

THE FORMATION OF PRIESTS IN THE CONSECRATED LIFE

A REVIEW OF SELECT CANONICAL ISSUES IN
IMPLEMENTING THE *PROGRAM OF PRIESTLY
FORMATION*, 6TH ED

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PLAN FOR DISCUSSION

- The Relationship of the *Program of Priestly Formation* to the Proper Law of A Religious Institute of Pontifical Right
- The Role of the Major Superior in Religious and Priestly Formation
 - Dispensations
 - Dimissorial Letters
- The Religious Priest or Religious Brother as Major Superior of a Clerical Institute or Society of Apostolic Life
- The Integration of Religious Identity and Priestly Identity
- The Length of Time for Formation: Religious and Priestly

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THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE *PROGRAM OF PRIESTLY FORMATION* TO THE PROPER LAW OF A RELIGIOUS INSTITUTE OF PONTIFICAL RIGHT

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THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE *PROGRAM OF PRIESTLY FORMATION* TO THE PROPER LAW OF A RELIGIOUS INSTITUTE OF PONTIFICAL RIGHT

- Levels of Ecclesiastical Authority to Consider
 - Documents of Ecumenical Councils and Papal Documents
 - Code of Canon Law
 - Documents of Dicasteries
 - Particular Law of Episcopal Conferences
 - Proper Law of Religious Institute or Society of Apostolic Life
 - General Constitutions, Statutes, and Policies
 - Provincial Statutes
 - Provincial Policies

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THE LEVELS OF ECCLESIASTICAL AUTHORITY: ECUMENICAL COUNCILS AND PAPAL DOCUMENTS

- Documents of Ecumenical Councils and Papal Documents
 - Vatican II
 - Decree on the Formation of Priests, *Optatam Totius*, (28 October 1965)
 - John Paul II, *Pastores dabo vobis*
 - **Source for the four dimensions of priestly formation**
 - **Human:** the necessary and dynamic foundation of all priestly life
 - **Spiritual:** helps to shape the quality of priestly ministry
 - **Intellectual:** provides the rational tools needed to understand the values that belong to being a pastor; to make them incarnate in daily life, and to transmit the content of the faith appropriately
 - **Pastoral:** makes possible a responsible and fruitful ecclesial service

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THE LEVELS OF ECCLESIASTICAL AUTHORITY: CODE OF CANON LAW

- Levels of Ecclesiastical Authority to Consider
 - Code of Canon Law on the PPF for each Episcopal Conference
 - *Can. 242 §1. Each nation is to have a program of priestly formation which is to be established by the conference of bishops, attentive to the norms issued by the supreme authority of the Church, and which is to be approved by the Holy See. This program is to be adapted to new circumstances, also with the approval of the Holy See, and is to define the main principles of the instruction to be given in the seminary and general norms adapted to the pastoral needs of each region or province. §2. All seminaries, both diocesan and interdiocesan, are to observe the norms of the program mentioned in §1.*

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THE LEVELS OF ECCLESIASTICAL AUTHORITY: DOCUMENTS OF DICASTERIES

- Congregation for Clergy, *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis* (“The Gift of the Priestly Vocation”) (2016)
 - Applies to Institutes of consecrated life and societies of apostolic life “with the necessary adaptations” (General Norms, I)(a)(1)).
 - “The *Rationes* of the following entities **must** be conformed to the *Ratio Fundamentalis*, with the necessary adaptations. **Institutes of consecrated life and societies of apostolic life, dependent on the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life** ... clerical associations who have been granted the right to incardinate clerics: personal prelatures; military ordinariates; and personal ordinariates.”
 - “When reference is made to competencies of the Ordinary, this includes Major Superiors of Clerical Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life of pontifical right, unless it is clear from the context that only the diocesan Bishop is intended.”
 - Cf. *Can 659*§3. **Universal law and the program of studies proper to the institute govern the formation of members who are preparing to receive holy orders.**

