



**SEMINARY OF CHRIST THE KING**  
**High School Guidelines**

2015-16



“In minor seminaries founded to nurture the seeds of a vocation, students should be prepared by a special religious formation and especially by suitable spiritual direction to follow Christ the Redeemer with generous souls and pure hearts.” - II Vatican Council, *Decree on Priestly Formation*, No. 3.

Dear Seminarians,

Welcome to the Seminary for the 2015-2016 school year. We are very glad that you could join us this year. The purpose of these guidelines is to help you reflect, to know and to challenge yourself in the light of your faith within the seminary community.

We know that you have many hopes, dreams, desires and fears as you begin this year. By God’s grace, we hope that we will be able to work with you to help you unfold and face those for which Jesus has called us together.

The purpose of the seminary is to provide a place and atmosphere within which young men can grow in holiness, i.e. can grow in their relationship with Jesus Christ and with the seminary community. Only through such growth are we able to discern God’s will for us, our vocation. We are here to grow! This fundamental purpose of the seminary must be kept in mind at all times, especially in difficult times. We are not here merely to get a good education, to be in a safe environment – we are here to grow in our ability “to follow Christ the Redeemer with generous souls and pure hearts” – we are here to grow into saints. This is not going to happen overnight; we should not be surprised when we or others make mistakes. The important thing is that we don’t give up, that we seek God’s help, and keep going forward in His ways.

## COMMUNITY

*What is the most important thing? Jesus. If we forge ahead with our own arrangement, with other things, with beautiful things but without Jesus we make no headway, it does not work.* Pope Francis, May 18, 2013.

Jesus has called us together to grow. He wants us to grow in every way. The foundation of all true human growth is laid by God’s Love for us, our response to that love and our giving of that love to others.

The seminary is a life, a community, a school of the Lord’s service. All that we are called to learn here we are called to learn in communion with God and with others.

*...speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every joint with which it is supplied, when each part is working properly, makes bodily growth and upbuilds itself in love.* Eph. 4:15-16.

Every natural and supernatural community has an organic order of communion. Each person within the community is blessed according to that order. Each of us is blessed with the gifts given to serve the community. Each of us is blessed according to place within the order we are called.

Each member of the community is given the grace to see and to joyfully experience, in the gifts of the other members of the community, especially those gifts that are different from my own. This is a precious and delicate gift. It is often not accepted. If I am a senior within the community the grace is not given to me to relate to or to correct another seminarian as if I was a teacher or a monk. The grace is given to me to be a good senior, to set a good example, to get to know the juniors, to guide and help them as a good older brother. If I am a junior within the community it is not given to me to relate to or correct a senior student as if I were his senior. If I am a junior within the community the grace is given

to me offer my gifts for the service of the community; it *is* given to me to learn, to listen, to watch, to be guided and be led by the good example of the seniors.

*...formation must be undertaken in community, in the novitiate, in the priory, in seminaries.... I always think of this: the worst seminary is better than no seminary! Why? Because this community life is essential. Remember the four pillars: spiritual life, intellectual life, apostolic life and community life. These four. You must build your vocation on these four elements.* Pope Francis to Seminarians and Novices, July 6, 2013.

### ATTITUDE

*True joy does not come from things or from possessing, no! It is born from the encounter, from the relationship with others, it is born from feeling accepted, understood and loved, and from accepting, from understanding and from loving; and this is not because of a passing fancy but because the other is a person. Joy is born from the gratuitousness of an encounter! It is hearing someone say, but not necessarily with words: "You are important to me". This is beautiful.... And it is these very words that God makes us understand. In calling you God says to you: "You are important to me, I love you, I am counting on you". Jesus says this to each one of us! Joy is born from that! The joy of the moment in which Jesus looked at me. Understanding and hearing this is the secret of our joy. Feeling loved by God, feeling that for him we are not numbers but people; and hearing him calling us.* Pope Francis To Seminarians and Novices, July 6, 2013.

What matters for your growth as a holy young man is not so much what happens to you or what other people do but the attitude in which you take the things that happen. The secret of peace of soul is to see God's will, God's hand, God's Love in everything. To set our sights on pleasing Him and serving others, and to turn difficulties into times of growth – learning to laugh at ourselves, to carry others and to be carried by others.

It is said of St. Pius X, when he was spiritual director of the seminary at Treviso, that the only thing that would ruffle his normal calm was soft, complaining, seminarians. If we find ourselves complaining to anyone except to those who can really help, it is a sign that we are not facing our difficulties in the right way. Do not be afraid to ask for help, to discuss with other students or the monks difficulties that you are facing. The growth of the whole community hinges on the personal growth of each member.

### PRAYER - LITURGY - SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

*If you do not praise God and do not know the freely given gift of 'wasting' time in praising him, then of course the Mass seems long! But if you go to it with this joyful attitude, praising God, it is beautiful"* Pope Francis May 31, 2013.

*At the time of his ordination to the priesthood, St. Francis de Sales took the resolution of making of every action of the day a preparation for the Eucharistic Sacrifice of the morrow, so as to be able to reply truly if anyone asked him the reason of his conduct: "I am preparing myself to celebrate Mass."* Abbot Marmion, *Christ the Life of the Soul*, p. 173.

1. **Chapel exercises** are times of worship and therefore reverence should be the attitude at all times. Try to avoid such things as curiously looking around, talking, and slouching or crossing legs at the knees etc.

2. It is standard Christian custom to **begin and end the day with prayer**. Go to the chapel as soon as you are washed and dressed. After Morning Prayer head straight to the Abbey Church for Meditation period before Mass. You should kneel and focus on your meditation until after the bells stop ringing. You will then have 5 minutes to prepare your books for Mass.

3. Once **Mass** starts give your attention to the Sacred Mysteries. The period after Communion and the few minutes after Mass are times for thanksgiving and personal prayer; and if a book is used at these times it should be a prayer book.

Good participation at Mass requires faith and preparation. Here are some ways to prepare:

- know the feast, have your books marked,
- preview the readings,
- use the Missal,
- hold the chant books;
- and above all, recall that you are to be sacramentally present at the death, resurrection and

ascension of the Lord Jesus.

