
DIVINE WORD COLLEGE
SPIRITUAL FORMATION MANUAL

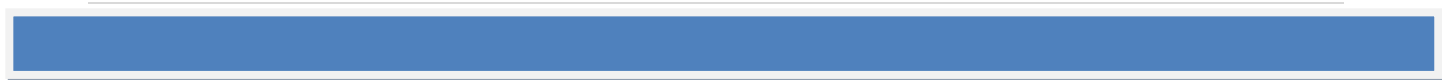


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SPIRITUAL FORMATION MANUAL

Divine Word College

INTRODUCTION: SPIRITUAL FORMATION

The Divine Word College Religious Formation Program aims to foster within its students a religious or lay missionary vocation. The Program encourages the development of students' intellectual capability, spiritual gifts, growth in community and ministerial skills. This occurs within a community intentionally intercultural and shaped by the missionary spirituality of the Society of the Divine Word (SVD). The Program nurtures in students a life-long commitment to serving God's people.

Spiritual Formation develops faith-filled discerning students rooted in Jesus Christ and committed to personal and communal prayer as a foundation for missionary service.

We must shape our lives according to our faith by always listening for the voice of the Holy Spirit, who speaks to us in scripture, in the life of the community and of the Church, as well as in contemporary events. Our response should be in prayer and action. As missionaries of the Divine Word, our spiritual lives are inspired by St. Arnold Janssen's example, for he was a man of faith and prayer, of openness and dedication. (SVD Constitutions, 508)

The Religious Formation Program invites students to grow in their awareness of God's presence in the world and their understanding of the mystery of the death and resurrection of Jesus. As the Incarnate Word proceeds from the communion of the Trinity in service to others, so students learn that religious or lay missionary life is always communal and rooted in a concrete social and historical reality. As Jesus emptied himself and "took on our human likeness," so students learn to empty themselves of their cultural predispositions and biases, even their language, in order to become one with others, to be re-formed in a new missionary spirituality.

A core foundation for missionary service is a strong personal and communal relationship with Jesus Christ. Divine Word Missionaries emphasize the importance of a solid life of prayer to support them in carrying out their work of spreading the Gospel. Jesus Christ modeled this in His own life through frequently going to a quiet place to commune with the Father. The core areas of development for the religious or lay missionary students are strong faith development, personal prayer, participation in communal prayer and vocational discernment.

Faith Development

Faith in God and its expression are personal to the individuals and their relationship to the Creator. Genuine faith can be seen in their active response to God's Word and in a life based on Christian values. A deep faith in Jesus Christ and His Church as community of faith is foundational for dedicating themselves to the religious or lay missionary life.

To assist students in their faith, the Religious Formation Program offers liturgical formation with content topics related to faith, and annual retreats and days of recollection. There are ample spiritual reading resources in the College library and reading room. Opportunities exist for students to initiate and participate in prayer groups and sharing. A key component for faith development is the students' participation in regular spiritual direction with directors with whom they share their spiritual journeys and ways of strengthening their faith. Individual reconciliation is always available. Communal reconciliation services are offered each semester, especially during the Advent and Lenten seasons.

The faith life necessary for the religious or lay students is best demonstrated through their self-evaluation and articulation of their faith as manifested in community. Students also express their faith and spiritual journey in formation group Bible Sharing and demonstrate that they place their faith on a level of importance equal to or greater than other aspects of their total development.

Personal Prayer

Within the context of faith, a personal relationship with the Lord is best developed in prayer. Students come to realize the importance of setting aside time for private prayer, meditation, and Scripture.

To facilitate personal prayer, the College provides the main chapel and small private chapels with particular devotional and ethnic themes for places of solitude, walking paths within the campus, quiet times in the evening in the dormitory areas, and tranquility weekends where College activities are curtailed, allowing students additional time for prayer or spiritual reading. Further prayer resources are available through the library and in the various chapels on campus.

Students who see the importance of personal prayer in their life will set aside regular times in their daily schedule where they can meet the Lord in reflection or Sacred Scripture. They also use the various chapels, opportunities for prayer times and spiritual readings provided by the College.

The formation director assesses the students' personal prayer by asking about their satisfaction with the nature and quality of their prayer life.

Communal Eucharist and Prayer

The community comes together to worship God and pray as a mutual support and expression of the spirituality of the Society of the Divine Word. Students learn to go beyond their individual expression of prayer and enter into the prayer of the community.

As a community, the College comes together for daily Eucharist, weekday and Sunday Vespers, weekly Holy Hour, liturgical services offered during Holy Week, and during special occasions. Formation groups also convene weekly for the Eucharist, prayer, and bible sharing. The College encourages particular cultural expressions of liturgy by setting aside Monday (except the third) of each week for Masses to be celebrated in English and other languages.

