132

Human Formation: Fostering Happy, Healthy, and Holy Ministers  
to Be a Bridge to Christ in Service to God's People,  
*Leon M. Hutton* 143

Trends in Scripture Study and Preaching Preparation in Roman Catholic  
Seminaries, *Barbara E. Reid, OP* 154

The Culture of Encounter: The Future of Seminary Formation,  
*Msgr. Peter Vaccari* 164

Appendices 174

Bibliography 185

Index 187

# List of Tables

- 1.1 References to Vatican II in the Five Editions of the *Program of Priestly Formation*
- 3.1 Changes in Governing Board Membership, 1985–2015
- 3.2 Vocational Status of Those Serving as Rectors/Presidents
- 3.3 Vocational Status of Faculty by Year
- 3.4 Faculty Degrees by Vocational Status and Years
- 3.5 Sources of Highest Academic Degrees of Faculty by Year
- 3.6 Vocational Status of Directors of Pastoral Formation/Field Education
- 3.7 Terminal Degree of Directors of Pastoral Formation/Field Education
- 4.1 Seminarians in Theologates, 1967–2015
- 4.2 Age Distribution of Seminarians
- 4.3 Racial and Ethnic Background of Seminarians
- 4.4 Foreign-Born Seminarians
- 4.5 Lay Students Enrolled in Theologates
- 4.6 Age Distribution of All Lay Ministry Students



# Foreword

The year 1989 was a year of a happy coincidence. I was appointed rector/president of the Pontifical College Seminary and Sr. Katarina Schuth published her pioneering study of Roman Catholic seminaries and theologates, *Reason for the Hope*. It was a book that challenged me and my colleagues at other seminaries to reevaluate our programs on a number of levels. For instance, we better understood from the feedback on her research the important contribution women were making on our academic and formational faculties. Likewise, she highlighted the benefits of evaluating readiness for orders based more on discerning gifts rather than impediments.

For the nearly thirty years since that book, Katarina has earned a well-deserved reputation as the person who knows more about Catholic seminaries and schools of theology in this country than anyone on the planet. Her research method is thorough and meticulous, something I came to know firsthand as she worked on her second book, *Seminaries, Theologates, and the Future of Church Ministry*, published a decade later. In those years, she and her team visited nearly every school of theology at that time, close to forty in all. Rectors, presidents, faculty, and vocation directors were asked to respond to questionnaires. She also conducted personal interviews of students, faculty, administrators, and staff. To be sure, her approach created new demands for those participating in her research, but they were demands that gave her work credibility. We recognized that this is a person who was not going to waste our time.

Over the years, Katarina has demonstrated an admirable ability to gather and organize data with the kind of detailed precision that borders on the scrupulous. Her presentation of facts is sophisticatedly synthetic, crisply composed, informative, and insightful. With all of this she brings a deep love for the church, for priesthood and scholarship.

With *Seminary Formation: Recent History—Current Circumstances—New Directions* Katarina builds on her solid reputation as a scholarly researcher. Her goal is to update her earlier research, specifically by appraising how seminaries and schools of theology have changed from 1985 to the present.

Part I situates the present state of seminaries and theologates in the era of the Second Vatican Council. She identifies a shift with each successive edition of the *Program of Priestly Formation (PPF)*. With the passage of time, those involved in this document's subsequent revision were less personally connected to the council. Consequently, as distance from the council increases, its documents receive less attention and more focus is given to the writings of St. Pope John Paul II.

Katarina presents the bulk of her research in the next two parts. No stone is left unturned. She examines almost every aspect of theologate-level schools, including their structures and missions, by providing information about boards and their membership, faculty and administrators (part II). Despite her remarks about the waning impact of the council on *PPF* revisions, she maintains a commendable objectivity to notice the ongoing influence of Vatican II on theologates. For instance, she remarks that diocesan seminaries have enlarged their missions to include enrollment of religious order seminarians and lay students. They focus on parish ministry and the need to train priests to pastor communities.

In part III, her review of the organizational aspects of theologates is complemented by a careful assessment of student enrollments and backgrounds of both seminarians and lay students. Attention especially is given to the evolution and development of degree programs, as well as what is involved in human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral formation, and how they have changed.

The data Katarina presents on the decline of enrollment since the peak years of the 1960s is sobering. In 1969, there were 4,876 diocesan seminarians and 3,283 religious order candidates, for a total of 8,159 men studying for the priesthood. Over the next 15 years, the total number dropped to 3,813 and continued to decline, albeit less dramatically. Most recent enrollment, in 2014, was 3,650, divided between diocesan candidates at 2,799 and religious candidates at 851.

Readers will find her work very engaging and even conversational. Throughout her presentation she organizes the data into a narrative, explaining the evolution of the changes and the possible reasons why they occurred. This allows her to offer insights about new directions for the future in part IV.

As I think back on that year of happy coincidence, and the nearly three decades since then, I find that Katarina's work is impressive on a number of levels. First, she has maintained a discipline in her method of research over the years, which makes it easy for her to make connections with the data she gathered in each succeeding project. Secondly, by giving us a common frame of reference and a language to engage each other, Katarina has facilitated conversations among those involved in seminary work. We literally were able to see how each other was doing, and that we had a lot to gain by sharing information with each other. As the title of her first book suggests, she also gave me and other rectors reasons for hope, as we discovered in her work that the concerns and challenges we faced were indeed common and could be best addressed in a collaborative way. It is not too much to suggest that in these past three decades any significant conversation about seminaries and theologates has been shaped by her research. That includes the work done in preparing the various revisions of *PPF*.

Her research also facilitated conversation with those involved in ministerial formation in other denominations. This resulted in sharing best practices. One particular example is in the area of board development. With her advice and assistance, many Catholic seminaries benefited from generous grants from the Lilly Endowment that funded board development retreats. Much of this was due to Katarina's solid reputation with Lilly and her credibility in the Catholic seminary world.

Sr. Katarina has proven to be an able scholar and researcher, but as I think about how she writes, there is another word that comes to mind. The Swiss painter of the last century, Paul Klee, once observed that "art doesn't give us things to see; art makes us see." Katarina is a researcher and a scholar, but also an artist. She makes us see. The rest is up to us.

Archbishop Blase J. Cupich  
Archdiocese of Chicago



# Acknowledgments

After many years of engagement with colleagues in seminary and theologate communities, those who deserve great thanks for assisting me with research and writing are numerous. Beyond the immediate scope of these institutions are many other religious leaders, community members, friends, and family who have been supportive in a variety of ways. The project required cooperation on many levels, but given the limits of space, I will be able to name only some of those who deserve recognition.

As I began research for the book, I was fortunate to have a committee of advisers who have been leaders in seminary education for many years. Their insights and suggestions have added so much to the final product, and beyond that, each of them wrote a commentary for the book: Rev. Ron Rolheiser, OMI, president, Oblate School of Theology; Dr. Thomas Walters, dean emeritus, Saint Meinrad Seminary; Rev. Leon Hutton, dean of Human Formation, St. John's Seminary, Camarillo, California (now pastor); Sr. Barbara Reid, OP, vice president and academic dean, Catholic Theological Union; Rev. Msgr. Peter Vaccari, rector, St. Joseph's Seminary, Dunwoodie, New York. Also on the advisory committee was Msgr. Jeremiah McCarthy, moderator of the Curia for the Diocese of Tucson, who wrote observations on the state of moral theology and on the role of the Association of Theological Schools with Catholic theologates. The broad and dependable advice they offered and their written contributions were priceless. I thank each of them for their time, interest, wise counsel, and friendship.

Adding valuable insights were the leaders of theologates—rectors, presidents, and deans—who responded to a lengthy survey about many aspects of their institutions. Although too numerous to mention by name, I greatly appreciate their candid views and perceptions and their generosity in taking the time to respond fully and willingly to the survey, as well as

assisting me in so many other ways through the years. I hope this work accurately reflects their understandings.

I am grateful to the Lilly Endowment, Inc., for again funding my research on Catholic theologates. Their generosity through the years has made it possible for me to have the time and resources to write three other books. On this project, John Wimmer, program director in the Religion Division, has offered encouragement and support for the duration of the grant. Also, I am indebted to Liturgical Press for again publishing my book, especially to Barry Hudock, who has been supportive and patient in guiding me to the conclusion of this project. Dr. Victor Klimoski, former academic dean of the Saint Paul Seminary, edited and commented on the text, improving immensely its intelligibility and clarity. His firsthand knowledge of seminaries adds considerably to the substance of the book. Without the proficient efforts of Catherine Slight, my assistant, this book would be far from complete. She was indefatigable in tracking down every piece of information and persistent in attending to endless details—always with a positive spirit.

Several individuals and organizations make my work more complete and more accurate. Mary L. Gautier, senior research associate at CARA, has been a constant source of knowledge about and understanding of data on seminaries. Her immediate answers to my most obscure questions demonstrate her extraordinary grasp of the subject and her magnanimous friendship in spending time to answer. For more than fifty years CARA has provided quality research on seminaries and many other aspects of the Catholic Church. Dr. Daniel Aleshire, executive director of the Association of Theological Schools, is a valued colleague and friend who has taken unparalleled interest in my research. For twenty-five years he has provided endless opportunities for me to learn about theological education beyond Catholic institutions and to present my research findings in many contexts. I am so grateful to him both personally and professionally.

