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**THE SPECIFIC ROLE
OF SEMINARY FORMATION
IN THE PREPARATION
FOR THE DEGREES
OF HOLY ORDER AFTER
THE COUNCIL OF TRENT
UNTIL TODAY**

Thesis booklet

BUDAPEST, 2024

Ixamined the canonical sources of different levels and authorities in the history of seminary formation from a comparative – institutional-historical perspective in order to answer the open questions of the critics in the context of the contemporary legitimacy of formation in the seminary.

The divine nature of the founding intention is clearly visible here and provides an excellent starting point and background for interpretation, since Jesus also educated his apostles for three years in the “apostolic school” (in today’s terminology we might call it an “apostolic seminary”) for holy service. In this school, the apostles see, through the life and example of Jesus, on the one hand, how to live the divine values and, on the other hand, how to witness to these values and teach people the divine mysteries.

I. As early as in the time of Jesus, it becomes obvious that in a true seminary spiritual training is as important as the scientific one, since this is what Jesus himself accomplishes among his apostles. In this training, a classical teacher-student relationship is established between Jesus and the apostles, which also means that the apostles, the disciples, can talk about their doubts, since Jesus will then address the problems that arise. This relationship also includes Jesus’ rebuking the apostles when they are of little faith, when they do not have sufficient trust in divine providence. In this relationship we can also observe that Jesus is realistic with the apostles, particularly, when he speaks to them of the difficulties and sufferings of discipleship, that is, he does not want to keep them in a dream world, he does not present them with a false image of apostleship.

II. The most important aspect of the apostolic school is that Jesus teaches the apostles how to develop and nurture the right relationship with God. At the Last Supper, when he institutes the sacrament of Holy Orders, he also gives the apostles a mission, namely to pass on their vocation in the form of the school model they have experienced. He also confirms it before his ascension, when, with the great missionary command, he entrusts them with the task of preaching the gospel in all circumstances and training priests for this purpose.

In the apostolic age, the apostles follow the way Jesus set them, training and educating the apostles through the example of their own lives. It is important to look

at a passage from the Apostle Paul's letter, 1 Timothy 3:2–12, in which he sets out the qualities which must be present in the life of a candidate in order to receive the sacrament of Holy Orders. St. Paul Apostle places great emphasis on the moral life of the candidate.

This is the way in which priestly formation is carried out in the early Church, hindered by historical persecutions. Here the candidates live with the bishop, who is their master and teacher.

In 313, after the complex change known as the Constantinian turn, it becomes clear that the organisation of priestly education requires an institutional form within the whole Church. This is how the various schools, such as the one in Alexandria (where, according to St Jerome, the sacred sciences were taught) were born. The first theological books are attributed to Dionysius the Areopagite, compiled at the request of his disciples. This means that in this age, the candidate learns the basic truths of the faith in the catechetical school and then goes to the seminary. St. Augustine's seminary is perhaps the first serious attempt at an institutional form for seminary, where members live in full community of property, meaning that social distinctions disappear. This allows for even more effective priestly formation. Here, in addition to academic scholarly, spiritual formation was also important, which was implemented through a strict agenda. The question of the age of ordination first appears in this epoch; this age was modified in almost all the eras I have studied, but in general it can be said that the canonical age of ordination is between 25 and 35 years.

In the early Church, we can observe three degrees in the ecclesiastical order (deacon, priest, bishop), later called "higher", then "greater" orders. They are chosen by the presence or absence of specific qualities, with the purpose that the degree should carry out a particular service for the sanctification of the community and of itself. In these degrees, the deacon is consecrated to the service of the community, while the priest and the bishop act and carry out their ministry in the person of Christ (*in persona Christi*).

III. In different eras, the secular environment of the Church changed, affecting the way in which the missionary imperative and the sanctification of the community can be carried out. In addition to the triple degree, there are minor orders leading to the diaconate, which at certain intervals take candidates on the basis of the recommendation of the magisterium and the community. In this period, the minor orders

do not form a hierarchical order (we have seen how this is done in the papal regulations).

The Council of Nîmes (396) provides for the qualities of a candidate that determine his suitability for the degree. The requirement is based on the development of an advanced moral life in the life of the candidate. In addition to moral purity, an equally essential quality is the development of responsibility, which means listening to the voice of conscience and the sanctification of oneself and others. In the lack of this duty the person to be ordained cannot remain on the path to which he commits himself in ordination, which also means that he turns away from the Christian commandment and remains unfaithful to his priestly promises.

Not only in our days, but also in that era, living a celibate life was a condition of ordination, as we see in the example of the apostles who gave up everything to devote their lives to the service of Christ. The obligation of celibacy is maintained in various ways from the early Middle Ages until the decree of the Council of Trent. There are many canon law sources in this period which apply not only to candidates but also to ordained priests, but figuratively speaking, one can also think that these were conditions imposed on candidates, since after ordination they had to live in line with these norms as members of the Order. Clerics are forbidden from dancing, musical entertainment and even from attending weddings. In the teaching of St. Isidore of Seville we see this principle enforced, for he teaches that if an ordained cleric is to be dismissed from clerical status for certain mortal sins, then even more so is a candidate found guilty of the same sin to be dismissed.

