



MUNDELEIN SEMINARY

TOLTON TEACHING PARISH PROGRAM



TTPP Handbook

2024-2025



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Tolton Teaching Parish Quick Start Guide

Seminarian's Checklist for August and September

- Research about your Parish. Use the parish profile form found on Teams (Files).
- Meet with your pastor. Schedule your meetings for the rest of the year.
- Meet with the parish committee onsite or via media they use. Schedule your meetings for the rest of the year.
- Complete your Learning Agreement before the end of September. Forward a final copy to your TTPP Pastor and Parish Committee.
- Don't forget: Enjoy the process! TTPP is an exciting opportunity giving you a chance to practice what you learn and prepare you for the future.

Committee Checklist for August and September

1. You will have your first Committee meeting with seminarians for this semester in September. Seminarians are required to come with their personal /seminary calendars.
2. Parish Committee Chairperson is responsible for reserving the date, time and creating onsite or a virtual opportunity.
3. The Parish Committee should be notified in advance that this meeting will take place. Full attendance is strongly encouraged.
4. The Seminarians are required to plan the subsequent meetings for the rest of the semester/year as possible. All contact information should be exchanged at this time.
5. Parish Committee should come prepared with their Parish Calendars to plan ahead for any parish wide events.
6. One additional meeting per the semester will be calendared in with the seminarians and the parish committee.
7. Seminarians will also meet with the Pastors and confirm their learning agreements. They will also share their learning agreements with the Parish Committee to discuss their goals for the year.

Teaching Parish Commitments

Commitment 1: Completion of the Learning Agreement by a seminarian. After discussing the Learning Agreement with seminarian Formation Advisor and Pastor, the completed form is submitted on [Teams](#) by September 30th. A copy is given to the TTPP Pastor and TTPP Committee. Electronic form is always available on Teams for TTPP Office and Faculty.

Commitment 2: Attending Sunday Masses, including greeting and hospitality events, on any Sunday.

Commitment 3: Involvement in a scheduled Ministry Commitment on appropriate days. (For example, RE, Youth Group, Adult Faith Formation, RCIA, etc.)

Commitment 4: Participating in at least two Mentoring Pastor Sessions per semester.

Commitment 5: Participating in two Parish Committee Meetings per semester.

Commitment 6: Generally, it will take you 3 h weekly for your TTPP involvement.



“O God, we give you thanks for your servant and priest, Father Augustus Tolton, who labored among us in times of contradiction, times that were both beautiful and paradoxical. His ministry helped lay the foundation for a truly Catholic gathering in faith in our time. We stand in the shadow of his ministry. May his life continue to inspire us and imbue us with that confidence and hope that will forge a new evangelization for the Church we love.” Amen.

Venerable Fr. Tolton, pray for us.

Program Objectives and Overview

Rationale for the Tolton Teaching Parish Program (TTPP) as a Pastoral Dimension

The Tolton Teaching Parish Program is part of Mundelein Seminary's priestly formation process that aims to foster the seminarian's growth in their call to be shepherds and teachers of the people of God. It provides a space and a time for seminarians to develop human qualities, pastoral sensitivities, and practical skills for ministry under the supervision of the Teaching Parish Team along with the accompaniment of active and committed parishioners that form the Teaching Parish Committee.

The Tolton Teaching Parish Program of Mundelein Seminary places all seminarians in long-term parish assignments to become immersed and skilled in the Pastoral needs of the parish communities. It does not replace the Spring Pastoral internship or the Pastoral Year as required by various dioceses. However, seminarians of the Archdiocese of Chicago can generally expect to be assigned to their Teaching Parishes for their Pastoral Internships. When this is the case, they should continue to participate in meetings with their Parish Committee during the internship. They also should follow the assigned curriculum for the Pastoral Internship Program as administered by the Director of the Pastoral Internship.

Parish Assignments:

- Tolton Teaching Parishes within the Archdiocese of Chicago are selected by the Coordinator of the Tolton Teaching Parish Program in consultation with various Vocation Directors.
- The Coordinator makes the Teaching Parish seminarian assignments in discernment with the Dean of Formation and Rector.
- Teaching Parish selections and seminarian placements in other dioceses (Joliet, Rockford) are made in consultation with their respective Vocation Directors and Diocesan Bishops.
- Once a seminarian is assigned to his Teaching Parish, the expectation is that he will remain at that same assignment for the remainder of his years of seminary formation at Mundelein. Serving in the same parish year after year affords the seminarian the opportunity to build important and life-giving ministerial relationships.
- In very rare circumstances, however, Teaching Parish assignments can be altered. Changing assignments should always be considered as a “last option” after all other options have been tried. All such changes begin with the Coordinator and Teaching Parish team and are to be approved by the Dean of Formation.

The goals of the Tolton Teaching Parish Program are:

- To cooperate in the overall goals and objectives of the seminary to form candidates into the image of Christ, who is teacher, priest, and shepherd as holy men of God.
- To provide means by which seminarians can integrate all four dimensions of seminarian formation.

In addition, the Teaching Parish Program follows closely the goals of the Program for Priestly Formation (PPF6, #3670): The goal of pastoral formation is to form shepherds of God's People; this goal requires men who are not self-centered, aloof, judgmental, or self-imposing but instead are characterized by a "serene openness" and capable of listening and collaboration. True shepherds must have a desire to understand the hearts of others and engage in attentive accompaniment.

