

DIVINE WORD COLLEGE RELIGIOUS FORMATION PROGRAM



Divine Word College
Epworth, Iowa

CONTENTS

	Page
Statement of Mission	4
Core Beliefs and Values	4
Program Objectives	4
Human Formation	5
Spiritual Formation	5
Intellectual Formation	6
Cross-cultural Community Formation	6
Missionary Ministry Formation	7
Religious Formation Program	7
1. Facet One: Human Formation	8
Knowledge and Acceptance of Self	8
Physical Health	9
Psychological and Emotional Health	9
Sexuality and Celibacy	10
Interpersonal Relationships	11
2. Facet Two: Spiritual Formation	11
Faith Development	11
Personal Prayer	12
Communal Prayer	12
Vocational Discernment	13
3. Facet Three: Intellectual Formation	13
Attitude to Learning	14
Commitment to Learning	14

4. Facet Four: Cross-Cultural Community Formation	15
Development of Respect	15
Community Participation	16
Skills for Cross-Cultural Living	16
Critical Appreciation of One's Own Culture	16
5. Facet Five: Missionary Ministry Formation	17
Initial Ministry Skills	17
Vocational Awareness for Ministry	17
Evaluation and Assessment	18
Candidates Evaluate the Program	18
Evaluation of the Candidates to Measure the Effectiveness of the Program	18
Evaluation of Candidates	19
Summary	19

DIVINE WORD COLLEGE
RELIGIOUS FORMATION PROGRAM

October 2007

STATEMENT OF MISSION

The Divine Word College Religious Formation Program aims to foster within candidates a religious missionary vocation. The Program encourages the development of a candidate's intellectual capability, his spiritual gifts, his growth in community and ministerial skills. This occurs within a community intentionally cross-cultural and shaped by the missionary spirituality of the Society of the Divine Word (SVD). The Program nurtures in candidates a life-long commitment to serving God's people.

CORE BELIEFS AND VALUES OF THE FORMATION PROGRAM

- The Trinity is the source of life and energy for Divine Word Missionaries.
- The Incarnate Word is the model of total surrender to God for Divine Word Missionaries.
- The Church is missionary by its very nature; therefore, all Christians, through their baptism, are called to witness to the Gospel.
- Some Christians are called to a lifelong commitment to mission. They pass over from their own culture and circumstances to proclaim the Good News and help usher in the Reign of God.
- A call to the religious missionary life at the pre-novitiate level is best discerned and confirmed in community. To hear and respond to a genuine calling, a candidate requires maturity--a maturity which integrates his cultural, social, spiritual and intellectual identity.
- A capacity for intellectual growth and a commitment to lifelong learning and ongoing formation are foundational for effective leadership among God's people.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

The goal of all formation and education in our Society is growth by the power of the Holy Spirit into unity with the Incarnate Word of the Father and into missionary community comprising members from many countries and cultures. This growth is a lifelong task, a shared responsibility to be faced by both the individual and the community. In this way we become capable of carrying out the missionary task of our Society: to be witnesses of the gospel of Christ to all by our personal lives, our community living and our preaching so that Christian communities may be built up. (SVD Constitutions, 501)

The Religious Formation Program provides an environment in which candidates can learn about the Society of the Divine Word. It gives direction to the discerning candidate seeking to meet the challenges of the program in preparation for application for admission to the novitiate. The Program provides the means by which formation personnel assess a candidate's suitability for the future religious, missionary life and service.

The Program is developmental. The candidate grows in the self-awareness and personal identity essential to a healthy spiritual life and missionary commitment. He demonstrates that he has adopted as his own the values underpinning the different dimensions of religious missionary formation: the human, intellectual, spiritual, communal and ministerial.

HUMAN FORMATION

Develops mature persons able to discern their desire to live in religious community and their readiness to enter novitiate.

Our formation is total and integral: it seeks to bring about human maturity, professional competence and committed faith. Growth towards human maturity occurs in a progressive deepening of self-knowledge, in the unfolding of one's personal qualities and in the achievement of that inner freedom which makes responsible decisions possible. (SVD Constitutions, 503)

At the pre-novitiate level, the Religious Formation Program encourages the student to grow in self-knowledge and self-acceptance. It promotes good physical and psychological health and formation in sexuality and celibacy. It teaches the skills for interpersonal relationships essential to a free, mature decision for the religious missionary life.

