

Sacred Heart School of Theology Rule of Life

Prologue

*As a seminary owned and operated as an apostolate of the U.S. Province of the Congregation of the Priests of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, our community comprised of SCJs, diocesan priests, men and women religious, and lay faculty and staff gather around our primary purpose - the preparation of men of all ages and experience for Roman Catholic priesthood (*Pastores dabo vobis*, #64). Both diocesan and religious men are prepared for ordained ministry in accordance with the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Program of Priestly Formation, and other related Church documents.*

Sacred Heart School of Theology also provides academic theological education for those in, or preparing for, other ministries in the Church, as well as programs for men and women seeking personal faith enrichment.

“Sacred Heart School of Theology is dedicated to serving God’s people by preparing men of all ages for priesthood and by educating others for ministry in the Roman Catholic Church.

Inspired by the charism of Father Leo John Dehon, founder of the Priests of the Sacred Heart, we are committed to academic excellence, authentic human and spiritual formation with an emphasis on the Eucharist and social justice, and formation of effective Church leaders with pastoral hearts.” (Mission Statement 2009)

“Sacred Heart School of Theology strives to become the leading theological center on the theory and practice of adult priestly and diaconate formation.

Empowered by this goal, we will further the education and faith lives of priests, deacons, and laity for faithful and effective service to the Church.” (Vision Statement 2009)

Formation for Priestly Life

Elements of Priestly Formation

Our way of life is one of giving evident and transparent witness to the power of the Gospel at work in our lives. As outlined in *The Program for Priestly Formation*, the elements of that witness provide the framework for our Rule of Life:

- A way of life permeated by the three-fold charge given priests at ordination to teach, to sanctify, and to govern.
- A life of steady prayer first and foremost centered in the sacraments, especially in the Eucharist (see *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, #31), the Liturgy of the

Hours, and the liturgical cycles, but also in prayer that is personal and devotional (*Pastores dabo vobis*, #33).

- A deep devotion to the person of Jesus Christ, Son of God and Son of Mary, Lord and Savior (*Pastores dabo vobis*, #46).
- A life of obedience that is apostolic, communal, and pastoral. (*Pastores dabo vobis*, #28).
- A life lived in communion with one's bishop and the presbyterate, a communion that includes sacramental, apostolic, and fraternal bonds.
- For religious, a life in community with one's fellow religious in accord with the institute's rule of life.
- A life of celibate chastity that serves as both "a sign and stimulus of love, and as a singular source of spiritual fertility in the world" (*Lumen Gentium*, #16) and being freely accepted, shows that the priest is "consecrated in a new way to Christ" (*Rites of Ordination*, #177) and offers in himself a reflection of the love of Christ for the Church (see *Sacrosanctum concilium*, #26).
- A life of gratitude for the material blessings of God's creation coupled with a simple and generous lifestyle that cares for and is in solidarity with the poor, works for universal justice, makes itself ready and available for all those in need, administers the goods of the community with the utmost honesty, and offers a courageous prophetic witness in the world.
- A life that embraces "the mind and heart of missionaries open to the needs of the Church and the world" (*Pastores dabo vobis*, #32).
- A life that promotes a diversity of ecclesial vocations, clerical and lay.

The purpose of the Rule of Life is to incorporate these elements in our common life at Sacred Heart School of Theology. This life involves conversion in our relationship to self, neighbor and God.

Relationship to Self

- We acknowledge at all times that we are in formation to priestly life and ministry and our behavior must reflect that reality.
- Cooperating with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we are the primary agents of our own spiritual, human, intellectual and pastoral formation (*Pastores dabo vobis* #69). Both the seminary as a house of formation and the community as a whole, exist to foster and promote this growth (see *Pastores dabo vobis*, #79).
- Christ and our growth in the likeness of Christ must be at the heart of this formation. The discipline of love calls us to mutual sharing, trust, support and reverence for one another, particularly respectful of the dynamics of culture.
- We are called to be signs of joy and familial love opening ourselves to all that is human.

