

RELIGIOSORUM INSTITUTIO

Congregation for Religious

Careful Selection And Training Of Candidates For The States Of Perfection And Sacred Orders (S. C. Rel., 2 Feb., 1961).

An Instruction, Religiosorum institutio, to the Superiors of Religious Communities, Societies without vows, and Secular Institutes on the careful selection and training of candidates for the states of perfection and Sacred Orders is as follows.

Purpose, Binding Force, And Extent Of This Instruction

1. The Instruction Quantum Religiones

The training of religious and of others pursuing perfection and aspiring to the ranks of the clergy in the states of perfection has always been particularly close to the heart of the Sacred Congregation for Religious. Thus, in the Instruction Quantum Religiones, of 1 December, 1931, the Sacred Congregation instructed the superiors general of religious communities and clerical societies on the proper religious and clerical training of their subjects, and on the investigation to be carried out before profession and the reception of Sacred Orders.¹

The main purpose of this Instruction was, in so far as human frailty may permit, to forestall serious cases of defection not only from the religious state but likewise from the sacred ranks in which religious had been enrolled through the reception of Orders.

2. The Purpose Of This Instruction And Its Binding Force

Now, however, without any change in the chief directives and criteria contained in the aforesaid Instruction, this Sacred Congregation proposes to take up this same question again and to treat it anew (can. 22), especially as regards the selection and training of candidates and the investigation to be made prior to professions and Sacred Orders in order that the aforesaid Instruction may be in complete harmony with subsequent developments and with later pertinent pontifical documents.

3. The Principal Sources Of This Instruction

In the Jubilee Year of 1950 there was held at Rome an International Congress of the States of Perfection, in which specialists summoned from all over the world on the basis of their knowledge and experience, spoke and wrote on the selection, nurturing, and perfecting of religious and clerical vocations. These discussions were published in the four-volume Acta et Documenta of the Congress. Later, congresses were held in various nations and in them the same topics were taken up.

During this same period other documents of the utmost importance appeared. These were the encyclical letter of Pope Pius XI, of immortal memory, Ad Catholici Sacerdotii, of 20 December, 1935,² and various others published by Pope Pius XII, of venerable memory, to whom the states of perfection are so indebted, such as his Exhortation to the Clergy, Menti Nostrae, of 23 September, 1950,³ his encyclical letter, Sacra Virginitas, of 25 March, 1954,⁴ his allocution, Sollemnis Conventus, of 24 June, 1939, to

all clerical students and their superiors,⁵ his allocution, *Haud Mediocri*, of 11 February, 1958, to the superiors general of religious orders and congregations resident in Rome.⁶ and especially the Apostolic Constitution, *Sedes Sapientiae*, of 31 May, 1956, on religious, clerical and apostolic training of clerics in the states of perfection.⁷ Nor of any lesser value are those documents which the Sovereign Pontiff, John XXIII, happily reigning, has issued on the priesthood and priestly formation, both in his solemn allocution on the occasion of the first Roman Synod and likewise in the Synodal Constitutions.⁸ There was also published a reserved Circular Letter of the Sacred Congregation of the Sacraments on 27 December, 1955,^{8a} addressed to local Ordinaries for secular clerics, imposing an investigation of candidates before their promotion to Orders.

Certainly it was most opportune for, and even the duty of, this Sacred Congregation to incorporate the fruits of this longstanding and rich experience and evolution into a new Instruction, which would likewise serve as a particularized commentary on the Apostolic Constitution, *Sedes Sapientiae* (cf. n. 40 and the *Statuta Generalia*, art. 17).

4. To Whom This Instruction Is Addressed

This Instruction is addressed to the superiors of religious communities, societies living the common life, and secular institutes, especially as far as the last are concerned, if their members are incorporated into the institute as clerics. Therefore, although frequently, for the sake of convenience, only religious will be mentioned, the norms and criteria set forth in this Instruction are also applicable to the members of the other states of perfection (cf. *Stat. Gen.*, art. 16, §§ 1-2).