SPIRITUAL FORMATION

Develops faith-filled, discerning candidates, rooted in Jesus Christ and committed to personal and communal prayer as foundation for missionary service.

We must shape our lives according to our faith by always listening for the voice of the Holy-Spirit, who speaks to us in scripture, in the life of the community and of the Church, as well as in contemporary events. Our response should be in prayer and action. As missionaries of the Divine Word, our spiritual lives are inspired by St. Arnold Janssen's example, for he was a man of faith and prayer, of openness and dedication. (SVD Constitutions, 508)

The Religious Formation Program invites the candidate to grow in his awareness of God's presence in the world and his understanding of the mystery of the death and resurrection of Jesus. As the Incarnate Word proceeds from the communion of the Trinity in service to others, so the candidate learns that religious missionary life is always communal and rooted in a concrete social and historical reality. As Jesus emptied himself and "took on our human likeness," so the candidate learns to empty himself of his cultural predispositions and biases, even his language, in order to become one with others, to be re-formed in a new missionary spirituality.

While centered on the Eucharist, the spiritual life of the College includes many additional aspects that challenge the candidate to grow in his personal devotion and in community. Through life in community and service to others, the candidate experiences the presence of God. In the mystery of his own person and that of others, in the known and the unknown, he meets God anew. As he grows spiritually, the candidate discovers the sources of discernment for his vocation and clarifies his desire for life in a religious missionary community. The candidate's spiritual growth supports his vocational discernment and deepens his desire for life in a religious missionary community.

INTELLECTUAL FORMATION

Instills a commitment to acquiring and developing the knowledge and the skills necessary to interpret and communicate the Gospel.

The study of philosophy and theology is part of the vocational preparation for the priesthood. It serves to increase one's knowledge of human nature and society and to deepen one's growth into the mystery of Christ...The program of studies for our seminarians should deliberately emphasize the missionary dimension and the value of social, cultural and religious plurality for the proclamation of the Gospel. (SVD Constitutions, 516 and 516.1)

The Academic Program is the primary instrument to help the candidate to grow in knowledge of the liberal arts. The Religious Formation Program works with the Academic Program in assisting him in a growing appreciation of learning by understanding its significance for effective future ministry. The candidate comes to understand that learning and religious formation are parts of an integrated process necessary for missionary service.

CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNITY FORMATION

Enables the candidate to be rooted in his own culture and to cross over to other cultures with respect and sensitivity, while developing skills for religious community.

...we meet with friendliness and goodwill those among whom we announce the gospel, growing into their historical situation, customs and mentality...we make every effort to master the language of the people and become familiar with their history and culture. Following the principles of the gospel, we respect the customs and habits of the people among whom we work, avoiding every derogatory criticism and comparison. (SVD Constitutions, 120.1 and 2)

The Religious Formation Program invites the candidate to develop the skills and abilities vital for crossing over to other cultures and for ministering in a multicultural church. The Program first enables the candidate to grow in appreciation of his own culture and to learn about and appreciate other cultures. It then enables him to develop the ability to challenge and critique his own and other cultures, even as he grows in awareness and respect for those cultures. The Program calls the candidate to gradually deepen his commitment to life in religious community through actively building up the community and accepting support from others. The life of study, work, and worship within the College's cross-cultural environment provides opportunity for developing this commitment.

MISSIONARY MINISTRY FORMATION

Allows the candidate to begin to develop his ministry skills and to apply his gifts and education to missionary services.

In order that this vocation can develop fully, formation must be integral, rooted in one's own culture, community-forming, directed towards apostolic service and open to the needs of the world... (SVD Constitutions, 502)

Besides the skills and knowledge requisite for mission, the Religious Formation Program offers opportunity for applying these tools in concrete activities within a Christ-

centered community. This practical service helps the candidate see how his coursework and other activities fit in with a vocation to religious missionary life.

Careful preparation, supervision and support, reflection and evaluation characterize the service experience. Challenges inherent in working with people of differing socioeconomic or cultural groups offer significant opportunities for growth. The structure of the program helps educate the candidate about his own areas for growth, and helps him develop critical insight and sound judgment. The process further stimulates the candidate's desire for service as he learns of the needs of the world and his own gifts in meeting those needs.