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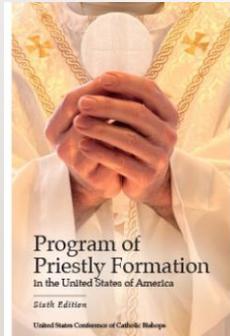
THE LEVELS OF ECCLESIASTICAL AUTHORITY: DOCUMENTS OF DICASTERIES

- Congregation for Clergy, *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis* (“The Gift of the Priestly Vocation”) (2016)
 - Source for **four stages of priestly formation**
 - **Propadeutic**: discernment
 - **Discipleship**: study of philosophy
 - **Configuration**: study of theology
 - **Pastoral**: vocational synthesis
 - Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life
 - “*The Gift of Fidelity – the Joy of Perseverance*” (2020)
 - *Potissimum institutioni*: Directives of Formation in Religious Institutes (1990)

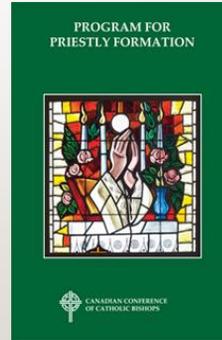
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THE LEVELS OF ECCLESIASTICAL AUTHORITY: PARTICULAR LAW OF EPISCOPAL CONFERENCES

USCCB, *PROGRAM OF PRIESTLY
FORMATION IN THE UNITED STATES OF
AMERICA, 6TH ED.*



CANADIAN CONFERENCE OF
CATHOLIC BISHOPS



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THE LEVELS OF ECCLESIASTICAL AUTHORITY: PROPER LAW OF AN INSTITUTE OF CONSECRATED LIFE OR SOCIETY OF APOSTOLIC LIFE

- General Constitutions, Statutes, Policies
 - Important to remember who is competent to approve each type of document, i.e., Holy See, General Chapter, or General Council?
- Provincial Statutes
 - Important to remember who is competent to approve Provincial Statutes, i.e., Provincial Chapter legislates but must be approved by General Council?
- Provincial Policies
 - Religious Formation Policy
 - Priestly Formation Policy
 - Approved by Provincial Council? For how long is such a policy binding?

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THE ROLE OF THE MAJOR SUPERIOR IN FORMATION: RELIGIOUS AND PRIESTLY FORMATION

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THE ROLE OF THE MAJOR SUPERIOR IN RELIGIOUS FORMATION

- Code of Canon Law: competence of major superior for religious formation
 - *Can. 620* Those who govern an entire institute, a province of an institute or part equivalent to a province, or an autonomous house, as well as their vicars, are major superiors. Comparable to these are an abbot primate and a superior of a monastic congregation, who nonetheless do not have all the power which universal law grants to major superiors.
 - *Can. 613 §1.* A religious house of canons regular or of monks under the governance and care of its own moderator is autonomous unless the constitutions state otherwise. §2. The moderator of an autonomous house is a major superior by law.
 - *Can. 641* The right to admit candidates to the novitiate belongs to major superiors according to the norm of proper law.
 - *Can. 689 §1.* If there are just causes, the competent major superior, after having heard the council, can exclude a member from making a subsequent profession when the period of temporary profession has been completed.
 - Dismissals: canons 691-696
 - Proper Law of Institute or Society may identify other areas of competence for the major superior

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THE ROLE OF THE MAJOR SUPERIOR IN PRIESTLY FORMATION

- Code of Canon Law: competence of major superior for priestly formation
 - Canon 672 Religious are bound by the prescripts of cann. 277, 285, 286, 287, and 289, and religious clerics additionally by the prescripts of can. 279, §2; in lay institutes of pontifical right, the proper major superior can grant the permission mentioned in can. 255, §4.
 - *Can. 277: ... **observe perfect and perpetual continence** for the sake of the kingdom of heaven and therefore are bound to **celibacy** ...*
 - *Can 285§1. ...**refrain completely from all those things which are unbecoming to their state, ...avoid those things which, although not unbecoming, are nevertheless foreign to the clerical state. ... forbidden to assume public offices ...not to take on the management of goods belonging to lay persons or secular offices which entail an obligation of rendering accounts. They are prohibited from giving surety ...to refrain from signing promissory notes...***
 - *Can 286: Clerics are prohibited **from conducting business or trade personally or through others, ...***

