

SEMINARIANS

Admission Policies¹

Ordinarily a man applying to the Diocese of Fresno will have some connection to the Diocese. Men may contact the Office of Vocations directly to begin the process of formal discernment. Most often are referred by their pastor or a priest-friend who sees in them the possibility of a religious calling. A successful candidate will have a strong connection with his local parish and be known to his pastor. Someone applying from outside the diocese must either have a close relative living in the diocese and/or a priest or religious who is presently serving in the diocese (and in good standing) who can recommend him. In such cases the candidate will need to establish a connection with a local parish and spend time getting to know the diocese before being considered for acceptance as a candidate for the priesthood of the Diocese of Fresno.

There is a discernment process an applicant will go through once he has been accepted for consideration. This will include vocation reflection activities, interviews and evaluations. The Office of Vocations has a **Handbook for Discerners and Applicants** that can guide the candidate and those working with him in this process.

Language Policies²

Because of the large number of Spanish-speaking Catholics in the Diocese, a seminarian is required to attain proficiency in the Spanish language before being ordained a deacon. He must be able to preach a homily, and celebrate the sacraments in Spanish with adequate understanding. Pronunciation should be good and the message intelligible to the average person in the pew. The candidate for orders ought to be comfortable enough with Spanish to celebrate the Sacrament of Penance. A lack of proficiency would place an added burden on fellow priests. The seminarian should strive to effectively minister to the Spanish-speaking in a variety of contexts. Cultural sensitivity should include appreciation of liturgical and religious traditions/practices and US Hispanic Church history.

Any student not born in the United States, or whose first language is not English, will also be required to demonstrate a firm grasp of the English language and culture and practices of the Church of the Diocese of Fresno before being called to Holy Orders. He must not only be able to understand English sufficiently to engage in theological studies, but must also be able to communicate effectively in the pastoral ministry of a predominately English-speaking country. The Office of Vocations will guide the seminarian toward those seminary courses, immersion experiences and pastoral assignment that will assist in developing the particular language facility which he may require. The seminarian, for his part, must be willing to grow in this area of his formation.

Internship Assignments³

Students after their first year in pre-theology or in theology are expected to accept a diocesan assignment from about June 15 through August 15. The bishop makes the appointment after consultation with the Director of Vocations and the Personnel Board. They work with a pastor and under the supervision of the Director of Vocations. Every man ought to have had at least two different experiences of living and working in a diocesan parish before being ordained to the diaconate.

¹ 2017

² 2017

³ 2017

Summer assignments will often include experiences with campesino ministry, detention ministry, interaction with diocesan support ministries at the Pastoral Center and exposure to various lay ministries (e.g. Cursillo, Teams of Our Lady, Marriage Encounter, Retroville, Rachel's vineyard, etc...). At times other experiences may also be offered to the seminarian that will be of particular assistance to his formation. These may include a Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) course, intensive language program, spirituality program or missionary experience outside of the diocese.

During the academic year the seminary's director of field education will normally make field placements. The Diocese strongly supports field education and the reflection process that challenges the seminarian. The Diocese expects all seminarians to have a "pastoral year" or lengthy internship with an assignment in a diocesan parish. This will normally occur between 2nd – 3rd Theology, but before diaconate.

Once ordained to the Diaconate, a seminarian will spend at least a summer in assignment to a local parish. In some cases, at the discretion of the Bishop, a more lengthy diaconate assignment may be given. In consultation with the deacon, the Director of Vocations will provide input to the Personnel Board. The Director of Vocations will work with the pastor to supervise deacon placements and programs.

Seminary Affiliations⁴

A central part of preparation for ordination is full time residency in a seminary with a formation program designed for diocesan priesthood. The Diocese recognizes that it is important that seminarians have an experience of the Diocese and of one another before ordination to the priesthood. We recognize that one seminary does not meet the needs of every candidate, therefore, a variety of schools are available to best serve the individual needs of the candidate in formation.

The primary college programs available to our candidates is Mount Angel Seminary in St. Benedict, Oregon and Queen of Angels Priestly Formation Center in Gardena, California.

The primary schools of theology with formation programs available are St. John's Seminary in Camarillo, California, Mount Angel Seminary in St. Benedict, Oregon, and St. Patrick Seminary in Menlo Park, California.

The Director of Vocations, in collaboration with the Candidate Assessment Committee and in dialogue with the candidate, will recommend to the bishop the placement that will best develop the seminarian's gifts in light of his situation and the diocesan goals. It is the policy of the Diocese of Fresno that prior to ordination, a seminarian must have at least two years residency in an approved diocesan formation program.

⁴ 2017