RELIGIOUS FORMATION PROGRAM

The Religious Formation Program of Divine Word College fosters the maturity and growth of the missionary candidate in five facets of development: human, spiritual, intellectual, cross-cultural community, and missionary ministry. The candidate's growth is demonstrated through observed behaviors and expressed ideas, manifestations of the candidate's own deepening discernment of his call which allow others to help evaluate his readiness for the novitiate.

The candidate is challenged to see the Program's expectations as an invitation to freely choose, out of love and a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, a way of life that leads to dedicated missionary service, personal fulfillment in a shared community life, and his own ever-deepening spiritual life.

Each facet of the Program consists of a rationale, means of implementation, outcomes, and the means used to assess those outcomes.

Facet One: Human Formation

Human Formation requires an integration of knowledge and acceptance of self, physical and psychological health, sexuality and celibacy, and interpersonal relationships. Each contributes to the development of the others. This integration moves the individual to healthy holistic human development.

Knowledge and Acceptance of Self

Self-awareness and acceptance of self are an essential component in the mature candidate's ability to respond freely to his call to be a religious missionary in the Society of the Divine Word.

Every year, each candidate is assigned to a formation group. This group is led by a Formation Director who accompanies the candidate for the year. This assignment is based on consideration of the candidate's class, age, and unique formational needs. Formation Groups meet each week in order to present information regarding religious life and issues of personal and vocational growth. The formation group also offers an environment in which members of the group interact in such a way as to deepen their understanding of each others' values and perspectives. The group is a lived experience of community, a place to enjoy and learn from each other, share personal journeys, discuss and solve problems, and develop skills essential to religious community life.

To facilitate the candidate's increasing self-awareness, his Formation Director helps him set reasonable and measurable personal goals at the beginning of each academic year, including the steps he will take to achieve the goals. The goals can be modified as needed during the year. This process encourages the candidate to undertake greater responsibility for his own growth. Individual interviews twice a semester with the candidate's Formation Director involve discussions of the candidate's progress in the context of the five facets of the Formation Program.

The result of this process will be that the candidate can write increasingly insightful self-evaluations which are shared with his Formation Director and members of his formation group. In this evaluation, the candidate demonstrates an increasing awareness of his interpersonal and emotional life, sexual development, accomplishments and leadership. He notes areas that may still need maturing. The Formation Director writes a comprehensive behavioral evaluation at the end of each academic year based on the five facets of the Religious Formation Program. The candidate has an opportunity to review this evaluation with his Formation Director to add information or provide greater insight. This process assists the candidate to grow in awareness and commitment to his vocational call.

Evaluations by the candidate, his peers, and his Formation Director provide the basis for assessment in this category. The Formation Director reviews goals the candidate set for himself and how he achieved them, looks for evidence of greater insight into himself and considers his ability to speak clearly to issues involved in making his own informed vocational choice for the religious missionary life.

Physical Health

Missionary life in many countries where the SVD live and work can present significant physical challenges. It is thus important that the candidate is aware of the need not only

to take care of his own physical health but to develop the physical stamina necessary for work as a missionary.

In order to encourage habits that promote good physical health, the College provides balanced meals, and recreational facilities with a swimming pool, weight room, gym, tennis courts, and outdoor sports fields. Intramural activities are also offered. Candidates are expected to avail themselves of these facilities and activities according to their own interests and abilities. The Program also provides a regular series of formation topics related to a healthy lifestyle.

The candidate demonstrates his commitment to good physical health by his choice of regular exercise, maintenance of an appropriate weight for his size, healthy eating habits, and regular medical and dental care. As part of the novitiate application process, the candidate takes and passes required physical and psychological examinations.

Psychological and Emotional Health

The religious missionary life is dedicated to service characterized by a commitment to cross-cultural living. To live among people whose cultures and belief systems are often different from his own, the missionary must possess strong emotional health and skills for maintaining it. The healthy candidate is stable, handles conflict satisfactorily, moves past disappointments and defeats, is able to tolerate differences of opinion, and copes successfully with the normal tensions resulting from community life.

The Religious Formation Program provides a regular series of formational topics on healthy emotional development and offers opportunities to meet with a Spiritual Director, Formation Director and/or professional Counselor. There are also opportunities for the candidate to work with others in a range of leadership positions that can at times be demanding and stressful. With the guidance of members of the Formation Team and other supervisors, the candidate learns how to cope with the emotional demands required in leadership.