Likewise, although the Instruction refers especially to candidates for the clerical state, nevertheless those points which by their very nature deal with the selection and training of candidates for the states of perfection are, with due adaptations, to be applied also to lay religious, including religious women (*Ibid.*, §3, 2°).

I. The More Common Causes Of Defection

5. An Inquiry Into The Causes Of Defections

It is necessary at the very outset to set down the most frequent grounds alleged for defections and to lay before superiors the reasons which religious priests claim to be the causes why they lose interest in the life they have embraced and ask the Holy See for secularization or even for "laicization," i.e., reduction to the lay state. Attention must be drawn also to the pretexts under which these same religious priests presume to leave the religious life and return to the world on their own initiative, or even make so bold as to question before the Apostolic Dicastries their clerical obligations, especially celibacy. Once the causes of defections are known, superiors will be able to exercise more experienced care and vigilance either in examining the divine vocation of candidates or in strengthening and preserving it by their devoted efforts.

In general, the aforesaid religious claim either that they entered on this way of life and continued in it without a genuine divine vocation, or that they lost the genuine divine vocation during the period of their formation or in the early years of their ministerial life.

6. Undue Family Influence

Frequently such religious claim undue influence from parents and members of their family, inasmuch as

they were born into a large or poor family and thus were advised either by their parents or by other relatives to leave the paternal home and go to the seminary as a happy solution of family difficulties and were even at times pressured by request, persuasion, or even disguised threats, into embracing the life of perfection and the priestly life and continuing in it. As a result, they allege that their repugnance or reluctance to accept the religious clerical state, for which they had an aversion, was broken down.

7. Undue Influence Of Superiors And Directors

There were also those who lay at the door of their religious superiors and their spiritual directors the responsibility for their most difficult situation, claiming that these latter, although they had noticed in them no happiness in the religious clerical life, no spirit of piety, and no zeal as they grew older, nevertheless did not hesitate to urge them on, either because they hoped the subjects would do better in the future or because they were more interested in the number than in the quality of vocations, or because, blinded by a false sense of kindness toward the candidates, they threatened them with the danger of loss of eternal salvation if they left the religious clerical state.

8. Ignorance Of Obligations And Lack Of Liberty In Accepting Them

Not infrequently religious priests plead insufficient knowledge of religious and clerical obligations, especially celibacy, or uncertain will in advancing to perpetual profession or Sacred Orders. If they entered a religious seminary as young boys or in their early adolescent years with only a confused knowledge of the religious and ecclesiastical vocation or with a very uncertain will, these unfortunate religious and priests claim that they never got over this state of mind, once they had completed their studies and their years of formation. Nevertheless, they did not withdraw from the path on which they had entered either because they heedlessly followed their companions according to custom, or because, being bashful and incapable of any serious decision, they unwillingly went along with the urgings and counsels of their superiors. Hence they affirm that in making profession or receiving Orders they were not sufficiently aware of the obligations of the priestly life or did not accept them with full freedom.

9. Fear Of An Uncertain Future

At times such candidates, on the verge of Sacred Orders or perpetual profession and somewhat mature in age, finding themselves without academic degrees and untrained in any art or liberal profession, were afraid to leave the religious life, feeling deep down in their hearts that if they returned to the world, they could not make an upright living unless by manual labor, or would be obliged to make difficult and uncertain efforts to acquire a liberal profession. Therefore they regarded the decision to continue in the religious clerical life as a lesser evil.

10. Difficulty With Chastity

Sometimes these religious priests affirm that it is now impossible for them to observe chastity, first because of bad habits contracted in youth, which were sometimes corrected but still never completely eradicated, and secondly because of sexual tendencies of a pathological nature, which they feel cannot be brought under control either by ordinary or extraordinary means, even those of a spiritual order, in such a way that they frequently fall into the solitary sin.

11. Loss Of The Religious Spirit

Lastly, not infrequently there is adduced as a cause the loss of the religious spirit either because, under the insidious impact of present-day naturalism, these priests become incapable of discipline and

religious observance, or because, living in religious houses an indolent and unproductive life, deceived by the desire of life outside and ill-regulated pseudo-apostolic activism and neglecting the interior life, they fall victims to dangers of all kinds, which they do not avoid and do not even recognize.