TTPP Learning Agreement

Learning Agreement Details

- Each year, in the Fall Semester, seminarians create a **Learning Agreement** with their Pastor based on the expectations for their year in formation. This document should record the concrete ministry involvement, along with times and days, to the best of his ability. This document should be discussed with seminarian Formation Advisor and should be shared with Parish Committee as well. The document will be turned in electronically by September 30th.
- This document should also record the **Learning Objectives** for the year that the seminarian hopes to accomplish over the next year. For example, a seminarian might list as one of his goals, "To become more confident speaking in front of crowds." These goals should be shared with the Parish Committee in the course of their meetings together.
- Finally, seminarians record their **social justice or pro-life commitment** on this form as well. This is an one-time engagement to take place at some point throughout the year in the parish setting or outside if the Parish doesn't provide this opportunity.
- Both the seminarian and the Pastor (or his delegate) work on this document together and then agree on it. It is the seminarian's responsibility to discuss the learning agreement with his **Formation Advisor before turning it in**. Then the seminarian submits it electronically, keeping a copy for himself and forwarding it to his TTPP pastor and Parish Committee. Any other adjustments to the learning agreement should be made in consultation with the Pastor, Teaching Parish Office, and the Formation Advisor.
- In addition, seminarians are expected to have two formal mentoring meetings with the Pastor and two formal Parish Committee Meetings during the course of the semester.

Areas of Ministries – Seminarian's Ministry Plan

The seminarian is invited to pursue and participate in different ministerial areas as is appropriate and available within the parish community. The seminarian has the responsibility to discuss and discern with the Pastor and the Parish Committee how to best identify and involve himself with these various components over the course of his time in the teaching parish.

The Teaching Parish Program, in collaboration with the parish committee and pastor, provide opportunities for seminarians to become exposed to and participate in parish life over the course of their studies. During the seminarian's years of formation, the Parish Committee assists with integrating them into the Teaching Parish in these areas and capacities:

- Ministry of Presence — presence before, during, and after Masses
- Parish events such as hospitality hours or large parish functions, when appropriate and when fits within the seminarian's schedule
- Ministry to the sick, the homebound, and the dying
- Religious Education
- Children Sacrament Preparation

- Youth Faith Formation: through religious education and/or parish schools
- Adult Faith Formation, Adult Spiritual Enrichment
- RCIA, marriage preparation classes, and/or baptismal preparation classes
- SPRED, inclusion ministry
- Rel. Education in other languages
- Vocation talks/presentations
- Some exposure to parish processes, including occasional attendance at Parish Council Meetings (when available), Parish Finance Council Meetings, etc.
- Opportunities in areas of social justice, outreach, and intercultural contexts
- Attending Parish Functions
- Visiting the school
- Leading devotional practices (e.g., Rosary, Stations of the Cross)
- Engagement in social / community services and building relationships with diverse cultural groups
- Participation in Advocacy groups (Pax Christi, death penalty, immigration reform, etc.)
- T4: Celebrating Liturgy and Sacrament & Teaching the Faith
- T4: Participation in the life of the Church and Presbyterate
- Other: _____

The goal is that throughout the years in the Tolton Teaching Parish Program, the seminarian will be exposed to all areas of parish life and operations with the mentoring of the parish committee and the pastor. Each of these experiences are important and formative to the learning and the discernment of the vocation and life of a future parish priest.

Areas of Growth - Pastoral Learning Objectives (PPF6, #366-398)

Deacon Learning Objectives

“I will give you shepherds after my own heart” (Jer. 3:15). Configuration to Christ, the Servant, Shepherd, Priest, and Head:

1. Following Christ, the Servant. DEMONSTRATE THE APPLICATION OF PASTORAL CHARITY AS AN ORDAINED MINISTER.

a. Demonstrate the ability to be open and available to others in the generosity of spirit and pastoral charity, while maintaining proper boundaries practicing and promoting professional standards of ministerial behavior.

b. Demonstrate the habit of obedience.

c. Demonstrate the spirit of collaboration with women, parish staff, and supporting volunteers. Recognize the laity’s evolving roles, leadership, and responsibilities, and foster their contributions, gifts, every good and perfect work, helping the laity consecrate the world itself to God (Lumen Gentium 34).

2. Following Christ, the Shepherd. DEMONSTRATE THE CAPACITY FOR CRITICAL OBSERVATION TO DISCERN TRUE AND FALSE VALUES.

a. Demonstrate the capacity to notice any formation gaps and prepare for life outside the seminary.

b. Demonstrate the ability to spend time alone in a pastoral setting and master a healthy habit of fruitful solitude with oneself and God.

c. Demonstrate the ability to address “traumas” in a parish setting, for example, clergy abuse, a transition of the Pastor, etc.

3. Following Christ, the Priest. DEMONSTRATE COMPETENCY IN THE LITURGICAL ROLES OF THE DEACON.

a. Demonstrate the ability to adequately prepare for sacraments and liturgies, including the ability to organize a homily and reflections around a central point and concrete awareness of Jesus working in people’s lives.

b. Demonstrate the ability to commit life to priestly ministry, growing in genuine empathy, compassion, generosity, understanding, and love for all, especially the poor.

c. Demonstrate the ability to communicate theological knowledge integrated with pastoral skills, pastoral discernment, and pastoral charity.

4. Following Christ, the Head. PRACTICE PASTORAL LEADERSHIP AS A GIFT OF OWN LIFE ON THE PATH TOWARD PRIESTHOOD.

a. Demonstrate the ability to be challenged to develop leadership and administrative style(s) as part of priestly identity and recognize the value of ministries beyond the parish setting (e.g., prison, hospital, food pantry, etc.).

b. Acknowledge various ecclesial movements and voices of conscience and discern interior longings that motivate my actions. That is, demonstrate the ability to identify and manage personal biases that may limit pastoral effectiveness and to break out of liturgical preoccupations/ preconceived biases/ narrow focus.

c. Demonstrate a willingness to create intentional community with fellow seminarians while in the rectory.

Seminarian’s (PT2 through T3) Learning Objectives

“The whole training of the students should have as its object to make them true shepherds of souls after the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, TEACHER, PRIEST, and SHEPHERD.” To be a true “shepherd of souls” means standing with and for Christ in the community, the Christ who TEACHES and SANCTIFIES and GUIDES or LEADS the community (PPF6, #368).

Choose at least two Pastoral Learning Objectives in each category that will allow you to grow. It is assumed that you will demonstrate competence in all areas by the time of your diaconate ordination.