In this era, the priestly ideal – and thus the formation of priests – is closely linked to an adequate level of ecclesial culture. Here the role of monasteries in educating the candidate in the liturgical, spiritual and intellectual life should be emphasised. After a while, these monasteries became centers not only for monastic but also for priestly formation, and in many cases also places for the training of bishops, thus serving as precursors and models for the episcopal schools that were to be set up.

The main educational principle of the episcopal schools is the *vita canonica*, in which young people are educated for the priesthood from childhood and take a vow of chastity after the age of 18, thus committing themselves to the holy order. This ideal also includes the idea of being chosen from birth (Jer 1:5), thus presupposing a divine vocation in the life of the candidate, which is fulfilled by the act of ordination.

This ideal is also expressed in the Rule of St. Benedict. The *vita canonica* was perhaps the most successful model of priestly formation of the time, in which we can already see the germs of the importance of spiritual preparation alongside academic preparation, and candidates are trained accordingly.

Equally important institutions are cantor schools, cathedral schools and parochial schools, which also educate young people for the priesthood from childhood. Parochial schools, in particular, provide an opportunity for children from poorer backgrounds at the “local” level, as these children would not have the financial means to attend a cantor or episcopal school in the diocesan town.

The emergence of universities has a particular impact on the academic training of candidates, since both episcopal and monastic schools were characterised by a practical approach. Gratian’s *Decretum*, a collection of canon law, which also had a great influence on the academic training of priests, is prominent in this period. We have seen this listed in detail, and have also observed that the later Tridentine Decree on Seminaries echoes the same ideas, including celibacy, daily prayers, priestly obligation, etc.

The establishment of universities was a great achievement for the cultivation of theology as a science, which was created by the first theological books. From these books, students could learn about the main truths of the faith and the sacraments.

At this time, as a consequence of the cultivation of this science, theology is attempted to be put into a kind of system, so that it can be more easily understood by students. St. Thomas Aquinas was the first to include Catholic theology into a system in his compendium, *Summa theologica*. University lectures of the time were in the form of disputations, where the professor explained the theological theorems through pro and contra opinions. This is when the academic degrees of theology are developed: the baccalaureate, the licentiate, and the doctorate, which can be obtained after fulfilling certain academic requirements.

At this time, academic training is provided at universities, and spiritual training is obtained in the institution serving as a *collegium*. The boarding school provides the opportunity for a relationship to develop between the candidate and the priest, in which the priest can ascertain the candidate’s suitability or otherwise. This can only be done under constant supervision, control, guidance, and encouragement by the priestly educators. Here the principles of seminary education are beginning to prevail:

spiritual education accompanied by scientific education. Until the establishment of the universities, the latter does not play a very important role, or have much emphasis. It is not even possible, since there are no institutions where students can study theology. It is the establishment of the universities that makes it possible when scholarly studies are given the same emphasis as spiritual education.

IV. Unfortunately, the scientific boom of the of the Renaissance also brings a number of negative side-effects, which spread to ecclesiastical universities. This, in many ways, represents a departure from the “original” ideals and goals, since the cultivation of theology is seen in the teachings of the early church fathers and the interpretation of Scripture. No doubt this is also very important, but it is not enough, since the cultivation of theology must exceed this. Unfortunately, we can also see this decline in the field of spiritual formation, as the order of boarding schools is beginning to loosen. With few students enrolled in the strict institutions, the collegium finds it difficult to sustain itself, and is forced to set loose its original strictness.

Hope in this era is again offered by the ecclesiastical institutions set up by popes, bishops and monks for more poor students who take on the rigours in order to become priests. Nevertheless, in the 15th and 16th centuries, a number of priests reached ordination without theological and spiritual preparation. Many authors, seeing the many problems, call for the restoration of the *vita canonica*, thus expressing the great need for an institutionalised, Church-wide formation for the priesthood.

The Council of Trent on 15 July 1563 gives a precise, regulated institutional response to this need, when it obliges all bishops to establish a large seminary in their diocese, or even more if there is a larger area, by the conciliar decree *Cum adolescentium aetas*. This way, it entrusts the responsibility for the formation of the priests to the diocesan bishop, and also provides for appeal authorities to warn and oblige the diocesan bishop, in case he does not wish to establish a seminary, to establish a major seminary. The council also takes into account that there are poorer dioceses which cannot afford to do so, and therefore proposes that several of these poor dioceses should get together and jointly found seminaries for their respective dioceses.

With this provision, the Church is paying off a very old “debt”, since it creates, in an institutional form, a uniform formation of priests throughout the Catholic Church, determined by legal provisions.