12. Weakness And Subjective Character Of Such Arguments

Unfortunate religious priests bring forth these and other similar arguments, at times even attempting to make the Church responsible for their deplorable condition, as though the Church, through her ministers, had admitted them to the religious and priestly life without the necessary qualifications, or did not know how to train and protect them once they had been called unto the portion of the Lord. But, as the Sacred Congregation of the Sacraments states in the above-mentioned Circular Letter: "it cannot be denied that these charges made by the priests during the trials have only a shadowy appearance of truth, for often the only proof is the statement made by the plaintiff alone, a very interested party, and not by witnesses or documents proved in court."^{8b} Nor is this surprising since these unfortunate religious priests not infrequently take their present state of mind and psychic crisis, which has gradually evolved over a period of years, and unconsciously transfer it to the time of their profession and ordination, being unaware of the inner change which has taken place within themselves.

13. Removal Of All Appearance Of Justification For These Claims; Superiors' Obligation In Conscience

And yet the honor of the Church, the welfare of religious communities and the edification of the faithful demand of superiors most accurate diligence and untiring zeal in order not to provide even a vestige of foundation for priests advancing such claims.

Superiors should see to it that they be not responsible for the mistakes or errors of those in charge of selecting and training young men. This will be the case if they are culpably uninformed of the norms laid down by the Church, or ignore them, or apply them carelessly; if, ignoring the necessary discernment of spirits, they admit into religious life and allow to remain therein those who have not been called by God, or if they neglect to give proper formation to those who are evidently called and to safeguard them in their divine vocation. Therefore, this Sacred Congregation regards it as its duty to exhort superiors most earnestly always to keep before their eyes the norms herein set forth, being mindful of the grave warning of this Sacred Congregation in its Instruction, *Illud Saepius*, of 18 August, 1915: "When a religious leaves his order, the superior of that same order, if he has diligently examined his conscience before God, will very frequently be well aware that he himself is not without fault and has failed in his duty. This neglect of duty is often verified either in the admission of candidates or in training them to the religious life, or, after they have made vows, in keeping watch over them."²

II. The Care To Be Taken In The Selection Of Candidates For The State Of Perfection And The Clerical State

A) General Warnings

14. Quality Before Quantity

First of all, although vocations to the state of evangelical perfection and to the priesthood are to be promoted by every means (*Stat. Gen.*, art. 32), still care must be taken lest an immoderate desire to increase numbers should interfere with quality and selection. Let all be convinced that, unless great zeal for an abundance of students is closely bound up with proper care for their formation, such zeal does not produce the desired effects, and even does just the contrary. For just as it is evident that, with the help of

God's grace, nothing contributes more to inspiring vocations than the exemplary life of those who have been properly formed, in the same way nothing is more conducive to impeding the growth of vocations or to suffocating them than the example of mistakes which are unfortunately beheld in those who are without proper solid formation. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His justice and all these things will be added unto you. We can say, and all superiors should repeat: Let us seek out quality first of all, because then, if we may use such an expression, quantity will automatically be present by itself. This will be the concern of Divine Providence. It is not our task to look for numbers, since it is not given to us to inspire vocations in souls. In this truth there is contained the whole of the theology of a vocation: it comes from God and only God can give it. It is our task to nurture this vocation, to enrich it, and to adorn it . . . This is the guarantee and promise of your future prosperity."¹⁰ As a matter of fact, experience teaches us that God favors with an abundance of vocations those religious communities which flourish with the rigor of discipline and carry out their own proper role in the Mystical Body of Christ, and that, on the contrary, those communities suffer a lack of candidates, whose members do not comply faithfully with His divine counsels. Wherefore, those who are suffering from a shortage of vocations and anxiously devote themselves to collecting them, using at times methods and procedures which are certainly not to be recommended, would do well to exert the greatest care in training in the best way possible the candidates who spontaneously come to them or are drawn to them by prudent means and are already entrusted to them by the Church and Divine Providence. For the rest, let us not be unmindful of the teaching of Holy Scripture, which the Sovereign Pontiff recalls to us in such timely fashion: "Gedeon, who had at his disposal an immense multitude of men apparently ready and prepared to fight all battles and conquer all difficulties, heard the voice of the Lord declaring that to accomplish hard and difficult tasks, rather than large numbers, the courage of a few was sufficient."¹¹