In the Religious Formation Program, this development is measured through the Formation Director's direct observation of the candidate's emotional stability and ability to exercise leadership in working with others.

Sexuality and Celibacy

God created humankind as sexual beings in order to participate in the continuity of creation. The sexual energy present in each individual is at its richest when it is expressed in appropriate witness to bring about ever more fully the Kingdom of God. The call to the religious life necessitates a mature response to live the consecrated life of celibacy. The response to this call is to find mature love in relation to others and in

particular to the people one serves and to find sexual expression in positive activity. Seminary formation at the College level requires that the candidate come to deeper understanding of his sexuality and appropriate ways to live it as a religious priest or Brother.

The Religious Formation Program utilizes a number of means for developing growth and understanding of sexuality. Academic courses in Human Sexuality and Sexual Ethics are offered on an annual basis. Regular assembly presentations address topics in human sexuality. Each formation group studies issues on human sexuality appropriate to the group's formation level, starting with topics on basic biology and moving on to topics such as sexual orientation, boundaries, addiction, and male/female relationships. College policies clearly define appropriate sexual conduct and use of electronic and publication media. The candidate participates in activities with a broad spectrum of individuals both within and outside of the College.

The Academic Program, formation group discussions and College wide presentations and forums facilitate the development of sensitivity and respect.

The candidate may speak confidentially about sexual issues with the College Counselor and/or his Spiritual Director. Positive experiences and challenges in lived relationship with others come from social activities and living in a close community. Outlets for sexual energy can be found through sports, study, work and prayer. There are also important opportunities for the candidate to come to appreciate himself and reflect on the life he is committing himself to through times of solitude and retreat.

A candidate who has a healthy sexual identity as a celibate will demonstrate this through his ability to maintain appropriate boundaries with friends and those with whom he ministers and interacts. He will have accurate knowledge about human biology regarding his sexuality. The candidate begins to speak about his sexual history with his Formation Director, Counselor and Spiritual Director.

The Formation Director notes the candidate's ability to speak about his sexuality and observes his ability to maintain healthy boundaries.

Interpersonal Relationships

In order to be an effective minister in working with others, in leadership, in positive contributions to community living, for the future religious missionary requires good interpersonal skills.

Opportunities to learn and practice interpersonal skills are present in formation groups, working through issues related to community living and the various recreational opportunities offered at the College.

A candidate demonstrates these growing abilities by active participation in the life of the College community through the exercise of leadership, responsible fulfillment of assigned duties, volunteering, and social interaction with both peers and staff. The successful development of interpersonal skills is verified through the Formation Director and peer evaluations and through the sensitivity and insight the candidate shows in his own evaluation of others.

Facet Two: Spiritual Formation

A core foundation for missionary service is a strong personal and communal relationship with Jesus Christ. Divine Word Missionaries emphasize the importance of a solid life of prayer to support them in carrying out their work of spreading the Gospel. Jesus Christ modeled this in His own life through frequently going to a quiet place to commune with the Father. The core areas of development for the religious missionary candidate are strong faith development, personal prayer, participation in communal prayer and vocational discernment.

Faith Development

Faith in God and its expression are personal to the individual and his relationship to the Creator. Genuine faith can be seen in one's active response to God's Word and in a life based on Christian values. A deep faith in Jesus Christ and His Church as community of faith is foundational for dedicating oneself to the religious missionary life.

To assist the candidate in his faith, the Religious Formation Program offers liturgical formation, content topics related to faith, annual retreats, and days of recollection. There are ample spiritual reading resources in the College library and reading room. Opportunities exist for the candidate to participate in student-initiated prayer groups and sharing. A key component for faith development is the candidate's participation in regular spiritual direction. Priests are available for personal Reconciliation, with a communal Reconciliation service offered each semester.

The faith life necessary for the religious life is best demonstrated through his self-evaluation, the candidate's own articulation of his faith as demonstrated in community. The candidate also expresses his faith and spiritual journey in formation group Bible sharing and by showing he places his faith on a level of importance equal to or greater than other aspects of his total development.

Personal Prayer

Within the context of faith, a personal relationship with the Lord is best developed in prayer. The candidate comes to realize the importance of setting aside time for private prayer, meditation and Scripture.

