

**Seminary Formation and Transitory
Same-Sex Attraction:**
A Proposal

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Kenrick-Glennon Seminary

Foreword

Everyone in seminary work is aware of the Vatican's *Instruction Concerning the Criteria for the Discernment of Vocations with regard to Persons with Homosexual Tendencies in view of their Admission to the Seminary and to Holy Orders*. But no one seems to know exactly what its key terms mean. As a result, the implementation of its directives has been inconsistent.

This work contains a proposal for how to understand the key terms of the *Instruction*—transitory, deep-seated, and overcome—and how to implement its directives in a seminary's policies and practices. The proposal is based on our own experiences, which is both its strength and its limitation. We invite others into conversation based on their experiences, policies, and practices.

Some Key Questions

Q: Who is this document for, and how should they use it?

On the one hand this proposal—and its centerpiece, the “Same-Sex Attraction Worksheet” (SSAW)—is for everyone involved in seminary work. On the other hand, different people will use it differently. Psychologists will use the SSAW in greater detail because they have the experience and training to do so. Others involved in formation—like Spiritual Directors, Formation Advisors, and Vocation Directors—will utilize the SSAW in a more limited fashion, according to their role and capacity. Everyone needs to have a general awareness of the SSAW's benchmarks, which provide a roadmap for growth in affective maturity. Those who are not psychologists will need to pick and choose the questions that are appropriate for their role in the formation process.

Q: Will I find a comprehensive anthropology on same-sex attraction here?

No. Those looking for a comprehensive anthropology on same-sex attraction will find it in other resources. We rely on those resources, but do not repeat them here.

Q: Will I find definitions and benchmarks that will help me implement the *Instruction* here?

Yes. But it is important to understand two things. 1) The definitions are proposals. We subject them to the Church's judgment and to the clarification that will come from further conversation among seminaries. 2) The benchmarks are common sense ideas of how one should measure growth, not statistically validated norms. They are meant to provide a roadmap of growth in affective maturity and what paragraph 2337 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* calls the “successful integration” of the sexual faculty through the virtue of chastity. But they are not a guarantee that a man is ready for ordination. They are still only one piece of a larger picture.

Q: In the end, are you going to propose that a man who can manage his same-sex attraction temptations is a suitable candidate for Holy Orders?

No. What the *Instruction* means and what we mean by overcoming transitory same-sex attraction does not and cannot signify the simple management of same-sex attraction tendencies. If overcoming is construed as management, the man may end up locked in an antagonism with God about his state of life. The priest who simply manages same-sex attraction tendencies may be led to believe that his temptations to mortal sin are a form of “sacrifice” in and for his priesthood. The ongoing harassment of such tendencies, if merely managed, may (and likely will) inform an approach to priesthood that is never objectively sacrificial and therefore not truly spousal.

Q: Are there two different standards for the priesthood—one for heterosexual men and one for men who experience same-sex attraction?

No. There is only one standard for candidates for holy orders: what paragraph 2337 of the *Catechism* calls the “successful integration” of the sexual faculty through the virtue of chastity (as opposed to simple continence). In this integration the candidate peacefully accepts his sexual identity and is at ease in it, a sign of which is his willingness to offer the sacrifice of conjugal life.

Q: The Same-Sex Attraction Worksheet seems daunting. How will we have enough time to address all of these topics? It seems like more work than can be done in seminary.

It is daunting. If the work does not begin until the first year of theology then there probably is not enough time to do it all before the end of that year. Of course, each man is different. It takes time to do this work. Unless we begin the discussion and work in college seminary or pre-theology it is not likely that a seminary will have the evidence to say, with moral certainty, that a man has overcome transitory same-sex attraction by the end of the first year of theology (i.e. three years prior to ordination) and recommend his advancement.

1. Theological Foundation: Same-Sex Attraction, Affective Maturity, and Spiritual Fatherhood

This section affirms that the Instruction is profoundly rooted in the most fundamental point of the theological anthropology of the priesthood: a man’s conformity to Christ.

2. Human Formation: The Role of the Formation Advisor

Before a seminary can get to the details of the Same-Sex Attraction Worksheet (chapter 3) it has to set the context and tone of formation. This happens first and foremost with the formation advisor. This section explains some key attitudes and practices of the formation advisor that provide a fruitful environment for formation and assist the growth of a man with transitory same-sex attraction.

3. Psychological Counseling: Process and Practical Guidance (Same-Sex Attraction Worksheet)

This is the heart of our proposal. It provides details on what a man has to work through, and what a seminary has to see in him, to show that he has overcome transitory same-sex attraction three years prior to ordination and can be advanced toward Holy Orders.

4. Spiritual Formation: The Role of the Spiritual Director

How do the points of psychological growth in the Same-Sex Attraction Worksheet get taken up and integrated into the spiritual life of a man? This section offers guidance to the spiritual director so that the formation of a man who experiences transitory same-sex attraction can be integrated into his entire formation. Without this integration there is a risk that a man’s growth will be compartmentalized in the counseling relationship.

5. Creating a Culture of Formation

None of the tools, policies, or practices offered in this book will work as a stand-alone resource. Without the right team, the process of formation will not come alive. This section offers some reflections on forming a team that can shape a fruitful formation process in which each seminarian becomes the focal point of integration.

6. Further Resources

Introduction: Why this resource?

The purpose of this book is to help all those involved in seminary formation and admission—especially seminary personnel, bishops, and vocation directors—apply the document *Instruction Concerning the Criteria for the Discernment of Vocations with regard to Persons with Homosexual Tendencies in view of their Admission to the Seminary and to Holy Orders*.¹

The *Instruction* states that a man with deep-seated homosexual tendencies cannot be admitted to the seminary or to holy orders, and that transitory same-sex attraction must be clearly overcome at least three years prior to ordination to the diaconate.² In order to implement the *Instruction*, those involved in formation need to know:

- 1) How to distinguish between deep-seated and transitory same-sex attraction.
- 2) How to assist the psychological and spiritual growth of a man who experiences transitory same-sex attraction.
- 3) Benchmarks that can be used to determine, with moral certainty, whether a man has clearly overcome such transitory attraction or not.

It is important—for the sake of the Church and for the sake of the man—that those involved in seminary formation have operational definitions and/or benchmarks for each point. This resource will offer guidance, grounded in Catholic anthropology and nurtured by almost thirty years of experience, regarding all three points.

In proposing definitions and benchmarks this proposal will be venturing into relatively uncharted territory. The Church *has* set out the boundaries of the discussion: the attraction must not be deep-seated and it must be overcome. She has not yet articulated exactly what those terms mean. As we propose definitions and benchmarks we submit ourselves in advance to correction by the magisterium should other definitions or

benchmarks be given at any time or flaws detected in what we propose. We also offer our work in the spirit of collaboration with colleagues at other seminaries, knowing that further conversation will undoubtedly clarify and correct things we have overlooked.

Ultimately, the purpose of the formation process and the policies that guide it is to facilitate the growth of each man in his relationship with Jesus Christ, whether that growth leads him toward the priesthood or out of the seminary. We entrust this work to the intercession of Mary, as Christ is formed more deeply in the men we serve.

Note on Definitions

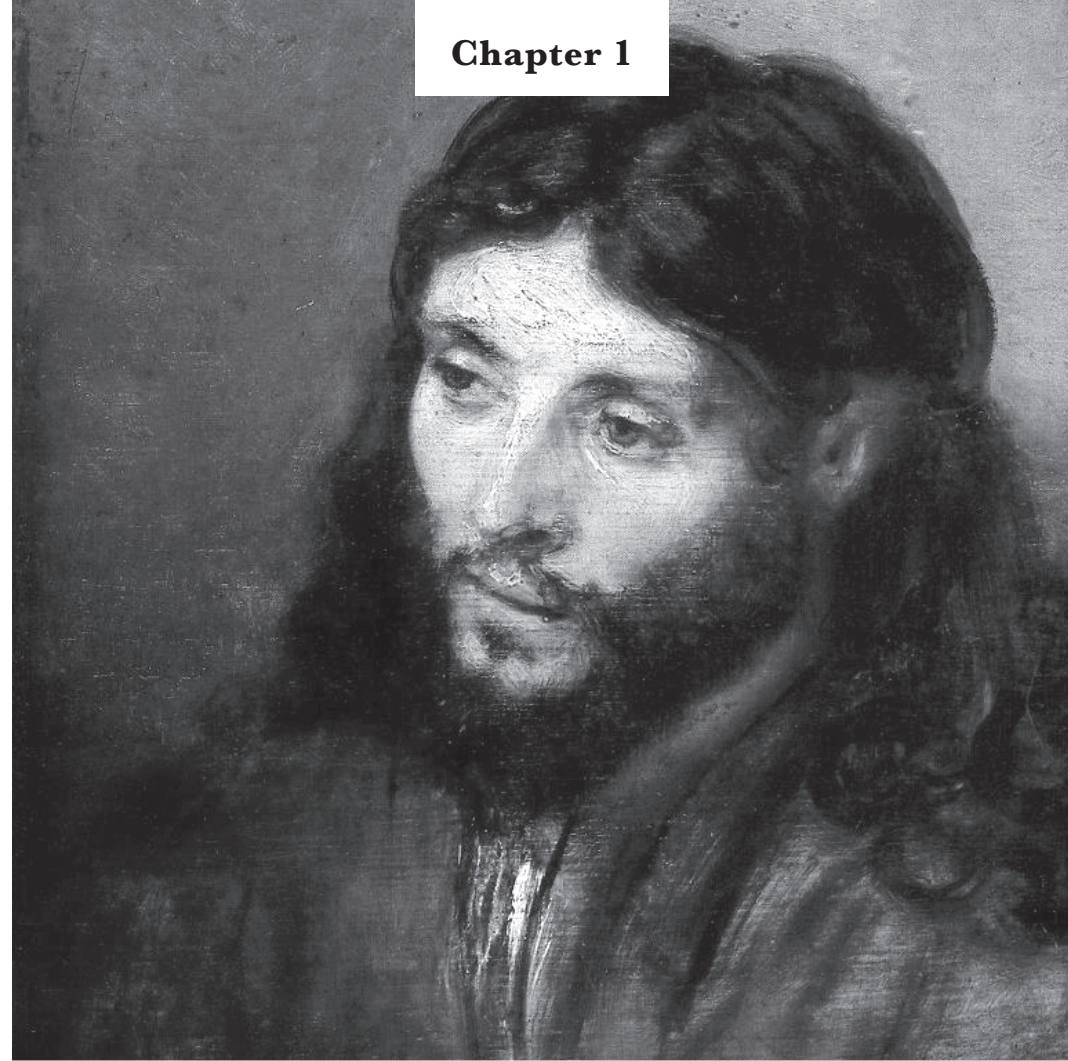
Some might like to see the definitions of key terms at the beginning of this resource. We have chosen to put them later and would like to explain why.

The *Instruction* uses these key terms—transitory, deep-seated, and overcome—without defining them. No working definitions of the terms exist anywhere in the seminary world today, to our knowledge.

Rather than listing, and debating, the definitions right away, we would like to walk through the process by which we arrived at the definitions we propose. After walking through the process the reader will be ready to see what the definitions mean and, we think, ready to propose better definitions on the basis of better processes where ours might be deficient. Those who wish to see definitions right away can find them on page 54.

¹ Henceforth *Instruction*.

² This instruction is repeated in the *Ratio Fundamentalis* (2016) at paragraphs 199 and 200.



**THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION:
Same-Sex Attraction, Affective
Maturity, and Spiritual Fatherhood**

This section affirms that the Instruction is profoundly rooted in the most fundamental point of the theological anthropology of the priesthood: a man's conformity to Christ.

*Ordination, to be sure, effects a conformation to Christ at a sacramental level, making the priest an instrument of Christ. But just as there is a prior conformation to Christ required of the candidate at the level of the body, at the level of the moral virtues, and at the level of charity, so also at the affective level.*³

To become a healthy spiritual father as a priest, a seminarian needs to make a conscious sacrifice of the goods of natural fatherhood: marriage and family life. But to make a conscious sacrifice of those goods he needs to desire them.

The seminarian is, by virtue of his body, objectively oriented toward the goods of marriage and physical fatherhood. But he needs to be subjectively oriented to them as well. Saint John Paul II's words on this point are instructive:

Christ's words [about celibacy for the sake of the kingdom] allude doubtlessly to a conscious and voluntary renunciation of marriage. Such a renunciation is possible only when one admits an authentic consciousness of the value constituted by the spousal disposition of masculinity and femininity for marriage. In order for a man to be fully aware of what he is choosing (continence for the kingdom), he must also be fully aware of what he is renouncing ... In this way, Christ certainly calls for a mature choice⁴ (emphasis in original).

Fr. Earl Fernandes builds on this vision and specifies it further for the issue of seminarians who experience same-sex attraction:

*...genital function, conjugal love, and natural fatherhood must be true sacrifices for the priesthood for the man to be considered suitable. For these things to be considered sacrificial, the candidate must be already attracted to them, not merely intellectually, but affectively. He must be oriented to them and desire them.*⁵

This is one of the central reasons why a man with deep-seated same-sex attraction cannot be admitted to or continue in seminary: he is not affectively oriented toward the goods of natural fatherhood and, therefore, does not experience their renunciation affectively, as a personal sacrifice, in the matter that chaste celibate priesthood and spiritual fatherhood require.⁶

³ Dr. Lawrence Welch and Fr. Guy Mansini, OSB. "In Conformity to Christ." P. 144. In *The Presence of Christ in the Church*.

⁴ *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*. Audience 81, paragraph 2. (May 5, 1982).

⁵ *Seminary Formation and Homosexuality*, p. 20.

In the case of a seminarian who experiences transitory same-sex attraction, the goal of formation is not to produce a "chaste gay man"—a man who identifies as gay but is committed to not acting on his inclinations. The goal is to have a man who desires the goods of marriage and physical fatherhood, willingly renounces those goods, and can still make a gift of himself as a man, to the Church as bride, in a way that will be fruitful. This places the notion of priestly celibacy squarely "in the context of the nuptial relation of Christ and the Church."⁷ Again, the words of Saint John Paul II are instructive:

The deepest reason for the Church's teaching regarding same-sex attraction in seminarians is the man's configuration to Jesus Christ.

*The priest is called to be the living image of Jesus Christ, the Spouse of the Church ... In his spiritual life, therefore, he is called to live out Christ's spousal love toward the Church, his bride. Therefore, the priest's life ought to radiate this spousal character, which demands that he be a witness to Christ's spousal love.*⁸

⁶ Theologically, there are two dimensions of sacrifice: subjective and objective. Objectively, we do not sacrifice sins, we only sacrifice goods. So, for example, "not lying" isn't a sacrifice, and "not stealing" is not a sacrifice, and so on. If we maintain, with the Church, that homosexual sex is not a good but a sin, then foregoing it cannot be an objective sacrifice. It remains true, certainly, that a subjective sacrifice is involved. But the nature of the priesthood depends on objective sacrifices, not subjective sacrifices.

⁷ Welch and Mansini, 143.

