

Markers of Human Maturation in Seminary Formation: Becoming a Gift for Others¹

There are six interrelated markers of human maturation significant to the formation of seminarians: self-knowledge, self-direction, self-control, self-discipline, self-governance, and spiritual fatherhood.² They are listed in ascending order of affective maturity.

Self-Awareness to Self-Knowledge

Questions to assess whether a seminarian is exhibiting this maturational marker:

- Does he exhibit:
 - The ability to acknowledge his feelings?
 - Emotional stability?
 - A desire to gain a more complete and accurate knowledge of his motivations?
 - Appropriate self-disclosure?

- Does he manifest a willingness to admit to mistakes?

- Is he appropriately self-reliant with a capacity to trust himself yet, at the same time, able to rely on and entrust himself to others?

Questions to assess whether a seminarian exhibits limited self-knowledge:

- Are the seminarian's relationships needy and emotionally-charged?

- Do his relationships terminate in frustration because of his neediness or emotional outbursts?

- Does he withdraw when emotionally conflicted?

- Does he exhibit excessively ingratiating behaviors?

- Does he give evidence of feeling undervalued?

¹ Cf. pp. 33-56 and 75-85 of [*The Art of Accompaniment: Practical Steps for the Seminary Formator*](#) by Sister Marysia Weber, RSM (En Route Books and Media, 2018).

² These markers were first described and presented in the chapter "Significant Markers of Human Maturation Applied to the Selection and Formation of Seminarians" (Sister Marysia Weber, *Seminary Journal*, 15(1): 35-41 (2009)). The specific names of the markers have evolved and changes will be noted.

Does he give evidence of being self-focused?

For example:

- Is he mostly about me, my, and mine?
- Is he unaware of what is going on around him?

Does he frequently avoid acknowledging personal faults?

Does he prefer to have others make decisions for him so as to avoid responsibility?

Self-Direction

Questions to assess whether a seminarian exhibits appropriate self-direction:

Is he able to receive criticism with docility and address it?

Does he exhibit appropriate initiative?

Can he accept a difficult situation and function within it?

Has he achieved the capacity to differ with others' opinions without dismissing those with whom he disagrees?

Is he comfortable in the presence of authority persons without antagonism or withdrawal from relationship?

Questions to assess whether a seminarian exhibits limited self-direction:

Does he prefer to have others make decisions for him?

Does he demonstrate excessive compliance?

Is he rigid and lacking a capacity for flexibility in interactions?

Does he seek the attention of authority persons to build up his self-worth?

Does he use others for what they can do for him?

- Does he exhibit a lack of personal autonomy and initiative?
- Does he exhibit ambivalence and self-doubt?
- Does he lack a capacity to cooperate with others?
- Is he frequently in conflict with authority persons?

Self-Control

Questions to assess whether a seminarian exhibits self-control:

- Does the seminarian exercise responsible stewardship in his use of time and resources?
- Does he exhibit a healthy sense of pride and self-competence from his work?
- Is he able to delay gratification for a future or greater good?
- Does he have a capacity for balancing harmony and diversity?
- Does he experience a heightened sense of fulfillment through collaboration with others in ministry?
- Does he encourage those with whom he is working to search for the good in others' ideas?

Questions to assess whether a seminarian exhibits limited self-control:

- Does he exhibit strong emotional reactions when someone "crosses" him?
- Does he feel incompetent or undervalued?
- Is he excessively critical of others or himself?
- Does he lack a sense of joy in authentic self-giving?
- Is he bothered by feelings of inferiority and inadequacy?

- Does he exhibit frequent negative murmuring or sarcasm?
- Does he exhibit apathy or “burnout” when his work performance does not compensate for his low self-esteem?
- Does he lack the capacity for appropriate delayed gratification?

Self-Discipline

Questions to assess whether a seminarian exhibits self-discipline:

- Does he exhibit appropriate interpersonal boundaries?
- Does he relate respectfully to women and men?
- Does he exercise discretion in his use of technology and choices of entertainment?
- Does he make choices that enable him to refrain from addictive behaviors?
(For example, regarding his use of alcohol and use of the Internet)
- Does he demonstrate realistic problem solving skills?

Questions to assess whether a seminarian exhibits limited self-discipline:

- Does he have enmeshed relationships with poor interpersonal boundaries?
- Does he have more acquaintances than friendships?
- Does the seminarian rely heavily on the role he plays to define his sense of personal adequacy and security?
- Does he have to “prove” his adequacy by his performance?
- Does he engage in pleasurable excesses?

Self-Governance

Questions to assess whether a seminarian exhibits self-governance:

- Does he demonstrate sound prudential judgment in his choices?
- Is he able to form relationships that are responsible, respectful, and marked by integrity?
- Does he manifest an ability to forgive others and seek forgiveness for personal shortcomings?
- Does he understand suffering in his own life and respond accordingly?
- Does he show compassion to those who are suffering?
- Does he exhibit faithful perseverance in fulfilling commitments?
- Is he faithful to the vocation to which he is identifying?
- Does he address self-denial, loneliness, and celibacy in a mature manner that also serve to enrich his life?

Questions to assess whether a seminarian exhibits limited self-governance:

- Does he function poorly in a stressful or delicate situation?
- Does he fail to fulfill commitments he has made?
- Are his interpersonal relationships characterized by superficiality?
- Does he demonstrate a limited sensitivity to the sufferings of others?
- Is he ambivalent about his sexual orientation, moral values, or commitments?
- Is celibacy a burden for him?
- Does he lack a capacity for fidelity to the teachings of the Catholic Church?

Spiritual Fatherhood

Questions to assess a seminarian's disposition for spiritual fatherhood:

- Does he manifest a “strong, lively, personal love” of Jesus Christ?
- Does he exhibit the capacity to mentor?
- Is he an instrument directing others to God?
- Does he exhibit a disposition for service?
- Is he enriched by his service?
- Is he striving for conversion from attitudes contrary to pastoral charity?
- Does he consistently exhibit a capacity for self-sacrifice trusting in God?
- Does he display the capacity to renounce the goods of marriage for spiritual fatherhood?

Questions to assess a seminarian who has a limited disposition for spiritual fatherhood:

- Does his love for himself surpass his love for others?
- Does he prefer “privileged” work?
- Does he manifest a need to be “successful” in ministry?
- Does he use relationships with others for self-aggrandizement?
- Does he manifest inappropriate possessiveness of his gifts?
- Is he insensitive to what is going on around him?
- Does he lack a capacity to be self-sacrificing and altruistic?