I. Standing with and for Christ who TEACHES. Developing the necessary attitude for a life of service in the Church.

a. Recognize the importance of offering religious instruction as Evangelization, providing various classroom instructions on religious topics to different age groups, and using the variety of parish communications media as a tool for Evangelization. Recognize the fundamentals of communicating to large and small groups (PPF6, 3542-3553, 3608-3611).

b. Demonstrate the ability to reach out and persuade inactive parishioners or those far or

fallen from the faith, listening deeply to the lived experiences and realities of the faithful (PPF6, 3663-3665).

c. Demonstrate the capacity to reflect with the Teaching Parish Committee and Formation advisor on ministerial experiences in the parish (PPF6, 3622-3651).

d. Recognize fundamentals of listening and interpersonal communications. Recognize the

need to maintain confidentiality when required and to seek help in cases where professional assistance or a referral is necessary (PPF6, 3622-3651).

e. Demonstrate the ability to seek and adequately engage the poor and marginalized within the parish boundaries and beyond the parish setting

(e.g., prison, hospital, food pantry, etc.) (PPF6, 3666-3672).

f. Demonstrate the awareness of racial injustice and other social issues by interacting well with a diversity of people with words and actions consistent with Catholic Teaching (PPF6, 3673-3678).

II. Standing with and for Christ who SANCTIFIES. Being intentional in nourishing the laity to sanctify the world.

a. Recognize the importance of assisting in Liturgical services, participating in the training of altar servers, ushers, lectors, grief committees, other liturgical groups, and working with a diversity of lay roles and responsibilities in ministry, liturgies, and sacramental preparation (PPF6, 3554-3560).

b. Demonstrate zeal and affective maturity, bringing people closer to God, meeting them where they are, moving a step at a time by listening deeply. Demonstrate the ability to lead others in prayer and reflection (PPF6, 3561-3582).

c. Demonstrate the ability to integrate and articulate into my spiritual and prayer life, my pastoral experiences, and the people to whom I minister (PPF6, 3612-3621).

d. Demonstrate with a missionary heart, the ability to understand parish needs and vision of the parish to the assigned ministries and relate them to the context of the Universal Church. Demonstrate the ability to use initiative to detect pastoral needs and discern workable solutions while respecting other voices (PPF6, 3561-3582).

e. Demonstrate a genuine appreciation of the diversity that marks the Catholic Church in the United States (PPF6, 3652-3662).

f. Demonstrate the ability to identify and manage personal biases that may limit pastoral effectiveness and to break out of liturgical preoccupations/ preconceived biases/ scrupulosity.

III. Standing with and for Christ who GUIDES and LEADS. Developing pastoral capacities to lead in ways that serve the greater good.

a. Demonstrate the ability to apply consensus while managing effective meetings within the assigned ministries. Demonstrate the ability to facilitate resolution of conflicts and flexibility of spirit in dealing with new and unexpected circumstances (PPF6, 3604-3607).

b. Demonstrate the ability to minister with empathy to situations of grief, aging, addiction, divorce, family dysfunctions, sexual orientation issues, and other special cases that may be present in the assigned ministry (PPF6, 3583-3603).

c. Demonstrate the ability to recognize, develop, and exercise a personal style of ministry leadership that fosters team building and mutuality in ministry (PPF6, 3679-3693).

d. Demonstrate the spirit of collaboration with women, parish staff, and supporting volunteers. Recognize the laity's evolving roles, leadership, and responsibilities, and foster their contributions and gifts, helping the laity consecrate the world itself to God (Lumen Gentium 34). (PPF6, 3604-3607)

e. Demonstrate the ability to give and receive constructive feedback, accepting own giftedness and limitations with humility (PPF6, 3612-3621).

f. Demonstrate the ability to be available to others while maintaining proper boundaries practicing and promoting professional standards

of ministerial behavior that are expected of all church employees and volunteers, including ministerial codes of conduct and policies regarding conflict of interest, financial transparency, appropriate boundaries, and the use of social media (PPF6, 3694-3709).

Teaching Parish Criteria

Criteria 1: The pastor agrees to collaborate in the formation of seminarians into parish life experiences.

1.1 The Pastor has informed Ministries, Staff, & Committee of the need and value of this program for the parish and the seminarian's pastoral development.

1.2 The learning objectives for each seminarian have been agreed upon with the Pastor and are feasible to accomplish within the realities of the parish setting.

1.3 The Pastor establishes a committee (Teaching Parish Committee, or TPC).

1.4 The Pastor submits written evaluations to the Teaching Parish Office of the Seminary, and the Office distributes them to the forums.

Criteria 2: The Committee member demonstrates a willingness to mentor seminarians into parish life experiences.

2.1 Teaching Parish Committee (TPC) members are sufficiently familiar with parish, church, and priestly formation.

2.2 Teaching Parish Committee (TPC) members agree to dedicate time and effort to mentor the seminarians and works closely with the pastor and the seminary formators.

2.3 Teaching Parish Committee (TPC) members offer an agreed upon set of meaningful mentorship observations.

2.4 Teaching Parish Committee (TPC) members recognize that privacy and confidentiality are essential to the mentoring process and in maintaining a climate of open dialogue.

Criteria 3: Mentorship environment for the pastoral development of seminarians.

3.1 Teaching Parish Committee (TPC) provides mentoring advice to the seminarians at least two times every semester. In rare cases, written observations may be required.

3.2 The Teaching Parish Committee (TPC) ensures seminarians are mentored primarily in the types of parish activities that best match the learning objectives selected for the observation period.

3.3 The Teaching Parish Committee (TPC) has sufficient interactions with the parish activities corresponding to the seminarian's learning objectives so they can offer meaningful observations during the mentoring advice sessions.

3.4 The Teaching Parish Committee (TPC) members have attended the mentorship workshop and can supervise the seminarian mentoring process.

Criteria 4: Seminary actions related to the Parish Teaching program.

4.1 The seminary conducts program training for the Teaching Parish Committee (e.g., mentorship workshop) and periodically conduct follow-up visits to assess the conditions of the program.

4.2 Seminarians receive reimbursement by the seminary for mileage and tolls incurred during travel to the parish. Deacons assisting will receive stipends.