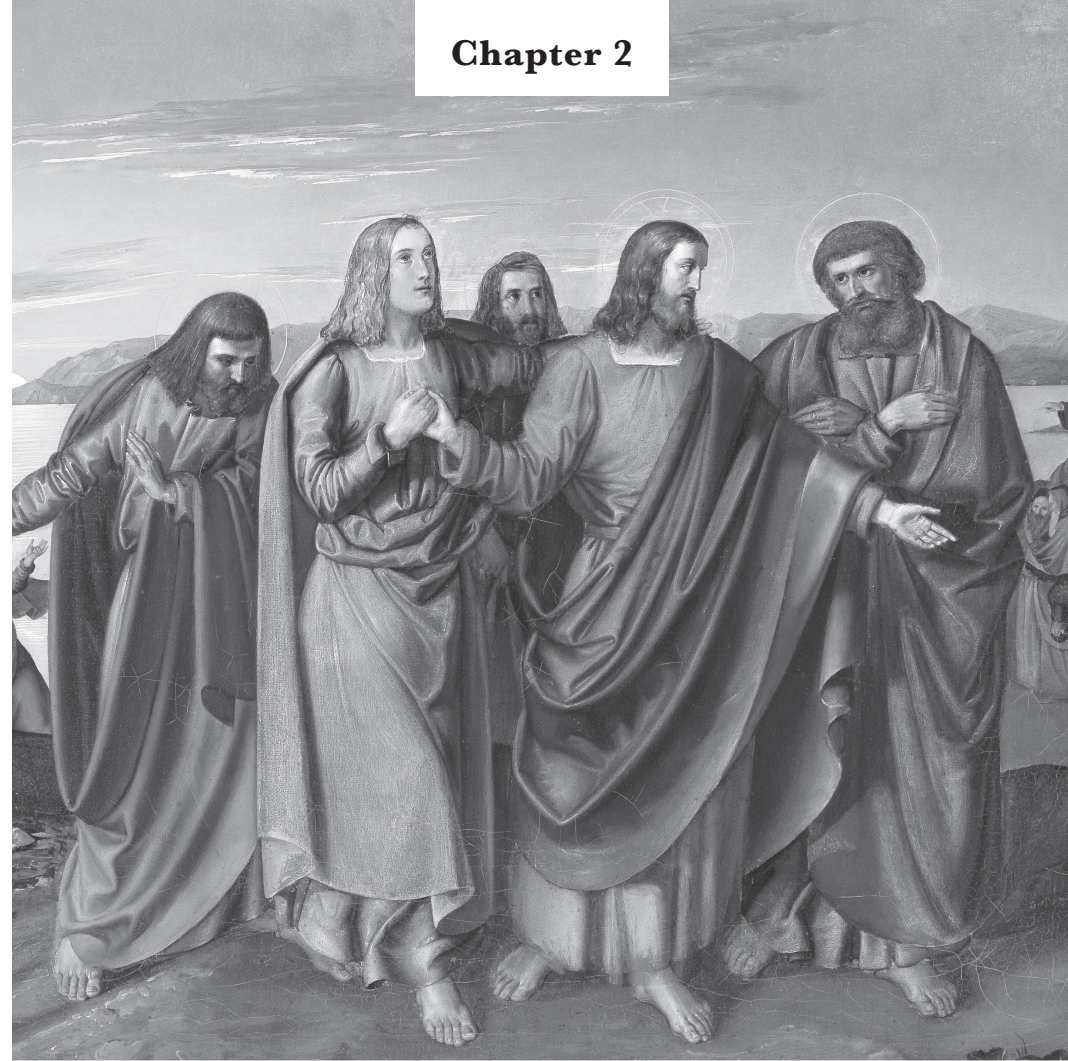
⁸ Pastores Dabo Vobis, 22. He makes a similar point in the *Theology of the Body*: *Perfect conjugal love must be marked by the faithfulness and the gift to the one and only Bridegroom (and also by the faithfulness and gift of the Bridegroom to the one and only Bride) on which religious profession and priestly celibacy are based. In sum, the nature of the one as well as the other love is "spousal," that is, expressed through the complete gift of self. The one as well as the other love tends to express that spousal meaning of the body which has been inscribed "from the beginning" in the personal structure of man and woman (ToB, 78.4).*

This spousal notion of the priesthood makes clear that the deepest reason for the Church's teaching regarding same-sex attraction in seminarians is the man's configuration to Jesus Christ. On the Cross and in the Eucharist, as he exercised his priesthood, Jesus made a complete gift of Himself to the Church. He did this naturally and supernaturally; He did it physically, affectively, and spiritually. But in every dimension He did it as a man. For a seminarian who aspires to the spiritual fatherhood of the priest, affective maturity means being configured to Christ as a man.

We are well aware that many priests who consider themselves to have deep-seated same-sex attraction were ordained before this *Instruction* was written or implemented. In articulating this line of reasoning we mean no disrespect to them. We honor the sacrifices they have made and the priestly service they have rendered and will continue to render. We welcome their reflections on what priesthood and fatherhood have meant for them. At the same time we affirm that the *Instruction* has taught something essential about the interior characteristics of the priesthood, and that this insight must be applied to seminary formation going forward.

*"Homosexuality is incompatible with the priestly vocation. Otherwise, celibacy itself would lose its meaning as a renunciation. It would be extremely dangerous if celibacy became a sort of pretext for bringing people into the priesthood who don't want to get married anyway."*⁹

⁹ Benedict XVI, *Light of the World*, 152.



HUMAN FORMATION: The Role of the Formation Advisor

Before a seminary can get to the details of the Same-Sex Attraction Worksheet (chapter 3) it has to set the context and tone of formation. This happens first and foremost with the formation advisor. This section explains some key attitudes and practices of the formation advisor that provide a fruitful environment for formation and assist the growth of a man with transitory same-sex attraction.

Some people may be tempted to skip ahead to the most practical part of the document: the Same-Sex Attraction Worksheet (SSAW) in section 3. But we offer this caution: the SSAW by itself is not sufficient for the formation of a man who experiences transitory same-sex attraction. The formation advisor takes the lead in creating an environment conducive to a man's formation. If the formation advisor does not set the context of formation properly, by exemplifying some key attitudes and traits, then a man's work with a psychologist is likely to become compartmentalized rather than integrated into the whole of his formation. Therefore, before presenting the SSAW in section 3, we set out some crucial features of the formation advisor's role.

I. Introductory Observations

Spiritual directors assist in a man's listening to God. Mental health professionals counsel a man to notice human influences on his listening and learning capacities. But the priest assigned as a formation advisor becomes a man's official, ecclesial accompaniment throughout seminary. He provides both encouragement and accountability, allowing the Church to attest at a man's ordination: "After inquiry...and upon recommendation...he has been found worthy." At the core of his role in the seminary formation process, the formation advisor embodies the ecclesial dynamic of "inquiry and recommendation."

While continuing the work of the vocation director, the formation advisor provides the ongoing forum for a man to reveal himself trustingly to his Bride, the Church, and for the man, in turn, to experience and be strengthened by the Church's receptivity to him. This is how the Church and the man discern together his call to the priesthood. The courageous and generous effort to reveal himself begins with the application for admission; it continues throughout seminary formation. The formation advisor is called to receive this self-revelation, and communicate with those most concerned with the worthiness of a priestly candidate: the Bishop, the people the Bishop oversees (especially the vocation director or director of seminarians), and the Rector.

In the case of a seminarian who experiences transitory same-sex attraction, the formation advisor will *not* use the SSAW in its full scope as a means of assessment or evaluation. The formation advisor is not the

counselor. Rather, the SSAW will first help the formation advisor grow in awareness of this issue and develop his capacity to refer the seminarian for assistance to other members of the formation team (e.g. the counselor or psychologist). The formation advisor can also utilize the benchmarks of the SSAW to attest to the man's affective maturity or notice signs that the man has not achieved the successful integration of the sexual faculty through the virtue of chastity.

From the perspective of a formation advisor, let us look more closely at these elements of human formation: admissions, attitudes, and activities.

II. Admissions

Every seminary should have a clear policy for the admission of candidates, especially examining a man's psychosexual history. Our own admissions committee, which consists of two psychologists, two priests, and the academic dean, provides the rector with a collective recommendation. If a candidate's application expresses some history of same-sex attraction, several directives are clear from the policy:

1. The same-sex attraction tendencies being disclosed must not be not deep-seated.
2. The same-sex attraction must be able to be overcome within a regular seminary formation environment.¹⁰

If those prudential determinations are not clear, a decision must be made against admission for the good of the Church and the man.

If the prudential determinations are clear, and a candidate with some history of same-sex attraction is admitted, there will be a special recommendation to the rector for specific admissions conditions. Ordinarily, any number of the following actions accompany the acceptance:

¹⁰ "If long-term therapeutic work is indicated, this is best accomplished before the decision is made concerning entrance into the seminary. At times, the gravity of family or personal issues is such that, if the candidate has not yet adequately dealt with these issues, entrance into the seminary program should be denied" (PPF, 53).

- a. Immediate engagement in counseling;
- b. Special supports for continued learning in chastity will be recommended as needed;
- c. The formation advisor will be made aware of the man's particular history or tendencies.

III. Key Attitudes of the Formation Advisor

Every candidate for seminary formation has one primary duty: to reveal himself. Rather than entering seminary with the burden of self-questioning—"Am I called to be a priest?"—the man can now begin to ask: "Am I being honest and generous with the Church?" Because he has been accepted by his sponsoring diocese and the seminary, the man can be confident that the Church sees qualities of the priesthood in him. Trusting in this, he can be relieved of the burden of self-scrutiny and move into simple and appropriate self-revelation. In this way the Church comes to know better the affective maturity of the man,¹¹ and the two can discern together.

The formation advisor is meant to provide a concentrated arena for the seminarian's self-revelation. And in that arena, flowing through the words and deeds of his formator, he will pick up on the priest's underlying attitudes. Here are some of the key attitudes the formation advisor must possess.

A. Disinterested Attentiveness

The formation advisor, like the spiritual director, is intensely interested in how God is manifesting His will. He is not interested in friendship, "fixing" the seminarian, or becoming a crutch for the seminarian's

¹¹ Affective maturity means the integration of reason, will, and the emotions. In the case of a candidate for priesthood, Pope Benedict XVI says "we grow in affective maturity when our hearts adhere to God. Christ needs priests who are mature, virile, capable of cultivating an authentic spiritual paternity" (May 26, 2006).

(sometimes acutely felt) inadequacies. A discerning formator can offer this liberating counsel to the seminarian: "I am not interested in you becoming a priest. I am interested in you listening to God." Moreover, any sense that the formation relationship is assuaging or satisfying some unmet need in the formation advisor will progressively hijack the mutual attentiveness to God's will in the concrete events of the seminarian's daily life.

***I am not interested in you becoming a priest.
I am interested in you listening to God.***

A good formator is characterized by disinterested attentiveness. First and foremost this addresses the seminarian's tendency to desire to please his formator. The formator is not pleased or displeased; he simply observes and points out. The relational intensity that can arise, especially with the insecurity of a man experiencing same-sex attraction tendencies, is best met by a disinterested desire to see the man grow in the manhood that belongs to him in Christ as a beloved son of the Father.

B. Accompanied Observing

The formation advisor is looking for signs that the man is letting God into his life, into "all of his things." (See the end of this section for some case studies.) Like Joseph, who was encouraged to take the child and his mother into his home, the man in formation is invited to notice how his affect changes and matures when other persons are brought into his life.

When a man is overcoming same-sex attraction tendencies, too often he has been alone in his inner experiences, trying to deal with things himself. The gentle accompaniment of a priest-formator is meant to

abolish the seductive shaming and self-pity that is exacerbated in the aloneness. Does the formation advisor seem to have an attitude of wanting to be present in the messy, painful, or embarrassing issues that impede a truly masculine confidence?

If the formation advisor does not want to be or is not capable of being present in the mess, it will short-circuit formation. The seminarian will know that his messiness is not welcome. If the formation advisor wants to be present in the mess but for the wrong reasons—e.g. to fix the seminarian or to meet some need in himself—that will also short circuit the formation process. The seminarian will know he is being used. The most healthy context is when the formation advisor is: (a) willing and able to be present in the mess and (b) simply wants the man to grow into his manhood in Christ.

C. Focused Observing

Too many seminarians believe the formation advisor is looking for problems, “stuff” that might get in the way of being found suitable for Orders. He may find himself thinking: “If too much ‘stuff’ is revealed, then I may not be ordained.” This adversarial sensibility requires radical reorientation. The formation advisor’s attitude is key in assisting this reorientation.

A formation advisor can facilitate a different attitudinal stance from the seminarian by focusing on two questions:

- 1) Is the man letting God into all of his things?
- 2) Is he moving with God through them?

When this shift happens, both seminarian and formator are focused upon God’s initiative in the formative experiences of life. This practice will never cease, nor will it be forced into a false timeline. Adopting and inculcating this attitude sets a man on a path for lifelong learning and formation rather than “jumping through hoops” to get to an ordination date. With the formation advisor as model and guide, the man begins to ask: “How do I let God into all of my things and move with God’s initiative in the concrete events of my daily life?” (Again, see the end of this section for some case studies.)

D. Observations lead to questions and self-revelation

Finally, contrary to popular belief, the principal work of the formation advisor is not evaluating but reporting. Yes, at the end of the day, the formation advisor is also responsible for evaluation, but much of the *work* of the formation advisor is “holding up the mirror” to the seminarian and asking the man to tell the Church what he sees.

Because of the formation advisor’s data collation, his care, and the time and energy he gives to the seminarian, the unstated but ever present desire of the Church may be gratefully expressed by the seminarian at the end of an evaluation along these lines: “Whatever decision is reached, I feel that I am known. I believe that I am understood. What I experience in my human formation is moving me to an excellence and desire for virtue that I could not have planned or imagined.” That can and should be the outcome, whether or not the man is being advanced toward Holy Orders.

To achieve this outcome requires much more than a “catching and correcting” mentality. Instead, the formation advisor is to maintain a posture of noticing and mediating, showing continuous interest in the meaning of the seminarian’s actions and attitudes. “You mention that some classmates have become good friends. Say more about your friendships. What do you value in each of these new friends?” Such questions reflect an attitude of fascination with the man’s experience. The seminarian’s self-revelation will give evidence of his depth—or lack of depth—of understanding and appreciation for relationships. Depth will be evident in the details and the savoring of the concrete thoughts, feelings, and desires that he can articulate about friends, family of origin experiences, body image, or daily disciplines.

Case Studies

The following case studies are illustrative of attitudes and actions that a man may display. Each raises a question for the formation advisor: How would you handle this? (All presume that a man has completed at least two years of pre-theology or up to four years of college seminary.)

Case Study One: Seminarman letting God into his life

At the end of a formation meeting, three questions are asked of the seminarman:

- 1) Do you have any questions?
- 2) Is there any way I can assist you?
- 3) Is there anything you want me to know?

The last question prompts a new admission about some recent struggles with chastity: “Father, I have been working with my spiritual director on my experiences of loneliness. However, I want you to know what I am doing for accountability and limiting of my media use at this time. I have been avoiding Covenant Eyes by using various applications. This is a symptom of my hiding. I do not want to hide anymore.” He seeks accountability with a brother seminarman. He converts his phone to a “dumb phone” and begins work to examine the sources of his anxiety in counseling.

Case Study Two: Seminarman moving with God in his life

During a formation session the man is asked about his experience of chastity. As the months pass, the man expresses an increasing freedom to name his struggles and take up healthy habits. He leans less and less upon material restrictions and develops an increasing sense of self-mastery:

“Father, my unchaste habits always made me feel like a boy rather than a man. I spent plenty of time shaming myself and feeling sorry for myself, because I could not overcome these periodic episodes of self-soothing. Counseling and being honest in accountability have been helpful, but the taste of increasing freedom has unveiled the spirit of perfectionism and pride that truly undermines my relationship with God. I have an ability to work day-by-day with God without being ashamed of my feelings. I am so grateful for the spiritual freedom to be really honest with God about all the ways I think I am failing. I did not know there could be so much love for me in this area of my life.”