Religious and academic leaders have contributed in many additional ways. Archbishop Blase Cupich of Chicago, who wrote the foreword for this book, has been a steadfast supporter and thoughtful advocate of my work for many years. He has shown intense interest in seminary formation and has served the church in this endeavor with exceptional competence. Bishop Gerald Kicanas of Tucson, since his days as rector of Mundelein Seminary, has encouraged and supported me on numerous occasions. Msgr. W. Shawn McKnight, as head of the USCCB Committee on Clergy, Consecrated Life, and Vocations, initiated and cooperated with many

projects of mutual interest and always included me in his deliberations. The Sulpicians as a group, particularly Rev. Melvin Blanchette, SS, have provided leadership in ongoing education for seminary personnel for over twenty-five years. They have sponsored workshops to educate new seminary formators, that have enhanced my understanding and offered me an opportunity to make presentations at these gatherings.

Other longtime associates and friends remain as unwavering allies: Former Weston Jesuit School of Theology colleagues; Rev. John O'Malley, SJ, Georgetown University; Sr. Mary Sweeney, SC, Rev. Richard Clifford, SJ, and Rev. Randall Sachs, SJ, Boston College; Rev. Edward Vacek, SJ, Loyola University, New Orleans; Rev. Frederic Maples, SJ, Boston; Rev. Donald Senior, CP, president emeritus, Catholic Theological Union; Dr. Deborah Organ, St. Catherine University; and Rev. Kevin O'Neil, CSsR, San Alfonso Retreat House, New Jersey. Colleagues at my own school also have been understanding and thoughtful, making it possible for me to work in an atmosphere conducive to research and writing: Msgr. Aloysius Callaghan, rector and vice president at the Saint Paul Seminary School of Divinity; Dr. Julie Sullivan, president of the University of St. Thomas; and coworkers at the seminary, especially Sr. Paul Therese Saiko, SSND, and at the university, faculty of the departments of Sociology and Theology.

On a personal level, I am so thankful to my friends and family who have endured several years of inattention as I focused on this book. The Sisters of St. Francis, Rochester, Minnesota, my religious community of more than fifty years, have always stood by me. The leaders of the congregation, especially our current leader, Sr. Marilyn Geiger, encouraged and assisted me in every way possible. My small community of Franciscan sisters, Ellen Whelan, Gavin Hagan, Marlene Pinzka, Jean Keniry, Colleen Byron, and Joanne Loecher, have shown incredible patience in listening to my many tales of seminary life. All of them, along with our sisters Yvette Kaiser, June Kaiser, and Margaret Boler, are valued friends.

My family grows larger every year and all of them have demonstrated enthusiasm, thoughtfulness, and patience as I work too long and miss too many happy family occasions. I attribute the joy that pervades my life to all of them—especially my living brothers, Robert, Michael, and Matthew, and those deceased, John, Edward, and Paul, along with my parents. Each day for the three years of this project I have prayed for them and asked God for protection and strength for all of us: “Let us not grow tired of doing good, for in due time we shall reap our harvest, if we do not give up. So then, while we have the opportunity, let us do good to all, but especially

to those who belong to the family of the faith” (Gal 6:9-10). My profound thanks to all who in any way have been there for me. God has blessed me abundantly with faith, family, and friends.

# Frequently Used Documents, Abbreviations, and Terms

## Vatican II Documents

- OT*     *Optatam Totius* (Decree on the Training of Priests), 1965  
*PO*     *Presbyterorum Ordinis* (Decree on the Ministry and Life  
          of Priests), 1965  
*LG*     *Lumen Gentium* (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church), 1964

## Additional Documents

- PDV*    *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the  
          Formation of Priests in the Circumstances of the Present  
          Day), 1992  
*EG*     *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel; Apostolic  
          Exhortation on Evangelization), 2013  
*PPF*    *Program of Priestly Formation* (issued by the bishops of the  
          United States), 1971, 1976, 1981, 1992, and 2005

## Organizations

- USCCB    United States Conference of Catholic Bishops  
NCEA    National Catholic Educational Association,  
          Seminary Department  
ATS     Association of Theological Schools  
CARA    Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate

## Explanation of Terms

Theologates is the term used for major seminaries and schools of theology. Generally diocesan theologates are called seminaries and religious order

theologates are called schools of theology. In the text, the term that best fits the set of institutions being discussed is used.

Rectors/presidents identifies the CEOs, the principal leaders of theologates. In a few university-related schools, the CEO may be called a dean. With some exceptions, leaders of diocesan seminaries are called rectors and of religious order theologates, presidents.

The term “pillars” is used to describe the four areas of seminary formation: human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral. In recent years, alternate words such as dimensions, aspects, or areas are used to indicate that formation is an integral endeavor, not made up of separate units, as suggested by the term pillars.

The Apostolic Visitation of the Seminaries and Houses of Priestly Formation in the United States was conducted by the Congregation for Catholic Education. Visits took place from September 2005 through July 2006 and the final report was issued in December 2008.

Keystone Conferences for faculty and administrators were funded by the Lilly Endowment, Inc., and the Holy Name Province of Franciscans from 1996 to 2002. Representatives met each year to discuss the major issues of theologates and to discern approaches to deal with diversity, integration, and assessment.

## PART I

# Context



# Introduction

The Second Vatican Council closed over fifty years ago. Its official documents have had a profound impact on the life of the church, including one of the last, *Optatam Totius* (Decree on the Training of Priests). Issued on October 28, 1965, four hundred years after the Council of Trent's document on priestly formation, this new document was revolutionary and required numerous adjustments in seminaries. The main question for this book, then, is "How well have seminaries and schools of theology responded to the intentions of Vatican II?" The answer is multifaceted and measures of success are not exact, but examining the programs and practices that prepare students for ministry offers an important source of understanding. While seminarians are the primary focus of the book, lay students have been enrolling in theologates since the 1980s. Since all graduates are important to parishes, dioceses, and other church organizations, the book takes into account the experience of lay students as well.

Determining if the promise of Vatican II is being fulfilled through seminary formation programs is a demanding and urgent task because of the impact pastoral leaders have on the life of the church. The following chapters contribute to that task by exploring how and how well theologates are forming seminarians and lay ministers so that they can effectively accomplish their ministries. Various sources of information guide this effort. Of fundamental import are the five editions of the *Program of Priestly Formation (PPF)*, issued in 1971, 1976, 1981, 1992, and 2005 by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). These documents have provided the authoritative guidelines for seminary formation, and each edition reflects the changing considerations of Vatican II and its influence on the way theologates organize themselves. The book refers as well to other universal and local church documents helping to shape the content and programs in theologates.

Another valuable source of information comes from the reams of statistical data gathered and analyzed by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA). Since 1967 CARA has surveyed seminaries annually about their status, enrollment numbers, student characteristics, and many other topics. Especially in recent years, the staff of CARA has authored comprehensive analyses of the data. Finally, for over three decades I have collected and studied information about how theologates function and have interviewed hundreds of seminary administrators, faculty, and students about their knowledge and experience of formation. Rectors/presidents have enabled me to make nearly five hundred visits to their schools to gather information and report on the findings. The data generated by these visits are important in themselves, but cumulatively they help clarify the ethos of each theologate.

Other agencies, leaders, and researchers also have been of great assistance as sources of influence and information. One of the most important organizations involving seminaries was the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA) Seminary Department established in 1898 as the “Education Conference of Catholic Seminary Faculties.” Disbanded in 2014, the Seminary Department provided critical leadership in the development of the church’s theologates, gathering seminary leaders for mutual learning and disseminating information pertinent to the profession. The Seminary Department served as a liaison with the bishops’ conference and established connections with foundations and donors, the Association of Theological Schools (ATS), and other organizations important to the excellence of ministerial education. The annual NCEA convention brought together faculty and administrators to hear about current practices and new research and to meet with peers to discuss interests of mutual concern. For generations the Seminary Department published research and commentary, culminating in the substantive quarterly, *The Seminary Journal*. In recent years, collaboration between the executive director of the Seminary Department, Msgr. Jeremiah McCarthy, and the head of USCCB’s Secretariat of Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations, Msgr. W. Shawn McKnight, resulted in projects related to celibacy, liturgy and spirituality, catechesis, evangelization, ecumenism, and justice and equality.<sup>1</sup> They also

<sup>1</sup>CARA reports prepared for the Secretariat of Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations of the USCCB: *Celibacy Formation and New Faculty Formation in the Program of Priestly Formation* by Mary Gautier and Thomas Gaunt, 2015; *Liturgical and Spiritual Formation in Seminary Programs* by Mary Gautier, Thomas Gaunt, and Jonathon

arranged conferences for seminary leaders and priests, initiated research projects, and organized regular meetings of rectors/presidents.<sup>2</sup> For many years the executive directors of the NCEA Seminary Department were instrumental in acquiring grants to support its activities. The Religion Division of the Lilly Endowment was the major funder for many of the Seminary Department's initiatives, some of which were in collaboration with the ATS.