V. The first seminaries were founded as a result of the seminary decree; the first such seminary was established by Pope Pius IV (1559–1565) in 1564 and began functioning in 1565. In this seminary, education was entrusted to the Jesuits. St. Charles Borromeo visited the seminary in Rome, and in 1566 he himself founded a seminary in Milan, not only for seminarians but also for ordained ministers who could fill their theological “gaps” with the help of the institution’s training programme. In addition, he founded not only major seminaries in the modern sense, but also what later became known as minor seminaries, in which he educated pupils of secondary school age to discern and choose a vocation. St. Charles Borromeo was the first to draw up the framework for the implementation of the seminary decree, i.e. the regulations, the residential (boarding and food) costs of the first seminaries, as well as the means of spiritual education and moral rules in training for the priesthood.

The *Collegium Germanicum–Hungaricum* was opened for Hungary in Rome in 1579. The establishment of the Hungarian seminaries was also greatly influenced by the secular political and historical situation: Miklós Oláh (1562–1568) erected a seminary. The foundational diploma was dated 19 May 1566, and approved by King Miksa I of Hungary. Péter Pázmány (Archbishop of Esztergom: 1616–1637) founded a seminary at Vienna in 1623, which he named *Collegium Pazmanianum* (Pazmaneum). He decreed what code of discipline, and what moral and spiritual rules the students had to follow in order to fulfil their vocation and become good priests. He introduced a period of eight days of spiritual exercises after admission, followed by three months of reflection, during which the pupil could change his mind and leave the seminary without financial consequences. After the three months, those who chose to study at the institution and stayed on, were then sworn in. The Council of Nagyszombat held in 1629 also dealt with the education of priests, and another council in 1630 ordered the foundation of three seminaries. It is noteworthy that the resolution revived and reorganised the old seminary founded by Miklós Oláh, which was then renamed after King St Stephen and dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary. In 1635, Péter Pázmány founded a university next to the seminary. The university provided opportunities not only for the descendants of wealthy families, but also to the poor, since they can also contribute a great deal to the cultivation of the country. In 1638, Imre Lósy (Archbishop of Esztergom between 1637 and 1642) convened a provincial council in Nagyszombat (Trnava), where he also dealt with the question of the education of priests,

and reminded the conciliar fathers of the duty imposed by the seminary decree on the chief pastor of each diocese. Unfortunately, he was unable to carry out what Peter Pázmány had done, but in his will he left a considerable sum of money for the seminary. His successor, György Lippay (Archbishop of Esztergom between 1645 and 1666), was able to carry out the foundation and opening of the seminary, which happened on 31 July 1649. Education was entrusted to the Jesuit fathers. The number of seminary students grew from year to year. The most important aim of the seminary's statutes was the formation of a priestly spirit, which was the result of a careful and regular spiritual life. Education also focused on their role in society. In 1687, György Széchényi (1685–1695) erected an academy, a noble college and a seminary in Buda, in the building next to Matthias Church.

VI. The *Ratio atque institutio studiorum Societas Iesu*, the first comprehensive Catholic study programme, was published in 1599 by the Jesuit Order, which had a great deal of experience in education in most Catholic colleges, seminaries and other institutions. This appeared in their educational programme and was disseminated in most Catholic universities and seminaries. In the first *Ratio (1599)*, the Parisian method was used, in which the right and appropriate order of studies is decisive, and which is presented in a systematic and progressive form. In my thesis I have explained in detail the structure and content of the document, and the beneficial effects it had on the work done in Catholic universities and seminaries, where not only theology as a science was taught, but also the impact of science on spiritual life. That is to say, they not only carried out the systematic transmission of the Catholic faith in principle, but also took care to ensure that it was translated into everyday Catholic practical life and that students were adequately prepared for that. In other words, the complex, theoretical and life-transforming religious education of future clergy was the central focus. Among the many elements of the *Ratio (1599)*, I would highlight the disputation, where students and teachers deliberate together on a specific scientific-theological issue. The *Ratio (1599)* clearly described university offices, the persons who could hold them, and their duties. The *Ratio* was respectful of all students, as it provided for a two-year “course of study” for less able students, or those who did not wish to obtain an academic degree. During this course they were taught to learn and live the fundamental truths of the faith. The *Ratio (1599)* set out not only the subjects to be

taught, but also provided a timetable to help implement the educational and curricular order of the Ratio. In addition, the *Ratio (1599)* established a triple academic degree: the baccalaureate, the licentiate, and the doctorate, and set out the conditions students needed to fulfil to obtain them.

VII. The *Ratio atque institutio studiorum Societas Iesu* was republished in 1832 (i.e. *Ratio [1832]*), in which not only the temporary ban of the Jesuit Order played a role. It is clear that the innovations were in fact necessary changes, which affected the teaching method in particular. The new *Ratio (1832)* also provided for a school of pure profile, with a precisely defined curriculum and structure. An example to be followed was the Greek gymnasium, which means a sports ground (and not a gym). Another symbol was the Athenian garden, with the sanctuary of the ancient demigod, Akademos, where Plato spent a lot of time talking and holding discourses. Gymnasium and academy are the two terms retained in the new Ratio. The new Ratio also recognised the principle of the old Ratio, according to which the curriculum determines the structure of the type of school, and the curriculum creates the structure of the education system. The principle of the new Ratio was also that, in addition to the requirements and the curricular arrangements of the school type, all must build on each other in an integrated way. The new *Ratio (1832)* also specified the age of the students. It fixed the age of starting secondary school at 10 and finishing at 16. Then pupils could go on to the *facultas artium*, which students completed by the age of 18. Until the end of the 19th century, only boys were allowed to study in Jesuit institutions, especially in secondary and higher schools, and no girls. Therefore, these Jesuit grammar schools also served as a preparation for the priestly vocation, or even as a clarification of the priestly vocation for the young.