15. Positive Signs Of A Vocation

It will be helpful to recall, then, that only those candidates can be admitted who are free of any canonical impediment and who, at the same time, show positive signs of a divine vocation, conformably to the prescriptions of the Apostolic Constitution, *Sedes Sapientiae*, and the *Statuta Generalia*, art. 31, § 2, 1°, 2°. Let this be the first and absolute principle in selecting vocations. For, as we are clearly admonished by the same Apostolic Constitution, *Sedes Sapientiae*: "A call from God to enter the religious or the sacerdotal state is so necessary that, if this is lacking, the very foundation on which the whole edifice rests is wanting. For whom God has not called, His grace does not move nor assist."¹²

The canonical fitness of the candidate for bearing the obligations of the institute (can. 538; *Stat. Gen.*, art. 31, § 1) must be evinced by positive arguments (can. 973, §3), and it must consist in all the requirements and, according to differences in age, all the physical, intellectual and moral qualities, either of nature or of grace, whereby a young man is rightly prepared for the worthy acceptance and performance of religious and priestly obligations (*Stat. Gen.*, art. 33):

16. Moral Certainty Of The Fitness Of Candidates

Candidates should not be admitted to religious seminaries except after careful investigation and the securing of detailed information on each individual. In seminaries and novitiates the necessary proofs and investigations are to be repeated with faithful observance of the General Statutes of the Apostolic Constitution *Sedes Sapientiae*, art. 31-34. Doubtful fitness is not enough but "as often as there still remains some prudent doubt as to the fitness of a candidate, it is wrong to permit him to contract obligations (can. 571, § 2), especially if they be definitive, (can. 575, § 1; 637).¹³ Still greater care must be exercised in this regard if there be question of Sacred Orders.¹⁴ The period of trial is to be continued as provided for in canon law, and all possible means must be employed which may be useful in acquiring this moral certitude" (can. 571, § 2; 574, § 2; *Stat. Gen.*, art. 34, § 2, 1°, 2°, 3°). Appropriately,

therefore, all due proportion being guarded as to the different degrees of probation and selection, should superiors and all those engaged in deciding vocations apply to themselves the canonical prescriptions whereby the bishop is warned "that he should confer Sacred Orders on no one unless he is morally certain, by positive arguments, of the candidate's canonical fitness; otherwise, he not only sins most grievously himself but exposes himself to the danger of sharing in the sins of others" (can. 973, § 3). For the selection and training of a religious candidate is a step toward sacred ordination and in the ordination of religious, as Pius XI wisely warns, the Bishop "always places full confidence in the judgment of their superiors."¹⁵ Consequently, in case of doubt as to fitness, it is certainly unlawful to proceed further for there is involved something on which the welfare of the Church and the salvation of souls depend in a special manner, and in which consequently, the safer opinion must always be followed. "This safer opinion in the question now before us, does more to protect the best interests of ecclesiastical candidates since it turns them aside from a road on which they might be led on to eternal ruin."¹⁶

17. The Responsibility Of The Internal And External Forum; Both Should Use The Same Principles

In this most important task the chief responsibility lies with major superiors. It is their work to organize and direct this entire activity, to be acquainted thoroughly with the norms set down by the Apostolic See, and to make sure they are faithfully carried out. On them, consequently, in this matter lies the greatest burden of responsibility (Stat. Gen., art. 27, §1). But major superiors need the helpful cooperation of all who are in charge of selecting and training candidates, whether they be superiors and directors in the external forum or confessors and spiritual prefects, each within the limits of his office. For some of the signs of a divine vocation or lack of it, by their very nature, come to the knowledge of superiors in the external forum, while others, since they belong rather to the intimate realm of mind and conscience, can oftentimes be known only by confessors and spiritual directors. All these individuals accept a burden in conscience in the choice of priests and religious and in their admission to profession and to ordination, and through their ignorance or negligence they may have a share in the sins of others. Nevertheless, they must use different methods in discharging their duties. Directors in the external forum must do their duty exteriorly according to the norms of common and particular law. The case is different with confessors who are bound by "the inviolable sacramental seal," and with spiritual directors in the stricter sense (cf. Stat. Gen., art. 28, § 2, 9^o), who are likewise bound to secrecy "by virtue of the religious office they have accepted." Confessors and spiritual directors should strive, but only in the internal forum, to see that those who either are not called by God or who have become unworthy should not go farther. But although the procedure in the internal and the external forum is different, it is of the utmost importance that "all should use the same principles in testing vocations and taking appropriate precautions to the end that young men may be prudently admitted to profession and to Orders."¹⁷