To facilitate personal prayer, the College provides the main chapel and small private chapels with particular devotional and ethnic themes for places of solitude, quiet times in the evening in the dormitory areas, and tranquility weekends where College activities are curtailed, allowing the candidate additional time for prayer or spiritual reading. Further prayer resources are available through the library and in the various chapels on campus.

A candidate who sees the importance of personal prayer in his life will set aside regular times in his daily schedule where he can meet the Lord in reflection or Sacred Scripture. He uses the various chapels, opportunities for prayer times and spiritual readings provided by the College.

The Formation Director assesses a candidate's personal prayer by asking about his satisfaction with the nature and quality of his prayer life.

Communal Prayer

The community comes together to worship God and to pray as mutual support and expression of the spirituality of the Society of the Divine Word. The candidate learns to go beyond his individual expression of prayer and enters into the prayer of the community.

As a community, the College comes together for daily Eucharist, Sunday Vespers, services offered during Holy Week or special occasions, and formation group Bible Sharing. There are opportunities for communal prayer with small prayer groups outside of formal community prayer and the weekly Holy Hour. The College encourages particular cultural expressions of liturgy by setting aside a day each week for Masses to be celebrated in English and other languages.

A candidate who has come to internalize the importance of the Eucharist in the daily life of the Church and community is present on a daily basis. He also actively participates in the life of the faith community by attendance at Vespers, shared formation group prayer, and special religious events such as during Holy Week.

The communal prayer outcome is measured through the candidate's faithful attendance and active participation at daily Eucharist, Sunday Vespers, and other designated communal and formation group prayer times.

Vocational Discernment

Divine Word College provides an environment for discernment. A candidate's serious efforts to discern, clarify and deepen his religious call are an essential component of his spiritual development. This discernment takes place through the processes of faith

development, personal prayer and reflection, and active participation in communal prayer.

The Program schedules regular presentations by SVD missionaries and special sessions within Formation Groups to help the candidate understand the nature of SVD mission activity. In spiritual direction, students discuss and refine their discernment within a confidential setting. The College Counselor has various psychological instruments to assist the candidate to further understand himself and his abilities. Various College celebrations such as Mission Sunday provide additional context for understanding the SVD.

A candidate who takes seriously these core dimensions of faith development and fully participates in them gives evidence of a serious effort to clarify and respond to his vocational call. Other evidence is the candidate's ability to articulate the important questions in his discernment to his Formation Director. His presence at College sponsored activities supports his genuine commitment.

Facet Three: Intellectual Formation

As a future leader in the Church, the candidate must come to recognize that his education and intellectual development is an essential tool for becoming a knowledgeable leader and communicator in the Church. A strong intellectual foundation plays an essential role in the candidate's total development, especially through reading as a way to continue to gain knowledge about himself and to more deeply appreciate and understand the world within which he lives. As a future minister, the candidate will find himself engaging in dialog with others of differing perspectives, which will require strong intellectual skills. Key components are the candidate's attitude towards learning and his commitment to becoming an educated person and a life-long learner.

Attitude to Learning

A candidate for the religious missionary life shows an intellectual curiosity and a positive attitude toward learning. This attitude is crucial to complete a rigorous course of studies.

The Formation Program provides interviews and formation groups as both places and resources for further positive intellectual development. Formation group discussions include topics such as techniques for effective study, which will help the candidate thrive in his academic work. Divine Word College also provides cultural events, reading materials, and access to electronic media.

A successful candidate works to acquire a solid education that will serve him as a foundation for the rest of his life and develops a dedication to continuing intellectual growth. With such an attitude he will read outside of academic requirements and make

use of educational media available to him. This attitude is expressed in curiosity about the world. The regular reading of newspapers, scholarly magazines and journals is evidence of the candidate's growing intellectual curiosity and sophistication.

The candidate's attitude toward intellectual development is demonstrated in his cumulative grade point average and its maintenance and improvement. A serious candidate should be moving towards a 2.5 or better as evidence of his ability to do graduate work or pursue further professional development. The candidate's Formation Director and the Dean of Students receive a copy of his semester grade report and have access to his daily progress through on-line grade reports.