Membership in ATS has provided excellent support for the distinctive needs of Catholic theologates while making available to other denominations the wisdom of their Catholic counterparts in the areas of human and spiritual formation. The current executive director, Daniel Aleshire, is especially attentive to leadership development that addresses the needs of rectors/presidents, academic deans, faculty members, and other administrators. Msgr. McCarthy commented on the value of the Association with special attention to accreditation:

ATS accreditation provides schools with a regular, ongoing opportunity for assessment of strengths and areas in need of improvement. The evidence that is gathered is based on data and established performance indicators of achievement. The information in the self-study document prepared by each school provides a historical record of a school's growth and a means of ongoing accountability to the community that it serves. For bishops and vocation directors, this data provides direct, objective evidence of a seminary's quality and its implementation of the *Program of Priestly Formation*.<sup>3</sup>

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Wiggins, 2014; *Formation in Catechesis and Evangelization and Ecumenical and Inter-religious Relations in Seminary Programs* by Mary Gautier and Mark Gray, 2013; and *Justice and Equality: Formation in Catholic Social Teaching and Intercultural Competency in Seminary Programs*, by Mary Gautier and Joseph O'Hara, 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Among the projects were: *An Assessment Workbook* by Jeremiah McCarthy and Mark Latcovich, 2014, the purpose of which was to examine the tasks of assessing seminary student outcomes and seminary degree programs; The Parresia Project, led by Richard Henning, which involved faculty and others who explored ways to help prepare priests coming from other countries to minister in the US, and the communities they will serve; and a gathering of experts on "Intercultural Competencies: A Necessary Conversation" with the American Psychological Association, 2012.

<sup>3</sup> Msgr. Jeremiah McCarthy, former director of accreditation for ATS, served as a member of the advisory committee for this project and authored these comments concerning ATS.

Msrgr. McCarthy goes on to note that ATS is a superb example of ecumenism in action. It is an agency that strengthens Catholic identity and enhances the quality of formation of priests, deacons, and lay ministers for service to the church. It helps to sustain seminaries as they deal with new and emerging challenges, ranging from the increasing diversity of students to economic sustainability, and helping seminary leaders and faculty members respond to the changing landscape of religious life in North America.

Based on these resources, the book delves into all aspects of seminary formation from the recent past through the present and on to future directions. The initial chapter examines the effects of Vatican II as it evolved since the first edition of the *PPF*. The next chapters examine the organization and personnel of the current thirty-nine theologates in the United States by considering the mission, vision, and structure of each, as well as their leadership of boards, administrators, and faculty. Research on students and programs constitute the next several chapters. The numbers and characteristics of both seminarians and lay students who are preparing for ministry are studied, with reference to the significant difference in their backgrounds and attitudes from many of the Catholics they will serve. With this profile in place, the book turns to the nature of the programs in human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral formation that will influence the sort of pastoral services the graduates will provide. The final chapter suggests new directions that seem appropriate and necessary in the preparation of seminarians and lay ecclesial ministry students if the people of God are to be served well.

The book concludes with commentaries by five seminary leaders who also served on an advisory committee for the book project. The issues, related to their expertise, are on the spirituality of leadership by Rev. Ronald Rolheiser, OMI, president, Oblate School of Theology; the significance of generational differences in the church by Dr. Thomas Walters, dean emeritus, Saint Meinrad Seminary; human formation by Rev. Leon Hutton, dean of Human Formation, St. John's Seminary, Camarillo, California (now pastor); trends in Scripture study and preaching by Sr. Barbara Reid, OP, vice president and academic dean, Catholic Theological Union; and the culture of encounter in seminary formation by Msrgr. Peter Vaccari, rector, St. Joseph's Seminary and College, Dunwoodie in Yonkers, New York.

The overall findings point to a sharper focus on priestly ministry than thirty years ago in the mission and vision statements of diocesan theologates, especially those that are operated by dioceses rather than religious

orders. While lay students continue to be enrolled in relatively high numbers, many of these schools have created programs for them separated from seminarians. Religious order theologates usually have more unified programs. The leadership of theologates has undergone rapid change in the past decade. Board membership has expanded significantly to include more people with financial expertise. The terms of rectors/presidents are shorter than at any other time in the past thirty years with about 75 percent in their first five years of office. Their role identity is determined in part by their attention to internal or external responsibilities, and these vary in relation to their understanding of the mission. Duplicate structures for seminarians and lay students, as well as the initiation of new degree and certificate programs, have added financial strain on some schools. Institutional development staff and activities increased to respond to new financial requirements. Faculty composition shows a significant decline in the proportion of priests, dropping by 20 percent since 1985, and an increase of 15 percent of laypeople. At the same time, priests on faculty are now expected to accept increased responsibilities for human formation advising and spiritual direction. Retirement of longtime faculty reached a high point in the past decade. All of this signals a new era of seminary leadership.

The most noteworthy change for seminarians is the human formation program, a new addition as a separate program in response to the directives of Pope John Paul II in *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (PDV) issued in 1992. Field experiences in pastoral settings are more diverse, but these do not always match the changing demographics of church members.

Recently, fifty years after the council, Pope Francis opened the Holy Door of St. Peter's Basilica to inaugurate the Jubilee Year of Mercy. In his opening homily, the pope remembered the Second Vatican Council as "a genuine encounter between the Church and the men and women of our time."

Wherever there are people, the Church is called to reach out to them and to bring the joy of the Gospel, and the mercy and forgiveness of God. After these decades, we again take up this missionary drive with the same power and enthusiasm. The Jubilee challenges us to this openness, and demands that we not neglect the spirit which emerged from Vatican II, the spirit of the Samaritan, as Blessed Paul VI expressed it at the conclusion of the Council.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup>Francis, homily, Holy Mass and Opening of the Holy Door, Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, December 8, 2015, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2015/documents/papa-francesco\\_20151208\\_giubileo-omelia-apertura.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2015/documents/papa-francesco_20151208_giubileo-omelia-apertura.html).

It is these sentiments of encounter and openness that need to define the purpose and inspiration of preparation for ministry. In *Evangelii Gaudium* (EG; *The Joy of the Gospel*) and in many of his addresses, Pope Francis elaborates on what ministry should be like. He speaks of cultural challenges (61–67) such as secularism, individualism, and globalization that affect our ability to inculturate the faith (68–70). In the extensive pronouncement on preaching, he specifies the challenge in this way:

Proclaiming the Gospel message to different cultures also involves proclaiming it to professional, scientific and academic circles. This means an encounter between faith, reason and the sciences with a view to developing new approaches and arguments on the issue of credibility, a creative apologetics which would encourage greater openness to the Gospel on the part of all. (EG 132)

Pope Francis also offers advice that would serve well the agenda for any pastoral formation program: “The preacher also needs to keep his ear to the people and to discover what it is that the faithful need to hear. A preacher has to contemplate the word, but he also has to contemplate his people . . . paying attention ‘to actual people, to using their language, their signs and symbols, to answering the questions they ask’” (154). No one underestimates the challenge this poses for those charged with preparing the church’s future ministers. It is a challenge to ground people in the intellectual, liturgical, and spiritual traditions of the church while encouraging the sort of human development that equips them with the fluency to “link the message of a biblical text to a human situation, to an experience which cries out for the light of God’s word” (154). This book will hopefully serve as a resource to this transformative end.

## Chapter 1

# The Effects of Vatican II on the Present State of Seminaries and Theologates

### Background and Overview

Few aspects of church life have been affected as profoundly by the Second Vatican Council as the theological schools where men are prepared for priesthood, and especially in the past twenty-five years where laypeople study to become lay ecclesial ministers.<sup>1</sup> While many theologians and other commentators have analyzed the impact of Vatican II on the church as a whole, it is only more recently that several authors have taken up in a substantial way how the work of the council related to priestly formation.<sup>2</sup> Until the 1970s most seminaries closely resembled those prescribed by the Council of Trent's 1563 Decree on Seminaries. Leaders made few substantial changes until several years after Vatican II, though by the mid-1960s some authors began writing about needed modifications and

<sup>1</sup> The term "theological schools" or "theologates" refers to diocesan seminaries and religious order schools of theology. Diocesan seminaries commonly enroll religious order candidates as well, and both types of schools also often enroll some lay students. The change in the numbers of schools and students is shown on the chart in appendix 1-A.

<sup>2</sup> The most thorough treatment of the topic is by Maryanne Confoy, *Religious Life and Priesthood: Perfectae Caritatis, Optatam Totius, Presbyterorum Ordinis* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2008).

a few models incorporated adaptations in design and method. To most Catholics, even past the mid-twentieth century, these institutions seemed enclosed and impenetrable. Much of what had transpired in seminaries for four hundred years changed radically in 1965 with the publication of *Optatam Totius* (OT), the Vatican II Decree on the Training of Priests.<sup>3</sup> That document continues to influence seminaries and pastoral formation programs for both seminarians and lay students.

The chapter provides a short historical background on priestly formation, with brief comments on the role and character of seminaries through the centuries. In the second section, attention turns to what *OT* says, how it is understood, and its enormous impact on seminary formation. Then follows a discussion of the *Program of Priestly Formation* (PPF), mandated for each country by *OT* and published five times in the United States between 1971 and 2005. Theological schools adapted their formational and educational programs with each succeeding edition, with a declining emphasis on the teachings of Vatican II in later editions. The final section of the chapter seeks to uncover possible reasons for the evolution in thinking about and the practices of pastoral formation since Vatican II, especially over the past thirty years. These developments can best be understood by considering the bishops who served on the committees that authored the PPFs through the years, such as their backgrounds and involvement with Vatican II. It also describes the role of faculty by assessing how changes in the approaches to and content of curriculum from the early 1980s to the present were affected by the council.