Case Study Three: Seminarman not moving with God in his life

The man was initially honest about his struggles. With each month however, there is an increasing sense of sadness, and some anger is surfacing. The faculty have noted some lapses in class preparation and attentiveness. His affect is low. When asked “how do you feel?” he has little response or insight. He has switched from one accountability partner to another because he felt the previous one to be “too intense.” When asked about prayer, the man declares: “It seems that God is not interested in making my growth very easy. It seems that nothing is ever simple. I am afraid that nothing is changing. All I do is try to keep up my prayer life, but it does not seem that God is keeping His promises.” Further questions reveal that he has harbored other sources of media and been dishonest about his access to the internet. When asked to rate his desire to grow in virtue and self-mastery on a scale of 1 to 10, he responds: “It is about a 6.5.”

Case Study Four: Seminarman not letting God into his life

The seminarman is asked to say more about his history of seminary formation up to this point (Theology I) and speak about what has been

most formative. He has enjoyed learning how to pray the Liturgy of the Hours and has great interest in sacred music. The liturgy has been a source of comfort for him in the seminary, but he has a desire to see more in the parish liturgies. He is not sure that he could celebrate Masses like those he has seen in many diocesan parishes. When asked if he sees the priest as a liturgical presider or a father, a discussion ensues about fatherhood in his own life. “I see myself as a priest-father, but I have not seriously thought about being a father of a family. My mom saw me as a priest from a young age. She never forced anything, and my dad was ok with it.” When asked if he believed that marriage and family could be a place of real happiness for him, he deflects the question: “God has been calling me to a supernatural call. The natural call to marriage and family has been assumed into it. What good would it do think about it? It would seem discouraging to me. Why would I want to go down a desolate or tempting path?”

Conclusion

In each of the case studies, the formation advisor can ask the following three questions:

1. *What has the man received?*

The formation advisor is looking for the ability of the man to evidence growth. *Ability* speaks to freedom: the man has a liberty to be honest and forthright that does not require much prodding or questioning. He can demonstrate insight in his responses because he is free to examine and speak about his experiences, both the good and the bad.

Since formation advising is consistently attentive to facilitating the process of overcoming affectively immature tendencies, with transitory same-sex attraction being a specific manifestation of a maturational need, the man’s ability must be accompanied by *evident growth*. When asked specific questions he does not respond with a “blank stare” or simply a conceptual assent to the right responses. Rather, the man can give concrete examples and name particular experiences.

The ability to give evidence of growth translates into a capacity to work day-by-day on that growth. Insight translates into integration: he seeks help; he looks for opportunities to change; he relishes the follow-up; he wants to be asked about his progress. Because he is discovering new competency with his interior experiences, the man becomes confident. A healthy, masculine confidence becomes the foundation for sequential growth. (Further characteristics of this masculine confidence can be found in section two of the SSAW.)

2. *What has the man not received (or, there is no evidence that he has received it)?*

Confidence apart from relationship cannot endure. If the man lacks the ability to: (1) personally and specifically testify to a concrete experience of God’s love, (2) recognize the lack of desire for virtue as a signal of refusing God’s love, or (3) acknowledge that natural, healthy desires are the foundation for receiving the grace of Orders, then there are problems. The necessary requisite evidence that he is growing in affective maturity is absent.

After asking these questions, formation moves into catechesis and pastoral counsel. Some intellectual correction may be necessary. He may require persuasion about the realities that will be encountered. He may need elements of his own experience pointed out and illuminated for him. However, it is best to have him do the work and research of articulating what is needed to have a holy, healthy, and joy-filled priesthood. The question becomes: Is that prospect possible with his current ability to evidence growth or does it seem unlikely that he can do so?

3. *What is the plan for growth?*

The seminarian is primarily responsible for his response to formation. Therefore, formation works best when a man is accurately gauging his freedom and the evidence for his growth. Some men are able to admit that their freedom is too compromised or that their growth is too superficial. These admissions are accompanied by a real peace in departing seminary formation. For those who want to do the work and see the way into a consistent resolution of their affective maturity, the plan for their growth

can draw upon the seminary and parish communities. Plans need to be made to see the man draw other men into virtue, lead others into freedom, disciple peers, be responsible for leadership, and be respected as a man.

A primary goal of integration is to become a disciple maker. A man who has overcome his same-sex attraction tendencies would have complete ease and freedom with men of all stripes. But, most importantly, he would have the capacity to find the best fathers and husbands in his parish, lead them in healthy discipleship, and inspire them to lead other men. He would see this priority as a gift and opportunity, not a burden or compensation for unresolved insecurities.

Having explained how the formation advisor sets the context of formation, we now turn to the Same-Sex Attraction Worksheet.

ADDENDUM I: Sample Handbook Policy on Admissions

Kenrick Seminary Handbook

1.9 Guidelines regarding possible candidates with Same-Sex Attraction¹²

Admissions: A man who applies to Kenrick-Glennon Seminary who experiences same-sex attraction will be informed that the Church has issued guidelines about the admission of candidates with deep-seated homosexual tendencies.¹³ The Congregation for Catholic Education has instructed seminaries not to admit such possible candidates who have these

¹² *Previously approved policy added to the Kenrick Seminarian Handbook Spring 2014.*

¹³ Congregation for Catholic Education. “Concerning the Criteria for the Discernment of Vocations with Regard to Persons with Homosexual Tendencies in View of Their Admission to the Seminary and to Holy Orders.” (CCDV). http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_20051104_instruzione_en.html

deep seated tendencies.¹⁴ Men who propose themselves for admittance, who are aware of same-sex attractions, have the responsibility to speak of their attraction to their Vocations Director¹⁵ and the Vocations Director to the Seminary. The Vocation Director needs to inform and advise the Director of Admissions of concerns in this area.

If the Admissions Committee and the Rector are convinced that a man’s same-sex attraction is transitory and not what the *Instruction* calls “deep-seated,”¹⁶ then the man may be admitted to formation. Such tendencies must be clearly overcome at least three years before ordination to the Diaconate.

ADDENDUM II: Sample Handbook Policy on Assistance

Formation: The Seminary formation personnel will work with a man who experiences same-sex attraction in order to help the man achieve what the *Instruction* calls “affective maturity.”¹⁷ The seminary will challenge and assist a man with same-sex attractions to work through any healings or maturity issues associated with his same-sex attraction. “In other words, genital function, conjugal love, and natural fatherhood must be a true sacrifice for the priesthood for the man to be considered suitable. For these things to be considered sacrificial, the candidate must

¹⁴ “In the light of such teaching, this dicastery, in accord with the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, believes it necessary to state clearly that the Church, while profoundly respecting the persons in question, cannot admit to the seminary or to holy orders those who practice homosexuality, present deep-seated homosexual tendencies or support the so-called ‘gay culture’ (CCDV).”

¹⁵ “It would be gravely dishonest for a candidate to hide his own homosexuality in order to proceed, despite everything, toward ordination” (CCDV).

¹⁶ “Different, however, would be the case in which one were dealing with homosexual tendencies that were only the expression of a transitory problem—for example, that of an adolescence not yet superseded” (CCDV).

¹⁷ “In order to admit a candidate to ordination to the diaconate, the Church must verify, among other things, that the candidate has reached affective maturity (CCDV).” Cf. *ibid.*, nn. 44 and 50; AAS 84 (1992), 733-736 and 746-748. Cf. also: Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, *Circular Letter to the Most Reverend Diocesan Bishops and Other Ordinaries with Canonical Faculties to Admit to Sacred Orders Concerning: Scrutinies regarding the Suitability of Candidates for Orders* (10 November 1997); *Notitiae* 33 (1997), 507-518, particularly Enclosure V.

already be attracted to them, not merely intellectually, but affectively. He must be oriented to them and desire them.”¹⁸ If a man becomes aware of same-sex attraction after the first year of theology, he will be asked to leave the program. If that attraction is transitory and if it can be demonstrated that he has overcome the transitory same-sex attraction, he may be encouraged to reapply at a later date. As stated above, tendencies towards same-sex attraction must be clearly overcome at least three years before ordination to the Diaconate.¹⁹

Signs of affective maturity for a seminarian in the School of Theology are:

- Seeking an ever-deeper knowledge of himself and Christ (GFPC 50)²⁰
- Appreciating solitude and contemplation in a solid prayer life (PDV 29)
- Exhibiting interior detachment from created goods and the accumulation of unnecessary possessions through a simplicity of life
- Loving the Church, Christ’s Mystical Body. In his spiritual life the seminarian “is called to live out Christ’s spousal love toward the Church, his Bride” (PDV 22)
- Fostering an attitude of spiritual fatherhood (GFPC 32)*
- Fostering a loving devotion to Mary, the Mother of God (1995 Holy Thursday Letter to Priests, 2)
- Cultivating the virtues necessary for celibacy (GFPC 40)*
- Displaying trust and openness that are rooted in realistic appreciation of the human condition and the power of God’s grace (particularly towards authority figures)
- Being respectful of women (particularly in leadership roles in the Church)

¹⁸ Fr. Fernandes, *Seminary Formation and Homosexuality; Changing Sexual Morality and the Church’s Response*, as found in *The Linacre Quarterly*, vol. 78, No. 3, p. 315.

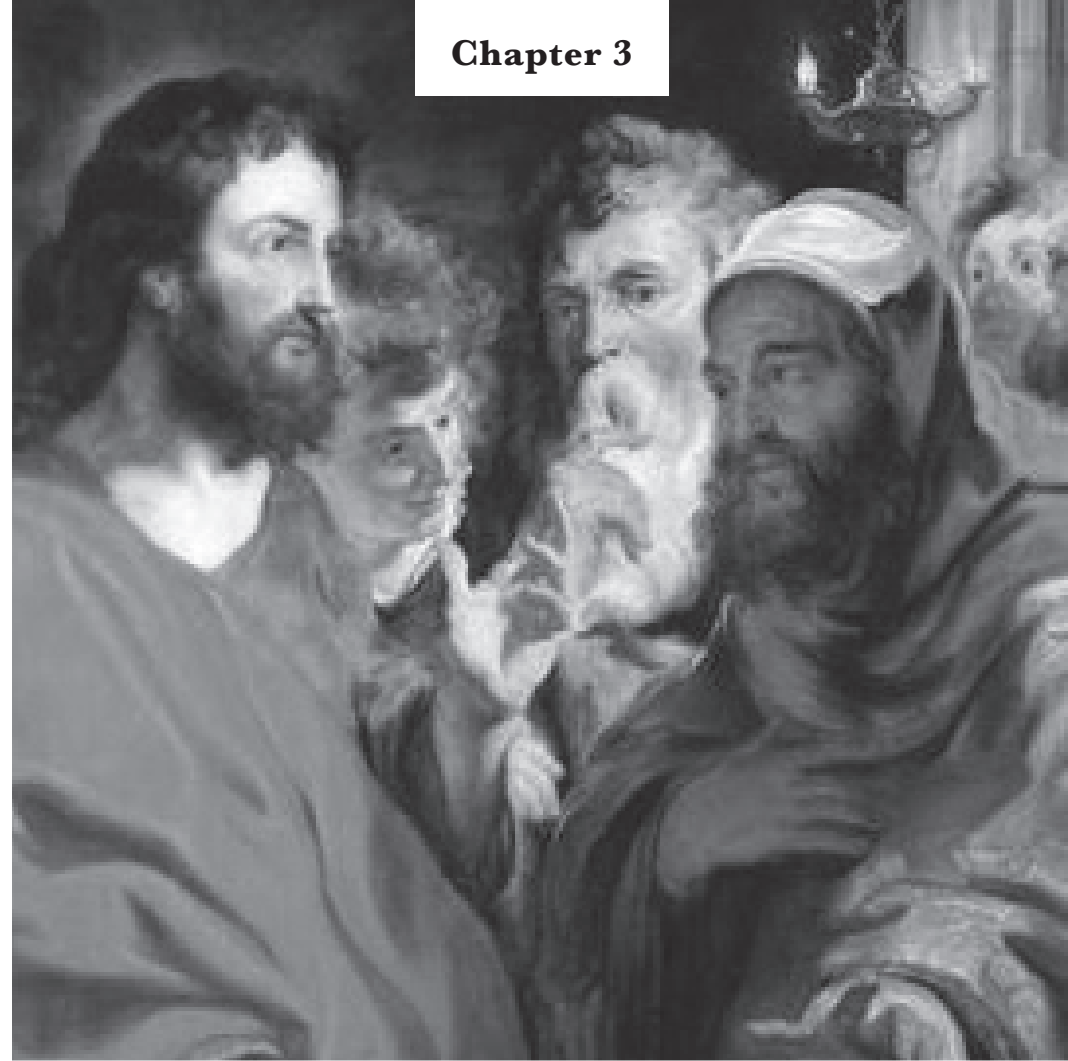
¹⁹ Nevertheless, such tendencies must be clearly overcome at least three years before ordination to the diaconate (CCDV).

²⁰ **GFPC** refers to “(Educational) Guidelines for Formation in Priestly Celibacy”, Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education. (Original title: *Cattolica Orientamenti Educativi per la Formazione al Celibato Sacerdotale*), Rome, 1974.

- Talking openly with his spiritual director about celibacy (PPF 291)
- Discussing with his Formation Advisor his readiness for the lifelong commitment of celibacy (PPF 292)
- Displaying the ability to form judgments free of emotional compulsion
- Using electronic, broadcast, and printed media without the use of pornographic materials
- Having the vocational maturity which rules out dating behavior
- Displaying the capacity for friendships with men and women
- Integrating one’s sexuality without behaviors which flaunt one’s sexuality, or which are seductive
- Enjoying freedom from habitual masturbation or other genital sexual activity
- Strengthening and safeguarding the virtue of chastity in oneself and others through modesty in speech, manners and dress
- Engaging in good leisure, healthy social life and regular physical exercise
- Practicing self-denial and penances directed to greater spiritual freedom.²¹

The assistance which may be provided through Kenrick-Glennon includes the life of liturgical and private prayer, community life, spiritual direction, the formation advising relationship, supervised pastoral service, and academic formation. Counseling in virtue growth, inner healing prayer, as well as short term psychological counseling may be suggested by spiritual directors or formation advisors.

²¹ These signs are taken from the list provided in SHMS’s *Guidelines for Spiritual Directors* and from *SHMS Guidelines for Spiritual Formation, School of Theology*. These guidelines used many materials from the Pontifical College Josephinum’s *School of Theology and Pre-Theology Program*, pp. 22-23.



PSYCHOLOGICAL COUNSELING: Process and Practical Guidance (Same-Sex Attraction Worksheet)

This is the heart of our proposal. It provides details on what a man has to work through, and what a seminary has to see in him, to show that he has overcome transitory same-sex attraction three years prior to ordination and can be advanced toward Holy Orders.