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THE ROLE OF THE MAJOR SUPERIOR IN PRIESTLY FORMATION

- Code of Canon Law: competence of major superior for priestly formation
 - Canon 672 Religious are bound by the prescripts of cann. 277, 285, 286, 287, and 289, and religious clerics additionally by the prescripts of can. 279, §2; in lay institutes of pontifical right, the proper major superior can grant the permission mentioned in can. 255, §4
 - *Can 287: §1. to **foster the peace and harmony based on justiceThey are not to have an active part in political parties and in governing labor unions ...***
 - *Can 289: **military service ... use exemptions from exercising functions and public civil offices foreign to the clerical state***
 - *Can 279 ... to **attend pastoral lectures ...***

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THE ROLE OF THE MAJOR SUPERIOR IN PRIESTLY FORMATION

- Code of Canon Law: competence of major superior for priestly formation
 - Canon 974 §4: faculty to hear confessions
 - Canons 1019, 1020, and 1025: dismissorial letters: *infra*
 - Can. 1029 *Only those are to be promoted to orders who, in the prudent judgment of their own bishop or of the competent **major superior**, all things considered, have integral faith, are moved by the right intention, have the requisite knowledge, possess a good reputation, and are endowed with integral morals and proven virtues and the other physical and psychic qualities in keeping with the order to be received.*
 - Can. 1030 *Only for a canonical cause ... can the proper bishop or competent **major superior** forbid admission to the presbyterate to deacons subject to him who are destined to the presbyterate ...*
 - Canon 1032§2. *After a deacon has completed the curriculum of studies and before he is promoted to the presbyterate, he is to take part in pastoral care, exercising the diaconal order, for a suitable time defined by the bishop or competent **major superior**.*

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THE ROLE OF THE MAJOR SUPERIOR IN PRIESTLY FORMATION

- Code of Canon Law: competence of major superior for priestly formation
 - Can. 1036 *In order to be promoted to the order of diaconate or of presbyterate, the candidate is to present to his bishop or competent **major superior** a declaration written in his own hand and signed in which he attests that he will receive the sacred order of his own accord and freely and will devote himself perpetually to the ecclesiastical ministry and at the same time asks to be admitted to the order to be received.*
 - Can. 1038 *A deacon who refuses to be promoted to the presbyterate cannot be prohibited from the exercise of the order received unless he is prevented by a canonical impediment or another grave cause to be evaluated in the judgment of the diocesan bishop or competent **major superior**.*
 - Can. 1051, 2° *in order to conduct the investigation properly, the diocesan bishop or **major superior** can employ other means which seem useful to him according to the circumstances of time and place, such as testimonial letters, public announcements, or other sources of information.*
 - Can. 1054 *The local ordinary if it concerns seculars, or the competent **major superior** if it concerns his own subjects, is to send notice of each ordination celebrated to the pastor of the place of baptism, who is to record it in his baptismal register according to the norm of can. 535, §2.*

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THE ROLE OF THE MAJOR SUPERIOR IN PRIESTLY FORMATION

- Other areas of competence as specified in the *PPF*
- The Proper Law of Institute or Society may identify other areas of competence for the major superior regarding priestly formation for members of the institute or society of apostolic life

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THE ROLE OF THE MAJOR SUPERIOR IN FORMATION: RELIGIOUS OR PRIESTLY FORMATION

- Dispensations from the requirements of religious or priestly formation
 - *Can. 85* A dispensation, or the relaxation of a merely ecclesiastical law in a particular case, **can be granted by those who possess executive power within the limits of their competence**, as well as by those who have the power to dispense explicitly or implicitly either by the law itself or by legitimate delegation. (emphasis added)
 - *Can. 86* Laws are not subject to dispensation to the extent that they define those things which are essentially constitutive of juridic institutes or acts
 - *Can. 90 §1*. One is not to be dispensed from an ecclesiastical law without a just and reasonable cause, after taking into account the circumstances of the case and the gravity of the law from which dispensation is given; otherwise the dispensation is illicit and, unless it is given by the legislator himself or his superior, also invalid.