## A. History of Seminaries

The long history of priestly formation has passed through many phases. In fact, the three years Jesus spent with his chosen Twelve is sometimes referred to as the first “seminary program,” complete with all four “pillars” as found in the current PPF, namely, human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral formation. For the first four centuries, no formal program or institutions for the education of seminarians has been uncovered. During Augustine’s time, the local synod in Carthage “called for a priestly training that produces priests ‘who know scripture, can preach, understand church

<sup>3</sup> The translation used for Vatican II documents is Austin Flannery, ed., *Vatican Council II: Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations; The Basic Sixteen Documents* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2014).

laws and are upright in their personal behavior.”<sup>4</sup> Even then the majority of priestly formation was done in the form of apprenticeships with local bishops or parish priests, while students stayed in their family homes.<sup>5</sup>

From the seventh to the thirteenth centuries priestly formation gradually began to take shape in the form of episcopal (cathedral) and monastic schools, but a comprehensive history of seminaries is not available for this early period.<sup>6</sup> From 1123 to 1215 four of the five Lateran ecumenical councils met at the Lateran Cathedral in Rome and, among other topics, they dealt with aspects of clerical life. One result of the third Lateran Council in 1179 was a mandate that a priest be appointed to the cathedral and that he be responsible and remunerated for the formation of local clerics. The fourth Lateran Council of 1215 further required that this priest be a theologian who would teach the Scriptures and pastoral theology.<sup>7</sup>

In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, seeds of present formation structures were sown in university programs, for example, in Paris, Bologna, and Rome. The programs were available for both religious and diocesan candidates for the priesthood, but most likely few parish priests were trained in these schools, especially if they were destined for the countryside. Rather the schools were established for “elite ministers for high society.”<sup>8</sup> In response to “the sorry moral condition of the clergy,” residential life with a rigid regimen was established, including compulsory devotions and “demanding asceticism.”<sup>9</sup> Nonetheless, with these few exceptions, “during the years preceding the Protestant Reformation, clerical formation in general lacked a solid and well-balanced intellectual and moral foundation and a practical preparation for ministry.”<sup>10</sup> In the period after the establishment of university programs and before the Council

<sup>4</sup> Confoy, *Religious Life and Priesthood*, 77–78. Reference to Christopher M. Bellitto, “Priestly Training before Trent: Rethinking Some Evidence from the Long Middle Ages,” in *Medieval Education*, ed. Ronald B. Begley and Joseph W. Koterski (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 35–49.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 77–78.

<sup>7</sup> Michael Papesch, *Clerical Culture: Contradiction and Transformation* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2004), 62.

<sup>8</sup> Confoy, *Religious Life and Priesthood*, 78.

<sup>9</sup> Joseph White, *The Diocesan Seminary in the United States: A History from the 1780s to the Present* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), 2; and Confoy, *Religious Life and Priesthood*, 78.

<sup>10</sup> Confoy, *Religious Life and Priesthood*, 79.

of Trent, several developments influenced the direction of formation for priesthood, especially in 1552 in Rome when the Jesuits opened their Collegium Germanicum and in late 1555 in England.<sup>11</sup>

Over a period of nearly twenty years (1545 to 1563), the Council of Trent addressed many issues related to the clergy. In an early session of the council (1546) a decision was made that colleges should be established solely for priestly training in every diocese (c. 16, final version c. 18). It was a decision that would have reverberating effects for many generations. “It is difficult to exaggerate the canon’s long-range influence.”<sup>12</sup> These schools “sought to isolate and protect priestly candidates from the dangers of the world, to educate and form priests who would serve the church and keep their parishioners away from the aberrations of the era. The intention of the entire Tridentine Decree on Seminaries was to protect ‘endangered youth’ by removing them from the world and to fortify them in their priestly vocation.”<sup>13</sup> In its twenty-third session, in July 1563 the Council of Trent issued its Decree on Seminaries. This decree “represented a major change in seminary training in terms of its reform of the diverse and inconsistent types of formation for ordination that had prevailed globally over the centuries.”<sup>14</sup> Since bishops were assigned responsibility for determining how their candidates were to be formed morally and intellectually, different forms of clerical training resulted from diocese to diocese. Nonetheless, the decree founded the seminary system as it substantially existed at the time of the opening of Vatican II.

The Council of Trent decree indicated that “the theological and ascetical training for diocesan priests was based on the model of the risen Christ as priest and victim. The emphasis on priestly vocation that prevailed in this model was less that of service to the people than of an inner call to life in Christ. The monastic approach to priestly vocation and formation influenced much of the writing on the spirituality of the diocesan priest even until Vatican II.”<sup>15</sup> On academic formation, the decree stated that the seminarians “should study grammar, singing, keeping church accounts and other useful skills; and they should be versed in Holy Scripture, church

<sup>11</sup> John W. O’Malley, *Trent: What Happened at the Council* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), 212.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Confoy, *Religious Life and Priesthood*, 79.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 78–79.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

documents [*libros ecclesiasticos*], homilies of the Fathers [*sancti*], and the practice of rites and ceremonies and of administering the sacraments, particularly all that seems appropriate for hearing confessions.”<sup>16</sup> At the time, the council did not intend that every priest be educated to the same level, but all were expected to live an upright life.<sup>17</sup> Those living in rural areas and dioceses had fewer opportunities for study, while those in cities had available a form of the cathedral schools of the past.

Response to Trent’s Decree on Seminaries was rapid. In 1565, Pius IV established the Roman College, attached to the Roman Seminary, as a Tridentine model for all dioceses.<sup>18</sup> Within a few years, the number of lay students enrolled in its classes far exceeded that of clerical candidates so that by 1639 some 130 lay students were enrolled along with 40 clerical students. “By the seventeenth century, the formation and spirituality of the diocesan seminary was fundamentally shaped by the French model of the Sulpicians and Vincentians.”<sup>19</sup> Later other religious orders developed their own seminaries; the Benedictines and Jesuits in particular were strongly influential.

Great disparity was evident in the way dioceses implemented the requirements set out by the Council of Trent. Even well into the twentieth century considerable variation could be found in the quality of priestly formation programs and in the ways they were implemented. The same might be said for the twenty-first century.

## B. Development of *Optatam Totius*

The council fathers of Vatican II developed *OT* with a clear understanding of how the training of priests should be intimately intertwined with the pastoral life of the church, and so they paid close attention to *Presbyterorum Ordinis* (*PO* [Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests]), already approved by the council. Cardinal Leo Joseph Suenens captured

<sup>16</sup> O’Malley, *Trent*, 214.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 213.

<sup>18</sup> Confoy, *Religious Life and Priesthood*, 79–80.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 80. Both Sulpicians and Vincentians conducted many seminaries in the United States through the years, the Sulpicians first beginning in 1791 and the Vincentians from 1818 onward. Vincentians tended to emphasize mission experiences and pastoral formation and Sulpicians tended to have a stronger intellectual tradition. Sulpician formation also called for the directors and faculty to live together with the seminarians on a one-to-one approach of formation.

this necessary connection when he said, “Vatican Council II must create a new kind of seminary in line with the needs of today.”<sup>20</sup> Not all of the council fathers were in agreement as some argued for faithfulness to past seminary training and processes. It was the divergence of opinion between adaptation to changing circumstances and adherence to tradition that was the basis of the bishops’ discussions on seminary training during the drafting of the decree. These disparities illustrate how strongly the different sides felt about the shifts, and it also reveals some of the compromises the council fathers made to reach the level of consensus required by Paul VI. Nonetheless, the schema was passed with a vote of 2,074 for and 41 opposed. *OT* underwent some elaboration and reordering and was finally passed on October 28, 1965, receiving a nearly unanimous vote.<sup>21</sup>

### **What Is the Content of *Optatam Totius*?**

From the first paragraph onward considerable disagreement is evidenced between the traditional and the progressive council fathers about the direction *OT* should take. In the introduction, the document first acknowledges the “supreme importance of priestly formation” and in the same sentence goes on to assure the more traditional bishops that it would strengthen the regulations that had long been in use and shown to be sound. At the same time it promises those who see the need for a new kind of seminary that it has added new elements that “correspond with the constitutions and decrees of this council and with the changed conditions of our time” (*OT* Introduction). The prescriptions of the decree directly concerned the training of diocesan clergy, but were to be appropriately adapted to all clerical training, including religious and monastic priests.