“Different, however, would be the case in which one were dealing with homosexual tendencies that were only the expression of a transitory problem - for example, that of an adolescence not yet superseded. Nevertheless, such tendencies must be clearly overcome at least three years before ordination to the diaconate.”²²

I. Introduction

Same-sex attraction presents itself along a spectrum of frequency, intensity, duration, etc. Students with transitory same-sex attraction who are appropriate for admission to seminary formation present growing challenges for many reasons, including their exposure to cultural influences. The cultural bias toward fluidity and non-judgmental acceptance of gender assignment and sexual orientation is pervasive. Many young people today rely on social media advice or internet searches to understand their emerging identity and sexuality. In the absence of caring Christian adults to guide them, especially adults who are well formed in Christian anthropology, they often emerge with incomplete and erroneous information. Seminary students are not immune from such cultural influences that challenge Christian anthropology, sexual ethics, and morality.

Against that background, the role of the counselor in human formation is crucial in helping a seminarian understand himself, grow in the image of Christ as beloved son, and deepen his relationship with and identity in the Trinity. Counseling works to aid a man in self-awareness of the truth about his identity as he transitions into manhood. Counseling should work to foster: (a) emotional receptivity, transparency, and self-love as he perceives God’s love for him and (b) growth in the characteristics of spiritual fatherhood. True respect for the dignity of the seminarian and respect for the principle of gradualism are necessary for successful assistance in this process.

The counseling process should serve to identify deficit areas in a man’s *psychological* identity that hinder his growth in his *spiritual* identity. For example, the counselor works with family of origin issues, past traumas,

²² *Instruction*, 2.

identity concerns, interpersonal challenges, and any other emotional or psychological difficulty that hinders a man’s freedom to give himself fully to Christ as a chaste spouse. Counselors must aid seminarians to be able to look deeply and steadily at their emotions, memories, thoughts, habits, behaviors, and social skills in all of these areas. In collaboration with other members of the formation team, counselors can review social/sexual histories, assess developmental markers, and assist in the construction of a comprehensive growth plan for affective maturity and chastity for seminarians with transitory same-sex attraction.

While individual differences in achieving these goals will exist, in all cases a substantial change in same-sex attraction tendencies and behaviors must occur if a man is to continue in formation.

The goal of counseling regarding the experience of same-sex attraction is to help seminarians achieve significant resolution of their issues, including: resolution of sexual/emotional attraction to males and accompanying behavior;²³ the desire for genital function and conjugal love in marriage and family; a true affective attraction to spiritual fatherhood; and an understanding and acceptance of one’s primary identity as a beloved son of God and chaste spouse of the Church. All of these are vital elements of what is involved in overcoming transitory same-sex attraction.

While individual differences in achieving these goals will exist, in all cases a substantial change in same-sex attraction tendencies and behaviors must occur if a man is to continue in formation. Evidence of such change must culminate in moral certainty that the attractions and associated behaviors have been overcome at least three years prior to ordination.

²³ What we mean by resolution will become clear through the following worksheet and the working definition of “overcome” at the end.

Note

With the consent of the seminarian, the counselor provides information about a man's progress toward formational goals to the Director of Formation. This input must include observations, self-reporting, and demonstrable attitudinal and behavioral markers. These observations help to form the goals for each individual student. If a student fails to be transparent, or refuses to provide needed data from counseling to the Director of Formation, counselors must report this situation to the Director of Formation. It is the Director of Formation's role, then, to decide on further action regarding the seminarian's formation plans.

If a seminarian is not making necessary and sufficient progress toward the goal—overcoming his transitory same-sex attraction at least three years prior to ordination—then the Director of Formation and Rector, in consultation with the formation staff, will review and make recommendations to the bishop about the seminarian's continuation in the seminary.

A seminarian is not obligated to give his consent to share this information. That is always his choice. But if he does not, the seminary may not have the data it needs to recommend his advancement toward Holy Orders.

II. The Same-Sex Attraction Worksheet: A Tool for Counseling and Formation

The purpose of the *Same-Sex Attraction Worksheet (SSAW)* is to specify how to operationalize and apply the document “*Instruction Concerning the Criteria for the Discernment of Vocations with regard to Persons with Homosexual Tendencies in view of their Admission to the Seminary and to Holy Orders*” as it pertains to the advancement of men with transitory same-sex attraction toward orders. The seminarian's ability to provide evidence of significant growth in the areas of self-identify and mastery, correct impulse management, growth in spiritual fatherhood, and celibate chastity is crucial to the seminary being able to recommend his advancement.

The SSAW is designed to be used by admissions committees, vocation directors, counselors, formation advisors, and spiritual directors, as well as by seminarians as they work with their formators. While the SSAW is intended for use by various members of the formation team, it should be used differently by each. Vocation directors may gain insight into the men they work with and assist them in their discernment. Formation advisors and spiritual directors can use it to inform the types of questions they ask the men, both to assist the men in seeing their authentic identity in God and in tracking their overall progress toward affective maturity. Counseling professionals will utilize it most extensively, in their clinical work with the men and in their collaboration with the rest of the formation team in creating a plan for integration leading to affective maturity.

The use of a tool like the SSAW provides a roadmap for the creation and assessment of formation goals. It allows the counselor, formator, vocation director, and the seminarian to have a common framework and language as they work together to identify developmental tasks and needed skills.

The SSAW is divided into six topical areas to trace past history, work on current skills, and prepare strategies for healthy, holy future ministry. The SSAW includes the following areas of assessment:

1. Personal History and Development of Same-Sex Attraction
2. Primary Identity, Gender, and Sexual Identity
3. Intimacy, Relationship, and Boundaries
4. Sexual Impulses, Feelings, and Behaviors
5. Holy, Healthy Life Strategies and Self-Mastery
6. Spiritual Integration of Sexuality

Benchmarks are provided at the end of each section to allow for assessment of the man's growth in overcoming transitory same-sex attraction.

Preliminary Point: Origin of the Label²⁴

When a person presents themselves having a same-sex attraction it can be important to help them understand the origin of that label. As *Catechism* article 2357 states, the psychological genesis of same-sex attraction “remains largely unexplained.” But, while there may be no universal origin, more than 25 years of clinical experience with seminarians and priests has shown that there are some common patterns that should be explored.

It is possible that the person may have a deep-seated tendency. A deep-seated tendency may be indicated if someone experiences an “exclusive or predominant sexual attraction toward persons of the same-sex” (CCC 2357). In such cases the attraction is characterized by a romantic or sexual arousal pattern that is persistent/predominant beyond adolescence or early sexual development and is not the result of mislabeling by self or others.

It is also possible, however, that a person may have misunderstood their experience. They may erroneously self-label or be mislabeled by others for a variety of reasons.

Self Labeling

Early Experience: As a normal part of development, children sometimes go through same-sex sexual exploration. This may lead to arousal. The experience of that, or the memory of that, may lead to mislabeling.

Envy: Because children develop at different times, and because some people suffer from a poor body image, it can happen that a child is drawn to the body of a same-sex individual. But this may be envy, not sexual attraction. The experience of that, or the memory of that, may lead to mislabeling.

²⁴ This material on the “Origin of the Label” was originally published in the document *Hope and Holiness: Pastoral Care for Those with Same-Sex Attraction*, Archdiocese of Saint Louis, 2016.

Developmental Issues: Especially during adolescence, it often happens that a person is drawn to the abilities, privileges, skills and/or gifts of another person of the same-sex. Due to the normal increase of sexual feelings during puberty these feelings may become eroticized. They may feel like they are falling in love. It may also happen that a young person is experiencing deep friendship for the first time. They may feel like they are falling in love with a best friend. The experience of that, or the memory of that, may lead to mislabeling.

Attention Getting: Most individuals desire to fit in and be accepted by others. Sometimes a person labels themselves, in the absence of any same-sex desire or inclinations, for the purpose of drawing attention to themselves or harming others (e.g. parents).

Sexual Abuse: When sexual abuse is perpetrated by a same-sex offender, the victim’s response may include both repulsion and arousal. They may misinterpret arousal as an indication of a same-sex attraction. They may also mistakenly think that a same-sex perpetrator sees a same-sex inclination in them of which they are not aware. When sexual abuse is perpetrated by a member of the opposite sex, the victim may generalize a negative response to the opposite sex. In such cases a person may mistakenly label themselves.

Internet Pornography: It can happen that one is exposed to same-sex pornography. This experience can lead to arousal, especially in a young person’s sexual development, especially if this is their first exposure to this kind of portrayal of the human body in the context of sexual activity. This experience, or the memory of it, may lead to mislabeling.

Labeling by Others

Male/Female Stereotypes: Some people do not fit the usual societal expectation of male/female body and behavior. These individuals are sometimes mislabeled by their peers: pansy, sissy, butch, gay, etc. These labels may influence the individual’s self-perception.

Bullying: Sometimes a person is labeled by others who intend to hurt them or their reputation. These labels may influence the individual's self-perception.

Having a same-sex admirer: If a person is vulnerable—lonely, suffering from a poor self-image, etc.—they may find themselves enjoying the attention or affection of a same-sex admirer. This attention or affection may influence the person's self-perception, and he or she may willingly accept an erroneous label.

Finally, when doubt or curiosity lead to experimentation, these experiences form memories which shape the person's self-understanding. This is why chastity is essential to forming healthy self-understanding.

Erroneous self-labeling or labeling by others is not always the root of same-sex attraction. Whatever the cause, however, such labels are “sticky”—they tend to endure. In a person's quest for truth and healing it is important that the meaning of his or her experiences be accurately understood. A person may experience a deep-seated same-sex attraction. If so they are not a suitable candidate for the seminary or priesthood, and once this is discovered the best service to the man is to assist him in living chastity outside of seminary formation. But the issues named here come up often enough that it is important to be attentive to the possibility that they are factors in a person's embracing the label “gay” or “lesbian” or some other sexual label.

Several seminarians who erroneously self-labeled as same-sex attracted came to an understanding of their confusion through counseling.

Student Case Study: When asked about the origin of his label, a student explained that he really is attracted to females, so he was not clear what his self-label really meant. He recounted self-identifying when a close friend came out to him and to help his friend “...feel better about himself, I told him I was gay too.” He explained that: “...it kind of stuck and we bonded over the label—but I'm not sure it is really me anymore.”

Student Case Study: A student who labeled himself as gay explained he did so at a younger age because he was “overweight, non-athletic, and never looked as good as the other guys.” He denied any desire for a sexual relationship with a male but explained that: “I just so envied the male-looking guys and felt better about myself when I was around them. I feel envy—not lust.”

To reiterate: erroneous labeling by oneself and others is not always the root of same-sex attraction, but it is essential that it be explored. Counseling must assist the man to accept the truth of his past and to integrate that meaning and history in a healthy, holy way for current and future dispositions and actions.

SSAW Section I: Personal Sexual History and Development of Same-Sex Attraction

The first section of the SSAW is designed to help a student review developmental issues such as traumas, rejections, conflicts, and unmet emotional needs. The role of shame, loneliness, and anger in the development of transitory same-sex attraction is well documented. In addition, emotional wounds, especially perceived or actual rejection by a father figure or significant males, have been demonstrated to contribute to gender inferiority and insufficient masculine attachment. As a result of these factors one may identify as experiencing same-sex attraction, which may be deep-seated same-sex attraction or some other unresolved issue. In finding out which of these it is, a first task is to assess the origin and meaning of the label “same-sex attraction” for each individual.

1. Personal History and Development of Same-Sex Attraction

The following list is illustrative, not exhaustive, of areas to be explored in assisting a man to move toward achievement of the benchmark.

The seminarian will be able to:

- Discuss unresolved issues from childhood—such as anger, bullying, emotional abandonment, or abuse.
- Discuss and understand his history or lack of healthy male friendships in childhood and adolescence.
- Discuss inadequacies experienced in childhood and adolescence regarding sport activities or other male interests and expectations.
- Discuss childhood feelings of loneliness, sadness, insecurity, anxiety, and poor body image.
- Discuss feelings of guilt and shame in relation to his history.
- Discuss attractions to other males as an attempt to escape emotional pain or other non-sexual reasons.

- Discuss and understand relationship with maternal figures and female authority figures.
- Discuss and understand relationship with paternal figures and male authority figures.
- Describe fully any history of sexual acting out, desires, feelings, or use of pornography.
- Identify origins of unresolved conflicts and work to resolve them.
- Recognize parental failings in childhood history. Reconcile and forgive where possible.
- Understand that current research is inconclusive about the causes of same-sex attraction.
- Consider critically the evidence for various theories for labeling same-sex attraction.
- Define sexual abuse versus sexual exploration and trauma in childhood and accept appropriate responsibility.
- Recognize and understand the origin of his same-sex attraction label.
- Work to resolve feelings, conflicts, and relationships.
- Forgive self and others for (real or perceived) harm or failings.
- Reconcile relationships where possible.
- Grieve losses of relationships or expectations.
- Articulate and express wounds of shame/sadness.

Benchmark: Demonstrate an accurate understanding of his past. Accept the truth about that past. Integrate the meaning and impact of that history—in a healthy, holy way—as it affects current and future dispositions and actions.

Reminder: *Utilize this worksheet according to your role and capacity. (For example: the formation advisor will not ask for a full disclosure of sexual history but the psychologist may.)*

What can the Counselor expect in terms of response?

Note: Seminarians may have formed their opinions and chosen their behaviors on the basis of cultural influences that are not consistent with Church teaching. Many have not shared these behaviors, thoughts, and feelings with responsible adults who could provide Christian mentorship. As a result, care should be taken to provide a trusting environment in which these discussions can take place. If this care is not taken, the issues are likely to go underground.

In response to the questions on the SSAW (in section 1, above, and in all subsequent sections) the counselor can expect a variety of reactions. The following examples are meant to be illustrative, not exhaustive. They are arranged to show a progression in freedom—a kind of roadmap of growth toward affective maturity and healthy, celibate chastity.

1. The man has limited awareness of this dimension and its impact on his affective life. He gives minimal responses to questions.
2. The man experiences same-sex attraction, and engages in behaviors on this basis (e.g. flirtation, jealousy, fantasizing). He understands that this is disordered but does not recognize the behavior until someone else points it out.
3. The man recognizes that he engages in behaviors on the basis of same-sex attraction, but he does not understand the cause or the nature of the attraction. (E.g. it may not be sexual lust but body envy or lack of masculine confidence.)
4. The man experiences same-sex attraction and engages in various behaviors on this basis. He recognizes this himself and understands the cause or the nature of the attraction.
5. The man engages in various behaviors on the basis of same-sex attraction. He recognizes it while it is happening and moves against it. But the man engages in negative self-talk and self-recrimination.
6. The man knows that he is prone to same-sex attraction and the resulting behaviors. It requires a great deal of attention—time, energy, and mentoring—to be ready to avoid this behavior in social situations.

7. The man occasionally experiences same-sex attraction. He recognizes this as disordered when it happens. With focus and concentration, he is able to adjust his interior reactions so that the attraction does not express itself exteriorly. He primarily uses suppression to adjust his behavior.
8. The man occasionally experiences same-sex attraction. He quickly recognizes this as disordered when it happens. He easily adjusts his interior reactions so that the attraction does not express itself exteriorly, and he engages in the process of sublimation—i.e. he re-channels his energy by choosing healthy thoughts and behaviors toward those to whom he is attracted.

SSAW Section 2: Primary Identity, Gender, and Sexual Identity

The second section of the SSAW, *Primary Identity, Gender and Sexual Identity* is designed to explore how the student perceives his identity, gender, and sexual identity.

Unfortunately, a young man's primary identity as a beloved son of God may be obscured by unresolved wounds of body image, traits, interests, and negative self-talk. Often times, early self-perceptions endure even despite evidence to the contrary.

