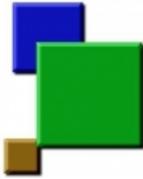


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Religious Law and Consultation Newsletter

Upcoming Webcasts

Vocation/Formation in the 21st Century
[Nov 15, 2016](#)

Taxation of Religious
February 2017

Role of Leadership
May 2017

Canon Law 101
Series: June 2017

Forming a Ministerial PJP
August 2017

Legacy Trusts
November 2017

Tuesdays, 2:00 pm ET, 11:00 am PT

[For more Information and to Register](#)

Format: Live, On-Demand or CD-ROM

Cost: \$65 for Live or On-Demand; \$75 for CD-ROM

Past programs are available [here](#).

Contact

Amy Hereford, CSJ

Vocation and Formation in the 21st Century

The ministry of vocation and formation in the 21st century requires new skills and understanding. Leadership, Formators and the Candidate would be well served by developing an Individual Formation Plan, taking into account the formation plan of the institute and the particular needs and even desires of the candidate.

Family. Today we are considering candidates who have various family relationships, both past and present that will impact their free status to enter the community. If we accept candidates who have been married or who have raised children, or those who may have had guardianships or dependents, we will also have to consider how this experience affects them, and any ongoing relationship and obligation they may have. Leadership and formation personnel should have a plan for these matters, preferably one that is shared with the candidate. As the candidate moves through formation, their situation may change, and they will be relating to different formators and possibly to different leadership teams. Thus a plan should be stable in describing the mutual expectations of the community and the candidate, and it should be flexible enough to adjust to changing circumstances.

Profession. Some of our candidates may enter at the beginning of their work life. Others enter with work history, professional credentials and an established career. These latter are blessings that candidates bring to the community, and care should be taken in the formation plan to maintain these gifts for ministry, whether the candidate remains in the community, or leaves. Neglect of this can leave an initially professed brother or sister who finds it difficult to find a suitable ministry position. The individual formation plan should balance the needs of formation with the need to protect the resume of the candidate.

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Immigration. For a long time, we have accepted candidates from outside the US. This requires careful attention to the candidates' immigration status, and the time-line of any renewals or changes in status. The Individual Formation Plan can then take account of this reality. Factors that will influence this are: the candidate's status and country of origin, whether the institute has a presence in the country of origin, where the institute foresees the candidate living and how they see them ministering. Another matter to be addressed here is cultural diversity and the ability of the community to welcome and the candidate to integrate.

Affective maturity. Candidates for religious life must have sufficient maturity to enter into religious life. Candidates today may come older, but they also come from a variety of challenging backgrounds that must be considered in accepting them, and in providing them with suitable support to enter fully into the life of the community. E.g. Candidates from broken homes, sex abuse survivors, candidates with a history of substance abuse or from alcoholic families, candidates with gender identity issues. While some of these issues have existed for years, we have a greater understanding now of how they may affect the individual's ability to form healthy relationships in community and to engage in ministry in a healthy way. Again, the candidate should not be accepted without sufficient maturity; the Individual Formation Plan should ensure that the candidate is given sufficient support in understanding and overcoming the challenges that remain.

Third party verifications of candidate information. Today's mobile society makes it possible that we could have little or no prior contact with candidates present themselves for admission to our institutes. My elder sisters tell me that when they entered, the community knew them and their families from childhood. This is rarely the case today. For this reason, third party verification of information provided by candidates is important. In addition to their report of their education, employment, family background, it is helpful to get third party verification. At a minimum, this would include sacramental records, transcript of the terminal degree, immigration documents and references. Increasingly, it can be helpful to have a credit check, criminal check, social security statement, passport, professional license and certificate of good standing, and all the individuals transcripts. Each of these provide

additional insight into a person's background as well as verification of information they self-reported on their application.

We are in a graced time when the Spirit continues to inspire men and women to enter religious life: to sell all, give to the poor, and come and follow Christ. Their courage and generosity call those of us in religious life to welcome them with generosity and prudence and open our hearts and lives to the new generations of sisters and brothers.

For more information on the Ministry of Vocation and Formation in the 21st Century, [register for November's webcast](#).

Sincerely,
Amy Hereford

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