### **Areas of emphasis in *Optatam Totius***

1. *Development of priestly formation programs tailored to the needs and circumstances of the region.* Each episcopal conference was to undertake programs that responded to the particular circumstances and pastoral needs of the region. This decentralization displeased some of those in the Curia who were used to a uniform program for formation of priests over

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

<sup>21</sup> John W. O’Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 240.

which they had control, but the call for inculturation and respect for local churches was already embedded in the thinking of other commissions and so curial opposition did not prevail. This mandate appealed to the bishops and, in John O'Malley's words, "It was also symptomatic of the council's consistent concern for adaptation to local circumstances and for placing more discretion into local hands."<sup>22</sup>

2. *Importance of fostering vocations.* During its preliminary work, the commission responsible for *OT* expressed great concern about the significant decline in vocations that was already occurring. While very little debate took place because of the high level of agreement about the content of the section of the document on "More Active Encouragement of Priestly Vocations," several bishops spoke to its importance due to the "crisis of vocations" in many parts of the world, especially in Europe. They ascribed the problem to "the de-Christianization of the world (especially the Western world), the smaller size of Catholic families, and the failure of church leaders to encourage vocations."<sup>23</sup> Thus the tendency to blame the actions of Vatican II for the decline of vocations did not hold for Europe since the pattern of diminishment happened before Vatican II; in the United States, the considerable drop in vocations came so soon after the end of the council—already by 1969 it was 6,602, a decrease of almost 25 percent from the beginning of the council—that the decline would erroneously be attributed as a direct result of the council (see appendix 1-A). The significant decline by 1970 in enrollment in high school seminaries was perhaps more likely related to the council, which exhibited a lack of enthusiasm for this level of formation. While the high school system, much more in use in parts of Europe than in the rest of the world, was accepted, it was not imposed in *OT*. Instead, the decree emphasized the role of the family in developing vocations.

3. *Centrality of pastoral training, thus breaking from the isolation of seminary life.* At the heart of the decree is section III on setting up major seminaries. The preliminary discussion sets the tone by expressing a widely

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. Although this was the first time such a directive was given, the issuance of the *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis* by the Sacred Congregation for Education in 1970 contributed to a more common approach throughout the world.

<sup>23</sup> Confoy, *Religious Life and Priesthood*, 83: Bishop Kieran Conry in Ireland "was astounded to discover that one group of Catholics ascribed the loss of priestly vocations and all the ills of the church, 'including, inexplicably, the horror of clerical child abuse, to the Second Vatican Council.'" From *Priest & People* (August 2003).

supported position that the decree needed to be systematically tied to *PO* and the document that would become *Lumen Gentium* (*LG*). Speaking on behalf of the commission preparing the Decree on Seminaries, Giuseppe Carraro, bishop of Verona, named “the five characteristics of the schema: its pastoral dimension, adaptation to the present day, adaptation to the needs of different localities and peoples, balanced synthesis, and appropriate renewal. Pastoral concern, he said, informed all the propositions and he hoped they would promote an ‘organic and vital synthesis’ in the education of priests.”<sup>24</sup> Later at least three other elements were added, calling for “a more pastoral approach to the process of formation, for a deeper biblical formation, and for more adequate methods of education.”<sup>25</sup>

Furthermore, this section sets out the ends toward which all formation is to be oriented. Priests are to be prepared for (1) the ministry of the word, so that they understand the revealed word of God, meditate on it, and express it in words and in example; (2) the ministry of worship and sanctification, so that through their prayers and sacred liturgical celebrations they might perfect the work of sanctification; and (3) the ministry of the parish, so that they might know how to make Christ present as they give their lives in service having become servants of all, that they might win over all the more. The summary affirms the direction: “All aspects of their training, therefore—spiritual, intellectual and disciplinary—are to be coordinated by joint action with this pastoral purpose” (*OT* 4). This section introduces what is often referred to as the “servant model” of priesthood, starkly contrasted with the “cultic model” of recent years.

In this section, the document also identifies the desirable characteristics of faculty: they should be prepared in sound doctrine, suitable pastoral experience, and special spiritual and pedagogical training. Administrators, under the rector’s leadership, are to form a closely knit community. Admission of candidates is to be done with “watchful concern” with only those who are worthy of being promoted and others given direction to embrace the lay apostolate.

4. *Spiritual training, including celibacy.* The primary emphasis of *OT* is found in the fourth section, “Greater Attention to Spiritual Training.” It begins with the admonition that “spiritual formation should be closely

<sup>24</sup> Giuseppe Alberigo and Joseph A. Komonchak, eds., *The History of Vatican II, Vol. 4: Church as Communion: Third Period and Intersession, September 1964–September 1965* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Press, 2003), 357.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, footnote 115.

allied to doctrinal and pastoral training” and that all aspects of formation should be integrated. Seminarians are to be taught to seek Christ, meditate on Christ, and imitate Christ, “especially the holy Eucharist and the Divine Office. Let them seek him too in the person of the bishop who sends them and in the people to whom they are sent, especially the poor, the little ones, the sick, sinners and unbelievers.” Practices of piety are commended, “but care must be taken that spiritual formation not be reduced to pious exercises alone nor merely develop religious sentiment” (OT 8).

Reinforcing the concept of the servant model, seminarians are to be made fully aware of the burdens they are undertaking. The document affirms that they should be admonished to give their lives with a generous heart and to “realize that they are not destined for a life of power and honors, but are destined to be totally dedicated to the service of God and pastoral ministry” (OT 9). Very little is said about celibacy except that students are to be educated in the tradition of celibacy and are to see it as “a gift to which, inspired by the holy Spirit and helped by divine grace, they must freely and generously respond.” Aided by suitable safeguards, “they are to be warned of the dangers their chastity will encounter” (10). Other admonitions are put forward: the norms of Christian education are to be observed, formation is to be complemented by findings of sound psychology and pedagogy, so as to be able to make sound decisions and develop human maturity. “But the discipline is to be applied in such a way that the students make it their own, so that they accept the authority of superiors from inner conviction and for reasons of conscience,” that is, for supernatural reasons (11). Toward these goals, “the bishops must set aside a suitable period of time for more intensive spiritual training” (12).

5. *Connecting philosophical and theological studies with the modern world.* The fifth section of OT, “The Revision of Ecclesiastical Studies,” is considered second in importance only to spiritual formation. It provides a thorough discussion of the place of philosophical and theological disciplines as essential elements of priestly formation. Regarding philosophy, the text states that students should “take account of modern philosophical developments” and that “subjects should be taught in such a way that students are first of all gradually led to a solid and coherent knowledge of human nature, the world and God, guided by the philosophical tradition of lasting value . . . so that with a proper understanding of the present age, they will be equipped for dialogue with people of their time.” It continues, “Careful attention should be paid to the close connection between philosophy and the real problems of life” (OT 15). Notable is the absence

of specific mention of Thomas Aquinas in the discussion of philosophical disciplines, but later, under theological disciplines, he is mentioned briefly: “Then, in order to throw the fullest light possible on the mysteries of salvation, let them learn through speculation guided by St. Thomas to enter into them more deeply and see how they are interconnected, to recognize how they are present and active in liturgical celebration and in the whole life of the church” (16).<sup>26</sup>

Also in this section, *OT* underscores the central role of the study of the Bible. In addition to careful initiation into the method of exegesis, daily reading of and meditation on the Bible for inspiration and nourishment is encouraged. Dogmatic theology is to be arranged in order to deal with biblical themes first and then with the general history of the church. It is at this point that St. Thomas is mentioned, as noted above. The decree identifies several other specific theological areas to be studied: moral theology, canon law, and church history. “Liturgy, which is to be regarded as the first and ever necessary source of true Christian spirit, should be taught in the spirit of articles 15 and 16 of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy” (*OT* 16). Students also are to be given a fuller understanding of other Christian churches and ecclesial communities, as well as of other religions. The final paragraphs insist that “teaching methods need to be revised,” excessive multiplication of courses is to be avoided, and those who serve in seminaries are to be well trained and suitable in “character, virtue and talent” (17, 18).

6. *Pastoral training.* This section on “Strictly Pastoral Training” reflects the insistence in *OT* that pastoral concern is to permeate thoroughly the entire training of the students so that they are prepared for catechesis and preaching, administration of the sacraments, works of charity, and other pastoral functions. Formators are to develop certain qualities in students, “such as the ability to listen to others and to open their hearts in a spirit of charity to the various kinds of human need” (*OT* 19). This pastoral development is to take place during the course of studies and in summers.

7. *Ongoing formation.* The final section of the document focuses on younger priests who “can be gradually introduced to priestly life and apostolic activity from the spiritual, intellectual and pastoral point of

<sup>26</sup> In the 1970 *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis*, slightly more is said of the role of St. Thomas. Both documents emphasize the necessity of integrating philosophy and theology.

view, and thus renew and develop this life and activity” (*OT* 22). As they conclude *OT*, the bishops note that Vatican II pursued the work begun by the Council of Trent. Seminary faculty and administrators have responsibility for forming future priests and those preparing must realize that “the hopes of the church and the salvation of souls are being committed to them” (Conclusion).

How important was *OT*? Many commentators believe it represented an almost total overhaul of the entire system for the training of priests; others saw it as mainly adjusting what had lasted for an extended period of time, since the Council of Trent. The former view seems more accurate in light of the changes that were to appear in theological schools, especially in the succeeding decades.