Student Case Study: A student persisted in describing himself as “fat, uncoordinated, and unmanly” even though he was physically strong and fit. He was taught to participate in sports by working with a formator to develop basic skills of several sports. He remarked that “I was shocked that I could do those athletic things...” and “I feel more like a real man.”

Self-limiting behavior and negative self-talk must be addressed and moved toward self-respect and self-efficacy to help a man demonstrate an accurate understanding of the dimensions of his male identity and to accept the truth that his identity is as a man, a beloved son of the Father, as he integrates characteristics of his male identity into an expression of spiritual fatherhood.

Student Case Study: A man seems to avoid the company of his brother seminarians in favor of other groups (the apostolate, the parish, women's religious communities).

It is important to beware of "false complementarity." We sometimes see this in men with same-sex attraction who seem more at ease in the company of women. Part of that may be legitimate complementarity, which can and should be fostered. Part of it may be avoiding male relationships rather than learning how to navigate them properly. If and when it is the latter, this needs to be addressed.

2. Primary Identity, Gender, and Sexual Identity

The following list is illustrative, not exhaustive, of areas to be explored in assisting a man to move toward achievement of the benchmark.

The student will be able to:

- Recognize and reconcile issues of poor or distorted body image.
- Recognize that his identity is as a beloved son of the Father—not a homosexual person.
- Acknowledge feelings of body/trait envy of other males.
- Accept with gratitude one's own talents and strengths.
- Discuss unresolved issues such as anger, bullying, emotional abandonment, abuse.
- Recognize gender identity as male and be comfortable/at ease in this identity.
- Envision self as, and develop behaviors of, spiritual fatherhood, such as abilities to care, mentor, protect, and shepherd.
- Develop and accept a felt sense of a male body image.
- Identify male role models he admires and the Christian virtues they possess.
- Recognize Jesus as the model of manhood.
- Understand and manifest masculine identity not based on sexual attractions.

- Recognize, monitor, and correct negative self-talk.
- Name, call out, and reject the lies around one's identity. (Identify and reject the "chattering voice of the enemy.")
- Develop male gifts of strength, courage, and protectiveness.
- Maintain a stable, positive sense of personal identity.
- Grow in self-confidence, self-love, and self-efficacy.
- Grow in ability to see his authentic masculinity without feelings of inadequacy.
- Model Jesus Christ as true model of masculinity and spiritual fatherhood.
- Grow in his capacity to receive and give love appropriately.

Benchmark: Demonstrate an accurate understanding of the dimensions (physical, psychological, and spiritual) of his male identity. Accept the truth that his identity is as a man, a beloved son of the Father. Integrate the characteristics of his male identity into actions that express spiritual fatherhood.

Reminder: Utilize this worksheet according to your role and capacity.

SSAW Section 3: Intimacy, Relationships, and Boundaries

This section of the SSAW is designed to assist formators and seminarians to assess the motivation, attitudes, and behaviors necessary for developing and maintaining healthy personal and professional relationships. Attention is given to attitudes and needs of the seminarian in seeking relationships, mature interdependence, and appropriate boundary recognition and maintenance, free of romantic inclinations.

Limerence, infatuation, and developmental dependencies are addressed, with attention to the development of mature, healthy, chaste beliefs, boundaries, and behaviors.

Student Case Study: A student described his attention to his own behavior in the presence of a certain fellow student. He described how he desired to be perceived as special and to be exclusive in relationship with this student. This was demonstrated by jealousy, possessiveness, overly emotional sentiments, and little attention to other male relationships.²⁵ The student began to become aware of this exclusive attachment and modified his attitudes and behavior. This allowed him to reach out to multiple members of the community and establish healthy, chaste male friendships free from focus on emotional attachment and mood disruption.

Counseling must assist a man to demonstrate an understanding of healthy and holy boundaries in relationships with others and accept the freedom of self and others to make a gift of themselves in a chaste way. Counseling must help a man learn to initiate and maintain relationships with others free from unhealthy attachments.

²⁵ This is a good example of what used to be called “particular friendships.” It may be more helpful to call them “exclusive” friendships because all relationships are *particular*.

3. Intimacy, Relationships and Boundaries

The following list is illustrative, not exhaustive, of areas to be explored in assisting a man to move toward achievement of the benchmark.

The seminarian will be able to:

- Recognize and modify unhealthy craving for male acceptance and approval.
- Recognize and work through feelings of anger or envy toward other men.
- Monitor behavior in relationships to have freedom from possessiveness, exclusivity, envy, jealousy, or romantic inclinations.
- Develop healthy attachments free from issues of self-worthiness.
- Develop an empathy and compassion for others and for self.
- Prudently discern the motivation for and the choice to disclose or not disclose personal same-sex attraction information in relationships.
- Make age-appropriate transition from dependence to independence to interdependence.
- Describe, evaluate, and maintain healthy relationship boundaries.
- Develop and enact appropriate boundaries for close, personal, chaste relationships with males.
- Develop and maintain appropriate boundaries in relationships with women.
- Develop healthy relationships with women, free of avoidance or over-identification.
- Abstain from romanticizing or titillating behavior with other males.
- Refrain from possessiveness of male friends.
- Refrain from fantasies of men as romantic partners.
- Refrain from wanting to be desired by men.
- Refrain from persistent yearning for an exclusive male friend.
- Refrain from emotional lability with exclusive male friends.
- Initiate and maintain chaste male friendships.

- Initiate and maintain healthy female friendships.
- Learn to tolerate rejection and criticism without fear of abandonment.

Benchmark: Demonstrate an understanding of healthy and holy boundaries and relationships with others. Accept the freedom of self and others to make a gift of themselves in a chaste way. Initiate and maintain relationships with others free from unhealthy attachments.

Reminder: Utilize this worksheet according to your role and capacity.

SSAW Section 4: Sexual Impulses, Feelings, and Behaviors

This section of the SSAW is designed to assist the seminarian in understanding the gift of his male sexuality. Exploration will include how a seminarian defines his sexuality, how he feels about it, and which behaviors he exhibits. In this section the seminarian will assess his sexual intentions and conduct to determine where change and development is needed.

Some seminarians may not have developed close relationships with females and did not experience romantic feelings or dating. Sometimes their relationships focused on males. Their sexuality, identity, and growth may have been expressed in isolation and confusion. A seminarian may question whether or not his sexual feelings were more focused on males and have many questions about sexual feelings and identity that were never discussed with trusted adults.

Interventions in this section include building trust with others to give meaning to sexual feelings and behaviors. Students may grow in an understanding of the unitive and procreative design of God for their sexuality. They must also grow in developing relationships which are chaste and appropriate with females.

Student Case Study: A student concerned about same-sex attraction attractions grew to see a healthy sexual attraction to a female. He stated, “I was so attracted to her beauty but mostly her listening, kindness, and her compassion. I began to see the true gift of femininity.”

Counseling must work to help a seminarian demonstrate, accept, and teach an accurate understanding of natural law, values, and Church teaching on sexuality and same-sex attraction—i.e. the purpose of sexuality as unitive and procreative. Counseling must help him accept the spousal meaning of his own sexuality in the gift of celibacy and to express his sexuality in chaste thoughts and actions.

4. Sexual Impulses, Feelings, and Behaviors

The following list is illustrative, not exhaustive, of areas to be explored in assisting a man to move toward achievement of the benchmark.

The seminarian will be able to:

- Understand the feelings, events, cues, and motivations for an attraction to a specific male.
- Understand his male sexuality as gift.
- Appreciate the value of his maleness as unitive and pro-generative in priestly chastity.
- Recognize others’ inclinations or sexual overtures directed at oneself and respond appropriately.
- Not demonstrate the vice of effeminacy—excessive softness, passivity, or delicateness. (This is to be distinguished from the authentic femininity of a woman.)
- Accept natural law values and the Church’s teaching on same-sex attraction.
- Engage in meaningful and instructive discourse with those who dissent from Church teachings on same-sex attraction.
- View his same-sex attraction as a challenge to manage chastely.
- Conduct self (behaviors, dress, talk) in a modest fashion.
- Avoid sexually suggestive talk, humor, images, or gestures.

- Engage in temperate, not hyper-sensitive, behavior or emotions.
- Refrain from use of pornography and other sexually graphic images that trigger unchaste behavior.
- Refrain from sexual fantasy life regarding males or behaviors and activities which titillate or arouse.
- Recognize a growing affective desire for genital function, conjugal love, and fatherhood in marriage.
- Recognize an affective desire for spiritual fatherhood.

Benchmark: Demonstrate, accept, and teach an accurate understanding of natural law, values, and Church teaching on sexuality and same-sex attraction—i.e. the purpose of sexuality as unitive and pro-generative. Accept the spousal meaning of his own sexuality in the gift of celibacy. Express his sexuality in chaste thoughts and actions.

Reminder: *Utilize this worksheet according to your role and capacity.*

SSAW Section 5: Holy, Healthy Life Strategies and Self-mastery

This section of the SSAW is designed to increase concrete strategies and improve methods for self-mastery. The seminarian must become aware not only of unchaste behavior but also develop self-care behaviors that assist in the growth of virtue. In particular, the student must demonstrate freedom from use of pornography, self-arousal behaviors including sexual fantasies, and unchaste emotional intention.

In seminary there is much emotional development (and sometimes even physical brain development) that is occurring. Sexual identity and self-mastery are primary parts of this continuing growth. In small group sessions and individual counseling seminarians often express difficulty with starting and maintaining healthy strategies that increase holy habits and that decrease the occurrence of unhealthy and unchaste behavior. Some do not have mature concepts of sexuality and do not have practical strategies for changing bad habits. These change strategies relate not

just to self-mastery in chastity but also developing overall effective habit formation at physical, emotional, and mental levels.

Student Case Study: One individual who struggled with chastity began to question whether he also had any tendency toward same-sex attraction. For this man, his growth in freedom from use of pornographic exposure and his development of better impulse and behavioral control in diet, sleep, exercise, and appropriate socialization, created a gradual diminishment of concerns about sexual identity.

The understanding here is that positive growth in multiple areas can diffuse sexual identity concerns in certain cases. In other cases, more explicit intervention and exploration may be needed.

Counseling must help a seminarian demonstrate a strong level of affective maturity and self-mastery. The seminarian must accept the need for daily ongoing structure and discipline, and plan and monitor healthy self-regulation techniques and habits.

5. Holy, Healthy Life Strategies and Self-Mastery

The following list is illustrative, not exhaustive, of areas to be explored in assisting a man to move toward achievement of the benchmark.

The seminarian will be able to:

- Recognize and control mood changes appropriately.
- Exercise impulse control.
- Direct self in positive self-talk and activity selection.
- Demonstrate an ability to ask for help and receive affirmation and affection.
- Possess and demonstrate desire to manage unchaste thoughts and other same-sex temptations.
- Utilize physical exercise and activity as effective healthy tools.
- Manage feelings of loneliness appropriately.
- Utilize alone time fruitfully (enjoy his own company).
- Develop healthy patterns of eating, sleeping, and recreating.

- Work directly with Formators and Spiritual Directors to develop a personal growth plan for chastity.
- Maintain freedom from using homo-erotic pornography or mental images.
- Maintain freedom from self-arousal regarding homo-erotic material.
- Grow in ability to self-regulate impulses, behaviors, and moods in a prudent way.
- Grow in ability to delay gratification.
- Develop healthy anger management.
- Develop ability to express feelings and thoughts with males without undue anxiety.
- Engage fully in the community life of the seminary.

Benchmark: Demonstrate a strong level of affective maturity and self-mastery. Accept the need for daily, ongoing structure and discipline. Plan and monitor healthy self-regulation techniques and habits. Accept accountability for his affective maturity on a daily basis.

Reminder: Utilize this worksheet according to your role and capacity.

SSAW Section 6: Spiritual Integration of Sexuality

This section of the SSAW is designed to create an integrated understanding and expression of human growth and spiritual development in regard to transitory same-sex attraction. The seminarian must understand specific behavioral approaches to change, and also understand the necessity of self-gift and sacrifice that is spiritually required. The student must understand the meaning of this sacrifice for the sake of the Kingdom and as an eschatological sign for the Church. Modeling his sexuality as sacrifice for the Church is a key element of his priesthood and of his spiritual fatherhood.

Student Case Study: A seminarian was aware of his grief in realizing he would never be a physical father and spouse. On a pastoral assignment he became more aware of his role as a chaste spouse to the Church, and as a spiritual father. Some of the experiences that led him to this deeper understanding included a desire to protect, care for, and guide parishioners. For the first time, he was able to see himself as a spiritual father. He experienced a great joy in this realization and a desire to increase this sense of spiritual fatherhood. He commented that previously, “I understood spiritual fatherhood intellectually, but for the first time understood this in my heart as my real gift to the Church.”

Counseling must strive to help a seminarian demonstrate an understanding that his sexuality can draw him closer to God and accept his sexuality in a strong relationship with each Person of the Trinity, Mary, and the communion of saints.

6. Spiritual Integration of Sexuality

The following list is illustrative, not exhaustive, of areas to be explored in assisting a man to move toward achievement of the benchmark.

The seminarian will be able to:

- Recognize Jesus’ presence throughout his childhood and adolescence.
- Recognize St. Joseph as a chaste, loving and affirming father and role model.
- Understand his chastity as a sacrifice for the sake of the Kingdom
- Understand his chastity as an eschatological sign for the Church
- Grow in an awareness of accepting and (subjectively) sacrificing his same-sex attraction struggles as deeper participation in the Paschal Mystery.
- Grow in strong relationship with God the Father, and understand himself as a beloved son.
- Grow in strong relationship with Christ, and understand his role as best man of the bridegroom.

- Grow in an understanding of self as spiritual spouse.
- Grow in an understanding of self as shepherd.
- Identify the presence of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit as the power-source of hope and healing.
- Grow in strong relationship with Mary, recognizing her gifts as complementary to male strength.

Note: these points will be further developed in the spiritual direction section

Benchmark: Demonstrate an understanding that his sexuality can draw him closer to God. Accept that his growth and maintenance in healthy sexuality unites him with Christ on the Cross. Integrate his sexual and spiritual identity in a deepening relationship with each Person of the Trinity, with Mary, and the communion of saints.

Reminder: Utilize this worksheet according to your role and capacity.

Same-Sex Attraction Worksheet Conclusion

Definitions

As a result of the experiences that have produced the SSAW, we offer the following working definitions.

Deep-Seated Same-Sex Attraction

A pervasive, persistent, enduring pattern of emotional, romantic, and/or sexual attraction to people of the same-sex. This is often presented as a matter of identity. (“This is who I am.” “I experience this most of the time.”)

Transitory Same-Sex Attraction

An emotional, romantic, and/or sexual attraction to people of the same-sex that is not pervasive, persistent, or enduring. This may be expressed as an occasional, perhaps confusing, tendency or experience. (“This is not who I am.” “I only experience this occasionally.”)

Overcome

A man may overcome same-sex attraction *temporally*. This means the emotional, romantic, and/or sexual attraction no longer occurs. The man desires to marry a woman and be a biological father. This is a legitimate sense of the term and the most basic sense of the term.

It is not, however, the only sense of the term. Overcome does not, in every case, mean erasure. We still live in a fallen world and experience disordered passions. A man may overcome erroneous self-labelling. He may reach the benchmarks of affective maturity. He may desire to have a wife and family and make a conscious sacrifice of those goods for the sake of spiritual fatherhood. He may still experience the temptations or disordered passions of same-sex attraction from time to time.