4.3 Seminarians will be aware of the learning objectives before engaging in parish activities.

Criteria 5: Seminarian actions related to the Parish Teaching experience.

5.1 Seminarians review the Teaching Parish view of the program and the inputs provided by the pastors on available ministries at the Teaching Parish and finalize a Learning Agreement.

5.2 Seminarians receive verbal observations from the Teaching Parish Committee.

5.3 At the end of the semester, each participating seminarian submits a survey, evaluation, or a reflective paper on the most significant learning events and challenges, a summary of Teaching Committee observations, as well as suggestions for the next Teaching Parish experience to the Teaching Parish Office.

5.4 The Teaching Parish Office distributes them to the appropriate seminary forums.

Teaching Parish Committee

The Parish Committee is made up of a representative group of parishioners who are actively committed to the mission of the parish and to fostering leadership for ministry. This group is selected by the pastor and is willing and committed to meeting several times each semester. The committee plays a critical role in introducing the seminarian to the parish dynamics, the many of the relationships, and the cultural context of the parish. In addition, the committee is the segue into the life of the parish. The supportive environment created by the committee helps foster mutual growth and leads to a seminarian's development as a future parish priest.

The committees offer the seminarian different perspectives on issues affecting their family lives, parish lives, ministry experience, and offer mentorship to a seminarian. Openness to discussing even difficult topics that are relevant in our world today is critical.

Committee Member Recruitment and Qualifications

The pastor of the Teaching Parish is charged with the responsibility of recruiting active parish members to be on a seminarian's Teaching Parish Committee. There is no particular knowledge base or set of experiences required of the Teaching Parish Committee members. The basic qualifications are as follows:

A Parish Committee Member is:

- an active member of the parish community and is committed to the parish mission.
- willing and able to attend the two committee meetings during the semester.

- open to sharing one's faith, experiences, and gifts with the seminarians and other members of the committee.
- willing and open to sharing their point of view about ministry, the Church, and their personal faith and life in the Church.

Number of Members

Committee size varies between 5 to 10 members. Fewer than five can be too small in the event a member is absent. Larger than 12 can be difficult to schedule and is difficult to gather should the committee meet in a member's home.

Length of Service

Committee members are invited to make this commitment for the duration of the seminarian's formation. In parishes with multiple seminarians, this may not be possible. This commitment would extend over a 3-5 year span. At the conclusion of each year, members are encouraged to discuss their availability to continue on for the next academic year. If the commitment is not possible, a replacement member should be sought.

Ongoing Development and Formation of the Parish Committee

As the Pastor selects parishioners for the Parish Committee that address the diverse needs of the parish, the contact information for the committee is gathered and is sent to the Tolton Teaching Parish Office. This helps the Teaching Parish Office share communication effectively with events, program development, and any formation opportunities for the Parish Committees as they are offered. The Teaching Parish team provides orientation and ongoing training on the parish site. In addition, the Teaching Parish team also offers communication through social gatherings, newsletters, resources located on our seminary website.

Seminarian Orientation to the Parish Committee

Seminarians are expected to have their first Parish Committee Meeting in **September**. Parish Committees are aware that they will be getting together with the seminarians. This initial meeting provides the opportunity to set the dates for the first and second semester.

Seminarians are expected to meet with their Parish Committee two times a semester during the academic year. Any concerns regarding Parish Committee gatherings should be immediately discussed with TTPP Pastor and directed to Tolton Teaching Parish Program Office.

Nuts and Bolts of the Teaching Parish Committee

1. You have been invited to collaborate with the seminarian, the seminary, and the parish in the formation of the seminarian on his journey to the priesthood. You are not just a "cheerleader", but your engagement, your honesty, and your prayerful presence is what will immerse the seminarian in the building of relationships critical to being a parish priest. A pat on the back is great but NOT formation!
2. The seminarian is in formation, and he is discerning his vocation. His exposure in the parish assists in his discernment process.
3. It is important to remember that not all seminarians will be ordained. In this process of discernment, some seminarians may choose to take "time off" or may discern out of the seminary. This is a deeply personal and confidential choice. In the event of these transitions, the Teaching Parish Office and the seminarian will inform you of changes. This is a normal part of formation and discernment. You are invited to continue to pray for the seminarian during this time of transition.
4. Parish Committee meetings are critical and not optional. Two meetings per semester are required.

Parish Committee Chair will be responsible for discussing and setting the agenda with the parish committee and seminarians. This time of gathering is not simply a check in. There can be discussions, talks, formation, prayer, etc. You are invited to offer feedback and even pastorally and compassionately critique their work in the parish.

5. You are provided with some suggestions on topics for discussion.
6. At these meetings the parish committee should also hold the seminarian accountable. If commitments are not met, the parish committee is encouraged to hold the seminarian accountable for his lack of follow through.
7. Parish committee members are encouraged to occasionally host the seminarian as they are able to their home for coffee or a meal. A critical part of priestly formation is gathering with families. They will learn by doing.
8. Critique homilies.
9. Consider assigning parish committee members to different Sundays or ministries when the seminarian is present to spend time seeing how well the seminarian is engaged.
10. Seminarians are asked to rotate Masses each Teaching Parish weekend to meet parishioners at all Masses. Take turns at the Masses to check in with them.
11. TRAINING for committees: every committee is helped by training organized by TTPP Office.