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THE ROLE OF THE MAJOR SUPERIOR IN PRIESTLY FORMATION

- **Dimissorial Letters**

- *Can. 1019 §1. The **major superior** of a clerical religious institute of pontifical right or of a clerical society of apostolic life of pontifical right is competent to grant dimissorial letters for the diaconate and the presbyterate to their subjects who are enrolled perpetually or definitively in the institute or society according to their constitutions. §2. The law for secular clerics governs the ordination of all other candidates of any institute or society; any other indult granted to superiors is revoked.*
- *Can. 1020 Dimissorial letters are not to be granted unless all the testimonials and documents required by law according to the norm of cann. 1050 and 1051 have been obtained beforehand.*
- *Can. 1025 §1. To confer the presbyteral or diaconal orders licitly, it is required that the candidate, having completed the period of probation according to the norm of law, is endowed in the judgment of his own bishop or of the competent **major superior** with the necessary qualities, is prevented by no irregularity and no impediment, and has fulfilled the prerequisites according to the norm of cann. 1033–1039. Moreover, the documents mentioned in can. 1050 are to be obtained and the investigation mentioned in can. 1051 is to be completed. §2. Furthermore, it is required that he is considered in the judgment of the same legitimate superior as useful for the ministry of the Church.*

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THE MAJOR SUPERIOR OF A CLERICAL INSTITUTE OR SOCIETY: A RELIGIOUS PRIEST OR A RELIGIOUS BROTHER?

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THE MAJOR SUPERIOR OF A CLERICAL INSTITUTE OR SOCIETY: A RELIGIOUS PRIEST OR A RELIGIOUS BROTHER?

- *Rescript of the Holy Father Francis regarding the derogation from can. 588 §2 CIC*
 1. A non-clerical member of an Institute of consecrated life or a society of clerical apostolic life of pontifical right is appointed local superior by the supreme moderator with the consent of his council.
 2. A non-clerical member of an Institute of consecrated life or of a clerical society of apostolic life of pontifical right is **appointed major superior**, after having obtained written permission from the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life at the request of the Supreme Moderator with the consent of the Council.
 3. A non-clerical member of an Institute of consecrated life or of a Society of clerical apostolic life of Pontifical Right **elected Supreme Moderator or Major Superior**, according to the modalities provided for by proper law, requires confirmation - by written permission - of the Congregation for Institutes of consecrated life and Societies of apostolic life.
 4. In the cases provided for in §§2-3, the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life reserves the **right to evaluate the individual case** and the reasons given by the Supreme Moderator or by the General Chapter.

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THE INTEGRATION OF RELIGIOUS IDENTITY AND PRIESTLY IDENTITY

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THE INTEGRATION OF RELIGIOUS IDENTITY AND PRIESTLY IDENTITY

- “How am I living my priesthood through my religious community?”
- PPF 31: “Priestly ministry, whether lived out in a particular Church or in an institute of consecrated life or society of apostolic life, can appear to be very different: one more geographically and parishbound, the other wider-ranging and **rooted in a particular charism. Still, all priests share a common ministerial priesthood, belong to a presbyterate in communion with the diocesan bishop, and serve the same mission of the Church.** A common sacramental bond links all priests, although particular circumstances of ministry and life may be diverse. It is, therefore, essential for all priests and those in priestly formation to understand and to see themselves as engaged in the Church’s ministry, **subject to the same formation laid out in the Program of Priestly Formation. Depending on the type of ecclesiastical entity, the details for the stages of formation may differ. For example, the propaedeutic stage for institutes of consecrated life or societies of apostolic life is handled by the postulancy or novitiate. In all cases the applicant, postulant, and so on must meet the benchmarks as noted in each dimension later in this document.**”