At the end of Mass try to foster the presence of Christ within you; try not to be in a hurry to leave the church by watching others and leaping from your pew in a mad dash to get to breakfast.

4. It is necessary to grow in **devotion to the Holy Eucharist**. Devotion is strengthened through reverent attendance at Holy Mass, through devout reception of Holy Communion, and personal private prayer before the Blessed Sacrament. Each seminarian is expected spend time with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament – suggested minimum times are, grades 8 and 9, 10 minutes; grade 10s 15 minutes; grades 11 and 12, 30 minutes.

On entering the church or chapel genuflect before the Blessed Sacrament; and if you are in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament kneel in silent prayer, trying particularly to be aware of the Real Presence of Jesus in the Sacrament and to make an act of adoration and of love.

5. **Spiritual Reading**: Before afternoon classes, on Saturday and Sunday mornings, and after Midday Prayer and Vespers on Monday through Thursdays, are periods of spiritual reading. Choose a book that has to do with spiritual things: about God, the lives of the Saints, or something on how to be a better Christian. You can usually tell a good book when you find yourself making good resolutions as you read along.

6. **Confession**: *“Tell the truth, without hiding anything, without mincing your words, because you are talking to Jesus in the person of the confessor. And Jesus knows the truth He alone always forgives you! But all the Lord wants is for you to tell him what he already knows.”* - Pope Francis to Seminarians and Novices.

You are expected to go to Confession frequently; once every two weeks is good practice. High school students are to choose one of the priests as spiritual director and they should make a practice of seeing him about once or twice a month. New students should begin by seeing their spiritual director twice a month.

7. **Examination of Conscience:** *The Sacrament of Penance is the sacrament of joy. It is not only the sacrament of joy for the sinner who returns to God and is restored to life and made one with Christ, but (and this is a mystery far beyond any joy or glory of man's) it is also a sacrament of joy for the eternal Father. He rejoices as the father of the Prodigal Son rejoiced. He sees in the Christ-redeemed sinner, risen from the death of sin and living again with Christ's life, his only beloved Son coming back to him, clothed in the red robes of his Passion.* Caryle Houselander, *Guilt*, chapter 6.

After rosary you should take about 3 or 4 minutes to examine your conscience. Think about how the day has gone; thank God for the graces and good things of the day, express sorrow to God for your failures and ask His help to do better in the future, but know that coming before your God in sorrow give joy to the Father's Heart.

8. **Every seminarian should choose a spiritual director.** Spiritual direction should help us to know ourselves in the light of the Gospel, to trust in God's Fatherly Love for us, and to respond to the Spirit of Jesus Christ as He calls and moves within us. On the part of the one directed, spiritual direction necessitates a true and sincere desire for holiness and freedom in Jesus Christ.

## STUDY

*Consistence is fundamental if our witnessing is to be credible. However it is not enough, we also need education, I underline cultural training, in order to account for faith and hope. The context in which we live continually asks us to "account" in this way, and it is a good thing, because it helps us to take nothing for granted. Today we cannot take anything for granted!* Pope Francis to Seminarians and Novices.

9. Study is both a time for developing the intellectual talents God has given you and a continual opportunity for showing respect for others. Develop a habit of praying before studying, asking God to guide and help you. When you find your mind is wandering or getting restless during study, pause and pray for a few moments to become aware of the presence of God and your guardian angel.

Study hall should also be used for spiritual reading. Try to develop a habit of reading spiritual and other good books in the study hall after you have finished your homework.

Many new students are not used to sitting still and studying for periods as long as some of our study-hall sessions. In order to aid new students in developing this necessary habit, all students are required to remain in the study-hall for **all** study periods for the **first two weeks of the school year**. After the initial two weeks, permission may be requested from the prefect to work in some other room, or to practice band instruments during study-hall periods **after 15 mins** of study are completed. For the first 2 weeks computers are not to be used during the afternoon study hall period unless you have permission from the prefect.

To encourage disciplined study habits, permission will not be given to leave during the **afternoon study hall period**, 4:45 to 5:25, unless arrangements have been made before hand, such as spiritual direction.

10. Respect and consideration for others is shown in the study-hall:

- cultivating the time as a period of silence
- by avoiding needless noise and unnecessary moving about,
- by keeping a record of assignments in each class so that you don't take up other students' time by asking what the assignments are,
- by doing your own work and getting help only as a last resort,
- by helping others who ask and need help.

11. Between classes aim at a subdued atmosphere in the main hallway and in the classrooms. The next teacher appreciates it if the students come to respectful attention when he enters the classroom.

12. In order to cultivate good study habits and to make the best use of your time you **must draw up a schedule** showing homework times for the various subjects on a weekly basis.

13. At the end of every study period put all your books and materials into your desk. There is a 50 cents per article fine for every article found on your desk by the prefect or rector.

### EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

14. High school is not too early to get into some apostolic work, such as visiting shut-ins, promoting interest in and giving help to the missions, fostering vocations, and generally being of help to others.

15. Outside of teacher supervised class use, the use of TV and/or videos require permission. IPod, iPad or any other kind of electronic entertainment devices are not permitted in the Seminary. **Any such device brought and used in the seminary will be confiscated and sold at our auction for the missions.**

Students do not have access to the internet or email, and should not have messages sent to them through the seminary's account.

16. An indication of your sense of responsibility is the way you perform your various duties such as housework and other out-of-class assignments. Willingness, regularity, dependability, thoroughness, and personal initiative are excellent qualities to develop; they help us to grow in God's grace and become mature adults; they teach us to control our superficial tendencies and develop genuine responsibility. Generosity in the various jobs where volunteers are needed is really appreciated; and to one who is apprenticing himself for a life of service to others for love of Christ this is a must. If you need help with a job don't be afraid to ask, and if you see others with lots of work and you have some spare time jump in and lend a hand.