Teaching Parish Committee (PC) Chairperson Ministry Guidelines

1. The Chairperson is the main point of contact between the Teaching Parish Office and the seminarian.
 - a. The Teaching Parish office keeps all updated information on parish committee members and their contact information. This is to ensure good communication from the Seminary regarding the program.
2. The PC chair oversees the committee in terms of its ability to function effectively through communication with the pastor and associate pastor and by selecting solidly engaged parishioners from diverse backgrounds and experiences in parish life.
3. The PC chair makes recommendations to the pastor to select parishioners that will be supportive and engaged members of the committee.
4. The PC chair is responsible for securing locations and room reservations for meetings to be held whether in a parishioner's home, the parish center, or virtually.
5. The PC chair will receive relevant information from the TP for inclusion in parish bulletin/event updates.
6. The PC chair is responsible for communication and collaboration with the pastor to oversee that good communication happens in the parish through:
 - a. Bulletin articles
 - b. Seminarian updates
 - c. Teaching Parish updates
 - d. Sharing of information if possible: on the parish website, social media, bulletins, where seminarian photos and updates may be displayed for the community.
7. The PC chair ensures that the committee is made up of 5-10 parishioners whenever possible.
8. If a committee member leaves the committee, the PC chair is responsible for soliciting recommendations for new members from the committee and making recommendations to the pastor and committee.
9. The PC chair is the point of contact for any updates or changes on the committee to the Teaching

Parish office.

10. The PC chair is responsible for overseeing and communicating any particular needs or concerns about the seminarian to the pastor or the TTPP Coordinator.
11. The PC chair is the initial point of contact for the seminarian and oversees communications, calendar issues, etc. with the committee and the seminarian.
12. The PC chair is the point of contact for any recommendations on the Evaluations for the Pastor as the committee will not provide seminarian evaluations. This is to help build trust with the seminarians that the PC is not an evaluative body of parishioners but a team of supportive individuals walking with and assisting in the formation process and full entry into parish life.
13. In terms of "time frame" of committee service, PC chairpersons may consider a 3-5-year policy of commitment (like a parish council), although this is based on a parish-by-parish preference. Many committees stay together for years finding great joy and fulfillment in walking with our seminarians. While some movement may organically take place within a committee, consistency is an important dynamic for the seminarian. Also, seminarians are engaged in a parish for up to five years, so ideally a committee will remain steady and consistent for good relationships and trust to develop over the years of a seminarian's formation.

Sample Agenda for Teaching Parish Committee Meetings

Ahead of the meeting

- a) Compile and distribute a membership list containing contact information of parish team members and seminarians, including pastor.
- b) Discuss scripture reading and reflection assignment with seminarians.
- c) Discuss intercessory prayer and blessing assignment with seminarian.

Parish Name

Date | Time | Meeting Room

ACTIVITY

1. Welcome and opening prayer -
2. Scripture Reading (3 min) -
3. Brief reflection and short sharing (5 min) -
4. Seminarians' experience and conversations (40 min)
6. Prayer intentions (5 min) and closing prayer

LEADER

Parish team member
Seminarian or team member
Seminarian
Seminarians and
Parish team members
Seminarian

1. Welcome and opening prayer

A designated parish team member warmly welcomes everyone. For the first few meetings, be sure to re-introduce everyone by name – unless you wish to use nametags. Refrain from long introductions. Consider using a fun ice-breaker exercise that puts all at ease. Consider brief sharing for the first meeting based on why all of you, TPC members, care about this Parish and Church, why do you volunteer to different parish ministries and to this committee, what are you passionate about. Conclude this activity with a brief opening prayer.

2. **Scripture reading**

Assign or request a seminarian to proclaim a scripture reading. Choose this reading ahead of time. If the TTPP meeting is on a Sunday, use one of the readings of the day. If the meeting is during the week, consider a reading from the coming Sunday. Permit the seminarian to proclaim the scripture which provides the opportunity to read publicly.

3. **Brief reflection**

Assign or request a seminarian to provide a reflection on the scripture passage. He may choose to provide his own reflection, or may invite members to focus on a significant phrase.

This is faith-sharing that involves the entire group. It is not to be a formal theological commentary. Faith-sharing asks that a person share what God tells him in a scripture passage, where God is leading, or what inspiration is gained from this text. This is a practice suitable for every person. It is not intended to offer intellectual information or to preach. Recall that this is a brief, invitational activity.

Both practices, reflecting and inviting others to share, are key learning experiences.

4. **Seminarians' Experience and Conversations**

Team leader invites each seminarian to remark on his current experience: (Choose 1-2 activities.)

- a) Parish learning agreement. "Describe what you agreed to fulfill in your parish ministry. What areas of growth did you choose and why?" What apprehension do you feel about the assignment? What expectation do you feel about the assignment? Have you chosen ministries you have never tried before or you are not good at?
- b) Conversation with the pastor: "Was the conversation what you expected? How so?"
- c) What is expected to be learned in the chosen ministry or engagement in parish life, e.g.: "In your thinking, what do you hope to learn or experience in the assignment?" "What example of an expected encounter in this ministry would you wish to share?"
- d) After experiencing the chosen ministry or engagement in parish life, what was learned, e.g.: "What did you learn or experience in the assignment?" "What experience of an encounter would you wish to share?"
- e) Feelings about the assigned ministry as it was fulfilled: "What surprise was encountered in the parish ministry?" "What idea was revealed to you that you had not anticipated?" "What touched your heart as you engaged in your ministry? What area of personal strength emerged as you engaged in the ministry. What area of weakness became apparent?"
- f) Name a particular or biggest grace you've experienced at the parish.
- g) Name a biggest challenge you've experienced.
- h) Name situations or ways in which TPC members might help or improve your experience.

Team members should refrain from indicating what the seminarians should do. TPC members should assist the seminarians to explore what discipleship looks and feels like in anticipation of becoming a parish leader, deacon, and priest.

Refer to the samples of friendly exploratory questions found at the end of this document.

5. **Intercessions and closing prayer.** Assign or request a seminarian to lead the introductory prayer, petitions, and closing prayer (lay blessing). In addition to several general intercessions, invite the assembled group to share their own intercessions. If needed, a parish team member may model this format as a future exercise for the seminarians. Some seminarians practice writing down members intentions, inserting them to their breviary, to remember them in his daily prayers.

