

PROGRAM FOR PRIESTLY FORMATION:

GUIDELINES FOR THE DIOCESAN VOCATIONS BOARD

The Roman Catholic Diocese of Charlotte
Charlotte, North Carolina

ARTICLE I NAME

The name of this body is Diocesan Vocations Board of the Diocese of Charlotte.

ARTICLE II DESCRIPTION

One of the most important responsibilities of the Bishop of Charlotte is the canonical faculty to admit one of the faithful under his authority to Sacred Orders. This presupposes that due care in regard to the appropriate canons as well as the responsibility for proper formation has already taken place. The Vocations Board is a stable body of priests and lay faithful who work as an advisory body in these matters and as such, it receives its mandate from the Bishop of Charlotte. “The opinion of the Board is not binding upon the Bishop or Superior, however it is an act having great moral value and should not be set aside except for grave and well founded reasons” (can. 127, § 2)¹.

ARTICLE III ACCOUNTABILITY

The Diocesan Vocations Board is part of the Office of Vocations of the Diocese of Charlotte.

The Board is advisory, first to the Director of Vocations, whose responsibility it is to report the deliberations of the Board to the Bishop.

¹ CONGREGATION FOR DIVINE WORSHIP AND DISCIPLINE OF THE SACRAMENTS Circular Letter *Srutinies regarding the suitability for Orders* (10 November 1997), Enclosure III, no.7.

ARTICLE IV PURPOSE AND RESPONSIBILITY

The Vocations Board is competent to advise concerning: admissions, advancements, seminarian formation assignments, policy concerning admissions, and the withdrawal of sponsorship.

Section 1 – Admissions

It is the responsibility of the Director of Vocations to guide an aspirant through the process of discernment. When the aspirant and the Director of Vocations have concluded, by mutual agreement, that it would be appropriate to make formal application, it is the responsibility of the Director of Vocations to oversee this process. The final step is the presentation of the aspirant to the Vocations Board. This is the first *scrutiny*. The Director of Vocations will have provided the members of the Board with appropriate materials regarding the aspirant. It is the role of the Board to provide observations and impressions regarding the suitability of the aspirant for acceptance as a seminarian for the Diocese.

“The initial selection of candidates for entry into the seminary should be done with care, since it is not rare, once this first step has been taken, that seminarians advance towards the Priesthood with the attitude that each subsequent stage is a Consequence and necessary prolongation of the first (can. 241 § 1).²

Section 2 – Advancement

It is a particular responsibility of the Board to conduct the *scrutinies* as outlined in Canon 1051 of the Code of Canon Law and the Circular Letter *Scrutinies regarding the Suitability for Orders* from the Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments. The scrutinies will take place at the time of admission, before the reception of candidacy, and before the reception of the Order of Deacon.

² Ibid. no. 7

It is the responsibility of the Director of Vocations to gather all of the required documentation, including the recommendation of the Rector of the Seminary, and to present them to the Board for its deliberation. The Board then offers its observations about the suitability of the candidate for acceptance. An essential component of each scrutiny is the interview of the candidate by the Board. The Board then makes a recommendation regarding the suitability of the candidate.

Section 3 – Policies and Procedures

The document *Priestly Formation Program: Policies and Procedures* encompasses the positions of the Diocese of Charlotte concerning admissions and Priestly formation. Any member of the Board may propose additions, amendments and revisions.

Section 4 – Withdrawal of Sponsorship

In situations regarding seminarians who, for some reason, have been found unsuitable for Orders or for service in the Diocese of Charlotte, it is the responsibility of the Director of Vocations to carefully and prudently report the circumstances to the Board. After having considered all the circumstances, including the recommendation of the Rector of the Seminary, and, in some instances, a response from the seminarian himself, the Board will recommend whether or not the Bishop of Charlotte should withdraw sponsorship.

“It seems appropriate to dismiss a doubtful candidate, however great the need for clergy in a local Church or Religious Institute, than to lament the sadness and not rarely the scandal, occasioned by the abandonment of the ministry: *Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands (1 Tim. 5:22).*”³

³ Ibid. no. 9.

ARTICLE V MEMBERSHIP

Section 1 – Composition

The Board will consist of members of the laity, religious, and clergy appointed by the Bishop of Charlotte for a specific term of his choosing.

Section 2 – Appointed Members

There shall ordinarily be six (6), and no more than eight (8), members appointed by the Bishop for a specific length of time.

ARTICLE VI TERMS OF APPOINTED MEMBERS

Section 1 – Length of Term

The terms of membership will be defined by the Bishop and stated in his letter of appointment to the Board member.

Section 2 – Absences

Unexcused absences from three (3) consecutive meetings shall be grounds for removal by the Bishop.

Section 3 – Vacancy

In the event of a vacancy on the Board, the Chairman will submit to the Bishop a list of candidates for his consideration.

Section 4 – Resignation

A member of the Board may resign by filing a written resignation with the Bishop, to be effective upon acceptance by the Bishop.

ARTICLE VII OFFICERS

The officers of Board consist of: Chairman and Secretary.

The Director of Vocations is the Chairman of the Board.

A Secretary is to be appointed by the Chairman from among the membership to keep the minutes of the Commission.

ARTICLE VIII MEETINGS

Section 1 – Meetings

“The meetings of the Commission by their nature will be held in closed session.”⁴

Section 2 – Agenda for Meetings

The business of a meeting shall be the agenda established by the Chairman. Members may submit agenda items to the Chairman in a reasonable amount of time before the meetings.

Section 3 – Format

The Chairman will ordinarily preside over all Board meetings.

Section 4 – Quorum

A simple majority of the voting members shall constitute a quorum.

ARTICLE IX

⁴ Ibid. no. 5.

VOTING

Section 1 – Votes for Admissions, Ministries and Orders

“The decision or the study of the information concerning a candidate must end with a vote that can be in secret if any of the members so request.”⁵

Votes to recommend admission to the seminary or advancement to ministries and orders shall carry with a simple majority of the entire voting membership of the Board.

ARTICLE X CONFIDENTIALITY

Each member of the Board, during and after his or her term of office, is to observe strict confidentiality in all matters discussed at meeting, and in regard to all Board agendas, minutes, documents, reports, or correspondence.

To safeguard confidentiality of sensitive materials, all application materials received prior to a meeting, as well as any and all materials pertaining to a candidate distributed at a meeting, are returned to the Chairman at the conclusion of meetings and are destroyed.

ARTICLE XI COMMITTEES

To assist in furthering the work of the Board, *ad hoc* committees may be established by an action of the Chairman. Such committees shall consist of Board members appointed by the Chairman, as needed and appropriate to the task, the *ad hoc* committee may call upon the assistance of consultants.

⁵ Ibid. no. 6.

ARTICLE XII AMENDMENTS

Amendments to these bylaws may be proposed by motions of the members of the Diocesan Vocations Board and forwarded for approval and signature of the Bishop.