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THE INTEGRATION OF RELIGIOUS IDENTITY AND PRIESTLY IDENTITY

- “... within the charism and ... mission of the particular institute of consecrated life”
- PPF 45. *The life of priests in religious institutes and societies of apostolic life encompasses everything that has been said about the life of priests generally. It also adds to the exercise of the ministerial priesthood the distinctive aspects of a religious institute’s Rule of Life or of the constitution of a society of apostolic life. These aspects include the spirituality of the institute or society, common life, and distinctive apostolates that witness to the community’s charism as a gift of the Spirit to the Church. **Priestly formation for those men belonging to a form of consecrated life must therefore always situate the vocation to the priesthood within the charism and thus reference the spirituality, history, and mission of the particular institute of consecrated life or society of apostolic life, with fidelity to its founder, the institute’s or society’s mission, and the Church which receives that charism.***



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THE INTEGRATION OF RELIGIOUS IDENTITY AND PRIESTLY IDENTITY

- "... within the charism and ... mission of the particular institute of consecrated life"
- PPF 46: **The primary context of priesthood for members of an institute of consecrated life or society of apostolic life ordinarily comes from the nature of the life itself as a deepening and fulfillment of a baptismal commitment to Christ by observing the evangelical counsels in an institute of consecrated life or a society of apostolic life approved by the Church.** Those men belonging to an institute of consecrated life or society of apostolic life who are called to priesthood exercise that ministry within the context of their institute or society. "In reality, the charism of the religious life, far from being an impulse born of flesh and blood or one derived from a mentality which conforms itself to the modern world, is the fruit of the Holy Spirit, who is always at work within the Church." The exercise of priesthood takes on a distinctive quality for a man who belongs to an institute of consecrated life or a society of apostolic life, depending upon the Rule of Life, constitution, and charism of a particular institute or society. **Nevertheless, the priest always exercises his ministry in union with the diocesan bishop as his co-worker.**



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THEN ... WHAT IS A RELIGIOUS PRIEST?

- A religious priest is not specifically defined; presumption seems to be that the religious priest is one formed in the charism of the ICL or SAL
- Presumes that canons on formation of clerics (c. 232ff) apply in addition to canons on formation of religious.
- Compare canon 207:
 - Can. 207 §1. *By divine institution, there are among the Christian faithful in the Church sacred ministers who in law are also called clerics; the other members of the Christian faithful are called lay persons.*
 - §2. *There are members of the Christian faithful from both these groups who, through the profession of the evangelical counsels by means of vows or other sacred bonds recognized and sanctioned by the Church, are consecrated to God in their own special way and contribute to the salvific mission of the Church; although their state does not belong to the hierarchical structure of the Church, it nevertheless belongs to its life and holiness.*



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THEN ... WHAT IS A RELIGIOUS PRIEST?

- Consider the primary duty of a diocesan priest versus mission of a member of a religious institute:
 - Diocesan priest: Can. 276§2. In order to be able to pursue this perfection: 1° they are first of all to fulfill faithfully and tirelessly the duties of the pastoral ministry
 - Religious: Can. 663 §1. The first and foremost duty of all religious is to be the contemplation of divine things and assiduous union with God in prayer



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THE LENGTH OF TIME FOR FORMATION: RELIGIOUS AND PRIESTLY FORMATION



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THE LENGTH OF TIME FOR RELIGIOUS FORMATION

- **Religious Formation:** minimum of four years from admission to the novitiate to perpetual profession; maximum of 11 years from admission to the novitiate to perpetual profession

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THE LENGTH OF TIME FOR RELIGIOUS FORMATION

- **Pre-novitiate: requires a “suitable preparation”**
 - *Can. 597 §1. Any Catholic endowed with a right intention who has the qualities required by universal and proper law and who is not prevented by any impediment can be admitted into an institute of consecrated life. §2. No one can be admitted without **suitable preparation**.*