Keep in mind:

- a. Be mindful to be a better listener than a talker. Avoid those behaviors that are not supportive: there are situations that pop up in every group setting that are detrimental to productive conversation. A chairperson is a facilitator that understands his/her role in managing conversations. A facilitator would encourage full participation and remind members to listen keenly when needed.
 - b. Practice open-ended questions that prompt fuller, more thoughtful responses. See *Relevant Questions* on following page.
 - c. Be mindful not to tell seminarians what they should do, witness, or be exposed to. Focus on the ministries listed in their learning agreement. Ask open-ended questions helping to deepen the seminarian reflection of their experience.
 - d. Approach difficult situations without causing shame. “What do you think happened...?” “I noticed this; were you aware...?” Why do you think this happened? If you had a chance, would you do XYZ differently? How?
 - e. Encourage seminarians to ask: “If you were in my shoes, what might help me to do better?” “What do you notice in my public ministry that I might be overlooking?”
-

Sample Meeting Highlights

Parish Name**Date | Time | Meeting Room**

Follow the agenda outline. Provide a brief account of the conversation that transpired.

Attendance:

The meeting started with a prayer led by X.

Introductions of the TPC committee and the seminarians

Group conversations keeping in the forefront the purpose of the Tolton Teaching Parish Program:

1. To encourage and develop the engagement of seminarians directly with parishioners and parish life.
2. Function as a mirror and avenue of exchange between seminarians and parishioners.

Next TTPP meeting will be (date), (time), (place).

RELEVANT QUESTIONS

These questions are worded so to be inviting and to elicit full responses.

1. Which of the Learning Agreement objectives did you benefit the most? What exactly did you learn?
2. Which of your Learning Objectives was least achieved? What can we do to help?
3. What aspects of your Learning Agreement do you think our collective experiences can help provide learning insights?

SAMPLE STATEMENTS, TPC MENTORING SESSIONS:

1. "It seems you are more appealing when your spontaneous prayer in the Prayer Group flowed from your heart. Did you see the same?"
2. "Your openness when meeting parishioners after Mass is right on target. It's very engaging. Yet remember it's not just a social activity. It's also an opportunity to highlight sacraments (marriage, babies).
3. "It's fine to wait to be approached after Mass, but it's even better if you take the initiative to engage someone when you intuit a need. An usher was distracted after the 9:30am Mass and unintentionally ignored an African-American parishioner looking for a Welcoming Packet..."
4. "During your visits to families in the parish, feel free to ask about their prayer life as a Domestic Church..."
5. "You were asked questions about gay marriage in one of your presentations last month. Don't hesitate to be sensitive but also to encourage dialogue with other members of the clergy."
6. "Parish closings present difficult situations. One lady was hurt because her entire spiritual life was at one of the parishes that "closed". In conversing with her, do you think she was sufficiently comforted after you spoke with her? In hindsight, would you do anything different?"
7. "The Men's Group had asked you to prepare a reflection for Lent. How did you pick your topic? What was your thought process in selecting the topic of online pornography?"
8. "We saw that during the parish picnic you spent a lot of time with the Bracero family. Of course, it's fine because they could really benefit from your presence, but it's also good to "work the room" (so to speak).
9. "During food distribution at the pantry you were behind the counter helping fill and give out bags of food. Would it be more beneficial to go outside and meet the people while they are waiting in line?"
10. "The Vietnamese asked if you could help with their quarterly Mass, but we heard that you declined. What was your rationale?"
11. "We heard there was a heated discussion on women and the priesthood at the Knights of Columbus meeting a few weeks ago. What can you tell us about that discussion? What would have been your approach?"
12. "The altar server training session you gave last month was very well accepted by the boys and girls attending.
13. "We have a chance to see you lead the Stations of the Cross on Lenten Fridays. If Father Bill (Pastor) agrees, would you be OK in offering a brief reflection at the beginning? What topics would you consider?"
14. "You assisted Father Dan with the funeral of baby-newborn Michaela Hennesey. Can you share with us some of your impressions?"
15. "The Pastoral Council let us know they were all happy to have you around and helping them with the fundraiser of the roof repairs. Did you see any opportunities connected to your personal or pastoral development?"

Accountability

Time Commitment

- Seminarians are expected to spend **as much time as they can** in the Teaching Parish Program **each semester. TTPP is equal to 1 credit h course commitment (3h per week)**. All time spent in preparation for Ministerial and supervisory activities are included in these hours. Suggested presence and participation: every weekend.
- Travel time is NOT included.
- **Sunday Mass is also NOT included** unless the seminarian has been **preaching** during it.

- Seminarians may find it necessary to go on additional days or times as discerned with the Parish Committee and the Pastor. Each Parish is unique and offers opportunities on different days. Seminarians may use other days when seminary schedule allows.
- Required to have a Ministry Commitment on appropriate days as determined by the parish and your personal / Mundelein calendar. (RE, Youth Group, Formation for Adult Ed., RCIA, etc.)
- Required: at least two Mentoring Pastor Sessions per semester.
- Required: two Parish Committee meetings per semester with the dates set in advance.

Expectations from Transitional Deacons During Fourth Theology

1. As part of the Teaching Parish Program, deacons focus primarily on liturgical ministry and preaching in their parishes.
2. As noted above, transitional deacons in Fourth Theology are expected to be present in their parishes every Saturday or Sunday.
3. Many Pastors will also make a room in the rectory available to deacons to use, if they wish to stay overnight during the weekend.
4. Deacons are expected **to preach and assist at parish liturgies** and celebrate the appropriate sacraments at the request of the Pastor.
5. The necessary faculties to minister as a deacon in the Archdiocese of Chicago are obtained by the seminary on the deacon's behalf. Each deacon is to receive **a stipend of \$75 from his parish** for each weekend that he is present there for ministry. This stipend is considered to cover the deacon's travel expenses; thus, he is not to complete the mileage reimbursement form for the seminary. Those Fourth Theologians not ordained transitional deacons are to discuss an alternative plan for ministry with their Pastors.
6. The deacon may not miss any classes on any day due to parish commitments. All deacons should take personal responsibility for their schedule both in the parish and at the seminary.

