
DIVINE WORD COLLEGE
SPIRITUAL FORMATION HANDBOOK



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INTRODUCTION: SPIRITUAL FORMATION

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.

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.

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 with a director with whom he shares his spiritual journey and ways of strengthening his faith. 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 also 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 pray as a 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 help the candidate to understand the nature of SVD mission activity. In spiritual direction, students discuss and try to 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.

LITURGICAL FORMATION

We encounter Christ in others and in every aspect of our work as well as in the celebration of the liturgy, in the Word of God, in prayer and meditation. This encounter is a continuing challenge to conversion and renewal. The closeness of the Lord brings joy into our lives and enables us to follow him in our crosses and sufferings. Thus we become like him in his self-emptying even unto death and so through the power of his resurrection enter into glory.
(Cons. 401)

The eucharistic praise of the Father is continued in our community prayers and services which help us live in closer contact with the Lord. Our community prayers are composed according to the spirit of the liturgy, the spirituality of our Society, the customs of the country in which we work and in response to the needs of our time. Allowance should be made for creativity and new prayer forms. (Cons. 403)

There are several ways candidates prepare for meaningful worship experiences through the school year. Each week they participate in a Liturgical Preparation period. The greater portion of these sessions involves them in the learning of music for worship. Input sessions are also provided by the Chaplain, Director of Liturgical Music, or Formation personnel covering various liturgical topics such as spirituality and theology of Word and Eucharist, Reconciliation, seasons of the Liturgical Year and devotional practices (taking into account the various cultural backgrounds of the student body).

One evening a week the Community gathers to celebrate the sung Liturgy of the Hours. In this community prayer of sung Vespers the community celebrates the light of Christ offered to us in baptism. The small formation communities gather often for Bible Sharing, Liturgies of the Word or Evening Prayer. These Word services are opportunities for reflection on daily life in the context of the Word of God as it speaks to us in our experience.

The worship life at Divine Word College involves the participation of everyone in the exercise of many ministries. Candidates are trained as Cantors, Readers, Eucharistic Ministers, Acolytes and Ministers of Hospitality and Music Ministers participate in Music Ministry by playing a variety of musical instruments.

The celebration of the Eucharist is the focal point of Divine Word College worship as a believing community. This celebration is in the format of a large or small community liturgy, a formation community liturgy or a language Mass. Likewise, each one's appreciation of the Eucharist is enhanced by the degree and quality of his own active participation.

To aid the candidate in his personal conversion there are periodically scheduled communal Reconciliation Services in which all are expected to participate and priests are always available for the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Participation in the Eucharistic liturgy is expected for each day, with the exception of Saturday. Liturgies on Sunday, and on weekdays so designated by the College Chaplain, are large community liturgies, at which all members are present. Each Formation group celebrates the liturgy together at least once a week.

Participation in community prayer and the following community functions is expected: conferences, Liturgy Preparation periods, Family Feast, Mission Sunday, Lunar New Year, Holy Week celebrations, Graduation and other specified occasions.

RETREATS AND RECOLLECTIONS

Retreats:

Each Formation community participates in at least one weekend retreat per year, normally from Friday evening until noon on Sunday. This retreat is held in a quiet place away from Divine Word College. The Dean of Students is responsible for selecting the space. The Formation Team plans for the weekend spiritually and materially. The Formation Director or the Coordinator for Spiritual Life spends time with the Formation group in preparation for the time away. These weekends are an opportunity to learn and strengthen the values of prayer, silence and community as privileged moments for encountering the Word.

The Junior year retreat weekend focuses on longer moments of silence to prepare candidates for the Directed Retreat experience in the Pre-Novitiate year. The Pre-Novitiate Formation group participates in 3-4 days of Directed Retreat at a Retreat Center away from Divine Word College during the Thanksgiving Break. The Directed Retreat provides a first experience of this form of retreat for many before the Directed Retreat experiences of the Novitiate year.

Recollections:

Candidates spend the major part of at least 3 days during the year in recollection, group sharing and reflective silence (first Saturday of the First Semester, mid-second semester, Good Friday). These days offer the opportunity for personal and communal reflection on different topics, guided by speakers from outside or within the College.

SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

That very same day, two of them were on their way to a village called Emmaus... and they were talking together about all that had happened. And it happened that as they were talking together and discussing it, Jesus himself came up and walked by their side; but their eyes were prevented from recognizing him. He said to them, "What are all these things that you are discussing as you walk along?" (Lk 24:13-17)

In Spiritual Direction one person(directee) meets with another more experienced person(director) in order to talk about and explore the directee's spiritual journey.