### **C. Development of Programs in Theological Schools— 1971 to the Present**

Considering how theological programs developed after Vatican II, it is obvious that the themes of *OT* served as a significant guidepost in creating the first edition of the *PPF* and its revisions in 1976 and 1981. Its powerful impact on seminary formation continued until Pope John Paul II issued his *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (*PDV*) in 1992, an exhortation that shifted the primacy of place held by *OT* from the years of 1971 to 1991. The changes can be measured in several ways, such as by analyzing the points of focus, the overall content of the documents, and the prevalence of quotes from each of the documents in the respective editions. The explanation for why the shifts occurred is complex, but several indicators help explain the changes. One element is the difference in how each committee of bishops understood what the council called for as they wrote and revised the *PPF*. Another factor is the change in theological school faculties as they responded to the bishops’ directives and incorporated the teachings of Vatican II in adapting their formational and educational programs from 1971 to the present.

### **References to Vatican II in the *Programs of Priestly Formation*, 1971 to 2005**

In determining both the immediate and lasting influence of Vatican II on theological education in seminaries, it is instructive to note the references made to Vatican II documents in successive editions of *PPF* in

1971, 1976, 1981, 1992, and 2005. The study shows a declining number of quotations from and references to the council from the first to the fifth editions (see table 1.1).

Table 1.1

*References to Vatican II in the Five Editions of the Program  
of Priestly Formation*

| Document   | 1st        | 2nd        | 3rd        | 4th       | 5th       |
|--|------------|------------|------------|-----------|-----------|
| <i>Optatam Totius</i><br>(Decree on the Training of Priests)                 | 40         | 47         | 43         | 13        | 15        |
| <i>Lumen Gentium</i><br>(Dogmatic Constitution on the Church)                | 10         | 11         | 6          | 15        | 4         |
| <i>Presbyterorum Ordinis</i><br>(Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests) | 4          | 4          | 3          | 19        | 10        |
| All Other References to Documents<br>(# of other documents used)             | 24<br>(8)  | 29<br>(8)  | 16<br>(6)  | 7<br>(6)  | 9<br>(7)  |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>78</b>  | <b>91</b>  | <b>68</b>  | <b>54</b> | <b>38</b> |
| General References to Vatican II   | 26         | 40         | 36         | 13        | 15        |
| <b>Grand Total</b>   | <b>104</b> | <b>131</b> | <b>104</b> | <b>67</b> | <b>53</b> |

*The First Three Editions, 1971, 1976, and 1981.* The first edition of the PPF was published in 1971, just six years after the close of the council. Already then the authors incorporated the thinking represented in the documents of Vatican II, with 104 references, 78 to specific documents, many of them quoted at length. In addition, they made 26 general references, often with the point of establishing how important the council was in the development of the first PPF. As expected, the most frequently used document was *OT* (Decree on the Training of Priests) and second was *LG* (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church). In 1971, *Unitatis Redintegratio* (Decree on Ecumenism) was third, surpassed later by *PO*. Eight other documents were mentioned 1 to 4 times (see appendix 1-B for details).

The second edition, published in 1976, reached a peak in its focus on Vatican II. It added 27 more references for a total of 131, with 91 of them to specific documents. Again the top two, *OT* and *LG*, remained the same. Perhaps somewhat curiously, the third most frequently quoted document was *Christus Dominus* (Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church). Eight other documents were mentioned from 1 to 5 times for a total of 25. *Unitatis Redintegratio* dropped to fourth place.

By the time of the third edition, published in 1981, fifteen years after the close of the council, the number of references to Vatican II documents dropped to 104 (the same number as in 1971), with 68 references to specific documents. *OT* was the only one frequently mentioned; though again in second place, *LG* dropped from 11 to 6 references; seven other documents were mentioned from 1 to 4 times for a total of 19. The council documents were still quoted more frequently by far than any other source.

*The Last Two Editions, 1992 and 2005, and the Influence of Pastores Dabo Vobis.* The two most recent editions of the *PPF* showed a dramatically changed pattern in their use of Vatican II documents. More than ten years passed between the third and fourth editions, the former issued in 1981 and the latter in 1992, twenty-six years after the close of the council. The total number of references to Vatican II dropped from more than 100 in the three previous editions, to 67 in the fourth edition, with 54 relating to specific documents. Three major changes were notable. *PO*, mentioned only 3 or 4 times in the first three editions, was now in first place with 19 references. Again in second place, *LG* was referenced 15 times. Most dramatically, *OT*, until now in first place with 40 or more references in each of the three previous editions, was reduced to only 13 references, suggesting that this decree was no longer the primary guiding document for seminaries. Six other documents were mentioned only once or twice for a total of 7 times, illustrating the reduced impact of Vatican II in comparison with previous editions. Replacing the Vatican II documents were 85 references to *PDV*.

The fifth edition of the *PPF* published in 2005, forty years after the end of the council, includes the fewest references to the council at 53, with 38 referring to documents. The latter number is less than half of the 91 references at its peak in 1976. *OT* returned to first place, but with only 15 references; second with 10 references was *PO*. *LG* was reduced to 4 from 15; the other six documents mentioned were referenced once or twice for a total of 9 times. Again, *PDV* is quoted or referenced 76 times, more often than all the conciliar documents, and in those instances

occasional secondary references are made to a Vatican II document. Yet, *PDV* is only second in number of quotes in 2005. *Codex Iuris Canonici* (Code of Canon Law, 1983) was referenced more than 90 times, the latter paralleled by *Codex Canonum Ecclesiarum Orientalium* (Code of Canons of Eastern Churches, 1990). By comparison, in 1992, references to the Code of Canon Law numbered only 23 and were not mentioned at all in earlier editions (see appendix 1-C).

The shift in emphasis clearly moved from Vatican II references to *PDV* and the Code of Canon Law. The foreword to the 2005 *PPF* states that this edition was influenced by consultation with bishops, major superiors, and seminary rectors with others in their administrations and that it was “also greatly influenced by the Apostolic Exhortation of John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (1992).” The authors make no mention of Vatican II in the foreword. In the preface the primary role of *PDV* is reiterated in the first paragraph; the second paragraph refers to *OT* and footnotes three other Vatican II documents: *Lumen Gentium*, *Christus Dominus*, and *Presbyterorum Ordinis*. The introduction quotes John Paul II’s *Novo Millennio Ineunte* (At the Close of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000), which stated that the council itself was “the great grace bestowed on the Church in the twentieth century.” Generally, references to Vatican II in the fifth edition of the *PPF* quote a few words or make broad statements related to the council, in contrast to extended quotations in earlier editions.

### Responses of Seminaries to the Directives in *Optatam Totius*

The intentions of the council fathers regarding priestly formation were clearly communicated in *OT*. Almost immediately following the end of the council, and in some cases even during the council, seminaries made adjustments to their programs and methods of education. Some seminary leaders responded with changes in the early years, as recorded in histories of seminaries and in articles from that period.

During the years of the council and even earlier in the 1950s, the reformation of seminary life was a topic of frequent discussion among seminary administrators and faculty. A number of articles by seminary educators were published in journals read mostly by priests, but as soon as the council ended, several volumes and many articles were available for a much wider audience.<sup>27</sup> A common theme of this first phase was

<sup>27</sup> See especially James Keller and Richard Armstrong, eds., *Apostolic Renewal in the Seminary in the Light of Vatican II: The Program of Priestly Formation* (New York:

the criticism that seminarians were too isolated and thus not prepared for engagement in ministry when they finished their studies and were ordained. Some authors, notably Stafford Poole, a Vincentian, suggested that “if the seminary is to keep abreast of the modern world, it is going to have to be reunited organically with lay education.”<sup>28</sup> He believed that seminary reform was the key to the church’s renewal.

In what might be considered a second phase, these changes were reinforced with the publication of the first two editions of the *PPF* in 1971 and 1976 for seminaries in the United States. In them, the bishops’ committee wholeheartedly embraced the major themes of the council and, quoting frequently from its documents, enjoined seminary leaders to change their institutions to conform to the new patterns. In the third phase, the dependence on and mentions of the work of the council diminished gradually in the 1981 edition of the *PPF* and markedly, as noted above, in the fourth and fifth editions (1992 and 2005), when *PDV* and the Code of Canon Law became the chief guiding documents.

In *Vatican II: The Battle for Meaning*, Massimo Faggioli reinforces this pattern of evolution: “The fidelity of mainstream Catholic theology to Vatican II meant rather undramatic work for university and seminary teachers who from 1966 onward transformed their courses on sacramental theology, on ecclesiology, and on anthropology.”<sup>29</sup> However, he adds that their work did not prevent difficulties in the process of the reception of the council’s documents, and “in opposition to the moderate and reformists attitude embodied by Paul VI, the questioning of the legitimacy of Vatican II created the first real discontinuity in the reception of a general council in the second millennium.” He continues, “Even if the traditionalist movement became more and more radical in the late 1970s and the 1980s, extreme opposition to the council did not wait a decade at the end of Vatican II to disavow it.”<sup>30</sup> The seeds of doubt about the council were

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Christophers, 1965); James Michael Lee and Louis J. Putz, eds., *Seminary Education in a Time of Change* (Notre Dame, IN: Fides, 1965); and Stafford Poole, *Seminary in Crisis* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1965); also, for a later analysis of the influence of Vatican II see T. Howland Sanks, SJ, “Education for Ministry since Vatican II,” *Theological Studies* 45 (September 1984): 481–500.