17. Substitutions for regular jobs should be rare. Be responsible and do your own work; but if you have to be away **be sure substitutions are arranged.** If substitutions are not arranged for jobs, e.g. waiting or dish-washing they will have to do the job for another week.

*"Idleness is the enemy of the soul"* (St. Benedict)

Various times on holidays and weekends are devoted to study-hall or community activities. These are designed to help us to grow in our ability to work together and in learning to keep ourselves occupied in constructive activity: "An idle mind is the devil's workshop".

2:00 to 4:00 PM Saturday afternoons are reserved for community activities. Various activities will be provided for all. You are encouraged to keep an eye out for jobs that need to be done. If you see a job that you would like to do, mention it to the Rector or his Assistants or your hockey captain.

10:45 to 11:45 AM on Saturdays are study hall periods.

8:30 to 9:00 AM Sundays and school holidays and 10:25 to 10:45 on Saturdays are spiritual reading times in the high school chapel.

## GROUNDS

18. Students are not to use the receiving entrance or linger on the grounds about the guesthouse area nor cultivate contact with the guests and visitors who come to the abbey. **Go to and from the abbey church by the inside route:** an exception can be made when some of your family are attending Mass or Vespers. Parents who come from a great distance may stay overnight if there is a vacancy in the guesthouse but only after permission has been obtained from the guest master well in advance. The dining room and its hallway near the guest house are areas where loud noise and boisterous conduct are especially out of place. Students should not visit in or near the Major seminary Residence.

**The guest house washrooms are not to be used by seminarians.**

Please keep respectful distance from the Major Seminarians.

19. Students may work at the barn if Brother is working there and has given permission. The farm area should not be used as a short-cut to the road.

20. Permission from the Rector is required to leave the abbey-seminary grounds; but the circuit around Mt. Mary Anne along Parr Road and Dewdney Trunk is considered to be on the seminary grounds – **this does not include the gas station and store** on the corner of Stavelake and Dewdney Trunk Rd. Permission to go to Mission will only be given if there is a real need. There is always a temptation to want to go to the store or down town without permission. By the grace of God, fight! Our culture teaches us that we have a right to give into our superficial, selfish whims and no one should stop us. Jesus asks us to be countercultural. Pope Francis says *“How hard it is to be a comfortable Christian!”*

21. Permission to leave the grounds does not include permission to visit private homes or to develop social contacts in the Mission area. We cannot supervise these contacts the way responsible parents do or the way they would want us to if such social contacts were allowed.

## DORMITORIES

22. Avoid shouting and roughhousing in the dormitories. There should be no lounging about or lying on beds during the daytime or using the dormitories as a place for recreation. **You are expected to keep out of dormitories and bays other than your own:** one dollar fine for the Missions for infractions.

23. During the day there should be no clothes lying on your bed, nor shoes on the floor. Keep your area and locker neat and tidy – clothes should be folded in your drawers or hung in your lockers.

24. Please keep the tops of the lockers free from all articles. Nothing should be pasted or tacked onto the woodwork in your bays.

An important part of developing responsibility and maturity in conduct is to keep your personal belongings neat. It says a lot to your parents when they come to see you at the seminary if they find your lockers and desk in good order. To foster development in this area lockers and desks will be inspected for neatness and order. A one dollar fine will be taken for the missions if lockers or desk is not neat.

Another area which needs attention is your bay in the dormitory. If it is your turn to do the sweeping keep the place well swept – especially corners. Once a week, beds are to be pulled out and the area under the bed swept.

## RELATIONS WITH OTHERS

*The Bible says this: friends, one or two.... But brotherhood with everyone. If I have some problem with a sister or brother, I say so to his or her face or I say it to someone who can help, but I do not tell others in order to “blacken” their name. And gossip is terrible! Underlying gossip is envy, jealousy and ambition.* Pope Francis to Seminarians and Novices July, 6, 2013.

*...We cannot go about speaking against one another: “And he does it this way and he does it that way..” Go on, say it to the person’s face! Our ancestors at the first Councils got to the point of punches and I prefer that they yell a few strong words to each other and them embrace, rather than speak against each other in hiding.* Pope Francis to Clergy July 26, 2014.

25. Cultivating habits of respect for each other and for those guiding you is an important part of Christian life. Some ways to do this are by holding doors open and allowing priests and brothers to pass before you and try to show respect in other ways such as using their full religious names in speaking to or about them: ‘Father Joseph’; ‘Brother Meinrad’.

Be careful how you use your speech. As you agreed in your initial seminary commitment, foul language has no place in any Christian’s life and must be seriously guarded against by seminarians. Help each other out in this area. The use of slang terms can only grow if others accept it; if you create an atmosphere where this type of speech does not fit then it will die of its own accord. For fellow students, you are not to use nicknames or make comments about others based on nationality, race, or bodily features.

*The blessing that God, in Jesus Christ, pours out on **this bond of fraternity**, expands in an unimaginable way. He renders it capable of overcoming all differences of nationality, language, culture and even religion. ... Having a brother, a sister, who loves you is a deep, precious, and irreplaceable experience. Christian fraternity happens in the same way. The smallest, the weakest, the poorest soften us; they have the “right” to take our heart and soul.* Pope Francis, General Audience, February 18, 2015.

26. Understandably you will form closer friendships with some students; but **these friendships should not become exclusive**: two or three fellows always together, cliques that keep others out. Jesus has called you all together as brothers. It is expected that one should get along best with those in his own class. Class spirit is a good thing but group rivalries should not develop. In the seminary a too close relationship between boys with a considerable age difference is often a sign that one is not relating properly with his own age group.



27. Respect for others' property and privacy requires you to keep out of their lockers and desks. In regards to stealing, drugs, pornography or any immorality (in speech, gesture, or action) the good of the seminary as well as the good of the offender obliges you to inform the senior students or superiors if you are aware of anything significant. Serious breaches in these areas are grounds for expulsion from the seminary. When we, do, say, imply bad things, we need help. We are all enslaved and blinded by our sins. We owe it to each other to do whatever is in our power to help. In these situations we are not trying to get anyone into trouble – they are already *in* trouble! We are trying to help them *out* of trouble.