STL / JCL Students

Those seminarians who are engaged in full-time STL or JCL studies have a more intense academic workload than other students. Therefore, it is understood that they will spend less time in parish ministry than their non-STL/JCL classmates. **It is imperative that the seminarian communicate these expectations with the Pastor in advance.**

Mileage/Transportation Log

All seminarians are responsible for keeping track of the expenses associated with their transportation to the parish. **These expenses are reimbursed by the seminary twice per semester, at mid-term and at the end of the term. Completed mileage logs returned to Teaching Parish office.**

- a) Seminarians who drive their own cars:
 - i) record the mileage on the log sheet for all trips to and from the parish. These trips are reimbursed and the cost per mile is updated annually.
 - ii) Seminarians who will be using the Illinois tollway are to buy an I-Pass device for their cars. The I-Pass is the system of electronic toll payment in the State of Illinois.
 - iii) Those who fail to use this system are required to pay a double toll. Mundelein Seminary will only reimburse tolls at the discounted (i.e. I-Pass) rate.
 - iv) These devices are inexpensive and readily available. Please see www.getipass.com for more information.
- b) Seminarians who take public transportation:

- i) Please record their trips and the associated costs on their log sheets and keep all their original receipts as well.
- ii) These trips are reimbursed at 100% of the cost.
- c) Seminarians who use vehicles from the seminary motor pool:
 - i) Please refill the gas tanks of the borrowed car upon returning it to the seminary.
 - ii) Please record the cost of the gas purchase on their log sheet and keep the original receipt. They are reimbursed at 100% of the fuel cost.
 - iii) Arrangements to borrow a car should be made directly through Administrative Assistant for Teaching Parish.
 - iv) Car-pooling is also a very good option for seminarians. Check with your seminarian brothers to arrange carpooling.

Evaluations

Seminarians will receive evaluations, in differing formats, from their Pastors only. These instruments are helpful means by which the seminarian can grow in self-knowledge. The Pastor's evaluation is given to the seminarian in full and should be shared in the form of feedback and discussion. The evaluation is then signed by the Pastor and given to the Teaching Parish office. This document is kept in the log of files for Formation.

Program Documents on Teams

The Tolton Teaching Parish Program materials are made available to seminarians electronically through Teams. Seminarians are to log in with their seminary credentials and choose "Files" from the list of any TTPP related teams.

Stipends / donations / gifts

1. Teaching Parishes are not to provide stipends to seminarians for their services in the parish. Seminarians are also not permitted to solicit stipends or financial support in any way from the parish or from parish groups. Seminarians receive financial support from their respective dioceses and reimbursement for their travel expenses to and from their Teaching Parish Assignments from Mundelein Seminary.
2. While the generosity to support a seminarian is truly appreciated, not all parishes can provide equal support. **Therefore, any gifts given to seminarians over the total amount of \$25.00 will be reported to Teaching Parish Office.** If you have any questions, please contact Tolton Teaching Parish Program Office.
3. A separate provision is made for deacons (see Deacon Particulars above). Should a parish, Pastor, or parishioner wish to support a seminarian, we recommend that they choose to make a donation to the Tolton Teaching Parish Program Fund, please contact TTPP Office.

Appearance and Dress

1. In general, when seminarians are at their Teaching Parish, they should wear black clerical attire along with their Teaching Parish nametag. This especially applies for moments when they are engaged in ministry or are present at Mass. **The purpose of clerical attire is so that the parishioners will be able to identify the seminarians.** From the seminarian's perspective, clerical attire is a way to embrace simplicity of life as well as to show oneself available for service to others. Seminarians will use their best judgment in determining when to wear a black suit jacket along with their clerics to more formal parish occasions.

2. Please wear your name badge with your Clerical attire for the parishioners. With the exception of habited religious, the use of the **cassock** is reserved **for liturgical functions**. Overall, maintain a professional standard of appearance.
3. At times, it will not be appropriate to wear clerical attire. This would be the case if the seminarians are involved in a service project that requires painting, etc., for example. Seminarians should bring any difficulties regarding the use of clerical attire to the attention of their respective Formation Advisor, or they may check with the Teaching Parish Office.

Communication and Calendars

1. **In parish life, communication is key.** Seminarians are expected to keep in close communication with their Pastors, committee chairpersons, and other staff members with whom they will collaborate in the parish.
2. Seminarians **should use their official usml.edu email account for all communications** with their parishes. Seminarians' mobile phones or landlines are also appropriate ways to communicate with their parishes. Seminarians should take care to get the best phone number for their Pastors and add it to their contacts list.
3. They should do the same with the chairperson of their Parish Committee and any other parish staff members with whom they regularly collaborate. Seminarians must also take care to use calendars – whether they be electronic or in a paper form.
4. In the parish context, there are many obligations for the Teaching Parish Program. This includes: mentoring meetings with the Pastor, Parish Committee meetings, ministry assignments, Sunday Masses, liturgical obligations, etc. **If a man is not able to make a commitment, he is to take care to inform the other party with plenty of time.** (With the exception of true emergencies). Therefore, we are asking that all known obligations that conflict with the Teaching Parish calendar be communicated to the Parish Committee and the Pastor at the start of the academic year. Arrangements should be made in advance to make up this missed weekend or opportunity. If there is an unplanned event, there must be two weeks' notice minimum for a planned absence from the parish. Last minute cancellations create difficulties for Pastors and parishes. Please be respectful of their time and their many obligations.
5. It is good practice to work together as a group of seminarians assigned to the same parish, helping each other and substituting if needed.
6. Seminarians are also asked to review the following policy of the Archdiocese of Chicago regarding electronic communication with minors. (See Appendix)

A Week in the Life of a Seminarian

At Mundelein Seminary, the seminarians have a regular routine of prayer, worship, study, and recreation time throughout the week. There are two nights per week that the seminarians are required to remain on campus for seminarian obligations.

Saturday and Sunday:

Teaching parish formation, worship, study, recreation time, Adoration, night prayer.

Monday through Friday:

- Morning Prayer
- Daily Mass

- Class 9-12 and 1:00—4:00
- Evening Prayer

Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday evenings are committed evenings on campus.

Wednesdays are free days, with the obligation to participate in the Rector’s Mass.

