

First Hand-Off: Transition from Propaedeutic Stage to Discipleship Stage

Special Character of the Propaedeutic Stage

- First step towards the ultimate goal: configuration to Christ in the life of the Trinity (*Ratio* 35)
- Not a veneer (*Ratio* 41); deep integration of gifts and frailty (*Ratio* 28; *PPF* 24-27)
- Provide a solid foundation for the lifelong journey of formation, particularly human and spiritual (*Ratio* 59; *PPF* 120)
- Vocational discernment – dedicate self to work of priestly formation or follow a different path (*Ratio* 60; *PPF* 122)
- This sets the tone for all future formation. Seminaries should give their best and brightest.

Benchmarks – What I am look for in the men

- Benchmarks from *PPF*: Human (191), Spiritual (235), Intellectual (271), Pastoral (373)
 - These are particularly helpful when we need to say ‘no’ or ‘not yet.’
 - Danger: Culture of Evaluation vs Culture of Formation
- Openness to Formation
 - They need to give external forum evidence of interior life
 - Agents of formation: trust, fatherhood, affirmation, forgiveness
- Growth
 - Philippians 3 – Growth and patient perseverance
 - We must be loved to ‘blossom’ and give love (Pieper, *Faith Hope Love*, 174-6)
 - Love demands growth (Balthasar, *The Christian State of Life*, 28)
 - Living in and accepting the present moment (Stinissen, *Eternity in the Midst of Time*, 159)
 - ¡Growth is appetitive!
- Poverty of Spirit – requisite for deep work
 - *Gaudete et Exsultate* 34 - "Holiness does not make you less human, since it is an encounter between your weakness and the power of God's grace."
 - “The freedom to receive everything freely and to give everything freely” (Philippe, *The Eight Doors to the Kingdom*, 23)
 - The opposite of Rule 14
- Deep Human Work
 - Family of Origin
 - Emotions – ability to live whole hearted, with whole emotional palette
 - Friendship
 - Conflict
 - The dynamic power of fraternity in growth—needing to deal with each other makes them really deal with themselves—strong connection between fraternal growth and self-knowledge, i.e. what is it like to be on the receiving end of me. (Paul Ruff)
 - Learning fraternal charity—having to really deal with the brother that I might avoid if we weren't in such close and regular proximity, and in group together. (Paul Ruff)
- Purity of Heart – chaste celibacy
- Vocational Discernment
 - Love Jesus and he will give you your vocation (Kathy Kanavy)
 - Discerning out is not a failure

End of Year Recommendations – Some Case Studies

- The Obvious ‘No’
- The man who does well in Propaedeutic House but not further stages
- The man who internalizes formation and knows how to reflect and grow
- Blessing good discernment
- The one you misjudge
- Be kind to yourself!

Building on the Momentum

- Handing on to the next formator – what has gone well and what has been challenging
 - Guys who are “stuck” or project or are triggered by me
 - Managing myself when the next formator is not as delighted as I am or the guy likes better
 - Important issues being tracked (or not) by the new formators
 - Therapists review assessment with the man and then together with formator
 - The therapists review the man moving to the SPS house in a meeting with the man and their new formator to note issues flagged in the initial assessment and growth achieved through the year.
 - From Paul Ruff: “In those meetings the Damascus men are generally very proactive about ways they want to keep growing—they like to grow and know what that looks and feels like.”
- Impact on the ‘Big House’
 - Grieving the transition—less unscheduled time, transition to serious studies, no process groups, harder to pray/be contemplative, *inter alia*.
 - Life should be closer to what it is in the Propaedeutic House
 - Allowing the men to take ownership – step up and do what was once facilitated
 - Positively encourage them to be a leaven—men who deal with conflict instead of complain, speak about their spiritual lives and pray together, are happy warriors
 - “They hang out a lot with each other, they pray with each other, and do all their reading”