The new *Ratio (1832)* also achieved a balance both outside and inside the classroom: there was the bound part, which is the classroom in the modern sense, and there was also free activity, which is as important as the classroom – here the material can be discussed in a less strict form. The new *Ratio (1832)* had an impact not only within the Catholic Church but also on other institutions. This is also an important finding in terms of the education of priests, since it was not only from ecclesiastical institutions that seminarians were coming to the seminaries, but also from other secular institutions.

The *Ratio* (1832) considered the introduction or retention of philosophical education to be important, not only as a form of preparation for theology, but also for other subjects, as well as because of the errors of the times. In this way, philosophical questions were related not only to general education, but also with scientific training and everyday life.

The Ratios are criticised for being too strict on moral purity, as they argue that if students enter society or the seminary with a high degree of moral purity, they will not regret anything, but if they do not have it, they will be disadvantaged due to this deficiency. It was not by chance that Protestants complained so much about Jesuit education, for it was through the influence of the Ratio and as a result of education that young people came out of these institutions with a Catholic conviction.

VIII. After the first codification, we find the norms on seminaries in Book III, Part 4 of the CIC (1917). According to Can. 1352 of the Pio-Benedictine Code, the formation of seminarians is the sovereign right of the Church, which also means that no secular power has any say in it. The following canons distinguished two types of seminaries which we have already seen in both Ratios, but in the Ratios no specific denomination was made (only through the institutions). According to the CIC (1917), one form of seminary is the minor seminary, the other is the major seminary, and the two seminary models rely on each other. The old Code requires that each diocese should endeavour to establish seminaries, although it also states that this requires an adequate number of seminarians, taking into account the size of the diocese. It also offers a solution where this is not provided, or where the bishop does not have a teaching staff at his disposal, he may send students to other seminaries, unless the Holy See has not set up inter-diocesan or regional seminaries for these students, where students from several such dioceses can study together. The CIC (1917) also provides for the taxes which the diocesan bishop may levy to maintain the seminary.

According to the old Code, the primary responsibility for priestly education in dioceses lies with the county bishop, who is responsible not only for the academic and spiritual formation provided in the institution, but also for the students. It defines the offices and duties of the seminary directors and ordinands, through the exercise of which the seminary can become a spiritual community for students to fulfil their priestly vocation. The Code lays down the principles according to which seminary

education is to be exercised in both minor and major seminaries. It defines the minor and major orders by which an ordinand is received into the sacraments of the Church.

IX. Turning to the resolution of the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965), *Optatam totius*, we can see that it focused on comprehensive renewal. It goes without saying, therefore, that it also meant innovation in priestly education. This was necessary, since the history of the 20th century shows that priests in the world have to “cope” with challenges that are unimaginable without renewed education. The last universal council had to find an answer to the great question of preparing priests who, on the one hand, could carry out their pastoral task according to the values set out by the council and, on the other hand, could give adequate responses to the new problems and questions of the world in the form of doctrinal, disciplinary and pastoral action they would entail. In the time of the council, negative tendencies towards the Church can be observed in different societies; thus, the concern on the part of the Church is not unfounded. In the light of the Council of Trent and the subsequent papal decree what we have already seen in the *Ratios* is a real innovation: namely, that the formation of priests cannot be carried out in the same way everywhere, since the particularities of a given country or region must be included in the educational programme of a given seminary. The council would like to make priestly formation even more effective, and plans to achieve it by involving the episcopal councils of the countries concerned in the development of the education system in the country concerned.

The document sees vocation formation as a Christian community issue, meaning that not only church persons are responsible for the development of vocations, but also the community. The first stage in the formation of vocations is in the family, who can do this especially if they take religious education seriously, since it is this ground which creates the awakening of vocations. Priests can do the most for vocations by living a chaste priestly life, as well as bishops by supporting their priests and the cause of vocation education. A crucial role in the nurturing of emerging vocations is played by minor seminaries, which, in addition to the required academic education in secondary schools, can provide a specific religious education in which an awakening vocation can be fulfilled, or a student can come to a decision about the priestly vocation.

The council clearly expresses the need for major seminaries in our Church, as places and venues for the formation of priests. This way it clearly confirms the decree on seminaries adopted by the Council of Trent. The purpose of the seminary is therefore to educate pastors who are priests according to Christ and can represent him in the world.