Commitment to Learning

A successful candidate completes the Formation Program with a strong commitment to intellectual development needed for life-long learning. To help facilitate a commitment to intellectual growth and life-long learning, the College provides an excellent library, a reading room with a large number of magazines and newspapers, various cultural events, and access to the worldwide web. The Formation Director assists the candidate in establishing personal academic goals for his intellectual development and in evaluating his progress toward those goals.

Evidence for this growing commitment can be measured through a candidate's participation in extra-curricular programs such as the Philosophy Club and attendance at special cultural events. This commitment is measured in the candidate's dedication to personal study and genuine interest in improving the quality of his learning. The Formation Director asks the candidate about his intellectual activities and notes his participation in extra educational activities.

Facet Four: Cross-Cultural Community Formation

Members of the Society of the Divine Word dedicate themselves to the proclamation of God's Word to all peoples. To achieve this goal, members are ready to leave their own cultures and to "pass over" to other cultures and live and work in communities comprising members of many cultural backgrounds. An important facet of the Religious Formation Program, therefore, is preparation for cross-cultural living. This facet involves respect, participation, skills, and the appreciation and ability to analyze one's own culture.

Development of Respect

To successfully interact with other members in a cross-cultural religious community, and work in cultures beyond his own, a candidate must respect and appreciate cultural differences.

The College offers opportunities for the candidate to develop cultural respect. The Formation Program provides a candidate with the opportunity to have roommates from cultures other than his own. Cultural dinners, cultural music, ethnic magazines, and art from different areas of the world offer a multitude of perspectives.

A candidate has the opportunity to participate in Mission Sunday, Lunar New Year, and other cultural celebrations. To offer students an opportunity to develop on-going relationships with families in the local area, the College sponsors the Friends Across Nations Club.

Issues related to understanding and respect are discussed openly in the Dean's Forum and formation groups.

The candidate demonstrates respect by reaching out to and having close friendships with individuals outside of his own cultural background. He reaches out by engaging in activities such as sharing meals in the dining room, sports activities, mixing in social events, walks and conversations. The Formation Director considers the candidate's attendance and genuine participation in cultural events and celebrations.

The candidate is expected to develop a genuine respect for women in their various roles in society and the Church. A candidate shows respect to women in authority roles and maintains relationships with them that are appropriate for someone entering the religious missionary lifestyle. This respect is developed by the fact that the College employs women in authority roles as staff members, teachers, spiritual directors and administrators.

Community Participation

In addition to cultural celebrations, the College sponsors ministries of service to people beyond the immediate College community with the elderly, homeless, physically and mentally disabled, ethnic parish events, and youth. Students are assigned to different ministries during their time at Divine Word College. The formation group charters aim to bring candidates together in various activities. Recreational facilities such as the Pour House, student lounge, and sports areas are designed to bring students together for greater interaction.

A candidate who comes to appreciate other cultures will demonstrate this appreciation through positive interaction with others from different cultures in leadership positions. He interacts in the classroom, dining room, chapel and sport events. He learns about other cultures through reading and other media. He learns a language other than his own and gains the cultural understanding that goes with that language. The Formation Director observes that a candidate takes the initiative to reach out to members of other cultures by inviting them to join in social activities.

Skills for Cross–Cultural Living

A candidate learns skills for cross-cultural living and service in such courses as World Art, World Music, Humanities Survey and other academic settings. A candidate learns to sing in different languages through liturgy preparation and by preparing for cultural events in which all students participate. Weekly ministries, language classes, and community service teach further skills.

As a candidate completes his formational experience at Divine Word College, he builds skills in living and working cross-culturally, including leadership skills for working with individuals from different cultural backgrounds.

Critical Appreciation of One’s Own Culture

A candidate becomes more aware of his culture and its assumptions when exposed to a different culture or set of values. He comes to a greater awareness and appreciation of the gifts of his culture, yet must be able to critique aspects of his culture.

The candidate comes to a greater awareness of his own culture through making presentations, preparing foods, sharing in his formation group and attending language Masses. Cross-cultural courses present the candidate with intellectual tools for reflection on his own culture and other cultures. The library has a significant collection of books in different languages about various countries and their cultures. The College educates on immigrant experiences and adaption to new cultures. The Religious Formation Program is structured so that the candidate will be able to discuss and write about the values explicit and implicit in his own culture.

