

A New Framework for Human Formation of Healthy Presbyterates

The Program of Priestly Formation (Sixth Edition) provides a rich and compelling vision of human formation. It identifies the qualities that should characterize a seminarian at each stage of formation – greater self-awareness, affective maturity, healthy relationships, prudent judgment, resilience, collaboration and human virtue. These benchmarks define the ends of human formation: the kind of man the Church seeks to form.

What the Program of Priestly Formation leaves open is the means. It does not prescribe a single developmental model for how these human qualities are cultivated, assessed or strengthened over time. As a result, many seminaries have strong aspirations for human formation but fewer shared tools for making that growth intentional, measurable and developmental.

This workshop proposes a practical framework that helps bridge that gap. Drawing upon the well-established EQ-i 2.0 Emotional Intelligence model, participants will explore how the competencies of emotional and social intelligence provide a clear developmental roadmap for achieving the human formation benchmarks articulated in the Program of Priestly Formation. Rather than replacing the Church's vision, emotional intelligence operationalizes it by translating broad formation goals into concrete human capacities that can be intentionally developed through coaching, mentoring, community life, pastoral experiences, structured reflection and ongoing feedback.

The framework also represents a shift in emphasis. Human formation should not be understood primarily as identifying psychological pathology or screening out unsuitable candidates. While appropriate assessment remains essential, the greater task is developmental: helping good men become psychologically, emotionally, relationally and pastorally mature priests. Emotional intelligence offers a common language for this work, enabling formators to identify strengths, recognize developmental needs, establish individualized formation plans and accompany seminarians in measurable growth throughout each stage of formation.

Ultimately, healthy presbyterates begin long before ordination. They are built through intentional formation that develops not only theological knowledge and spiritual depth, but also the human capacities that allow priests to lead well, love well, persevere through difficulty and flourish in ministry over the course of a lifetime.

Join seminary leaders from across the country August 12-14, at St. Mary's Seminary Center for Continuing Formation in Baltimore as we introduce a new framework for strengthening human formation and building healthy presbyterates.