Therefore it is important to say that a man may also overcome same-sex attraction *situationally*. This means that if and when it occurs he habitually recognizes the emotional, romantic, and/or sexual attraction, responds to it interiorly, and adjusts to healthy, holy behavior quickly, securely, and serenely.

Finally, it is interesting and important to note that the points detailed in the SSAW actually apply to everyone’s growth in affective maturity, not only those who experience same-sex attraction.

Methodology

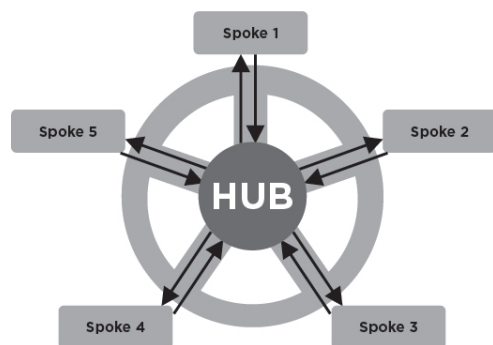
The SSAW is a complex tool with many facets. What if a man is strong in some areas but not in others? Can he be advanced toward Holy Orders?

On one level, it is helpful to think in terms of an image. For a man who experiences transitory same-sex attraction, affective maturity is like a wheel: its 5 spokes are the first five dimensions of the SSAW, and the hub of the wheel is the spiritual integration. Every one of those spokes, and the hub, needs to be strong and secure. If there is weakness in any area, the “wheel” of human formation and pastoral ministry will not roll along properly.

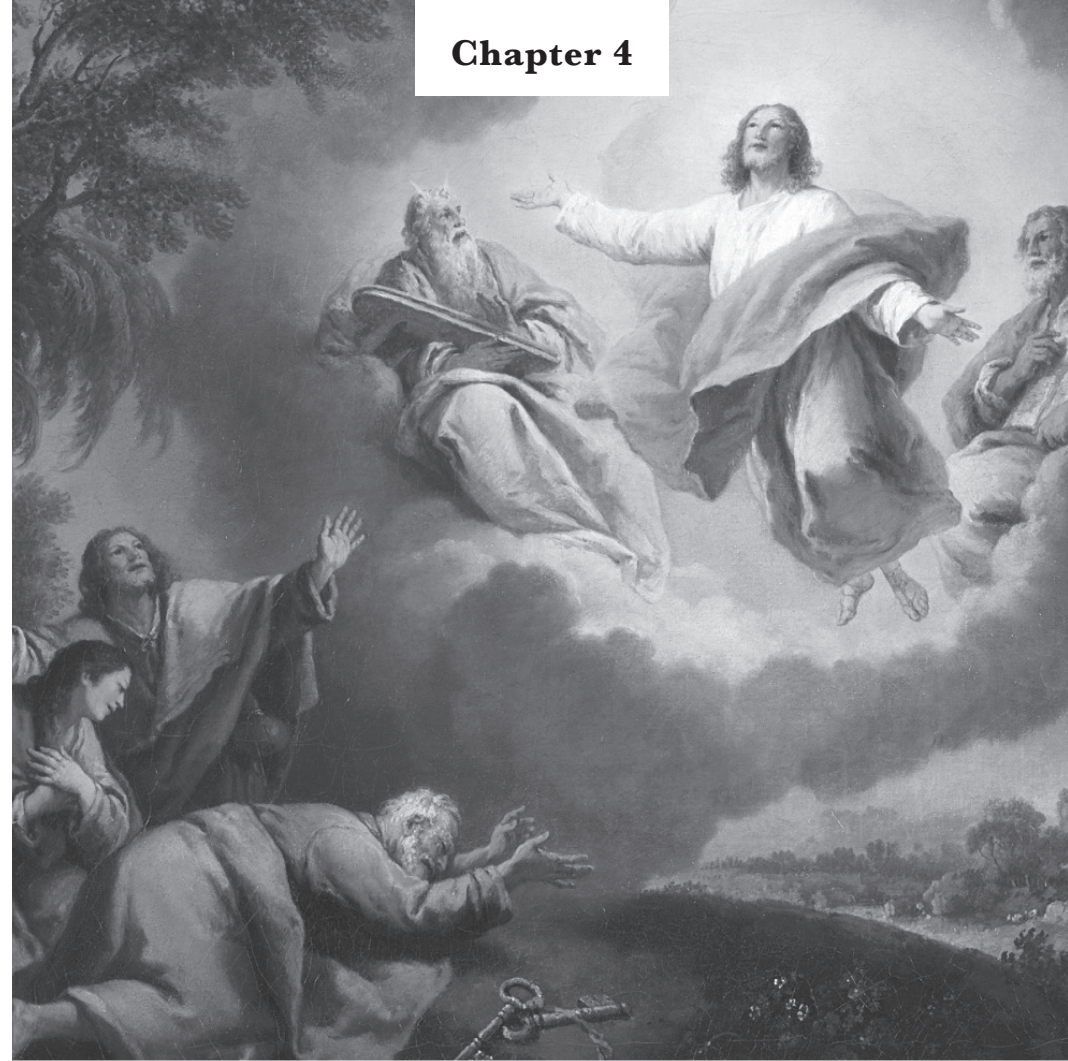
Without evidence of a secure basis in all 5 dimensions, and evidence of the integration of those dimensions in the spiritual life, the seminary does not have the evidence it needs to say, with moral certainty, that a man has overcome transitory same-sex attraction. Without that certainty the seminary cannot recommend him for advancement toward ordination.

To set the matter more deeply in the context of the Catholic theological tradition, it might also be helpful to think in terms of an analogy to just war theory.²⁶ We begin with a presumption against going to war. The presumption cannot be overcome on the basis of just one factor in favor of war. All of the dimensions of just war theory need to be met at the same time.

We can think of the case of transitory same-sex attraction along similar lines. The question is: if a man experiences transitory same-sex attraction, may a seminary advance him toward holy orders? The presumption is against such advancement. The presumption cannot be overcome on the basis of a man's having a good handle on any one, or even several, of the dimensions of affective maturity detailed in the SSAW. In order to advance a man who experiences transitory same-sex attraction, the seminary has to have solid evidence on all fronts that the man has overcome the attraction and achieved affective maturity. If, and only if, the seminary has such evidence in all six dimensions can it overcome the presumption, and advance the man toward Holy Orders.



²⁶ We are in no way suggesting that there is a parallel between war and same-sex attraction. The analogy is limited to the methodology of the just war tradition and the proper methodology for utilizing the SSAW.



SPIRITUAL FORMATION: The Role of the Spiritual Director

How do the points of psychological growth in the Same-Sex Attraction Worksheet get taken up and integrated into the spiritual life of a man? This section offers guidance to the spiritual director so that the formation of a man who experiences transitory same-sex attraction can be integrated into his entire formation. Without this integration there is a risk that a man's growth will be compartmentalized in the counseling relationship.

*In the discernment concerning the suitability for ordination, the spiritual director has an important task. Although he is bound to secrecy, he represents the Church in the internal forum. In his discussions with the candidate, the spiritual director must especially point out the demands of the Church concerning priestly chastity and the affective maturity that is characteristic of the priest, as well as help him to discern whether he has the necessary qualities. The spiritual director has the obligation to evaluate all the qualities of the candidate's personality and to make sure that he does not present disturbances of a sexual nature, which are incompatible with the priesthood. If a candidate practices homosexuality or presents deep-seated homosexual tendencies, his spiritual director as well as his confessor have the duty to dissuade him in conscience from proceeding towards ordination.*²⁷

Introduction

The Spiritual Director is often a kind of first responder, the first one with whom a seminarian shares his human and spiritual struggles. In this privileged place the spiritual director must have the capacity both to accept a man as he is and assist him in growing toward all that Jesus offers him.

Since, for the priest, the spiritual life “is the core which unifies and gives life to his being a priest and his acting as a priest,”²⁸ it is essential to consider how the spiritual director facilitates such integration for the seminarian. The more effectively a seminarian's spiritual life serves to integrate all his formation, the more freely and completely he will be conformed to Christ.

What are the qualities and capacities spiritual directors need to have to serve seminarians in their formation, especially seminarians who experience transitory same-sex attraction? Saints have written at length about the necessary qualities of a good spiritual director; the Church offers additional guidelines for spiritual directors in seminaries. The following characteristics are drawn from these sources and offer some key points of consideration, both to those tasked with appointing priests who will serve as spiritual directors in the seminary and to priests who are already serving as spiritual directors.

²⁷ *Instruction*, 3.

²⁸ PDV 45.

To Think with the Church

If a spiritual director is going to speak with the heart of Jesus, he must speak from the heart of the Church. To have the mind of the Church is to have the mind of Christ. The ecclesial nature of spiritual direction should be evident and consequential for selecting spiritual directors. Some particularly important qualities are:

1. The spiritual director fully accepts the entirety of the Church's magisterial vision for the life of faith. Such *de fide* acceptance, religious adherence, and submission of intellect and will with respect to all the Church's teachings on faith and morals presumes a level of study and aptitude that will truly serve the man's training in spiritual intimacy.²⁹
2. The spiritual director has a robust and abiding trust in the power of the Gospel to awaken faith and form a seminarian's heart in the life of virtue. The Holy Spirit's potency in the Word of God cannot be superseded by methods or techniques of direction.³⁰
3. The Church's word and sacraments allow the spiritual director to have an understanding of sin that is liberating and loving. With a mature focus on God's unceasingly loving initiative, the directee can steadily experience the intimacy that casts out sin and its sources. Good spiritual direction for seminarians will detect any self-imposed strategies for sin reduction that may compound a man's sinful reluctance to receive love from God.³¹

²⁹ The spiritual director is held to no less a standard than the teaching faculty according to the profession of faith and oath of fidelity. In other words, the spiritual director should be willing to make the profession of faith and take the oath of fidelity, just as the teaching faculty do.

³⁰ Spiritual Exercises #15, “leave the Creator to act immediately with the creature, and the creature with its Creator and Lord.”

³¹ “If I have experienced conversion on the basis of an encounter with the real love of God, two things result. First, I am eager to tell others of the power of Divine Love in bringing about conversion and healing. Second, I know the need for and long for ongoing conversion in my life. Again, it is a sign of integral and mature faith that this question/topic can be addressed with openness and not defensiveness. I want my director to have an integral and mature faith that is growing on a daily basis. If the director in any way downplays the reality of sin, or the need for conversion, if they intimate that the whole topic is just far too negative or discouraging, or if they approach conversion in a “just try harder” sort of way, then another director should be considered.” (Traynor, Fr. Scott, *Open Letter on Seeking Spiritual Direction*)

A Man of Prayer

A spiritual director must have a spiritual life that is born out of “an intimate and unceasing union with the Father through His Son Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit.”³² Thus, seminary spiritual directors must be men of prayer.

This may seem obvious, but what is meant here is more than simply praying the Office, celebrating the Sacraments, and praying a daily holy hour. All priests must be men of prayer in this sense. A priest serving as a spiritual director in seminary formation must be more. He must receive his very life and identity from Trinitarian intimacy, knowing who he is in relationship to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. A priest suited for spiritual direction in the seminary must be capable of articulating concrete and practical ways he experiences God’s grace in his own daily life, noticing the same things in other people, and helping others articulate those truths in concrete ways. Only if he can locate his own life and identity in relation to the Trinity will he be able to help the seminarian locate his life and identity in relation to the Trinity.

Only if he can locate his own life and identity in relation to the Trinity will he be able to help the seminarian locate his life and identity in relation to the Trinity.

Further Characteristics

The key attitudes and activities identified for the formation advisor in section 2—disinterested attentiveness, accompanied observing, focused

³² *Optatum Totius*, 8.

observing, observations that lead to questions and self-revelation—apply in their own way to seminary spiritual directors, as well. More particularly, the spiritual director must know how to pay attention to and name the most prominent affective movements in a seminarian’s life (thoughts, feelings, desires, attitudes, etc.). He must be able to assist the seminarian in noticing and bringing forth such movements for attentiveness, prayer, and integration. The purpose of the listening and naming is not analysis but, most deeply, applying the Rules for the Discernment of Spirits in order to assist the man’s growth in relationship with Christ and his growth in freedom.

The proper tools and formation and credentials are important, but the capacity to be a good spiritual director is also a gift. How is it possible to identify priests who have the gift of spiritual direction? It often happens that a good spiritual director has been invited by another director with wisdom and experience to consider entering into the ministry. A director who has the gift will find that the exercise of this ministry is not only energizing for themselves but fruitful for those whom they direct. It needs to be clear not only that this person has the desire to give spiritual direction, and not only that they have received training in spiritual direction, but also that God has given this person the gift of spiritual direction.

Of course, a spiritual director in a seminary should be a good example of all the benchmarks mentioned in section 3. If not, spiritual direction runs the risk of meeting the director’s emotional needs more than helping the seminarian grow in Christ. Stunted affective maturity will prevent a director from imagining all that Jesus is offering to a man in formation.

The spiritual director’s affective maturity is an essential foundation for him to assist the seminarian in growing in Trinitarian intimacy. The director can only be an effective guide if he is familiar with the terrain: his human, affective, and spiritual capacities are important factors. But even the most useful human strengths are insufficient without a deep interiority that draws a director into increasing intimacy with the Trinity. This intimacy is the source of his own priesthood, and the principal task of his call as a seminary spiritual director is to lead men into such intimacy. He must assist the seminarian in experiencing ever more deeply

the love of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit for him, particularly and concretely. From this awareness, the seminarian can discover the action of God in his daily life and mission.

As the seminarian is drawn into the communion of the Trinity, he will receive more deeply his identity as a beloved son of the Father. To know who he is in the eyes of the Father gives him the possibility of coming to know himself in Christ. Though accessible through his baptism, the seminarian is preparing to receive—through his ordination—a special, ontological configuration to Christ’s identities: Son of the Father, Spouse (Bridegroom) of the Church, Father of His people. The spiritual director must assist the seminarian in entering into these aspects of Christ’s identity.

Finally, the seminarian is not only drawn into such communion for his own sake but in order to serve the People of God (see CCC 1534). The spiritual director needs to be able to help a man grow into greater purity in this intention and his ability to notice the fruits of this service.

It is best for spiritual directors to receive supervision. At Kenrick-Glennon supervision is provided twice per semester for each spiritual director.

“The spiritual training should be closely connected with the doctrinal and pastoral, and, with the special help of the spiritual director, should be imparted in such a way that the students might learn to live in an intimate and unceasing union with the Father through His Son Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit. Conformed to Christ the Priest through their sacred ordination they should be accustomed to adhere to Him as friends, in an intimate companionship, their whole life through.”³³

Experiencing the Father’s Love (Father wound)

When a seminarian is asked to describe a concrete and personal experience of the Father’s love for him, too often the spiritual director is met with a “blank stare,” or a series of abstract concepts. Such responses often show that the seminarian does not have a concrete sense of the Father’s love.

³³ Ibid.

The impoverished sense of encounter, or immature expressions of it, should activate deep desires in the director to see the man pray—in spiritual direction sessions together and in a daily personal holy hour—with greater concrete awareness of God’s love. Without this fatherly standard of prayer with and for the man, there is a great danger that the seminarian’s sense of being unwanted or unloved (or simply unnoticed) by the Father will undercut a great deal of his formation. Without an awareness of and grounding in the secure love of the Father, seminary formation can become merely a school for training in priestly duties, rather than a “journey of transformation”³⁴ aimed at “assimilating the heart in the image of the heart of Christ.”³⁵

A seminarian’s relationship with his human father will often influence how he is able to receive the love of his heavenly Father. As a seminarian encounters the infinite love of the Father in prayer, he may bump up against experiences of unlove in his own life, especially in his relationship with his earthly father. Of course, the help of a good psychologist or counselor is crucial here. But in addition, with the help of a good spiritual director, a seminarian can learn how to welcome the healing power of the Holy Spirit and the redemption of Jesus into such places of pain, transforming the wound into a place of intimacy with the Trinity. The seminarian can then learn to love as a father through such an experience of the Father’s love for him.