28. When you are involved in or experience breaches in trust and in Christian behaviour discuss the issue with someone you trust and feel comfortable with, a friend, a senior student, your spiritual director, the Rector. Talk to someone that you think will be able to help fix the problem not to someone who will just agree with you and foster negative feelings. It is important that we work together and help work through misconduct, misunderstandings and hurt feelings.

29. **Telephone.** Certain students are appointed to answer the phone. If none of these is near, answer yourself. 'The Seminary of Christ the King, may I help you' is a courteous answer. Try to avoid excessive use of the phone. Writing letters is a much more personal form of keeping in touch.

30. Phone calls are **not to be made or received during study periods nor after rosary.** If you must make a call, plan ahead. **If there is a line up for the phone there is a five minutes limit on calls.**

## SPORTS

Sports are a very important part of seminary training, giving us many opportunities to work with and respect others. Participation in sports helps us to see our own faults and to learn to face them. Learning good sportsmanship is the greatest good that can be received from participating in sports activities. Through sports we learn to work with others and to oppose others; we learn to face ourselves and to learn to be a better men. In most sports environments only the best and most aggressive athletes are able to make the sports teams. Of those who make the teams only the very best will play often – since winning is all important. In the seminary, good sportsmanship, fair play, good team work, in general, concern for others are all more important than winning. We have a serious obligation to give a good example, one worthy of young men dedicated to Jesus Christ.

## CLOTHES AND HAIR

31. As seminarians, not only your conduct but also your appearance should reflect your sincere search for God, and your willingness to be different for the sake of Christ.

32. Sunday wear (suit or dress pants with jacket, white shirt and tie) is the normal dress for Sundays and those Church Feasts that are school holidays. In the case of school holidays which have a First Vespers in the abbey church Sunday wear applies from First Vespers until after Second Vespers. On such occasions your suit jacket is not required for Supper or Rosary (white shirt and tie is still required)

33. School wear requires white shirt and tie. Coats, jackets, sweaters, shirts or t-shirts that have large slogans, logos, pictures or similar decoration, are not acceptable for church or class.

**Jeans** or other pants made of denim material are not acceptable wear in the Seminary, **nor are they to be worn when leaving the seminary or returning.** School wear is required until 3:00 P.M. on school days; on Saturdays until breakfast and again for Vespers.

Each seminarian is to have two pairs of **black thin soled shoes** for church; these should be kept polished, especially for serving at the altar. Any type of white or colored sport (running) shoes, sandals, or other shoes made of suede, or similar non-leather material, are not acceptable for church wear.

Waiters are to wear white shirt, tie and dress pants while waiting.

**Your hair style must be neat.** We suggest that seminarians wear their hair trimmed and rather short, in a style acceptable to the Seminary. Hair must not be so long that it extends over your eye brows or looks shaggy. Hair dyes, gels, sprays, etc. are not permitted. The superficiality of such cosmetics should be seen by seminarians for what they are, even if they are fashionable amongst others your age.

#### **TABLE MANNERS - FOOD - KITCHEN**

34. Table manners are a combination of considerateness and custom and take a special effort where boys eat together without adults at the same table. This is an ideal daily opportunity for practising the Golden Rule to “do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” As seminarians and possibly future priests you will often be eating in public places where proper etiquette is expected.

35. Here are a few glaring errors: throwing food, smelling food before putting it on your plate, tasting the food before taking your helping, eating with your face in the bowl or plate, bobbing your head up and down as you go to meet each spoonful (instead: bring the food to your mouth and not your mouth to the food), taking food from the serving dish with your hands or with your own spoon or fork (such things as celery and carrot slices are exceptions as regards hands), picking through a salad or stew etc. for your favourite items, reaching across another’s plate, talking with food in your mouth, shouting or making a big fuss to get the waiter’s attention, having elbows on the table.

36. Practice sitting up straight and looking presentable; use your knife and your fork as tools – don’t hold them like a pirate holding a dagger! Please use your napkins at table.

37. The cooks plan meals so that there is a balanced diet of proteins, fats and carbohydrates. You are expected to take moderate portions of all the main dishes and to finish whatever is put on your plate. Do not bring food of your own to table nor take food away from table. Those who come to table after prayer should excuse themselves when they come in. Permission is to be asked for leaving the refectory early. **Please do not take food off of the monk’s, majors, or guest’s food carts when they are being pushed into the kitchen.**

38. The kitchen staff are very busy, **so please stay out of the kitchen!** You may, however, take the waiters’ food out of the warmer and do what is necessary for dish washing: such as pushing the empty carts from the scullery into the kitchen.

Food or drinks are not to be brought to the seminary for personal consumption or to be kept in lockers. The kitchen staff provide three large meals a day as well as an afternoon snack after sports and work.

### PROPERTY

39. Please be careful with the seminary buildings and furnishings – the monks work hard to keep things in shape. Here are a few things that endanger or spoil property: running in the hallways, throwing pillows, defacing desks, sitting on tables, leaning on music stands, throwing or kicking balls in or near the buildings, standing on polished surfaces (chairs, tables, desks) without protecting them against the sand and grit of your shoes, putting tacks into woodwork or wantonly using scotch or masking tape, lunging into swinging doors, (and similar things that your own good judgment will suggest). Each student is responsible for the replacement or repair of seminary property which is broken through carelessness: **this applies especially to musical instruments.**

40. Take off your cleat boots in the locker room and **do not come upstairs with muddy footwear of any kind.**

### SILENCE

41. Silence helps us foster the presence of God. Please keep strict silence from the time of rising until prayer at breakfast. It helps to give the first hour of the day to God in prayer. Rise immediately when the bells ring. Keep silence on the way from chapel to meals after midday prayer and vespers. After 8:45 PM is nightly silence. After rosary there should be no talking throughout the seminary. Those who are given permission to stay up longer are to use it for quiet study or prayer.