The conciliar document is also noteworthy for its structural peculiarity, since it deals with spiritual education first, and only then does it turn to scientific education. Perhaps this is the council's way of emphasising that the "scales" are actually tipped in the direction of spiritual formation, but this does not mean that scientific education is not necessary.

The council decrees that the methods of teaching used up to then must be reviewed, since, in the council's view, teaching is not only the transmission of knowledge and information, but also means the education of the whole person. It is a novelty that, in addition to "theoretical" education, practical training is essential, either during the school year or during school holidays, under the supervision of the parish priests or magistrates appointed for this purpose.

X. In the conciliar decree *Optatam totius*, the Conciliar Fathers made it clear that the seminary schools needed to be renewed. This renewal was helped by the new *Ratio fundamentalis institutionis sacerdotalis (1970)*, which, following the directive of Vatican II, left it to the bishops of the respective countries to decide how they wished to renew their seminaries. To this end, the document lays down certain principles. The *Ratio (1970)* seeks to help the episcopates to put the new approach into practice in their respective countries. It would be their task to develop a seminary formation programme, taking these principles into account, in which the ordinands will not only find an intimate relationship with God, but will also be able to be open to the world, that is, to share the fruits of their relationship with God with the world, and thus lead as many people as possible to God and the Church. The *Ratio (1970)* sets out the principles and the framework within which the bishops of each country must act.

On 9 December 1971, the Hungarian Catholic Bishops' Conference drafted and adopted the national document required by the *Ratio (1970)*, which it submitted to the Holy See and obtained its approval. This document provides seminaries with a

guide on the basis of which the constitution of the particular seminary can be drawn up. The introduction to the document points out that it is not intended to be a national minimum as far as seminary formation is concerned, but rather to set out requirements and values on the basis of which seminarians should be prepared for priesthood. The document was introduced on an experimental basis, but it was binding, which means that it had to be applied in all seminaries. Also, after an exchange of experiences at the annual episcopal conferences, the Bishops' Conference would amend the text, with the changes approved by the Holy See. The document sets out the principles of seminary education, based on *Optatam totius* n. 4, which I have already discussed in my thesis. According to this, the aim of formation is to form the seminarians into true pastors, preparing them for the ministries of the Word, worship, sanctification and pastoral care, so that by serving all they may win many to Christ. It highlights that spiritual, intellectual, and disciplinary formation must be unified, and it also defines the leaders and officers of the seminary. A detailed analysis of the document reveals the detailed standards and expectations towards the seminarians on the subjects just outlined.

XI. After a decade and a half, the Holy See published *Ratio fundamentalis* (1985), renewed on the basis of the experience of the past period, taking into account the many new canonical provisions. The preface to the document says that the *Ratio fundamentalis* published in 1970 after Second Vatican Council was a unified document on priestly formation, the aim of which was to make priestly formation uniform throughout the world, regarding both spiritual and academic formation. The Code of Canon Law (1983) also formulated decisions on the question of priestly education, which meant that the 1970 *Ratio* was partially repealed, therefore a new document was needed, taking into account the national regulations issued by the respective nations. The Catholic clergy have a crucial role to play in fostering the priestly vocation, since it is from the communities where the fathers serve that the priestly students will come. At the same time, the community has an equally decisive role to play, since it is there that young people will receive the first germs of vocations, where they will hear God's call, and it is the task of both the community and the pastors to help these young men to enter priesthood. In other words, the document stresses the responsibility of all in the cultivation of priestly vocations, which should be the concern not

only of the clergy and bishops, but of the whole Church and community. According to the document, the heart of priestly ministry is to serve the Word, to work for sanctification, to celebrate the Eucharist, as well as to lead and keep the community on the divine path.

Ratio (1985) also speaks of the need to carry out priestly ministry in a completely changed world, which is a great challenge for the pastor. It discusses the minor seminaries and other institutions founded for the same purpose, which aim to clarify or facilitate the development of the vocation emerging in young people as early as secondary school. The document does not only target young people, but all age groups, as the cultivation of a vocation is not age-related. It therefore provides that certain universities should offer students the opportunity to cultivate the seeds of their priestly vocation. The major seminary should admit students who have a high school diploma and a priestly vocation, and will hopefully go on to priesthood. At the same time, the main task and challenge of the seminary is to strengthen the priestly vocation in these young people, so that they may become good pastors, following the example of Jesus Christ and being united with him. Another important result of priestly formation should be to develop a close relationship not only with Christ, but also with the diocesan bishop, with whom he will need to collaborate after ordination. This can be developed through frequent conversations, joint programmes and mutual charity. Similar unity is also prescribed with the priests of the diocese, whom the pastor will help and assist. In seminary education, close contact should be established not only with the magisterium but also with the teachers, since this is the way in which the pupil can improve and deepen his knowledge of the discipline. This is important not only for academic progress, but also helps the magistrates and teachers to make decisions before the ordination, allowing the pupil to be ordained or asking him to improve further in his vocation. The document identifies the most important part of seminary formation to be spiritual formation, during which the student becomes conformed to Christ and seeks to do pastoral work through His example. The document highlights the qualities and virtues which should be developed in the candidate by the end of the spiritual formation: sincerity of spirit, respect for justice, kindness, reliability, faithfulness to his word, discretion, charity, desire for fraternal service, ability to cooperate with others, dialogue, communication, reconciliation of human and supernatural values in pastoral life. The most important virtue in the life of the pastor