“This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased” (Mk 1:11). Our participation in Jesus’ primordial, baptismal identity too often gets glossed over. The deeply pragmatic and pelagian tendencies of seminarians cannot be underestimated. The slow and attentive listening to the man’s sense of self is revealed in questions about his experiences with Scripture, with studies, and with others. In his responses to these questions, there should be evidence that a man’s self-awareness is increasingly aligned with the reality of his baptismal identity. If there is not, the spiritual director will need to help the man to pray into that identity. For the seminarian, this reception of his sonship is the essential foundation upon which he can receive the identities that will become the foundation of his priesthood: spouse, father, physician, shepherd.

³⁴ *The Gift of the Priestly Vocation*, Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis, 43.

³⁵ Ibid 89.

When a seminarian learns more and more how to live in Christ Himself, receiving Christ's identity as his own, that provides evidence that he will be able to live his priesthood rooted in Christ as well. Discovering in himself the spousal nature of Christ the Bridegroom draws him into communion with Christ and others that bears fruit in his mission and gives life to the Church. This fruitfulness orients a man toward the people he serves, and his life can become ordered to the self-sacrificial love of the father for his wife and children. As the seminarian discovers Christ in himself, he is invited to remain in this communion in order to give to people what they truly desire—Christ Himself. The spiritual director must understand where the seminarian is in receiving these aspects of priestly identity and guide him along this path.

These skills and gifts of the spiritual director are essential for guiding every seminarian. They become even more critical in guiding a man who struggles with same-sex attraction. The integrating nature of these aspects of priestly identity, especially the orientation towards spousal intimacy which is central to Christ's gift of self, pose particular challenges in the case of a man with transitory same-sex attraction.

In favor of the Church

An important presupposition for spiritual direction is that the good of the Church and the good of the man are the same thing. This confidence is the foundation for freedom for the spiritual director and the man. The spiritual director is not a cheerleader for the man. If there are habits or actions in a man's life that are contrary to Church teaching the spiritual director needs to call the man to share this information in the external forum, with confidence that it will serve not only the good of the Church but also the freedom and peace of the man. In extreme cases, the spiritual director may no longer be able to serve a man.³⁶

The spiritual director is at the service of the seminarian's spiritual growth; he is also part of the formation team of the seminary. As the seminary has a responsibility to the man (to offer the best formation for his priesthood possible), it also has responsibility to the Church and People of God. This includes dismissing men not suited to priesthood

from formation. While the spiritual director is not explicitly part of the dismissal process, he has an important role in assisting the seminarian to see and live in reality. When he knows with certainty that the good of the Church and the good of the seminarian are the same, the spiritual director is able to assist the seminarian in his discernment within the light of the Church's discernment through the seminarian formation team.

Even though it is sometimes difficult, especially when he sees many valuable gifts in a man, the spiritual director may have great confidence in assisting a seminarian experiencing same-sex attraction that the greatest good of the Church and the greatest good of the seminarian are the same thing. Thus, fidelity to the Church's wisdom regarding men with same-sex attraction is also serving the seminarian. This key truth must be embraced fully and with gratitude for a spiritual director to serve faithfully both the seminarian and the Church.

Wounds and Healing

While the counselor helps to identify struggles and wounds in a man's psychological history, the spiritual director assists the man in bringing these experiences into relationship with God. The spiritual director's capacity to name affective movements in relation to those wounds, and to help the man name those movements for himself, is key in assisting in a man's growth. When noticing wounds, the spiritual director must assist the seminarian to invite Jesus into the experience and ask for healing. He may pray with the seminarian in direction, gently guiding him to receive Jesus' healing power.³⁷

The healing available to the seminarian may be as simple as Jesus speaking truth into the lies he has believed. In such cases the spiritual director will simply help the seminarian to receive the gift Jesus offers. At other times the healing power of Christ will penetrate a disorder

³⁶ If the seminarian discloses in something that is problematic and seriously inconsistent with his pursuing priesthood, the spiritual director must ask him to reveal this to his human formators. If the seminarian is unwilling to do so, the spiritual director must recuse himself. Though he may not comment on the specific reason, he must communicate to the appropriate formator that he is no longer meeting with the seminarian.

within the heart of the seminarian. Then the director must be capable of journeying into the depths with his eyes fixed firmly on Christ, trusting in the redemption of Jesus rather than his own capacity to heal the seminarian. Authentic humility will assist the spiritual director in remaining agile: as the movements within the heart of the seminarian illuminate the healing presence of Christ, the director can assist the seminarian in remaining with Christ and His redemptive work. The affective immaturity that is often present within a man struggling with same-sex attraction can easily be tempted to settle for human affection and affirmation within the direction relationship. While being supportive, the spiritual director must take care to help the seminarian reorient his gaze toward Christ rather than settling for something less. With patient confidence in Christ's desire to heal each person according to the Father's providential care, the spiritual director remains free to marvel at the miracles he is privileged to witness.

Particular considerations to attend to in assisting men with same-sex attraction

The work of the spiritual director should always be a point of intersection with what is happening in a seminarian's human formation. If a man is experiencing same-sex attraction, it is all the more important that this integration be made explicit. All of the points in the Same-Sex Attraction Worksheet can become places of deepening prayer. For example, if a man did not receive confidence from his human father, he needs to consider how God the Father is inviting him to greater confidence as a man and how the Father is present in his human relationships (e.g. with his rector or teacher). If a man grew up without brothers or close male friends, he should be invited to consider more deeply his friendship with Jesus and how this friendship is being mediated through relationships with brother seminarians. The spiritual director serving a man who experiences transitory same-sex attraction needs to read the SSAW,

³⁷ At times, guiding the seminarian through the healing of memories or deliverance prayer may be helpful to do at a different time or separate session.

choose the questions that are appropriate to spiritual direction, think about how to phrase them so that they serve spiritual direction, and then include them in spiritual direction sessions.

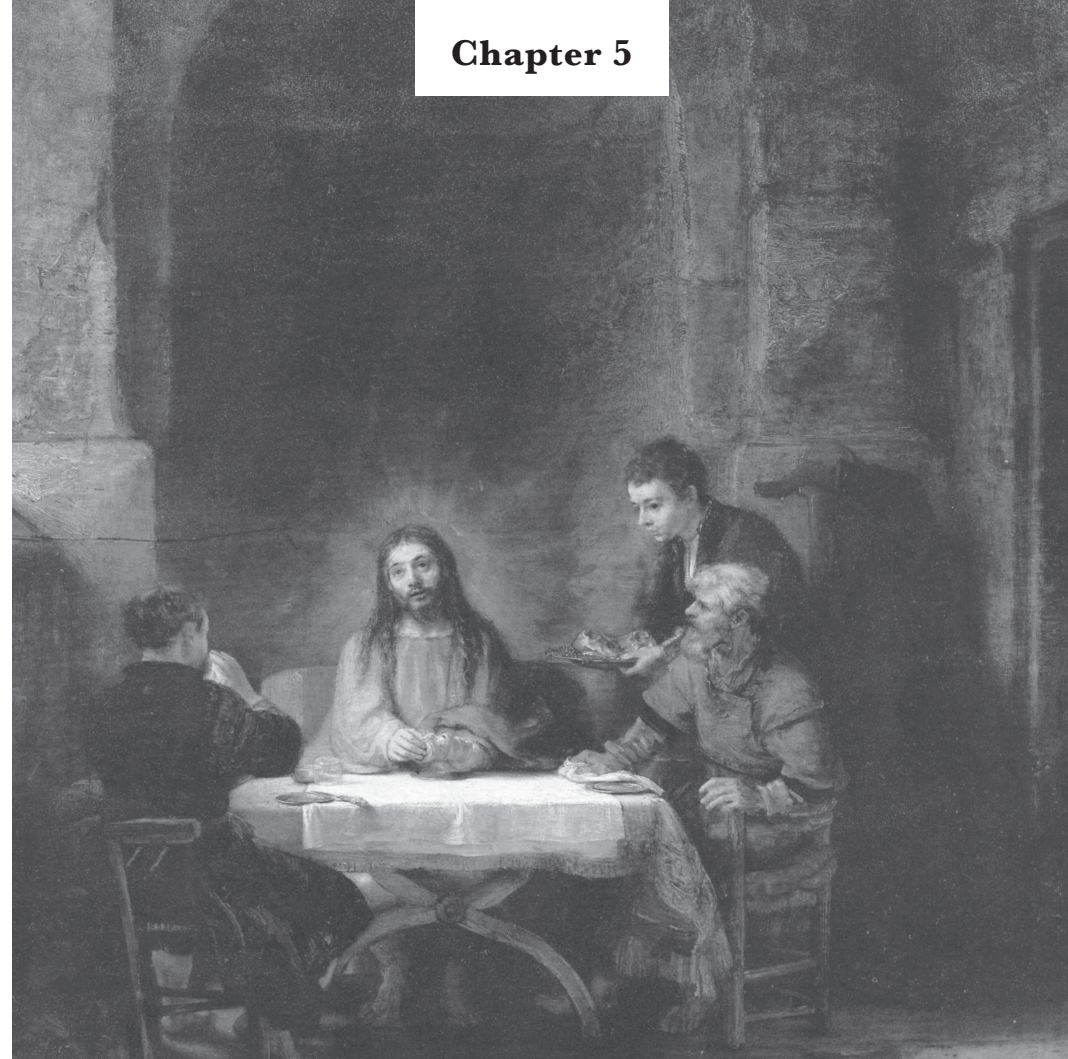
The spiritual director should also assist the man in considering his relationship with Mary and how that forms his relationship with women. If his primary experience is that of an over-bearing mother, his call as husband and father may be muted by an effeminacy, and his capacity for ordinary maturity may be likewise stunted. Mary can help a son to become a man and a man to become a husband and father, as she did for Jesus and Joseph.

All of the points in the Same-Sex Attraction Worksheet can become places of deepening prayer.

Many needs arise in directing seminarians, especially those who experience same-sex attraction. While various attitudes and techniques are important, the most fundamental point is the director's trust in the leadership of the Holy Spirit. Such dependency on the action of God is fundamental if the director is to assist both the seminary and seminarian: some things need to be perfectly clear to the director, even while he does not want to overwhelm the seminarian by attempting to force something too quickly or address too many issues at once. In all cases, however, the spiritual director needs to be able to locate the man in relation to the Trinity and provide a roadmap to deeper intimacy. As the director assists the seminarian in entrusting everything that comes up in his heart to Christ, the thresholds identified in chapter 3 will be able to be addressed not only on the human level but also in a spiritual integration.

The importance of a careful preparation for priestly celibacy, especially in the social and cultural situations that we see today, led the synod fathers to make a series of requests which have a permanent value, as the wisdom of our mother the Church confirms. I authoritatively set them down again as criteria to be followed in formation for chastity in celibacy: “Let the bishops together with the rectors and spiritual directors of the seminaries establish principles, offer criteria and give assistance for discernment in this matter. Of the greatest importance for formation for chastity in celibacy are the bishop’s concern and fraternal life among priests. In the seminary, that is, in the program of formation, celibacy should be presented clearly, without any ambiguities and in a positive fashion. The seminarian should have a sufficient degree of psychological and sexual maturity as well as an assiduous and authentic life of prayer, and he should put himself under the direction of a spiritual father. The spiritual director should help the seminarian so that he himself reaches a mature and free decision, which is built on esteem for priestly friendship and self - discipline, as well as on the acceptance of solitude and on a physically and psychologically sound personal state. Therefore, seminarians should have a good knowledge of the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, of the encyclical Sacerdotalis Coelibatus and the Instruction for Formation in Priestly Celibacy published by the Congregation for Catholic Education in 1974. In order that the seminarian may be able to embrace priestly celibacy for the kingdom of heaven with a free decision, he needs to know the Christian and truly human nature and purpose of sexuality in marriage and in celibacy. It is necessary also to instruct and educate the lay faithful regarding the evangelical, spiritual and pastoral reasons proper to priestly celibacy so that they will help priests with their friendship, understanding and cooperation.”³⁸

³⁸ *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 50.



CREATING A CULTURE OF FORMATION

None of the tools, policies, or practices offered in this book will work as a stand-alone resource. Without the right team, the process of formation will not come alive. This section offers some reflections on forming a team that can shape a fruitful formation process in which each seminarian becomes the focal point of integration.

Applying the Church's instruction regarding men with same-sex attraction requires a deep, comprehensive program of formation. How does a seminary create and sustain the kind of institutional culture among faculty, staff, and seminarians that will support such a program of formation?

Part I: Faculty and Staff

Hiring a Culture

When we hire faculty and staff in Catholic seminaries, we are hiring a culture, too. All faculty need to have human, psychological, and relational maturity if the program of formation is going to promote those qualities.³⁹ So the first question is: does our hiring promote a culture of formation or not?

The question is most acute when it comes to hiring in-house priests. With every priest we invite to join the team we need to ask: what kind of culture of formation are we shaping? One of the most poisonous things for forming a healthy culture of formation is if and when priest faculty are allowed to form small cliques of seminarians around themselves. A priest who does so may be very active in the house. But is it for the right reasons?

Most people have had the experience of having a priestly faculty member who is brilliant and orthodox and popular among the men, but who is also setting up his own formation program for a chosen group. This is poison for a house of formation. We can admire the mind and charisma and orthodoxy of such priests, but that does not mean they are psychologically healthy. If they are using the seminarians to meet their own emotional needs then seminary formation is not the best assignment for them. We cannot be so enamored with a priest's intelligence or ability

³⁹ *The Ratio Fundamentalis* treats this in some details in paragraphs 41-43. For example, it notes that a seminarian is called to develop a balanced and mature capacity to enter into relationship, to have a basic human and spiritual serenity, to overcome every form of self-promotion or emotional dependency, and so on. A seminary formator must have these qualities if he's going to form others in them. Paragraphs 41-43 provide many details to flesh out what the Ratio means when it says, in paragraph 49, that a formator "should be possessed of human, spiritual, pastoral and professional abilities and resources so as to provide the right kind of accompaniment."

with languages that we overlook the deficiency of some basic human traits he needs, not only for his own priesthood but also and especially for forming future priests.

Of course, this is a temptation for *any* priestly assignment. It is, however, a special temptation for seminary faculty and staff because of the power differential involved in their ministry. (The same is equally true of vocation directors, youth ministers, and Newman Center chaplains.)

A priest faculty or staff member has to be a good exemplar of what the *Program for Priestly Formation* talks about under Human Formation: affective maturity and healthy psychosexual development, clarity of male sexual identity, an ability to establish and maintain wholesome peer friendships, and the capacity to maintain appropriate boundaries in relationships.⁴⁰ No one is saying a priest without these qualities will create a homosexual culture in the seminary; but a priest without those qualities *will* foster a culture of emotional immaturity, which will be detrimental to the affective maturity of the seminarians.

Building a culture of formation makes demands of the faculty and formation advisors, as well. The seminarians are told that their number one responsibility is to make themselves known, to be transparent and open to formation. If they are going to do that, it is necessary to have faculty and formation advisors who have the capacity to receive this transparency and who can lead the men to continued growth in healthiness and holiness. "Nemo dat quod non habet"—no one can give what he does not have.