**9:00 AM to 10:00 AM on Sundays and school holidays** are times of silence in preparation for Mass.

42. Within the Seminary there are places and times for silence. There are also places where silence should be observed. When not praying/ singing with the community, strict silence should be observed in **the Abbey Church** and in the **Seminary Chapel at all times.** Similarly strict silence should be observed in the hallways going **to and from the Abbey Church.**

**The Study-hall** is to be reserved for quiet study **at all times.** Seminarians who may wish to study outside of study hall times should not be disturbed within the study hall.

**The hallways** between classrooms are not places for recreating or loud talking. If you wish to be loud or play some game please do so in the recreation room or outside.

By the grace of God may we grow in holiness and virtue together.

**W**e have, therefore, to establish a school for the Lord's service, in the setting forth of which we hope to order nothing that is harsh or rigorous. But if anything be somewhat strictly laid down, according to the dictates of sound reason, for the amendment of vices or the preservation of charity, do not therefore fly in dismay from the way of salvation, whose beginning cannot be but difficult. But as we go forward in our life and in faith, we shall with hearts enlarged and unspeakable sweetness of love run in the way of God's commandments; so that never departing from His guidance, but persevering in His teaching... till death, we may by patience share in the sufferings of Christ, that we may deserve to be partakers of His kingdom. Amen. (Rule of St. Benedict, *Prologue*)

P A X



## St. Thomas Aquinas on Studies

You have asked me, John, my dear brother in Christ, how you ought to study to amass the treasures of knowledge. The advice that I would give you on this matter is the following:

Be not anxious to plunge immediately into the deep sea of wisdom, but advance by the streams that lead to it. Because by simple things you arrive at the profound. Hence, let this counsel of mine be your rule.

I advise you to be slow to speak, and slower still in frequenting places of talk. Cherish the purity of your heart. Pray ceaselessly. Desire to keep to yourself, if you wish to reach intimacy with God. Be courteous to all. Pay no attention to the affairs of other people. Do not be familiar with anyone, because too much familiarity breeds contempt and is an abundant source of distraction from study. Never, under any circumstances, involve yourself with the activities and talk of the outside world. Above all, avoid all useless visits. Strive rather to walk constantly in the footsteps of good and holy men. Pay no attention to the source of a lesson, but memorize any useful advice you may hear. Be sure that you understand what you read and hear. Never leave a doubt unsolved. Take pains to lay up all you can in the storehouse of memory, as he does who desires to fill a vase. Do not try to know things that are above you.

By following these ways, you will all your life send forth and bear both branches and fruit in the vineyard of the Lord of hosts. If you take these words to heart, you will attain what you desire. God be with you.

### MEETING WITH SEMINARIANS AND NOVICES

#### ***ADDRESS OF HOLY FATHER FRANCIS***

*Paul VI Audience Hall  
Saturday, 6 July 2013*

Good evening!

I asked Archbishop Fisichella whether you understood Italian and he said you all have the translation.... I feel somewhat reassured!

I thank Archbishop Fisichella for his words and his work: he worked hard to organize this. not to mention all the other things he has done and will be doing for the Year of Faith. Thank you very much. However, Archbishop Fisichella said something, and I don't know if it is true, but I am taking it up: he said that you all want to give your life to Christ forever! You are now applauding, you are celebrating because it is the wedding time.... But when the honeymoon is over,

what happens? I heard a seminarian, a good seminarian, who said that he wanted to serve Christ for 10 years, and then he would think about starting a different life.... This is dangerous! However, listen carefully: we are all, even the older people among us, we too, are under pressure from this "culture of the temporary"; and this is dangerous because one does not put one's stakes on life once and for all. I marry as long as love lasts; I become a woman religious, but only for "a little while...", "a short time" and then I shall see; I become a seminarian in order to become a priest, but I don't know how the story will end. This is not right with Jesus! I am not reproaching you, I reproach this culture of the temporary, which hits us all, since it does us no good: because it is very hard today to make a definitive decision. In my day it was easier, because the culture encouraged definitive decisions, whether for married life, consecrated life or priestly life. However, in this day and age it is far from easy to make a decision once and for all. We are victims of this culture of the temporary. I would like you to think about this: how can I

be free, how can I break free from this “culture of the temporary”? We must learn to close the door of our inner cell from within. Once a priest, a good priest, who did not feel he was a good priest because he was humble, who felt he was a sinner, said many prayers to Our Lady; and he said this to Our Lady — I will say it in Spanish because it is beautiful poetry. He told Our Lady that he would never abandon Jesus, saying: *“esta tarde, Señora, la promesa es sincera. Por las dudas, no olvide dejar la llave afuera”* (“this evening, Mother, the promise is sincere. But in case anything happens, do not forget to leave the key outside”). However he said this with love for the Virgin — people say “Our Lady” — constantly in mind. Yet when someone always leaves the key outside, for any eventuality.... It won’t do. We must learn to close the door from the inside! And if I am not sure, if I am not sure, I think, I shall take my time, and when I feel sure, in Jesus, you understand, because without Jesus no one is safe! — when I feel sure, I will shut the door. Have you understood this? What the culture of the temporary is?

When I entered I saw what I had written. I wanted to say a word to you and the word is “joy”. Wherever there are consecrated people, seminarians, men and women religious, young people, there is joy, there is always joy! It is the joy of freshness, the joy of following Jesus; the joy that the Holy Spirit gives us, not the joy of the world. There is joy! but — where is joy born? It is born... but on Saturday evening shall I be going home or will I go out dancing with my former friends? Is joy born from this? For a seminarian, for example? No? Or yes?