- We are called to listen to the spirit within the total community - to regard our neighbor in need as one who stimulates our potential and lifts our awareness to ever higher levels of life.
- Purity and openness of heart are closely linked. Our celibate commitment must promote healthy human affections and relationships of integrity with other men and women. A committed life must never serve as a pretense for personal isolation or withdrawal from that presence of Christ which is assured when disciples are gathered together.
- This same calling urges us to avoid those environments which erode this celibate commitment.
- Our calling urges us to a spirit of interior quietness, that we may nurture our own union with God, and that we would respect the need for solitude in others.
- We recognize that our calling extends to our personal, social, ecclesial, and civic responsibilities in school and beyond.
- Our calling urges us to develop a healthy, holistic and balanced rhythm of life, that we may integrate the everyday activities of living according to consciously chosen priorities. We try to achieve a harmonious integration of prayer, work and leisure in our lives, attending likewise to appropriate diet, healthcare, sleep and exercise.
- This same calling urges us to carry out our assigned tasks in a spirit of generous Christian service to the community, in response to the Gospel injunction, "loving our neighbor as ourselves." (Matt. 22:40)

Relationship to Neighbor

- By our Baptism we are configured to Christ the priest and we are called to build up and establish community, which is Church. The ongoing revelation of Jesus is in the shared life of the community.
- In building up the community we carry the burdens of others. We accept the struggles of each day as an opportunity to nurture and model communion within the body of Christ. Honest controversies are a part of intelligent reflection on our faith. We engage in these with charity and mutual respect.
- The attitude of imposing one's opinions on others can bring about a diminishment of community. The call to wholeness/holiness is a call to suffer our own and our neighbor's limitations, and to do so out of love; "...in essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty and in all things charity." (attributed to St. Augustine)
- We seek at all times to forgive one another, to avoid needless controversies and

to overcome our own prejudices. We try to promote unity and to discourage divisiveness. Extreme individualism impedes the development of a common life. At the same time, we allow persons to be their unique selves without trying to mold them to a common denominator.

- In our concern for others we see quiet as a necessity, respecting those who are praying, reading, writing, studying, or resting. Likewise this respect and concern for others impels our discretion in word and action.
- Judgmental gossip -- that poison of common life -- is treacherous because under its cover is often what one dares not say face to face; it is cowardly, because it demeans the individual in the eyes of others. If some delicate issue needs to be confronted, we do so in private, respecting personal dignity.
- Being together at table is an occasion for Christ-like attention to the needs of others. It should manifest itself in joyfulness and simplicity.
- When guests are present we realize that it is Christ himself who is present and treat them with respect, warmth, and hospitality.
- As we extend ourselves into larger communities we realize that we attempt to reflect Christ to our brothers and sisters by our compassion and ministry. We are conscious of the need for appropriate behavior and personal responsibility for the building up of the larger Church. Through theological investigation and reflection we attempt to understand and respond to the call to conversion in our personal, communal and institutional lives.

Relationship to God

- Each day, we seek to take time to renew our personal intimacy with Jesus Christ. Common prayer does not dispense us from private prayer. One augments the other.
- We are called to anchor ourselves in the Scriptures - the food and drink of our spirituality, our study, and our daily lives. We believe what we hear and read, teach what we believe and live what we teach.
- Eucharist, our sharing in Christ's love and gift of himself for others, is the center of our seminary life. We are nourished daily with this "bread of life and cup of salvation", the source and summit of our spiritual life and apostolic activity.
- We are called to show diligence in the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours. We pray the Liturgy of the Hours in common in the seminary community, and we continue this prayer of the Church, when we are alone, or with our local churches.

- As pilgrims we are conscious of our continued need for spiritual renewal through regular celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- Our growth in the Lord is also nourished by the study of Sacred Scripture and of the Church's tradition and its theology. In faith, we seek to understand so that we may build up the body of Christ which is the Church. We are called to take our years of theological studies seriously, as an expression of our accountability to our local churches. We understand our studies as events in which God enters our lives, and by which God nourishes and challenges us to personal growth and professional development.
- With this same awareness for growth, we observe our days of recollection and our annual retreat in silence, which provides an atmosphere conducive to reflection.
- We value having companions on this spiritual journey. An ancient tradition in our Church supports the need for such a companion. Every student, therefore, chooses a spiritual director and consults with this person regularly, building a habit for life.
- We give ourselves to building a truly apostolic spirituality (*Plan for Priestly Formation* 5, #110) which anchors our reflection and faith life to the people of God in a local church. We respect the diversity of gifts within the community and seek to honor each person's particular way to God. Growth in priestly obedience and simplicity of life is a gift to be given to the mission and ministry of the Church whose servants we are becoming.

Epilogue

We consider this Rule as a "Call to Life," a foundation, the minimum required in our life together. In accepting this Rule, we do not regard it as an end in itself, but as a call and invitation to discover God's will, the heart of Christ, and the wisdom of the Holy Spirit.