must be the daily celebration of the Eucharist with dignity and freedom. Therefore, in the seminary, the students must attend a mass every day. The paper highlights three possible models through which studies can be organised and these are described in detail in the paper. Theological education must be up-to-date, which means those questions which are no more “current” in theology must be omitted and replaced by questions which are more current. Thus, it is not only necessary to introduce new subjects, but also to update old subjects. Pastoral training must be adapted to the challenges of the times, preparing the candidate pastors for the tasks and requirements they will have to meet as pastors in the world, or even to respond to new questions that arise. The document also points out that after the completion of the seminary, i.e. priestly ordination, formation should be continued, especially in the first years after ordination, as provided by *Optatam totius* n. 22. In this respect, collaboration between priests should be encouraged, as has a number of advantages in pastoral ministry.

XII. An important point of reference is the apostolic exhortation of Pope John Paul II, *Pastores dabo vobis*, which had a great influence on the renewal of priestly formation in the universal Church. The novelty of this document lies in the fact that the most important actor in priestly formation is the candidate priest, whose formation is basically self-education supported by the competent diocesan bishop, with the help of magistrates and teachers. Through this process he becomes like Christ, the Good Shepherd, who is the shepherd of all his people.

In the light of the above, we cannot ignore Pope Benedict XVI’s motu proprio titled *Ministorum institutio*, in which he transferred the competence for the formation of priests from the Congregation for Catholic Education to the Congregation for the Clergy in 2013. Previously, there had been two reasons for the Congregation for Catholic Education to be competent in the formation of priests. The first was related to institutional history: the Congregation itself was created for the central pontifical supervision of the operation of seminaries, which was only later extended to theological higher education, Catholic universities and then Catholic public educational institutions (firstly, the pontifical universities in Rome, then some of the most important Catholic higher educational institutions of the universal Church, and finally the entire educational system, which is recognised by the Holy See as being entitled to award diplomas and use the Catholic epithet). The second fact was the regulation and control

of the uniformity of education, including priestly education. The *motu proprio* of Pope Benedict XVI introduced a new approach in the life of the Church, according to which priestly formation, post-seminary and further education, represent the same reality, which is basically an immersion in the priesthood of Christ.

XIII. After many changes since 1985, the renewal of the Ratio has constantly been on the agenda, and was finally adopted and published in 2016. The introduction of the new *Ratio fundamentalis (2016)* sets out the general standards and their scope. The novelty of the document lies in the fact that the regulations of institutions of consecrated life and those of societies of apostolic life, especially in those conducting priest formation, must be in line with this document.

The document also orders that a national code of priestly formation be drawn up by the bishops' conferences of the country concerned, in accordance with the above document, taking into account local particularities and conditions, especially in the field of education and training. It draws attention to the responsibility of the bishops' conferences in this process. The document orders the seminaries to prepare formation programmes, and also addresses the question of national seminaries and regulates their functioning, with particular attention to integrated education in their respective institutions. After the presentation of basic principles for the priestly vocation, attention is directed to the institutions supporting vocation (minor seminaries and other preparatory institutions and such), and there are also provisions for the cultivation of the late vocations. It then discusses the issue of indigenous vocations and immigrants.

The basic elements of priestly formation include the subject, the formation of priestly identity, which aims at "Christification", called *configuration* in the document. It then moves to the external life, the *communio*, or cultivation of the seminary community. The document considers the essentials of formation to be the harmony of personal and communal life.

The stages of priestly education are defined as follows:

- propedeutic stage,
- philosophical stage, or as the document calls it, discipleship,
- theological stage, or configuration,
- pastoral stage, that is, the synthesis of vocation.

The participants in seminary education include the Holy Trinity, then the ordi-

nary, the clergy, the seminarians, the seminary magistrates, theology teachers, various experts, the family, the parish and other ecclesial communities, and the influence of the consecrated.

After studying the document, it becomes clear that it aims to combine the education of three main areas: spiritual life, the acquisition of ecclesiastical knowledge, and physical and personal education. The three areas fit, or should fit, both in seminary or novitiate formation. The legislator returns to the principles found in the document establishing the seminaries, drawn up by the Council of Trent in 1563. These were followed by the seminaries established in Hungary, where the complex education of the novices took place in conformity with the principles cited above. Only the implementation of these three pillars can ensure a sufficiently well-ordered legal framework for the education of priests.

As we have seen in the other two previous Ratios, it was required, in a way similar to *Ratio (2016)*, that episcopal faculties should ensure the preparation of the documents. Once the document has been prepared and approved by the Congregation for the Clergy, it can be introduced in the country. The aim is also to implement the document according to the local conditions, so that it will make clerical formation in the country even more effective. The *Ratio (2016)* also provides that the bishops' conferences should periodically review these regulations, based on the method just described. The new provision gives our diocesan bishops the opportunity to engage in a dialogue with the Holy See, resulting in the formation of priests according to Christ, so that they can authentically witness to Christ in the storms of the present age, taking into account the specificities of the diocese and the country.