Some will say: joy is born from possessions, so they go in quest of the latest model of the smartphone, the fastest scooter, the showy car.... but I tell you, it truly grieves me to see

a priest or a sister with the latest model of a car: but this can’t be! It can’t be. You think: “so do we now have to go by bicycle, Father? Bicycles are good! Mons. Alfred rides a bicycle. He goes by bike. I think that cars are necessary because there is so much work to be done, and also in order to get about... but choose a more humble car! And if you like the beautiful one, only think of all the children who are dying of hunger. That’s all! Joy is not born from, does not come from things we possess! Others say it comes from having the most extreme experiences for the thrill of the strongest sensations: young people like to walk on a knife edge, they really like it! Yet others like the trendiest clothes, entertainment in the most fashionable places — but I am not saying that sisters go to those places, I am saying it of young people in general. Yet others say joy comes from success with girls or with boys, and even from switching from one to another or from one to the other. This is insecurity in love, which is not certain: it is “experimenting” with love. And we could go on.... You too are in touch with this situation which you cannot ignore.

We know that all this can satisfy some desires or create some emotions, but in the end it is a joy that stays on the surface, it does not sink to the depths, it is not an intimate joy: it is momentary tipsiness that does not make us really happy. Joy is not transitory tipsiness: it is something quite different!

True joy does not come from things or from possessing, no! It is born from the encounter, from the relationship with others, it is born from feeling accepted, understood and loved, and from accepting, from understanding and from loving; and this is not because of a passing fancy but because the other is a person. Joy is born from the gratuitousness of an encounter! It is hearing

someone say, but not necessarily with words: “You are important to me”. This is beautiful.... And it is these very words that God makes us understand. In calling you God says to you: “You are important to me, I love you, I am counting on you”. Jesus says this to each one of us! Joy is born from that! The joy of the moment in which Jesus looked at me. Understanding and hearing this is the secret of our joy. Feeling loved by God, feeling that for him we are not numbers but people; and hearing him calling us. Becoming a priest or a man or woman religious is not primarily our own decision. I do not trust that seminarian or that woman novice who says: “I have chosen this path”. I do not like this! It won’t do! Rather it is the response to a call and to a call of love. I hear something within me which moves me and I answer “yes”. It is in prayer that the Lord makes us understand this love, but it is also through so many signs that we can read in our life, in the many people he sets on our path. And the joy of the encounter with him and with his call does not lead to shutting oneself in but to opening oneself; it leads to service in the Church. St Thomas said: “*bonum est diffusivum sui*” — the Latin is not very difficult! — Good spreads. And joy also spreads. Do not be afraid to show the joy of having answered the Lord’s call, of having responded to his choice of love and of bearing witness to his Gospel in service to the Church. And joy, true joy, is contagious; it is infectious... it impels one forward. Instead when you meet a seminarian who is excessively serious, too sad, or a novice like this, you think: but something has gone wrong here! The joy of the Lord is lacking, the joy that prompts you to serve, the joy of the encounter with Jesus which brings you to encounter others to proclaim Jesus. This is missing! There is no holiness in sadness, there isn’t any! St Teresa — there are many Spaniards here and they know it well — said: “a saint who is sad is a sad saint”. It is

not worth much.... When you see a seminarian, a priest, a sister or a novice with a a long face, gloomy, who seems to have thrown a soaking wet blanket over their life, one of those heavy blankets... which pulls one down.... Something has gone wrong! But please: never any sisters, never any priests with faces like “chilis pickled in vinegar” — never! The joy that comes from Jesus. Think about this: when a priest — I say a priest, but also a seminarian — when a priest or a sister lacks joy he or she is sad; you might think: “but this is a psychological problem”. No. It is true: that may be, that may be so, yes, it might. It might happen, some, poor things, fall sick.... It might be so. However in general it is not a psychological problem. Is it a problem of dissatisfaction? Well, yes! But what is at the heart of this lack of joy? It is a matter of celibacy. I will explain to you. You, seminarians, sisters, consecrate your love to Jesus, a great love. Your heart is for Jesus and this leads us to make the vow of chastity, the vow of celibacy. However the vow of chastity and the vow of celibacy do not end at the moment the vow is taken, they endure.... A journey that matures, that develops towards pastoral fatherhood, towards pastoral motherhood, and when a priest is not a father to his community, when a sister is not a mother to all those with whom she works, he or she becomes sad. This is the problem. For this reason I say to you: the root of sadness in pastoral life is precisely in the absence of fatherhood or motherhood that comes from living this consecration unsatisfactorily which on the contrary must lead us to fertility. It is impossible to imagine a priest or a sister who are not fertile: this is not Catholic! This is not Catholic! This is the beauty of consecration: it is joy, joy.

However I do not want to embarrass this good sister [*addressing an elderly nun in the*

*front row*] who was in front of the crowd barrier, poor thing, she was really squashed, but she had a happy face. It did me good to look at your face, sister! You may have had many years of consecrated life, but you have beautiful eyes, you were smiling, you did not complain of being squashed.... When you find examples like this, many sisters, many priests who are joyful, it is because they are fertile, they give life, life, life.... They give this life because they find it in Jesus! In the joy of Jesus! Joy, no sadness, pastoral fecundity.

To be joyful witnesses of the Gospel it is necessary to be authentic and consistent. And this is another word that I want to say to you: “authenticity”. Jesus severely reprimanded the hypocrites: hypocrites, those who think within themselves something other than what they say: those who — to say it clearly — are two-faced. To speak of authenticity to young people costs nothing because the young — all of them — have this wish to be authentic, to be consistent. And you are all disgusted when you find in us priests who we are not authentic, or sisters who are not authentic!

This is a primary responsibility of all adults, of formators. And it is your responsibility, you formators who are here: to set an example of consistency to the youngest. Do we want consistent young people? Are we consistent? On the contrary, the Lord will say to us what he said to the People of God about the Pharisees: “Do what they say but not what they do!”. Consistence and authenticity!