<sup>28</sup> Poole, *Seminary in Crisis*, 14, 28–29; also as quoted in White, *The Diocesan Seminary in the United States*, 413.

<sup>29</sup> Massimo Faggioli, *Vatican II: The Battle for Meaning* (New York: Paulist Press, 2012), 23.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

sprouting and growing, as is reflected later in seminaries as well as in the exercise of pastoral ministry by many recently ordained priests.

A variety of sources confirmed the readiness of seminaries to receive the mandates of the council in the twenty to thirty years following the end of the council. Faculties implemented the teachings of the council in all aspects of programs, from spiritual formation to curriculum, from community life to pastoral experience. Yet, as is now evident in many situations, that receptivity and implementation has moderated, if not diminished, through the years.

In what ways were the major points of *OT* and other Vatican II documents reflected in the first *PPF*? And how did the response change from the first to the fifth editions? At the outset, the US bishops established that their authority to write and promulgate a document on seminary formation came explicitly from *OT* as one of its first mandates. It stated that it was the responsibility of each nation and region to develop its own program of priestly formation, which was to be revised from time to time and approved by the Apostolic See. The US bishops conformed to this directive by issuing the first *PPF* in 1971; others followed in 1976, 1981, 1992, and the fifth edition in 2005.<sup>31</sup> *OT* was the major source for the first *PPF*, along with the *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis*.<sup>32</sup> As each succeeding edition of the *PPF* was modified, the use of *OT* as the foundational Vatican II document on seminaries shifted. Following are several examples of changes related to both content and method.

The pastoral dimension was the framework for all aspects of the formation program according to *OT*. In the first edition of the *PPF*, the authors emphasized the relationship between belief and life, which was to be actualized in theological method that helped students develop logical rigor to bring experience and reflection into their studies. “Pastoral concern resounds throughout the Decree on Priestly Formation,” according to the first *PPF*, and it “ought to permeate thoroughly the entire training of the students,”

<sup>31</sup>The sixth program of priestly formation was scheduled to be published in 2015, but was delayed in part because of changes in the organization of the Roman Curia. The expected date of publication is now 2020.

<sup>32</sup>*Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis* (A Basic Scheme for Priestly Training), developed by the Congregation for Education for use by the bishops’ conferences to assist them in formulating their own programs (1970, rev. 1985), sets out the fundamental norms for the formation of future priests. The Congregation said that the purpose of the document was “to preserve unity and at the same time allow sound variety.”

a sentiment reflected throughout the document (*PPF* I 94, quoting *OT* 19). Toward that end the authors included a lengthy section on field education, a relatively new concept in seminary training at the time. By 2005, many other more pressing issues had intervened, especially those arising from the sexual abuse crisis, so the urgency of pastoral ministry education was somewhat diminished when the fifth edition of the *PPF* was published. The goal of pastoral formation was said to be “the formation of a ‘true shepherd’ who teaches, sanctifies, and governs or leads,” but in the same paragraph it states, “It is important not to sacrifice human, spiritual, and intellectual formation for practical experience” (*PPF* V 239). The message of the divergent statements indicates a shift in attitude: pastoral education is viewed as necessary, but it should not take precedence over other areas of formation. This caution echoes the attitude of the small number of council fathers who did not approve of widening the scope of seminary formation.

Sacred Scripture was highlighted in *OT* and in the first *PPF*, where it quoted at length from *Dei Verbum* (Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation) and made note of its significant role as the basis for academic and spiritual formation. The accompanying narrative indicated that “the central task of the Scripture professor is exegesis of the sacred text so that the student may have the best possible understanding of the sense intended by the sacred authors” (*PPF* I 51). The first *PPF* also underscored the importance of students learning the historical-critical method as an essential tool for exegesis. “The course in Sacred Scripture should serve to initiate the student in biblical criticism, contribute to his understanding of the message of the entire Scriptures, and provide a significant exercise in biblical criticism of particular parts” (*PPF* I 53). In the fifth *PPF* the most significant shift was the comment regarding the historical-critical method: “The proper understanding of Sacred Scripture requires the use of the historical-critical method, though this method is not totally sufficient” (*PPF* V 200). The previous emphases in *OT* and the first *PPF* was not as evident in the last *PPF*.

The third example has to do with methodology. The first *PPF* states that students should be able to evaluate the strengths and limitations of past and current theological speculation, noting that a student “should learn how to use biblical and historical sources in his theological thinking and how to relate this thinking to his personal faith, life, and apostolate” (*PPF* I 60). Further, the document affirms that the plurality of theologies “should be accepted and encouraged” for a deeper understanding of

our common faith (*PPF* I 34). A separate section under Methodology, labeled “Pluralism,” gives attention to the place of Thomas Aquinas. This paragraph makes reference to *OT* and reflects the compromise reached among the council fathers about the role Aquinas was to be accorded. *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis* (A Basic Scheme for Priestly Training) maintains that students “should regard St. Thomas as one of the Church’s greatest teachers while still esteeming authors of more recent times” (86, 1970). As noted above, specific mention of Thomas Aquinas is absent in the discussion of philosophical disciplines in *OT*, but under theological disciplines his place is strongly asserted (*OT* and footnote 36). In the most recent *PPF*, the importance of Aquinas is reiterated (*PPF* V 157 and footnote 102).

Particularly strong in *OT* is the call for integration of academic, pastoral, and spiritual formation. In the first *PPF* this admonition was clearly reflected, with many references to ways of presenting the program so that seminarians would learn to provide spiritual leadership and achieve a greater degree of personal and emotional maturity for the sake of ministry. An underlying goal was to attain a sense of personal responsibility. While no specific section is dedicated to human formation, elements of that dimension are identified in later editions and touched on in the three major components of formation identified above, along with community life.

Through the intervening years and until now seminaries have held fast to the goal of integration and it is considered a foundational approach to the implementation of priestly formation. However, the goal of comprehensive integration is yet to be achieved to the extent directed in *OT*: “In the revision of ecclesiastical studies, the primary aim is to coordinate philosophy and theology in such a way that together they open the minds of the students more and more to the mystery of Christ, which touches the whole of human history, continually influences the church, and is at work particularly in priestly ministry” (14).<sup>33</sup> A substantial section of *OT* called for philosophy to be taught with the goal of relating studies so that they were connected with the modern world, pastoral training, and breaking from the isolation of seminary life. Numerous conversations about how to establish a meaningful relationship between philosophy and theology and other aspects of the program have occupied faculty through the years, but has yet to be achieved.

<sup>33</sup>See *LG*, nn. 7 and 28.

The following list indicates the disposition of major changes emphasized in *OT*:

1. The *pastoral dimension* was to be the framework for all aspects of formation according to *OT*. In the 2005 *PPF*, pastoral education is viewed as necessary, but it is not to take precedence over other areas of formation.
2. *Sacred Scripture* was highlighted in *OT* and was to be the basis for academic and spiritual formation. In the 2005 *PPF*, the previous emphases are present, though the importance of the historical-critical method is lessened.
3. Concerning *methodology*, the primary aim of *OT* was to make a connection between philosophy and theology and the real problems of life. It affirmed that the plurality of theologies “should be accepted and encouraged” for a deeper understanding of our faith. In the 2005 *PPF*, greater emphasis is given to Thomas Aquinas, while other theologians should be considered.
4. *OT* calls for *integration* of academic, pastoral, and spiritual formation, a goal still considered foundational to the implementation of priestly formation, though not yet fully achieved.

#### **D. Change in the Use of Vatican II Documents in the *Program of Priestly Formation* and in Theological Schools**

Shifts in interpretation of the role Vatican II should play in seminary formation have occurred in many areas. Data on the use of the council’s documents in the *PPFs* from 1971 to 2005 show a pattern that is in some ways predictable and in other ways unexpected. Seeds of doubt about its interpretation had been planted. Moreover, in 1992, before the issuance of the fourth edition of the *PPF*, Pope John Paul II had written *PDV*, which incorporated many of the same topics contained in *OT* and then became a major reference point for the last two editions. The rise and fall in the number of references is perhaps not so surprising for two other reasons—changes in bishops who authored the various editions of the *PPF* and changes in faculty teaching in seminaries.

##### *Changes in Bishops*

By the time the fourth and fifth editions were published, the bishops who were responsible for developing the texts for the most part had not

experienced Vatican II in person; thus, twenty-six years after the council (1992, the date of the fourth edition) or forty years after (2005, the date of the fifth edition), the council's impact and influence had lessened. The ages of the bishops at the beginning of the council who served on the *PPF* drafting committees are revealing: their average age in 1962 ranged from forty-nine for the authors of the first edition to sixteen for authors of the fifth edition (see appendix 1-D). Obviously, committee members' experience of the council differed widely and no doubt affected their identification with the thinking of the council fathers. Of the twenty-three committee members for the 1971 edition of the *PPF*, all sixteen who were bishops by 1965 attended the council, fourteen of them attended all four sessions, along with a fifteenth priest who served as a *peritus* and later became a bishop. Of the six committee members who did not attend the council, five were made bishops after the council ended and one was an elderly bishop unable to attend.

