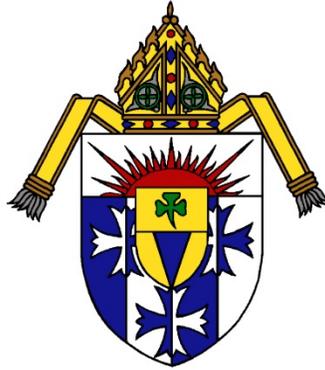


# SEMINARIAN HANDBOOK DISCERNMENT THROUGH ACCEPTANCE

Diocese of Great Falls-Billings



## Part One: **DISCERNING** A CALL TO DIOCESAN PRIESTHOOD

- I. **Before Application.** (Note: these are issues and programs to consider *before* seeking the formal application as a diocesan seminarian. These will also be the questions the Vocation Director will discuss with you.)
  - a. Questions about Self...
    - i. How long have I been living a healthy and devoted Catholic lifestyle?
    - ii. Do I regularly attend Mass and receive Holy Communion?
    - iii. Do I frequently attend the Sacrament of Penance?
    - iv. Would people know me as a healthy and sincere Catholic?
    - v. For recent converts to Catholicism: Have I had enough time to live the Catholic faith so as to experience the joys and struggles of it? (If one has recently participated in RCIA, it is recommended that he wait at least 3-5 years before making application, during which time he actively lives the Catholic faith and has a final recommendation from a competent spiritual director.)
    - vi. How well am I known by my pastor and other priests? Have I visited with them about my thoughts on priesthood?
    - vii. Am I a “balanced” person, healthy in physical, spiritual, psychological and emotional ways?
    - viii. Am I a celibate person, and am I ready to live a lifelong commitment to celibacy?
  - b. Am I a ministering person?

- i. How long have I been involved in my parish?
    - ii. How have I been actively involved in diocesan ministry?
    - iii. How have I been involved in community service?
  - c. Am I free in the eyes of the Church to consider seminary?
    - i. Am I free from the bond of marriage or vows?
    - ii. Am I free from the responsibility of parenting minor children?
    - iii. Have I ever participated in helping someone procure an abortion?
  - d. Am I aware of the expectations of serving in a remote, rural diocese?
    - i. How long have I lived in eastern Montana? (The Bishop normally expects two years residency in the diocese prior to accepting an application to seminary.)
    - ii. Am I familiar with and have I experienced the differences in ministry between city parishes (Great Falls or Billings), the rural parishes (Plentywood, Circle, Malta), and the reservation parishes (Poplar, Crow Agency, Rocky Boy)?
- II. Help in Discernment
  - a. Have I had a chance to discuss the joys and challenges of priesthood with...
    - i. My pastor?
    - ii. A local priest?
    - iii. My family?
    - iv. My parishioners?
    - v. Other significant persons in my life?
  - b. Have I taken advantage of attending a weekend “live-in” experience at a seminary?
  - c. Have I participated in a diocesan-sponsored gathering to discern my vocation?
  - d. Have I read materials available from the Vocation Director? (Visit the Web site, and find links under VOCATIONS. The Vocation Director may also give useful literature to help with your discernment.)
- III. Meeting with the Vocation Director...
  - a. Now you are ready to review these discernment questions with the Vocation Director in person as a potential candidate for seminary.
  - b. Upon recommendation of the Vocation Director, the potential applicant can begin the formal application for status as a seminarian for the Diocese.

## Part Two: THE **APPLICATION PROCESS** FOR THE DIOCESE

- I. If the discernment process, accomplished with the help of the Vocation Director, is approved, you will fill out a Diocese of Great Falls-Billings Seminary Application form. The Vocation Director will provide it to you

- in electronic form if he judges that the necessary conditions have been satisfied. This form is used for all levels, college, pre-theology and theology.
- II. Along with the completed application, you will also need to send:
    - a. Your baptismal and confirmation certificates (less than six months since issued),
    - b. A personal spiritual autobiography
      - i. family life
      - ii. relationships outside family
      - iii. School and work experience
      - iv. Major satisfactions and problems faced in life
      - v. Prayer and faith experiences.
    - c. An essay, "What Priesthood Means to Me",
    - d. All academic transcripts (high school, college, graduate...)
    - e. **Six** references whom you have already contacted, notifying them that the Vocation Director will ask for a recommendation to your application:
      - i. pastors and priests,
      - ii. teachers and/or school administrators,
      - iii. employers,
      - iv. peers,
      - v. and those who have observed you in the Church's service or those served by you).
    - f. Medical History report, the form of which is provided by the Vocations Director
      - i. This medical history is done at the expense of the applicant.
      - ii. All applicants must be tested for HIV. The results remain confidential. The bill for the HIV test must **not** be sent to the insurance company. The Vocation Director will instruct you about the HIV test before it is done.
  - III. Report from the Vocation Interview Board. Arrangements for the interview will be made by the Vocation Director at the earliest convenience of all involved. The interview will cover a broad spectrum of questions including personal life, academic accomplishments, religious experience, goals and expectations.
  - IV. Psychological Evaluation. Applicants for college seminary and major schools of theology must be tested before acceptance. The expense is paid by the diocese. The confidential report is submitted to the Bishop and Vocation Director
  - V. Safe environment documents must be completed and found satisfactory (see diocesan Child Protection Policy, Chapters 3-4)
    - i. Social Security trace