The baseline for being a formation advisor, for example, would be that a man embrace the mission of forming healthy, holy, joy-filled parish priests. He has to know that the seminary is forming priests for the parish, not for the library. It requires the capacity to engage the men with a confidence that allows him to challenge a man where he needs growth. The seminary needs to be a "coddle free zone." Yes, it is essential to *encourage* a man. But it is equally essential to be able to *challenge* a man. The ability to appropriately call out a seminarian can be difficult. If a man cannot do this, then he cannot be a formation advisor.

⁴⁰ PPF, 280.

A seminary wants to form men of God who can assist others in encountering God. A lived experience of this is most formative. In-house priests that experience ordinary and growing Trinitarian intimacy and can share this in simple ways through their preaching, conversation, and life are key to a healthy seminary culture. Priests who are reluctant to leave parish life because they find it immensely rewarding, fruitful, and life-giving are actually among the most appropriate candidates to serve as in-house priests. Their experience of investing in their parishioners bodes well for their capacity to invest in the lives of the seminarians as father and mentor. Seminary cannot be an escape, time off, or a self-improvement plan. It also must not be a refuge for unassignable priests.

In-house priests may or may not be spiritual directors.⁴¹ Experiences as a spiritual director is helpful, however, because many of the same gifts are necessary (as indicated in section 2) and because one of the biggest issues in forming a community is to promote and sustain a felt awareness of the activity of God with the formation team. The only way this works is to have priests who are aware of deepening relational intimacy in their own experience. Expecting in-house priests to receive consistent spiritual direction and have an openness and appreciation of supervision will also assist in creating the necessary culture for fruitful formation.

Again, the question needs to be asked: when I hire or keep this faculty member or formation advisor, what kind of culture am I shaping? Am I hiring someone who can engage the men, engage the life of the house, and challenge men in appropriate ways?

Forming a Culture

The opportunity to hire new members of the team requires careful deliberation. Of course, many members of the team are already in place. A rector does not simply assemble a team; he also inherits a team. In addition to hiring the team the rector desires, how does he shape the team he has? Two key practices have helped us shape a culture of formation among the faculty and staff.

First is regular in-services for formation advisors and spiritual directors, which are also attended by the administration and staff

⁴¹ The qualities necessary for that responsibility are identified in section 5.

psychologists. These are held four times a year. Rather than trying to work out a five-year plan for them, we consider the most prominent needs of the seminarians and the formation advisors and make a plan for the coming year. For example, this may be around the need for giving specific, concrete feedback. It may be around anxiety, elements of affective maturity, or chaste internet usage. Communication among multiple groups is essential here. Shaping a common conversation helps to build a consistent culture of formation.

When I hire or keep this faculty member or formation advisor, what kind of culture am I shaping?

Second is the cohort system. Sixteen times a year the administration, faculty, and staff gather to discuss the overall progress of each seminarian in every dimension of his formation: each man in theology is discussed three times before his final evaluation, and each man in pre-theology is discussed twice before his final evaluation.⁴² In preparation for each cohort meeting a survey is sent to all faculty members regarding the progress of each seminarian, asking for an overall assessment and particular observations.⁴³ The responses are combined into one report for the meeting.

The cohort meeting is led by the Dean of Seminarians. He reviews the responses given for each seminarian and then asks for further comments or observations. The emphasis here is on concrete, observable behaviors. Each seminarian's formation advisor attends this meeting and

⁴² Each man in Pre-Theology is looked at once each semester before his final evaluation. Each man in Theology is looked at twice in the fall and once in the spring before his final evaluation.

⁴³ Kenrick-Glennon Seminary has a separate document for this process.

takes notes.⁴⁴ The formation advisor gives feedback to each seminarian after each cohort meeting so that the man has a chance to hear and respond to the feedback, both positive and negative. Of course, there are certain basic thresholds that a man needs to meet, but the main question here is not whether a man is perfect but whether he is open to formation.

The use of the cohort system to gather input on how each seminarian is doing, and the use of the formation advisors to provide timely feedback to each seminarian after cohort meetings, ensures that particular attention is given to what is happening for each seminarian in every dimension of his formation. The most important point, however, may be this: in the give and take of the cohort process, and in its repetition, the entire team is building a habitual focus. It sharpens the ability of the entire team to know what we are looking for in a man's progress and thus helps to create a culture of formation among the faculty and staff.

Part II: Seminarians

Admissions and Pruning

The principle of gradualism is an important thing to apply to a man's formation in seminary. When it comes to admissions, though, the *Program for Priestly Formation* gives us an important caution when it says:

“The principle of gradualism, however, does not deny that a minimal level of development is necessary for admission to any level of priestly formation. The minimal qualities necessary for admission are properly understood as *thresholds or foundations*. All applicants need to pass through certain thresholds of human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral development, which will serve as foundations for further development. For example, if a candidate has achieved a threshold of a basic capacity for empathy and communication, he would seem to have a foundation upon which pastoral formation could develop.”⁴⁵

⁴⁴ The spiritual director remains silent in the meeting, but he may be instructed to raise a particular issue with a man in spiritual direction.

⁴⁵ PPF, 36.

Thinking about thresholds or foundations certainly involves a judgment call; but it is essential to ask: has the man met the minimal development for someone his age? A vocation director often looks at a candidate for seminary along these lines: “Let’s give this guy a shot and see what happens. What do we have to lose anyway?”

A seminary looks with a different standard, something like: “Wait a second, we need to *live* with this guy. What will he do to the spirit of the house? What effect will he have on other men? Would the vocation director want to live with this man?”

This is where it is best if the seminary and vocation director are on the same page. If they are not, it is a recipe for some tension. A good saying for marriage preparation is: “unrealistic expectation is premeditated resentment.” The same truth applies for vocation directors and seminaries. The vocation director needs to ask: What am I expecting from the seminary with this man? Is that expectation realistic? What effect will this man have on his diocesan brothers or the reputation of our diocese or the seminary? “Let’s give him a shot” may seem to be the more charitable approach. Instead, it can work against the overall formation program if the man has not met the minimum thresholds for admission.

It is not that seminaries do not admit men who need work. If that were the case, the seminaries would be empty! But experience teaches that seminaries cannot do it all. The seminary needs to ask: will this man be taking up a disproportionate amount of time and energy and draining resources away from the formation of other men who have met the appropriate thresholds? If the seminary tries to do it all, it becomes detrimental to the formation of all the other men and drains momentum away from building a culture of formation.

For example, looking at a candidate's ability to empathize and communicate with others is key. If the seminarian needs to be constantly reminded to look at those speaking to him, then he probably has not met the minimum threshold for seminary formation. The seminary is likely not the place for this foundational formation. Each diocese should consider how they might assist potential candidates to priesthood in developing the foundational spiritual and human capacities which will enable their men to receive the formation the seminary can offer.

More to the point: if a man experiences some level of same-sex attraction, and the first year of theology is the first time it is dealt with in any depth, it is not realistic to think that he will overcome this attraction by the end of the year. As the SSAW makes clear, this issue needs more than nine months of work. In order to meet the standard of the *Instruction*—overcoming the attraction at least three years prior to ordination—he will have to take some time out of seminary.

Does this mean we should not admit a man to Theology I if he experiences transitory same-sex attraction or immediately remove him from the seminary if he brings it up? Not necessarily—for two reasons. First, the issue may only surface during the first year of theology, as a man comes to know himself on a deeper level. If it does come up, men need to be free to bring their issues to seminary formation personnel rather than hide them. Second, if such a man is not admitted or he is removed immediately, there is a danger that the issue will just go underground.

The “Intra” standard simply looks at how much a man has grown. But a man may have grown a great deal and still not meet the thresholds necessary for advancement.

A distinction between college/pre-theology and major seminary is helpful here. It is best if same-sex attraction issues are surfaced, and the man begins to address them, before admission to the theologate. The idea here is to admit the man, or allow the issue to surface, and work with him. As is clear from what has already been written, he will need to show significant progress if he is to remain on the path to ordination. If he does not show progress, a seminary cannot continue to work with him. If he does not meet the benchmarks, he cannot be advanced. If a man is showing significant progress, but still needs time to show that he has overcome the transitory same-sex attraction three years prior to ordination, then he will have to spend some time out of the seminary.

This is one place, among many others, where it is necessary to make a distinction between the “Inter” standard and the “Intra” standard. The “Intra” standard simply looks at how much a man has grown. A man may have grown a great, however, and still not meet the thresholds necessary for advancement. He has achieved a high “Intra” standard, but does not yet meet the “Inter” threshold and cannot be advanced.

Knowing what a man’s prior formation was like

In college or pre-theology, when priestly ordination is six to eight years off, it can be tempting to ignore the very difficult work of formation and allow a man to fly under the radar. However, this is the most appropriate and fruitful time to address these issues and deal with them.

From the perspective of major seminary, it is not unusual for the seminary to receive a man whose college or pre-theology recommendations may refer vaguely to “some possible issues” when, in fact, there are major formation issues that have not been addressed.⁴⁶ Bishops know that if they are sending a man with significant issues that have not been adequately addressed in their prior seminary experience, it may be very difficult for us to recommend the man forward. In our experience bishops appreciate our frankness. They understand: it is better now than later.

The work of formation is hard, both on the giving and the receiving end. If and when a seminarian comes from an experience in which basic issues in human and spiritual formation were not addressed, then being challenged in such areas comes as a shock to him. Formators must grow accustomed to the shock.

Once again, the principle of gradualism certainly applies; but the principle of gradualism cannot be an excuse to avoid engaging a man in the serious work of formation. If there are issues, and if they are not addressed immediately and repeatedly, then a man becomes accustomed to being only affirmed. If and when he is challenged he must make a decision about whether he truly wants to be formed. If he is not open to challenges from the formation staff, he will not be open to the challenges that priesthood and parish life will bring. The question needs to be continually asked: what will this man look like in the parish?

⁴⁶ E.g. same-sex attraction, internet pornography, anxiety, evaluation for mental health and possible medication, father and authority issues, lacking any depth in relational prayer, lacking ability to share in *Lectio Divina*, not praying a daily Holy Hour, etc.

Pruning is essential to healthy growth.

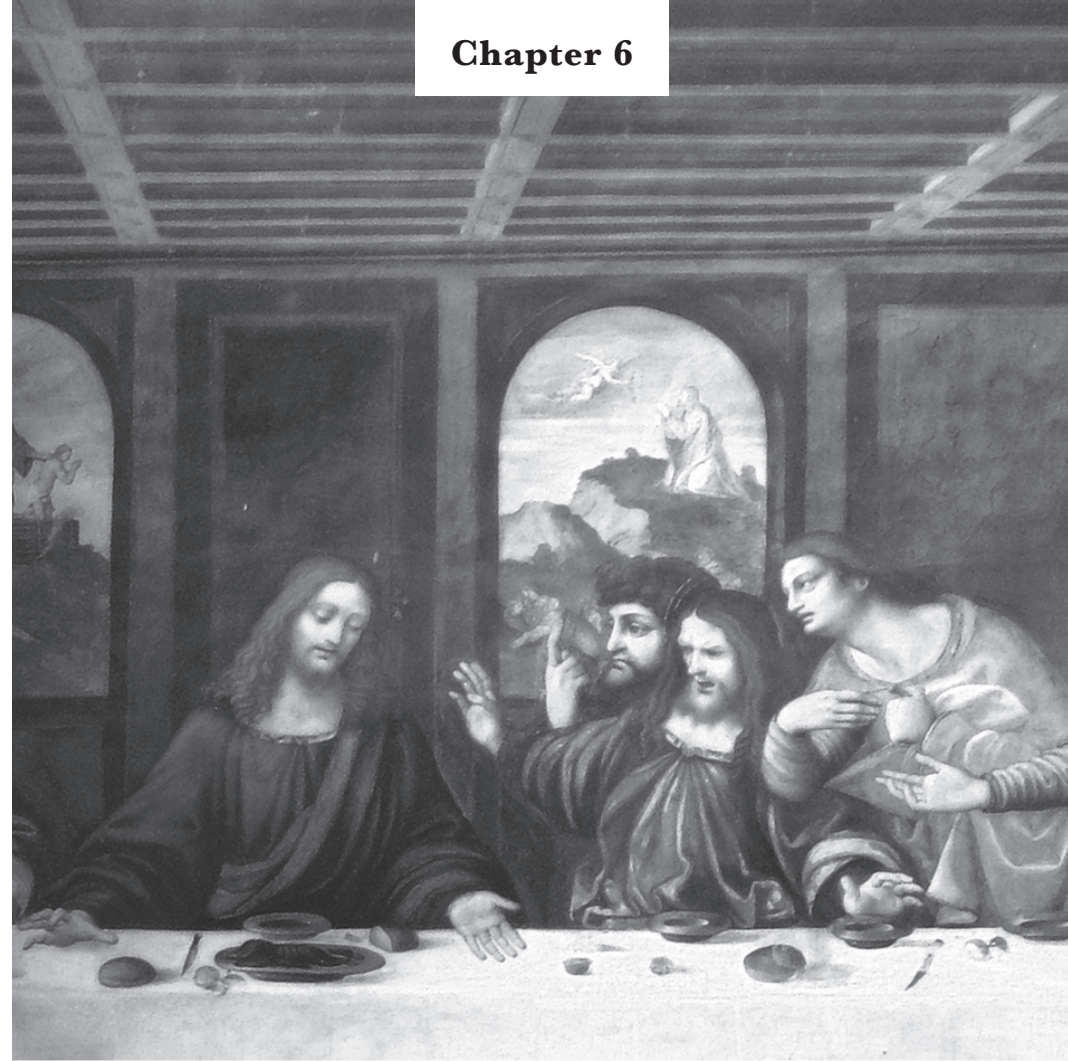
Perhaps the most important non-sacramental act a rector performs—the act for which he will be held most accountable before God—is his decision to recommend a man onto Holy Orders or not. Most seminarians agree with this statement in the abstract, but when the issue becomes concrete, they sometimes have difficulty connecting that truth to the immediate formation issues about themselves!

This is where concrete observations offered in the cohort process, and the culture that it creates, can be very helpful. This is part of why it is important to create a culture of formation among the faculty and staff: so that it is not just the rector's observations. The whole community is contributing observations about the man.

Peer reviews can also be helpful because a man's peers often know him best. For example, we had one case when 9 out of 10 peer reviews mentioned a man's negativity. When asked about it, the man did not see negativity as an issue. The rector was able to say: "No, objectively, this is an issue. When 9 of your peers independently see a problem, we have an issue."

Sometimes the feedback is more informal but just as real. For example, during a skit at a Halloween party a "News Report" was being given. It mentioned that one man had discovered a new gift of the Holy Spirit: the gift of invisibility. His peers noticed his absence and said something about it. As a result it was discussed in formation and with his vocation director.

The point is simply this: through something like the cohort process, timely feedback from the formation advisor, and a faculty and staff that pay attention and give concrete feedback, the seminarians themselves begin to join in the culture of formation. They are not policing each other in a negative sense. Rather, they become accustomed to being challenged with respect to the qualities they need to become healthy, holy, joy-filled parish priests. They see the need for growth and come to want it. Building and sustaining a culture of formation in a seminary takes a lot of work, and it takes a team approach. But without this culture no individual tool—like the SSAW—can do the work it is meant to do.



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