Friday evenings are possible evenings for seminarians to participate in parish ministries, based on the parish need.

Professional and Ministerial Boundaries

As public representatives of the Catholic Church, their respective dioceses, and Mundelein Seminary, seminarians involved in the Teaching Parish Program are expected to observe professional standards of conduct and boundaries. Should a man have questions about what appropriate boundaries are, especially in different cultural contexts, he should consult with his formation advisor and TTPP Office.

Safe Environment and Child Protection

Seminarians participating in the Teaching Parish Program are required to observe the norms for the protection of children, youth, and vulnerable adults as described by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), the Archdiocese of Chicago Office for the Protection of Children & Youth, and the State of Illinois. Mundelein Seminary has an office of Safe Environment. All seminarians go through Virtus training and must keep up with all the required documentation. Under **NO** circumstance is any seminarian allowed to go to the TPP parish ministry if he has not complied with The Office for the Protection of Children & Youth.

Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect to the State of Illinois:

1. **Call 911** if a child is in immediate danger or has been injured.
2. In the State of Illinois, **by law**, seminarians are mandated reporters. All reports of known or suspected child abuse and/or neglect should be reported in 24 h to the Department of Children and Family Services 1.800.252.2873 or 217.524.2606 Outside of Illinois. After calling the DCFS, inform the Pastor and your immediate supervisor.
3. Seminarians are taught how to identify possible signs of neglect or abuse. Helpful information is also found on: www.illinois.gov/dcfs/Pages/default.aspx.
4. If child sexual abuse is reported to DCFS with an allegation against a cleric, employee or volunteer, you are also required to notify the Archdiocese of Chicago Office for Child Abuse Investigations and Review at 312.534.5205.

After reporting to State of Illinois:

1. After a report is made, the seminarian should inform TTPP Office and the Dean of Formation of Mundelein Seminary, Fr. Maina Waithaka.

Appendix

Guidelines for Communicating Electronically with Minors (June 2011, updated May 2022)

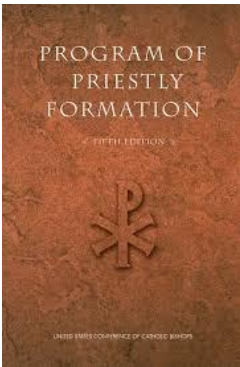
1. All decisions related to the means used to communicate electronically with minors should be made by a Pastor rather than an individual employee or volunteer, prior to the use of any tools.
2. All communication must conform to Archdiocesan Safe Environment Training and the Code of Conduct. Communication that violates the Code of Conduct will not be tolerated, regardless of

the medium used to convey it. Except in extraordinary circumstances, all communications between adults and minors should take place between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 9:00 p.m. This includes the posting of content to websites and social networking sites.

3. Do not contact minors using a personal email address. Only official Archdiocesan or parish accounts should be used for communication. Always copy parents and your supervisor on emails sent to minors. In the case of certain minors (i.e., elementary school and middle school students), only email parents and copy your supervisor. Before communicating with minors electronically, obtain written permission from parents to do so.
4. Do not collect email address and phone numbers from a minor.
5. Except in cases of emergency, do not call minors directly (e.g., on a minor's cellular phone). Instead, call parents' or family lines. Except in extraordinary circumstances, do not share your personal cell phone number with minors.
6. Do not communicate with minors individually via text message, No instant messaging.
7. When communicating with a minor, write or speak as if you are also communicating with their parents; the boundaries that must be respected in oral communication extend to electronic communication.
8. Do not add a minor to personal electronic mailing lists (e.g., when sending or forwarding an email unrelated to educational or ministry-based activities). If you receive an inappropriate personal communication from a minor (especially a communication that is sexual in nature), keep a copy of the message and report it to your Pastor and supervisor of your ministry (RE Director, Youth Minister, etc.). If Pastor not present report to your immediate supervisor and then upon return to the seminary to TTPP Office and your Formation Advisor.
9. If a parish or school has a group or organization page used strictly for education or ministry related communication, a seminarian may use it only with Direct permission from the Pastor These accounts must be registered to the school or parish, and the Pastor should have access to the passwords. If registered to individuals within an organization, DO NOT use them.
10. If a minor seeks association with your personal social networking page or account, you should refuse or ignore the minor's request (e.g., you should ignore the "friend request," and not become "friends" with the minor). Do not post pictures of minors without first obtaining a signed written release from the minor's parent(s) or guardian(s).
11. Do not "tag" pictures of minors.

Acknowledgements

The University of Saint Mary of the Lake/Mundelein Seminary gratefully acknowledges the work of many people in the development of the Tolton Teaching Parish Program, the writing of this manual, and the generation of the ideas contained herein. In particular, we are indebted to The St. Paul Seminary School of Divinity, St. Paul, Minnesota and St. Francis de Sales Seminary, Milwaukee, Wisconsin for sharing their many years of practical wisdom about Pastoral Formation carried out in a Teaching Parish Model.



"Pastoral formation means that seminarians learn how to take spiritual initiatives and direct a community into action or movement...the pastoral formation program should provide opportunities for seminarians to acquire the basic administrative skills necessary for effective pastoral leadership, recognizing that programs of continuing education and ongoing formation will be necessary to equip newly ordained priests to assume future responsibilities as pastors." PPF #239

Additional Resources

Program of Priestly Formation (PPF), USCCB, 2022 [\[LINK\]](#)

Pastores Dabo Vobis (PDV): Apostolic Exhortation of St. Pope John Paul II: 1992 [\[LINK\]](#)

Ratio Fundamentalis (Ratio) The Gift of Priestly Vocation, 2015 [\[LINK\]](#)

Optatum Totius: Decree on Priestly Training, 1965 [\[LINK\]](#)

Please visit <https://usml.edu/teachingparish/resources/> for additional documents and resources.

On behalf of all of us at the seminary and all the dioceses which are served through Mundelein Seminary, we thank you for your generosity of time and spirit in the formation of our future parish priests. Thank you!

Please know we keep you and parishes in our prayers.

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