Seminary education has undergone many reforms since the 16th century, but it has always remained faithful to the Trent principle of seminary education. This institutional form still has a *raison d'être* in today's world, especially in the light of the new secularisation that has emerged in the world. In today's world, our affirmative and firmly defended answer to the question regarding the modernity of the seminary system of priestly formation is still being questioned and its correctness doubted. However, we must not forget that there are also numerous topical questions in relation to the seminary training standards examined in the various chapters of this dissertation, which are specific to different historical periods. My thesis confirms that, despite critical voices and the renewal initiatives that were necessary from time to time, the

principles of the seminary system established at the Council of Trent – and reflecting the history of the institutions of priestly formation up to that time – proved to be stable. So true is this that the basic concept of seminary education is as central to the life of the Church today as it was in the 16th century. Therefore, it must continuously be seen as essential that the formation of a candidate priest should be free from the world and its spiritual dangers, so that he can not only clarify his vocation but also prepare himself for the dangers and influences which he faces in the world – more strongly in the 21st century than ever before – as a pastor. This form of education, contrary to what some critics say, does not mean an education that is isolated from the real problems of the world, unable to understand and respond to them. The preservation of the person (*separatio*) and the acquisition of openness to the problems of a world dominated by neo-secularism (*interactio*) must be present together (*correlatio*) in the seminary education of the 21st century.

XIV. The documents published since the Council of Trent, and discussed in detail in my essay, emphasise the importance of spiritual life, since it is the formation of a good priestly spirit, which can be created in the “closedness” of seminary life, that leads to students becoming pastors in Christ, and can authentically represent their mission in the Church in the world and, through their pastoral work, make use of this formation in many ways for the spiritual salvation of the community. All the documents emphasise the need to create a seminary spiritual programme where this spiritual life can develop. Therefore, it is essential that seminarians encounter Jesus Christ as often as possible through daily Mass, Scripture and spiritual readings, reflections, sacramental worship, spiritual days, spiritual exercises, excursions and other seminary programmes. This programme can be developed by each seminary itself, in the system and idea the main aspects of which the *Ratio (2016)* gives. This, however, can be made even more effective in the seminary the diocesan bishop, in consultation with the seminary leaders or even the small priests, maintains. This creates the priestly spirituality which not only prepares the pastor for ordinations, but is also present in his later priestly life as a “spiritual resource”, and which he can make even more effective in his priestly life through the various priestly training courses (recollection, spiritual exercises, spiritual days). The documents published since the Council of Trent, and discussed in detail in my thesis, stress not only the importance

of spiritual life, but also the importance of immersion in academic life, as well as a kind of physical and personal education.

XV. Considering the goals and means named in the examined documents, and comparing them with the circumstances and requirements of sacramental and holy ministry, the transmission of Christian doctrine and pastoral activity in the 21st century, the following answers to the open questions posed in my dissertation can be formulated:

1) Can institutional seminary education continue to ensure the duty of the clergy to transmit faithfully and authentically the doctrine of the Church and to administer the sacraments and the sacrament in the proper form?

The overall question can be answered in the affirmative on the basis of the historical, canon law source and thematic, content-related explanations presented in the dissertation. It can be clearly seen that, following the establishment of the seminary formation system, we can speak of a *dynamic rather than a static structure*. That is to say, while the objectives set out at the Council of Trent and the institutional framework remained unchanged, there have been constant changes of emphasis and development from one period to the next. as we have seen in the discussion of the content of the different Ratios. In this way, the system established in the mid-16th century responded constructively to changes within civil and ecclesiastical society. The medium of transmission of Church doctrine is the human community broken down into different units; thus, the substantial changes occurring within them must lead the legislator and the law enforcer to continuous feedback at institutional level. The gradual modifications and interpretative changes thus made were intended to ensure the permanence of the doctrine transmitted, so that it carried the same content within a social and cultural framework that was changing in stages (but not uniformly). The same can be said of the administration of the sacraments, where the changes can primarily be observed in the methods of pastoral – institutional preparation and the gradual expansion of the area in which the sacraments are administered, which are also not of a substantive nature. Together, these two groups influence the content of the seminar training, either by their integration into the curriculum in theory or in practice. In other words, the relative separation of the student clergy from the everyday secular environment and its influences does not mean in any way that the preparation taking

place there is separated from the active pastoral processes of the Church and the clear responses it gives to different situations, age groups, etc. This relative separation allows for the development and institutionalisation of balanced and reflective theological and practical responses through seminary formation to new and emerging processes within human communities.

2) Can institutional seminary formation continue to serve adequately the permanent formation of the spiritual life of the student clergy, in such a way as to provide a secure framework for the preservation and development of a stable spirituality necessary for exercising priestly duties and rights?