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THE LENGTH OF TIME FOR RELIGIOUS FORMATION

- **Novitiate: 12 months to 2 years**

- *Can. 648 §1. To be valid, a novitiate must include twelve months spent in the community itself of the novitiate, without prejudice to the prescript of can. 647, §3. §2. To complete the formation of novices, in addition to the period mentioned in §1, the constitutions can establish one or more periods of apostolic exercises to be spent outside the community of the novitiate. §3. The novitiate is **not to last longer than two years***
- *Can 652 §5. The time of the novitiate mentioned in can. 648, §1 is to be devoted solely to the task of formation and consequently novices are **not to be occupied with studies** and functions which do not directly serve this formation.*

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THE LENGTH OF TIME FOR RELIGIOUS FORMATION

- **Temporary profession: 3-6 years; max 9 years**

- *Can. 655 Temporary profession is to be made for a period defined in proper law; it is **not to be less than three years nor longer than six.***
- *Can. 657 §1. When the period for which profession was made has elapsed, a religious who freely petitions and is judged suitable is to be admitted to renewal of profession or to perpetual profession; otherwise, the religious is to depart. §2. If it seems opportune, however, the competent superior can extend the period of temporary profession according to proper law, but in such a way that the total period in which the member is bound **by temporary vows does not exceed nine years.** §3. Perpetual profession can be anticipated for a just cause, but not by more than three months.*

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THE LENGTH OF TIME FOR RELIGIOUS FORMATION

- **Formation of all Religious:**

- *Can. 659 §1. In individual institutes the formation of all the members is to be continued after first profession so that they lead the proper life of the institute more fully and carry out its mission more suitably. §2. Therefore, **proper law must define the program of this formation and its duration**, attentive to the needs of the Church and the conditions of people and times, insofar as the purpose and character of the institute require it. **§3. Universal law and the program of studies proper to the institute govern the formation of members who are preparing to receive holy orders.***

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THE LENGTH OF TIME FOR RELIGIOUS FORMATION

- **Perpetual profession is required before reception of diaconate:**

- *Can 266§2. Through the reception of the diaconate, a perpetually professed religious or a definitively incorporated member of a clerical society of apostolic life is incardinated as a cleric in the same institute or society unless, in the case of societies, the constitutions establish otherwise.*

- **Reception of ministries of lector and acolyte required before reception of diaconate; acolyte at least 6 months before ordination**

- *Can. 1035 §1. Before anyone is promoted to the permanent or transitional diaconate, he is required to have **received the ministries of lector and acolyte and to have exercised them for a suitable period of time**. §2. There is to be an interval of **at least six months** between the conferral of the ministry of acolyte and the diaconate.*

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THE LENGTH OF TIME FOR PRIESTLY FORMATION

- **Priestly stages: minimum length of time – 7 ½ years**
 - Propadeutic: 12 months
 - Discipleship: 2 years
 - Configuration: 4 years
 - Cf. Can. 250: *The philosophical and theological studies which are organized in the seminary itself can be pursued either successively or conjointly, in accord with the program of priestly formation. These studies are to encompass **at least six full years** in such a way that **the time dedicated to philosophical disciplines equals two full years and to theological studies four full years.***

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THE LENGTH OF TIME FOR PRIESTLY FORMATION

- **Priestly stages: minimum length of time – 7 ½ years**
 - **Vocational synthesis: 6 months**
 - Cf. Can 1031: §1. *The presbyterate is not to be conferred except on those who have completed the **twenty-fifth year of age** and possess sufficient maturity; an interval of **at least six months** is to be observed between the diaconate and the presbyterate. Those destined to the presbyterate are to be admitted to the order of deacon only after completing the **twenty-third year of age.***
 - See also, Can. 1035: §1. *Before anyone is promoted to the permanent or transitional diaconate, he is required to have received the ministries of lector and acolyte and to have exercised them for a suitable period of time. §2. There is to be an interval of at least six months between the conferral of the ministry of acolyte and the diaconate*

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BREAK

- Breakout Groups
- Return for Questions and Answers