Facet Five: Missionary Ministry Formation

The candidate begins to develop awareness of his own gifts and how these may be applied to the missionary endeavors of the Society of the Divine Word and of the Church. In the future the candidate will use his gifts to lead the Christian Community in worship and proclaim the Good News. His gifts may lie in community organization or in the practical skills necessary to sustain a local church and community life. At the College level, the candidate begins to become aware of what will be required of him as a future religious missionary. Growth in missionary ministry involves establishing initial ministry skills and developing awareness of what may be required of him in mission.

Initial Ministry Skills

The College provides opportunities for ministry which are often cross-cultural experiences for the candidate. These experiences are evaluated with the candidate’s on-site supervisor and are shared in reflection with his formation group twice a

semester. The candidate completes an end of the year self-evaluation of his own ministry efforts both within and outside the College.

Initial skills for ministry are measured through the candidate's willingness to go beyond simply meeting his own needs to extending himself to be of genuine service to others. He exhibits this through his willingness to volunteer for common activities as his gifts allow. He is willing to explore skills and activities he may not have tried before because he realizes their development may be helpful in communal missionary life. The candidate shows responsibility and commitment to do his best in carrying out community assignments. He develops confidence in completing assigned tasks and taking initiative.

Vocational Awareness for Ministry

By awareness, the candidate is able to come to a theological reflection, both oral and written, of his ministerial experiences and how they might be a lived reality of the Gospel message. Satisfaction and growth in ministry in the context of the theological reflection become important components for vocational discernment. Along with his formation group and his Formation Director the candidate takes a realistic look at his faithfulness in fulfilling various ministries both within and outside the College.

The College provides opportunities for the candidate to clarify his vocational call. There are opportunities to interact with Divine Word Missionaries who have served in other parts of the world. The candidate experiences first hand the celebration of Mission Sunday and the College environment that constantly speaks to mission and its centrality in the Church. Through formation groups and interviews, the candidate also reflects on his behaviors and how they reflect to his awareness of himself as a religious missionary.

The candidate's self-evaluation and his reflection with his formation group and Formation Director provide a gauge of his understanding and sense of his vocation. Work-study evaluations provide evidence of his faithfulness to basic community responsibilities. Participation in campus activities shows his willingness to go beyond minimum expectations.

Evaluation and Assessment *

Candidates Evaluate the Program

Candidate evaluations of the Religious Formation Program occur at the end of the academic year during the final formation group meeting. The candidates in each formation group give oral evaluations to the Formation Director. Candidates evaluate the overall Program, their own formation group, their Formation Director, retreats, recollections, topics presented, counseling services, spiritual formation, and ministry program. Formation Directors give both oral and written summaries to the Formation Team during the school year's final meeting. The information from these evaluations is discussed and evaluated, leading to adjustments in the Program as needed.

Evaluation of the Candidates to Measure the Effectiveness of the Program

At the end of each academic school year, Formation Directors assess how well the Religious Formation Program has met its stated outcomes for the candidates. In this process, the Formation Directors use a candidate's evaluations, Formation Director's observations and formation group input to assess the progress of the candidate in the Program. A candidate's progress is assessed two years after his entrance into the ESL Institute, at the end of his second year in the College Program and at the completion of his program at Divine Word College. A candidate is assessed using a Likert-Scale to measure his progress toward competence in each facet of the Program. Formation Directors set a target score in each area. To assess the Program itself, a total score for each item and the cohort group is ascertained and studied to determine any areas where expected outcomes are not being met. This allows Formation Directors to make adjustments in the requirements or activities meant to help the candidates meet the outcomes. This Program assessment also helps identify other areas in the Program that may be in need of modification, increased emphasis, or further development.

Evaluation of Candidates

A candidate is evaluated at the end of each academic year by self evaluation, peer evaluations and his Formation Director. Information from this evaluation is used to help the candidate to grow into a mature, responsible leader and member of the Divine Word College community. He is evaluated using the five facets of the Formation Program.

Summary

The Religious Formation Program helps Divine Word College realize its Mission to assist young men discerning a call to the religious missionary life as a member of the Society of the Divine Word. All dimensions of the Program, particularly its developmental outcomes, assist the candidate in discerning his vocation to religious missionary life and allow Divine Word College to determine his readiness for acceptance to the Novitiate of the Society of the Divine Word.

* Evaluation and Assessment are fully explained in the Assessment Tools for the Religious Formation Program. Please refer to that document for more detail.