Focus is always on assisting the directee to deepen his relationship with God, further discover God's presence in his life and clarify what the Holy Spirit is inviting him to act on. In this process the directee deepens his relationship with God, grows spiritually, moves through the process of vocational discernment and comes to greater freedom in decision- making.

Through regular one-on-one meetings(monthly or more frequently), the Director accompanies the directee and offers guidance, direction and encouragement as needed. The focus of these meetings is always the spiritual growth of the directee.

Spiritual Direction: A regular meeting (at least once a month) with an approved spiritual director is an essential part of spiritual direction, especially in arriving at the interiorization and integration needed for growth in sanctity, virtue, and readiness for Holy Orders. (PPF 110. 2006)

Each candidate is required to have a Spiritual Director. He meets with his Spiritual Director on a regular basis, at least once a month for lower classmen and more frequently for upperclassmen. At the beginning of each school year the Coordinator for Spiritual Life submits a list of Spiritual Directors to the President for his approval.

CORE ITEMS IN PERSONAL SPIRITUAL FORMATION

The candidate needs to be aware of these KEY areas in his personal spiritual formation:

1. Personal and Communal Prayer
2. Vocation Discernment
3. Personal Relationships
4. Sacramental Life
5. Sexuality/Celibacy
6. Spirituality/Devotional Prayer
7. Scripture/Spiritual Reading
8. Prayer Styles
9. Silence
10. Disciplined Life

DIFFERENT FORMS OF HELPING

	Spiritual Direction	Counseling	Therapy
Person seeking help	Wants to discover action of God in life.	Wants relief from troubles.	Wants cure.
Goal of the process	Movement toward union with God.	Reconciliation, guidance in decision-making.	Self-acceptance and ability to function in society.
Methodology	Surrender to God; letting go of whatever blocks union with God.	Use of relationship with client for beneficial results.	Application of professional techniques aimed at specific results.
Attitude of helping person	Allowing God to work in the relationship.	'We can solve this problem together'.	'I'm the doctor'.

GUIDELINES FOR CHOOSING SPIRITUAL DIRECTORS

Spiritual Direction in the Seminary is a privileged and confidential relationship between a seminarian and a director who assists the seminarian to find his true self in Christ and to make a free and loving gift of that self in answer to the carefully discerned call of God. (Rev. Austin Doran S.T.D.)

1. Upperclassmen and Associates choose a Spiritual Director by the end of August. A list of Spiritual Directors, approved yearly by the President, is given to each candidate.
2. Lowerclassmen choose a Spiritual Director by mid-September.
3. ESL candidates are assigned a Spiritual Director by mid-September.
4. Candidates are recommended to interview two or three Spiritual Directors and then make their choice.
5. Candidates discuss with their Spiritual Director time and place of meetings and some of the areas of growth they are tending to. A list of Core Items in Personal Spiritual Formation is given to each candidate.

6. A Spiritual Director accompanies a student on the journey of life reflecting on God's felt and unfelt presence.

GUIDELINES FOR CHANGING SPIRITUAL DIRECTORS

1. Each candidate is required to have a Spiritual Director.
2. On the rare occasions the Spiritual Direction relationship is not working as anticipated, the following process should be followed:
 - 2.1 The candidate talks with the Spiritual Director about the points of dissatisfaction and comes to an agreement on:
 - a) whether to continue or
 - b) whether to end the relationship and seek another Director.
 - 2.2 If b) above, then the candidate meets with the Coordinator for Spiritual Life to inform her/him of the agreed need to change Spiritual Director. The student then follows the usual process of seeking a Spiritual Director according to the Guidelines and with an agreed time of completion of the process and choosing from the list of Approved Spiritual Directors.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Information which is part of the SPIRITUAL DIRECTION relationship:

The content of information which is discussed between the candidate and the Spiritual Director is **confidential**, which means that the Spiritual Director is bound **not** to reveal the contents of the sessions, except in cases where the candidate is involved in harm to self or to another person or the abuse of children or the elderly. These rare exceptions are explained to the candidate at the beginning of the spiritual direction relationship.

Disclosures that a seminarian makes in the course of spiritual direction belong to the internal forum. Consequently, the Spiritual Director is held to the strictest confidentiality concerning information received in spiritual direction. He may neither reveal it nor use it. The only possible exception to this standard of confidentiality would be the case of grave, immediate or mortal danger involving the directee or another person. (PPF 134. 2006)

Formation directors may, on occasion, ask a candidate to take a particular issue to his Spiritual Director for further reflection. In such cases, the Formation Director has no right to expect the candidate to reveal the contents of the spiritual direction sessions. The candidate alone has the right to choose to reveal what he has discussed with his Spiritual Director.