However, you too, in turn, seek to follow this road. I always say what St Francis of Assisi stated: Christ has sent us to proclaim the Gospel with words too. The sentence goes like this: “Always proclaim the Gospel. And if necessary, with words”. What does

this mean? Proclaiming the Gospel with an authentic life, with a consistent life. But in this world to which wealth does so much damage it is necessary that we priests, that we sisters, that all of us be consistent with our poverty! But when you find that money is the principal concern of an educational, parochial or indeed any other institution, this is not good. It is not good! It is an inconsistency! We must be consistent and authentic. On this route, let us do what St Francis says: preach the Gospel with our example and then with words! However, it is in our life that others must first be able to read the Gospel! Here too, without fear, with our shortcomings which we try to correct, with our limitations which the Lord knows, but also with our generosity in letting him act through us. Faults, limitations and — I add a little more — with sins.... I would like to know something. Here, in this hall, is there anyone who is not a sinner, who has not sinned? Put up your hand! Put up your hands! No one? No one. From here to the back... everyone! Yet how do I carry my sin, my sins? I want to recommend this to you: be honest with your confessor. Always. Confess everything, do not be afraid. “Father, I have sinned!”. Think of the Samaritan woman who, to test him, in order to tell her fellow citizens that she had found the Messiah, said to him: “you have told me all that I have ever done”, and everyone knew about this woman’s life. Always tell your confessor the truth. This transparency will do us good, because it makes us humble, all of us. “But father, I have got stuck in this, I have done this, I have hated”... whatever it may be. Tell the truth, without hiding anything, without mincing your words, because you are talking to Jesus in the person of the confessor. And Jesus knows the truth He alone always forgives you! But all the Lord wants is for you to tell him what he already knows. Transparency! It is sad when one finds a seminarian or



sister who in order to be rid of the stain confesses today with this one; tomorrow he or she goes to another, to another and to yet another: a *peregrinatio* to confessors in order to hide the truth from them.

Transparency! It is Jesus who is listening to you. Always have this transparency before Jesus in the confessor! However, this is a grace. Father I have sinned, I have done this, and this, and this.... with all the words. And the Lord embraces you, he kisses you! Go, sin no more! And if you come back? Once again. I say this from experience. I have encountered many consecrated people who fall into this hypocritical trap of lacking transparency. "I have done this", humbly. Like the publican at the back of the Temple: "I have done this, I have done that...". And the Lord shuts your mouth: it is he who cuts you short! But don't you do it! Do you understand? From one's own sin grace overflows! Open the door to grace with this transparency!

The saints and teachers of spiritual life tell us that to help us develop our life in authenticity, the daily practice of the examination of conscience is very useful; indeed, it is indispensable. What is happening in my soul? Hence be open, with the Lord and then with the confessor, with the spiritual director. This is so important!

How much more time do we have  
Archbishop Fisichella?

*[Archbishop Fisichella: if you continue talking like this, we shall certainly be here until tomorrow].*

He says until tomorrow.... If it is to be until tomorrow, let them bring each one of you a sandwich and a Coca Cola, at least!...

Consistence is fundamental if our witnessing is to be credible. However it is not enough,

we also need education, I underline cultural training, in order to account for faith and hope. The context in which we live continually asks us to "account" in this way, and it is a good thing, because it helps us to take nothing for granted. Today we cannot take anything for granted! This civilization, this culture... we cannot. But it is certainly also demanding, it requires a good, balanced formation which combines all the dimensions of life, the human, the spiritual, the intellectual dimension with the pastoral. In your formation there are the four fundamental pillars: spiritual formation, that is, the spiritual life; intellectual life, this means studying "in order to account for"; apostolic life, beginning to go out to proclaim the Gospel; and fourthly, community life. Four. And for the latter, formation must be undertaken in community, in the novitiate, in the priory, in seminaries.... I always think of this: the worst seminary is better than no seminary! Why? Because this community life is essential. Remember the four pillars: spiritual life, intellectual life, apostolic life and community life. These four. You must build your vocation on these four elements.

And here I would like to stress the importance, in this community life, of relations of friendship and brotherhood that are an integral part of this formation. Here we come across another problem. Why do I say this: relations of friendship and brotherhood? So often I have found communities, seminarians, religious or diocesan communities where the most common remarks are gossip! It is terrible! They "flay each other alive". And this is our clerical or religious world.... Excuse me, but it is common: jealousy, envy, criticism of others. Not only speaking badly of our superiors, that's a classic! But I want to tell you that this is so common, so very common. I too have fallen into this. I have

often done it, often! And I am ashamed of myself! I am ashamed of this. It is not good to do this: to go and gossip: "Have you heard... have you heard?...". That community is hell. This is not good for us. For this reason relationships of friendship and brotherhood are important. Friends are few. The Bible says this: friends, one or two.... But brotherhood with everyone. If I have some problem with a sister or brother, I say so to his or her face or I say it to someone who can help, but I do not tell others in order to "blacken" their name. And gossip is terrible! Underlying gossip is envy, jealousy and ambition. Think about this. I once heard of a person who after the spiritual exercises — a consecrated person, a sister.... This is good! This sister had promised the Lord never to speak badly of another. This is a beautiful, beautiful way to holiness! Never to speak badly of others. "But father, there are problems". Tell the superior, tell the Bishop who can remedy them. Do not tell a person who cannot help. This is important: brotherhood! But tell me, would you speak badly of your mother, your father, your siblings? Never. And why do you do so in the consecrated life, at the seminary, in your priestly life? Only this: think, think.... Brotherhood! This brotherly love.

However, in this aspect of friendship and brotherhood there are two extremes: isolation as much as dissipation. Friendship is fraternity that helps me not to fall into either isolation or dissipation. Cultivate friendships, they are a precious good; however they must not teach you to close yourselves in but to go out of yourselves. A priest or a man or woman religious can never be an island, but must be a person who is always ready to meet others. Friendships moreover are enriched by the different charisms of your religious families. This is a

great wealth. Let us think of the beautiful friendships of many of the saints.

I believe I must cut this a little short, because your patience is never-ending!

*[Seminarians: "No no no!"]*.

I would like to tell you: come out of yourselves to proclaim the Gospel, but to do this you must come out of yourselves to encounter Jesus. There are two ways out: one towards the encounter with Jesus, towards transcendence; the other towards others in order to proclaim Jesus. These two go hand in hand. If you only take one of them, that is no good! I am thinking of Mother Teresa of Calcutta. She was a fantastic sister.... She was not afraid of anything. She went about on the roads.... This woman was not even afraid of kneeling for two hours before the Lord. Do not fear to step out of yourselves in prayer or in pastoral action. Be brave, in order to pray and in order to go and proclaim the Gospel.