Students who have come to internalize the importance of the Eucharist and prayer in the daily life of the Church and community are faithfully and actively present on a daily basis.

Vocational Discernment

Divine Word College provides an environment for discernment. The students' serious efforts to discern, clarify, and deepen their religious or lay missionary vocation are an essential component of their spiritual development. This discernment takes place through the processes of faith development, personal prayer and reflection, and active participation in communal prayer.

The Religious Formation Program schedules regular presentations by SVD missionaries or other invited speakers, and special sessions within formation groups help students to understand the nature of SVD mission activity. In spiritual direction, students discuss and try to refine their discernment within a confidential setting. The College counselor has various psychological instruments to assist students to further understand themselves and their abilities. Various College celebrations such as Family Feast and Mission Sunday provide additional context for understanding the SVD.

Students who take seriously these core dimensions of faith development and fully participate in them give evidence of a serious effort to clarify and respond to their vocational call. Other evidence is their ability to articulate the important questions in their discernment to their formation director. Their presence at College-sponsored activities supports their genuine commitment.

LITURGICAL FORMATION

We encounter Christ in others and in every aspect of our work as well as in the celebration of the liturgy, in the Word of God, in prayer and meditation. This encounter is a continuing challenge to conversion and renewal. The closeness of the Lord brings joy into our lives and enables us to follow him in our crosses and sufferings. Thus we become like him in his self-emptying even unto death and so through the power of his resurrection enter into glory. (SVD Cons. 401)

The Eucharistic praise of the Father is continued in our community prayers and services which help us live in closer contact with the Lord. Our community prayers are composed according to the spirit of the liturgy, the spirituality of our Society, the customs of the country in which we work and in response to the needs of our time. Allowance should be made for creativity and new prayer forms. (SVD Cons. 403)

There are several ways that students prepare for meaningful worship experiences through the school year. Each week they participate in a Liturgical Preparation period. The greater portion of these sessions involves them in the learning of music for worship. Input sessions are also provided by the chaplain, liturgical music coordinator, formation personnel or guest speakers covering various liturgical topics such as spirituality and theology of Word and Eucharist, of the liturgical year and devotional practices (taking into account the various cultural backgrounds of the student body).

On Sunday evening the Community gathers to celebrate the sung Liturgy of the Hours. In this community prayer of sung Vespers the community celebrates the light of Christ offered to us in baptism.

The worship life at Divine Word College involves the participation of everyone in the exercise of many ministries. Students are trained as cantors, readers, Eucharistic ministers, acolytes and ministers of hospitality, and music ministers participate in music ministry by playing a variety of musical instruments.

The celebration of the Eucharist is the focal point of Divine Word College worship as a believing community. At Divine Word College, the Eucharist is celebrated within both the large and small community, and also in languages other than English. Likewise, the students' appreciation of the Eucharist is enhanced by the degree and quality of their own active participation.

To aid students in their personal conversion, the sacrament of reconciliation is available during the Monday evening holy hour. The students are also required to participate in the communal reconciliation services which are scheduled during the Advent and Lenten seasons.

Participation in the Eucharistic liturgy is expected for each day, with the exception of Saturday. To build up the bond of companionship, each formation group celebrates the Eucharist together at least once a week.

Participation in community prayer and the following community functions is expected: a recollection once a semester, Liturgy Preparation periods, Family Feast, Mission Sunday, Holy Week celebrations, Graduation and other specified occasions.

RETREATS AND RECOLLECTIONS

Retreats:

Each formation group (except the Pre-Novitiate) participates in at least one weekend retreat per year, normally from Friday evening until noon on Sunday. This retreat is held in a quiet place away from Divine Word College. The Dean of Students is responsible for selecting the space. The formation team plans for the weekend spiritually and materially. The formation director or the Coordinator for Spiritual Life spends time with the formation group in preparation for the time away. These weekends are an opportunity to learn and strengthen the values of prayer, silence and community as privileged moments for encountering the Word.

The Pre-Novitiate formation group participates in 4-5 days of directed retreat away from Divine Word College at a time designated and approved by the Dean of Students. This directed retreat is meant to provide a two-fold purpose. First, it provides the candidate additional time for further discernment before applying for the novitiate; and secondly, a foretaste of the 30-day retreat during the novitiate year.

Recollections:

Students spend the major part of one day per semester in recollection, group sharing and reflective silence. These days offer the opportunity for personal and communal reflection on different topics, guided by speakers from outside or within the College.

SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

That very same day, two of them were on their way to a village called Emmaus... and they were talking together about all that had happened. And it happened that as they were talking together and discussing it, Jesus himself came up and walked by their side; but their eyes were prevented from recognizing him. He said to them, "What are all these things that you are discussing as you walk along?" (Lk 24:13-17)

In spiritual direction a person (directee) meets with another more experienced person (director) in order to talk about and explore the directee's spiritual journey.

Spiritual Direction: A regular meeting (at least once a month) with an approved spiritual director is an essential part of spiritual direction, especially in arriving at the interiorization and integration needed for growth in sanctity, virtue, and readiness for Holy Orders. (PPF 110. 2006)

At the beginning of each school year the Coordinator for Spiritual Life submits a list of spiritual directors to the President for his approval.

The focus of spiritual direction is to assist the directees to discover/understand themselves, to deepen their relationship with God, and to further discover God's presence in their life and to clarify what the Holy Spirit is inviting them to act upon. In this process the directees might grow spiritually, move through the process of vocational discernment and come to greater freedom in decision- making.

Through regular one-on-one meetings (monthly or more frequently), the director accompanies the directees and might offer guidance, direction and encouragement as needed. The focus of these meetings is always the personal and spiritual growth of the directee.

All those in temporary vows and religious candidates are required to have a spiritual director. They meet with their spiritual directors on a regular basis.

Core items in personal spiritual formation

Students need to be aware of these KEY areas in their personal spiritual formation:

1. Personal and Communal Prayer
2. Vocation Discernment
3. Personal Relationships
4. Sacramental Life
5. Sexuality/Celibacy
6. Spirituality/Devotional Prayer
7. Scripture/Spiritual Reading
8. Prayer Styles
9. Silence
10. Disciplined Life

DIFFERENT FORMS OF HELPING

	Spiritual Direction	Counseling	Therapy
Person seeking help	Wants to discover action of God in life.	Wants relief from troubles.	Wants cure.
Goal of the process	Movement toward union with God.	Reconciliation, guidance in decision-making.	Self-acceptance and ability to function in society.
Methodology	Surrender to God; letting go of whatever blocks union with God.	Use of relationship with client for beneficial results.	Application of professional techniques aimed at specific results.
Attitude of helping person	Allowing God to work in the relationship.	'We can solve this problem together'.	'I'm the doctor'.

GUIDELINES FOR CHOOSING SPIRITUAL DIRECTORS

Spiritual Direction in the Seminary is a privileged and confidential relationship between a seminarian and a director who assists the seminarian to find his true self in Christ and to make a free and loving gift of that self in answer to the carefully discerned call of God. (Rev. Austin Doran S.T.D.)

1. A list of spiritual directors, approved annually by the President, is disclosed and presented to the student body.
2. All those in temporary vows and religious candidates are required to have a spiritual director.
3. Non-ESL and returning students will, by themselves, choose a spiritual director at the prescribed time. These students are highly recommended to interview two or three spiritual directors and then make their choice.
4. All ESL and newly arrived students are assigned a spiritual director by the Coordinator of Spiritual Life at the prescribed time.
5. Directees can always discuss with their spiritual director the time and place of meetings, and some of the areas of growth they are attending to.
6. A list of *Core Items in Personal Spiritual Formation*, or any other materials which might be of help for spiritual direction, might be given to the directee.

GUIDELINES FOR CHANGING SPIRITUAL DIRECTORS

1. On the rare occasions when the spiritual direction relationship is not working as anticipated, the following procedure should be followed:
 - 1.1. The directee will discuss first with his/her spiritual director about the points of dissatisfaction and comes to an agreement on:
 - a) whether to continue or,
 - b) whether to end the relationship and seek another spiritual director.
 - 1.2. If b) above, the directee will then meet with the Coordinator for Spiritual Life to discuss the points of dissatisfaction about his/her spiritual director. If the directee still insists on changing of spiritual directors, the directee then follows the usual process of seeking a spiritual director.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Information which is part of the spiritual direction relationship:

The content of information which is discussed between the directee and the spiritual director is confidential, which means that the spiritual director is bound not to reveal the contents of the sessions, except in cases where the directee is involved in harm to self or to another person or the abuse of under age children or the elderly. These rare exceptions are explained to the candidate at the beginning of the spiritual direction relationship.

Disclosures that a seminarian makes in the course of spiritual direction belong to the internal forum. Consequently, the Spiritual Director is held to the strictest confidentiality concerning information received in spiritual direction. He may neither reveal it nor use it. The only possible exception to this standard of confidentiality would be the case of grave, immediate or mortal danger involving the directee or another person. (PPF 134. 2006)

Formation directors may, on occasion, ask directees to take a particular issue to their spiritual directors for further reflection. In such cases, the formation director has no right to expect the directees to reveal the contents of the spiritual direction sessions. The directees alone have the right to choose to reveal what they have discussed with their spiritual directors.