This specific question can also be answered in the affirmative on the basis of the historical, canon law source and thematic, content-related explanations presented in the dissertation. Narrowing our previous answer to the area of spiritual life, we should perhaps support the argument in favour of maintaining the seminary institutional framework even more emphatically. The above mentioned relative separation of the seminary form of formation has a prominent positive effect in developing the need for a systematic spiritual life and the persistence in keeping it consistent. The seminary agenda and weekly schedule provide a stable framework, the mastery of which, once the compulsory framework is removed, i.e. once any ecclesial assignment begins after ordination, can continue to exert a strong influence on the daily spiritual life of clerics, regardless of the place, nature, content and hierarchical level of the disposition. Naturally, the agenda developed in the seminary cannot be fully implemented in the life of ordained ministers, but it will be the basic norm against which the usual cornerstones of each person's spiritual life will be developed, depending on the particularities of the office or task. That is to say, without the educational effect of a period of relative separation, the daily exercise of the clergy's spiritual life would become much more unbalanced in a new context of secularisation, the negative impact of which is considerably more intense compared to the 16th century, when the seminary system was established.

3) Can institutional seminary training continue to ensure the permanent development of ecclesial doctrinal and disciplinary knowledge in a way that provides a secure framework for the cultivation of theology and for the maintenance and deepening of ecclesial knowledge?

This specific question can also be answered in the affirmative on the basis of the

historical, canon law source and thematic, content-related explanations presented in the dissertation. In fact, looking at the changes in the requirements of each Ratio, it is in this area that the most significant form of continuous renewal of content can be observed. It is not by coincidence, of course, that the most favourable form of theoretical training and the development of the need for further training is the systematic, relatively separate system of education and training institutions with a fixed timetable. However, there is more to it than that. It is not enough merely to create the opportunity, the place and the appropriate medium for the orderly transmission of the Church's doctrinal and disciplinary convictions, but it is also necessary to develop them authentically. This requirement is adequately met, on the one hand, by the recurrent revision of the regulations on the formation of sacred doctrine, which, however, must be complemented by the relevant results of sacred doctrine and of inter- and multidisciplinary research. The same is true of the proper incorporation of the ever-expanding ecclesiastical discipline into the curriculum and its interpretation in accordance with the Magisterium's positions. Theological and ecclesiastical preparation cannot be a definitive state at the moment of ordination, since both areas require a continuous activity by the supreme authority of the Church, the theologians, and the local ecclesiastical authority. It is the natural need developed in the course of seminary formation which, in addition to progress in the spiritual life, creates an openness to institutional formation in the sacred sciences among those who carry out sacred ministry.

4) Does institutional seminary formation continue to be a sound institutional form, in the light of the latest findings in the field, for the secure formation of the physical and personal foundations of the student clergy, in such a way as to have a lasting influence on the future daily life of the priest?

Similarly to the previous, this last specific question can also be answered in the affirmative on the basis of the historical, canon law source and thematic, content-related explanations presented in the dissertation. This is certainly an area that raises serious new questions in the field of the seminary education. There is no doubt that the focus of priestly education in the mid-16th century was not on physical and personal education, since the conscious cultivation of these areas can be dated to the modern age. Nor, of course, can it be ignored – as we have seen in the discussion of the periods preceding the Council of Trent – that the early education of the student

clergy was inextricably linked to performing physical work. However, it is a fact that the radical development of psychological sciences within the framework of special sciences dates back to the end of the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th century. It was also in the period between the two world wars that the Catholic approach to personal education, which was influenced by this development, was incorporated into seminary education. The pastoral psychological works of the 20th and 21st centuries had a significant impact on the renewal of priestly formation, as we have seen in the texts of *Ratio* (1970), *Ratio* (1985) and *Ratio* (2016). Of these, it is clearly in the material of the current *Ratio* that the principles of seminary formation, formulated in accordance with the findings of the disciplines, are most clearly defined. Its most important element is the education of the individual in community, since all the activities of the ordained cleric are carried out in a particular community, for the benefit and on behalf of the community. The education of the students in community, which also takes into account the personality of the individual, is thus an indispensable condition, and the seminary form of formation is a natural framework for this. Physical formation is an integral part of the formation of a complete personality, prepared for the priestly state of life. This is an old – new principle, since physical work was a natural part of everyday life from the 16th to the 19th century, and this principle has been increasingly re-emphasised by the authors since the last decades of the 20th century.

XVI. I can, therefore, give a positive answer to all four questions formulated as theses in the dissertation. Obviously, initiatives and solutions for priestly education other than the institutional seminary education system may arise, depending on age, geographical location, specific social or even personal situation. However, an effective solution to these four issues to be solved within the framework of a complex institutional system can be fully provided by the seminary form of formation. At the same time, this also means that, in the context of the 21st century, it is necessary to make use of the advantages of relative separation to ensure that the ability to perceive problems and the respond to them (*interactio*), which are inherent in pastoral work, would be well grounded both theoretically and practically in the seminary formation aimed at shaping the new generation of ordained ministers.