I would like a more missionary Church, one that is not so staid. This beautiful Church that makes progress. In these days a large number of missionaries, men and women, have come to the morning Mass here at Santa Marta, and when they greet me they say to me: "But I am an elderly sister; and I have spent 40 years in Chad, I have been here and there...". How lovely! But you have realized that this sister was able to spend these years in this way because she never neglected to encounter Jesus in prayer. Going out of ourselves, towards transcendence, to Jesus in prayer, towards transcendence, to others in the apostolate and in work. Make your contribution to a Church like this: faithful to the path that Jesus wants. Do not learn from us, from us who are no longer very young; do not learn

from us the sport to which we old men so often have recourse: the sport of complaining! Do not learn from us the cult of the “goddess lamentation”. She is a goddess that.... is always complaining.... But be positive, cultivate your spiritual life and, at the same time, go out, be capable of meeting people, especially those most despised and underprivileged. Do not be afraid of going out and swimming against the tide. Be both contemplatives and missionaries. Always keep Our Lady with you and please pray the Rosary.... Do not neglect it! Always keep Our Lady with you at home, as did the Apostle John. May she always accompany you and keep you. And also pray for me, because I too need prayers, because I am a poor sinner, but let us go ahead.

Thank you very much and we shall meet again tomorrow. And on we go, with joy, with consistence, always with the courage to

tell the truth, the courage to step out of ourselves to meet Jesus in prayer and to step out of ourselves to encounter others and give the Gospel to them. With pastoral fruitfulness! Please do not be “spinsters” and “bachelors”. Keep forging ahead!

Now, Archbishop Fisichella said that yesterday you recited the *Creed*, each one of you in your own language. But we are all brothers, we have one and the same Father. Now, each one in his own language, let us recite the *Our Father*. Let us say the *Our Father*.

[*Recitation of the “Our Father”*].

And we also have a Mother. Let us now say the *Hail Mary* in our own language.

[*Recitation of the “Hail Mary”*].

**Spiritual reading list.** This is a list of some spiritual reading books you may be interested in. You could ask your spiritual director if you are not certain what you would like to read.

**These titles are stories of saints:**

*Pere Marquette* — Agnes Repplier

*Above All a Shepherd* — H. Groppi and J. Lombardi

*They Saw His Glory* — Maisie Ward

*The Long Road of Father Serra* — T. Maynard

*The Apostle of Alaska* — Sister Mary Mildred

*Song in the South* — M. F. Windeatt

*Dogsled Apostle* — A. H. Savage

*The Great Mantle* — K. Burton

*Africa or Death* — A. G. Mondini

*Fatima* — John de Marchi

*The Grace of Guadalupe* — F. P. Keyes

*Secret of the Little Flower* — Henri Ghéon

*The Curs of Ars* — Milton Lomask

*Mother Cabrini* — Frances P. Keyes

*Mare Marie of the Ursulines* — Agnes Repplier

*The Fisher Prince* — The Story of St. Peter Apostle

*Footsteps of a Giant, Life of St. Charles Borromeo*

*Leaving Matters to God* — The Life of St. Teresa of Avila

*Light in the Grotto, The Life of St. Bernadette*

*Wind and Shadows* — The Story of Joan of Arc

*The Cheerful Warrior* — Charles Dallen

*Catherine of Siena* — Fr. Raimondor Sorgia

*Ahead of the Crowd* — The Story of Dominic Savio

*The Conscience Game* — The Story of St. Thomas More

*The Heroes of God* — Henri Daniel-Rops.

*Marguerite Bourgeoys* — Sister St. Mary Genevieve, C.N.D.

*Angel of the Poor* — Brother Ernest, C.S.C.

*Pippo Buono* — Ralph F. Kerr

*Irish of the Artic* — P. E. Breton, O.M.I.

*Tar Heel Apostle* — John C. Murrett

*Knight of Molokai* — Eva Betz  
*Peruvian Journal* — Charles O'Neill Conroy  
*God's Troubadour* — Sophie Jewett  
*The Steps of the Master* — H. V. Morton  
*The Great Mantle* — Katherine Burton  
*The Secret of St. John Bosco* — Henri Ghén  
*To Heaven Through a Window, Life of St. Gerard Majella* — Carr  
*Son of the Passion, The Story of Gabriel Frances Possenti* — Godfrey Poage  
*Theophane Vénard* — Christian Simonnet  
*Hero of the Hills* — Mary F. Wyndiott  
*Voyage of the Pax* — Bede Camm  
*Father Flanagan's Boys Town*  
*The Life and Miracles of St. Benedict* — Pope Gregory the Great  
*Brother André of Mount Royal* — Clark  
*Citadel of God, life of St. Benedict* — De Wohl  
*Quiet Light, St. Thomas Aquinas* — De Wohl  
*Lay Siege to Heaven, St. Catherine of Siena* — De Wohl  
*Set all Fire, St. Francis Xavier* — De Wohl  
*The Restless Flame, St. Augustine* — De Wohl  
*The World's Shepherd, Pius XII* — De Wohl  
**The following titles are for more reflective spiritual reading:**  
*The Story of a Soul* — St. Thérèse of Liseux  
*Letters* — St. Thérèse of Liseux BT 2430  
*Journal of a Soul* — Pope John XXIII  
*Imitation of Christ* — Thomas a Kempis BT 2516  
*Introduction to the Devout Life* — St. Francis de. Sales BT 2526  
*True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary* — St. Louis de Montfort BT 2673  
*Virtue and Christian Refinement* — St. John Bosco – BQ 2430  
*Letters* — St. Ignatius of Antioch BQ 314 A1  
*Rule* — St. Benedict BX 7046  
*Life, Way of Perfection* — St. Teresa of Avila BT 2427  
*The New Eve* — Bl. John Henry Newman BT 1006  
*Spiritual Conferences* — St. Vincent de Paul BQ7121