The second edition was staffed by three bishops who attended the council and ten who did not attend; all were ordained as priests before the council. No one who worked on the third or fourth edition attended Vatican II. No one in the youngest group staffing the fifth edition was yet ordained as a bishop—or even as a priest—in 1962 and just a few were old enough to be in college and fewer still in theological studies. Personal familiarity with the council likely played a role in decisions to incorporate more or less of its teachings in the various editions of the *PPF* for which they were responsible.

Besides direct participation in the council and being of age during the council, the popes who appointed each set of bishops may add to the explanation for their stronger allegiance either to Vatican II documents or to *PDV* (see appendix 1-E). Four different popes ordained those bishops serving as members of the committee for the first edition—from Pius XI to Paul VI. Only five years later Paul VI ordained all but one of the second edition committee members, and in 1981, after five more years, all were ordained by Paul VI. By 1992, when the fourth edition was published, six were ordained by John Paul II and only two by Paul VI. Finally, in 2005, all eleven members were ordained by John Paul II. As expected, this pattern corresponds to the age of bishops as Vatican II commenced. Even by the third edition in 1981, the composition of the bishops had changed substantially; by 2005 the change was all-embracing.

### *Changes in Seminary Faculty*

In the 1980s the number of seminary faculty averaged around 900. Of these, only 51 were still teaching full time in 2014–15—30 religious priests, 6 diocesan priests, 8 laymen, 5 laywomen, 1 sister, and 1 brother. Most of them are likely to be in their late sixties or early seventies, representing the small remaining group of those who were young adults during the council. Those 51 faculty equal 6 percent of all faculty, few of whom are teaching in diocesan seminaries. It is possible that a small number of older faculty who were not teaching in the early 1980s but are over sixty-five are among the 871 still teaching full time.

At the same time, the many recently hired faculty teaching full time in seminaries earned their graduate degrees while studying with faculty who themselves were born after 1960, removing the experience of the council another step away from those who experienced the council as young adults. This configuration makes difficult the task that Richard Gaillardetz and Catherine Clifford see as an essential role for seminary faculty. They say that teachers must assist students/seminarians in understanding what “fuller participation of the laity” means and how to celebrate in a meaningful way for today’s congregations. The seminary faculty needs to encourage seminarians and other students to explore the meaning of fuller participation of the laity in the Eucharist, as well as participation on councils and committees using their expertise. The task of seminaries is to help seminarians flesh out what all this might mean for a pastor.<sup>34</sup>

### **E. References to Vatican II in Theological School Catalogs— Early 1980s to the Present**

Whatever the disposition of faculty, references to Vatican II in seminary catalogs have actually increased over the period of time from the early 1980s to the present from 205 to 252 (in the 35 schools with comparable information available). Possibly these numbers have minimal significance since on average the number of references grew from about 6 per school to just over 7 (see appendix 1-F). Most of the references are found in course descriptions, of which there were 166 in the 1980s and 213 in the 2010s. Another 39 references in each of the decades were distributed in other

<sup>34</sup> Richard Gaillardetz and Catherine Clifford, *Keys to the Council: Unlocking the Teaching of Vatican II* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012), 79.

areas, including the history and purpose of the schools and in reference to formation programs (see appendix 1-G). Besides the numbers, from specific examples such as the liturgy and ecumenism, very different outcomes result depending on the method of incorporating Vatican II thinking.

Concerning the liturgy, *OT 16* stresses the centrality of the liturgy and urges that it should be taught according to the viewpoint of *Sacro-sanctum Concilium* (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy). The first *PPF* quotes extensively from this constitution: “The study of Sacred Liturgy is to be ranked among the compulsory and major courses in seminaries and religious houses of studies; in theological faculties it is to rank among the principal courses” (*PPF* I 69, quoting *Sacro-sanctum Concilium* 16). It advises that the liturgy should be intimately linked to spiritual and pastoral formation. In the fifth edition of the *PPF*, *Sacro-sanctum Concilium* is mentioned only in one footnote and that is in reference to celibacy. The directives about teaching the liturgy indicate that it should be included in the core, related to other areas of formation, and celebrated “according to the mind of the Church, without addition or subtraction” (*PPF* V 214).

The place of liturgy is not elevated to the same degree in the latest *PPF*. However, a 2009 study on the state of liturgy in seminaries yielded very positive findings from the forty-seven faculty who teach courses on liturgy.<sup>35</sup> To the statement, “*Sacro-sanctum Concilium* is the basis of our liturgical formation program,” 96 percent agreed (66 percent agreed strongly and 30 percent agreed) and 4 percent were undecided. Overall the faculty were at least moderately satisfied with the content and method of teaching liturgy and the implementation of liturgical celebrations. Other questions and the narrative responses yielded mixed results. For example, when asked if seminarians in our school were overly concerned about rubrics used in liturgy, 34 percent of the faculty surveyed agreed, 17 percent were undecided, and half disagreed. On the negative side, in the narrative more than half the comments (13 of 23) concerned the rigidity and stiffness in liturgical celebrations in seminaries. All in all, the survey suggested that the teachings of *Sacro-sanctum Concilium* are being followed in teaching, but not as strongly in the understanding of students or in liturgical practices.

Concerning ecumenism, the final chapter of the 1971 *PPF* is devoted entirely to the “Ecumenical Dimension of Theological Education” in

<sup>35</sup> Study by Katarina Schuth, conducted for the annual meeting of the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions, 2009. The study was done before the recent English translation of the Roman Missal went into effect.

formation at the theology level. It quotes several passages from *Unitatis Redintegratio* (Decree on Ecumenism) and details its relationship to spiritual, academic, and pastoral formation. The concluding section lists a number of concrete actions to be undertaken in implementing an ecumenical program, including cooperation with non-Catholic seminaries.

The fifth edition of the *PPF* touches only briefly on the topic of ecumenism in six places, three having to do with academic studies, two with pastoral application, and one with spiritual formation. On the topic of theological curriculum (*PPF* V 163), it states that theology studied in a seminary should contribute to the mission of the church by being concerned with Christian unity, and so the studies must impart adequate grasp of the Catholic principles on ecumenism (here they are referring to the Decree on Ecumenism). Later it states that the core should include a course on ecumenism and “[it] should be fully integrated into other courses, thus permeating the theological curriculum. Issues concerning interreligious dialogue also should be discussed” (*PPF* V 216). Another citation concerns the faculty who are to teach about the beliefs and practices of other churches or religions; they may be members of those churches or religions, but seminarians should have taken ecclesiology and ecumenism courses beforehand so as to have a more informed understanding of ecumenical relations (*PPF* V 224).

The two references to ecumenism dealing with pastoral formation are concerned with interaction with other churches and religions. In the first instance, the focus is on learning how to interact with different churches: “Religious pluralism: they also need to know, appreciate and learn how to work within the ecumenical and interfaith context that forms the backdrop for life in the United States and for the Catholic Church in this nation” (*PPF* V 239). The second pastoral recommendation concerns the experiences seminarians should have. When they are ecumenical in nature, they must be respectful of Catholic teaching, especially on moral and ethical issues, and the sacramental dimension of pastoral care must be integral to such programs. Clinical Pastoral Education is given as an example of an opportunity for engaging in ecumenism, both with other participants and in the hospital setting. This opportunity was mentioned in the first edition of the *PPF*, and in the next three editions, it is encouraged. In the fifth edition it is listed merely as one of many possibilities and is not specifically identified as the official Clinical Pastoral Education program, but rather a clinical experience. In recent years the number of seminaries requiring CPE has declined considerably, from twenty-four requiring it in 2000 to

only eight requiring it presently. This shift is viewed by many faculty as a significant loss of an occasion for ecumenical encounter.

Other ways of shifting the importance of ecumenism can be identified. For example, while the fifth *PPF* specifies that ecumenism is to be a core course, only seven of thirty-nine theological schools actually require it. Five others combine it with ecclesiology or missiology in their course titles, and perhaps others include some aspects of ecumenism, but they do not mention it. The *Instrumentum Laboris* for the Apostolic Visitation of the Seminaries and Houses of Priestly Formation in the United States in 2005 mentioned numerous documents as sources, among them the “Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism,”<sup>36</sup> but the final report of the Congregation for Catholic Education, December 2008, makes no mention of ecumenism. In recent years the topic has not been emphasized by those responsible for developing the norms for seminary curricula.

## Conclusion

The transformation in seminary formation is linked closely to the understanding and experience of Vatican II. With each subsequent edition of the *PPF*, authors and contributors to these documents were less and less personally connected to the council, including the bishops on the committees and the faculty who teach in these seminaries. The open question is whether they will be able to or strongly desire to continue the tradition of Vatican II established in *OT* and *PO*. This concern is more than a matter of being for or against Vatican II. The teachings of the council were meant to expand the vision of the church’s self-understanding in how it proclaims the Gospel and engages the world in its own transformation. In a sense, how the insights of the council continue to influence the preparation of seminarians and others for pastoral service should be a matter of urgent concern. As new generations of priests assume their responsibilities, the approaches they employ in the exercise of ministry become unmistakable signposts of the church’s boldness in its mission. Clerical leadership is singular in its power to shape the life of the Christian community and to engage the wisdom and commitment of lay ecclesial ministers and parishioners. The following chapters will explain in detail the evolution of theological education, with special attention to the past thirty years.

<sup>36</sup> Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (1993), see especially 192–95.