

DECREE ON PRIESTLY TRAINING

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Prior to Vatican II, candidates for priesthood usually entered a “minor seminary” as teenagers and lived a semi-monastic life, which emphasized strict obedience to authority and rigorous personal discipline, but paid little attention to personal and psychological development. Screening for suitable candidates was virtually non-existent. The Council Fathers call for “major seminaries” for adult candidates, who are properly screened prior to admission and then properly formed to be spiritually, intellectually, and psychologically healthy individuals. (#4-6)

The decree also seeks a new type of theological training for priesthood. Prior to the Council, seminary professors followed a dogmatic approach, developed in the middle ages, which presented students with a catalogue of divinely revealed truths, many of them quite abstract. Exposure to Scripture was limited mostly to “proof texting,” i.e., taking a short biblical quote out of context to support a pre-conceived theological position. The Council Fathers call for a solid background in modern philosophy and modern methods of biblical interpretation. (#15-16)