- ii. Court Records Search (Statewide MT or Felony and Misdemeanor 7 years) with driving offenses
- iii. National Criminal Offender Search
- iv. Code of Pastoral Conduct

Part Three: **ACCEPTANCE AS A SEMINARIAN FOR THE DIOCESE**

- I. If of the above-noted documentation is acceptable and complete, the Vocation Director will notify the Bishop and supply him with necessary documentation listed above, as needed, and write a memo of recommendation referencing the recommendation by the Vocation Review Board.
- II. If the Bishop approves, you are accepted as a seminarian and will be notified by him in writing.
- III. The Vocation Director will direct you to fill out a separate application form provided by the seminary. All supporting documents listed above will be required by the seminary.
- IV. If the application process reveals that you are not suitable for some reason, (psychological or physical inadequacies, unsatisfactory interview with the Vocation Review Board, criminal behavior, or canonical reasons), the Vocations Director will notify you in writing.

Part Four: **TIMELINE**

- I. Meet with the Vocation Director as soon as possible, preferably one year prior to your intention to enter formation.
- II. If you intend to enter the seminary in the fall, you must have these documents submitted to the Vocation Director prior to January: ALL ITEMS LISTED ABOVE IN PART II, a through f.
- III. All other items (Seminarian Interview Board, Psychological Evaluation, and Background Check) will be coordinated with the help of the Vocations Director by February.
- IV. Generally speaking, you will also have contact with the seminary, assisted by our Vocations Director, and complete their application process before March.
- V. Exceptions may be made to the above timeline as circumstances warrant.

Part Five: **DIOCESAN SUPPORT**

- I. College-Level Seminarians (or equivalent)

- a. You are asked to seek funding that may be available to you, including, but not limited to, scholarships, grants, FAFSA awards, and loans through the institution's financial aid office.
    - i. You may additionally be eligible for a personal line of credit through the Diocese if approved by the Bishop; this would be at the standard diocesan interest rate on loans.
    - ii. Upon ordination, the diocese will forgive 1/3 or 33.3% of your line of credit each year for three years.
    - iii. Upon ordination, the diocese will repay any FAFSA loans at the rate of 20% per year for five years.
    - iv. In the event that you cease priestly service to the Diocese, then you are responsible for any FAFSA loans, and you will work with the Diocese to work out a payment plan for your line of credit accruals.
  - b. Expenses related to college-level formation are the responsibility of the student. You will have to address personally the costs of room, board, tuition, fees, travel, books and school supplies, as well as health insurance. The money available for you to cover these costs is described above in part "a. i through iv."
  - c. College-level seminarians are encouraged to find summer-time employment; the Diocese may be able to assist in this process.
  - d. College-level seminarians are provided a monthly gift of \$75.00.
  - e. If the Diocese requires a college-level seminarian to travel to an event back in the Diocese, the Diocese will pay the expenses.
- II. Pre-Theology and Theology Seminarians
- a. The Diocese pays seminary room and board, tuition, fees, books and school supplies.
  - b. The Diocese provides health insurance.
  - c. The Diocese provides a monthly stipend of \$350.
  - d. Travel: generally speaking, the Diocese will pay for all reasonable expenses relating to travel to and from the seminary. Returning home for holidays or personal events is generally the responsibility of the student. Exceptions are allowable with the permission of the Director of Seminarian Formation.
  - e. Previous Student Loans: the Diocese can work out on a case-by-case basis a plan how these loans can be retired after ordination.
  - f. Summer Formation:
    - i. The Director of Seminarian Formation assists in placing you in a parish assignment.
    - ii. Room and board are provided, along with the regular \$350 per month.
    - iii. A reasonable amount of personal time is allowable during the summer.

- III. A note about Clinical Pastoral Education: If you are able to include this program in your formation schedule, the Diocese will pay all expenses related to it. It is not required.
- IV. As other formation opportunities arise, they are considered on a case-by-case basis, with consultation from the Bishop and the Director of Seminarian Formation.

**PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS:**

JESUS, HIGH PRIEST AND REDEEMER FOREVER,  
WE BEG YOU TO CALL  
YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN  
TO YOUR SERVICE,  
AS PRIESTS AND SISTERS.  
GIVE PARENTS THE GRACE  
OF GENEROSITY AND TRUST  
TOWARD YOU AND THEIR CHILD  
SO THAT THEIR SONS AND DAUGHTERS  
MAY BE HELPED  
TO CHOOSE THEIR VOCATION  
IN LIFE WITH WISDOM AND FREEDOM.  
AMEN.