18. The Role Of The Confessor And The Spiritual Director

Confessors have the grave duty of warning, urging, and ordering unfit subjects, privately and in conscience, with no regard for human respect, to withdraw from the religious and clerical life. Although they may appear to have all the dispositions required for sacramental absolution, they are, nevertheless, not for that reason to be regarded as worthy of profession or ordination. The principles governing the sacramental forum, especially those pertinent to the absolution of sins, are different from the criteria whereby, according to the mind of the Church, judgment is formed on fitness for the priesthood and the religious life. Consequently, penitents who are certainly unworthy of profession and ordination can be absolved if they show proof of true sorrow for their sins and seriously promise to drop the idea of going on to the religious or clerical state, but they must be effectively barred from profession and ordination. Likewise spiritual directors are under obligation in the non-sacramental internal forum, to judge of the divine vocation of those entrusted to them and are also under the obligation to warn and privately urge

those who are unfit, to withdraw voluntarily from the life they have embraced.

19. The Careful Choice Of Confessors And Spiritual Directors

Lastly, using this occasion, this Sacred Congregation earnestly stresses for superiors both the importance and the necessity of carefully choosing as confessors and spiritual directors in religious seminaries men properly trained and gifted with great prudence and perspicacity in understanding the minds of the young (Stat. Gen., art. 24, § 2). Superiors themselves must encourage a watchful and uniform policy among all those dedicated to the formation of the young lest they allow unqualified candidates to ascend to Orders.

20. The Cooperation Of Candidates; Recommendation Of Sincerity And Docility

Finally, candidates should be prudently urged to cooperate in the formation of a correct judgment on their vocation, for to them this is of the utmost importance. They should understand correctly that leaving the religious life and the ranks of the clergy is not always and for everyone an evil. It is not an evil but is actually something good for those who are not called or are not properly disposed. Indeed, infidelity resulting in the loss of a divine vocation is certainly dangerous, but the situation would be still more serious if those who are not called or who are unworthy were blindly to take on religious and clerical obligations. Therefore, they are especially urged to practice simplicity and sincerity in opening their hearts, and docility and perfect obedience to the counsels and precepts of their confessors, directors, and superiors: "According as young men will be known for their integrity and sincerity, all the more effectively can they be assisted by their superiors, when the time comes to decide if they are divinely called to enter upon the way of perfection and to receive Sacred Orders."¹⁸

Consequently, all candidates should be well aware of the mind of the Church on the manifestation of conscience as set forth in canon 530, § 2, and as explained in the Statuta Generalia.¹⁹

21. The Time For Definitive Selection

As for the time when the definitive selection is to be made, every means should be diligently employed to insure that this selection takes place within the time limits determined by law. Superiors shall bear well in mind that only rarely should a further extension of probation be requested (cf. Stat. Gen., art. 34, §3). The excellent norm laid down in the encyclical letter, *Ad Catholici Sacerdotii*, should be observed: "And although it is better not to postpone this selection unduly, since in this matter delay usually leads to error and causes harm, nevertheless, whatever may have been the motive for the delay, just as soon as it is evident that there has been a deviation from the right path, then, with no trace of human respect, the remedy must be applied."²⁰

B) The Required Freedom

22. Freedom: A Sign Of A Divine Vocation

Among the requisites for a genuine divine vocation there is rightly listed the free will of the candidates or a choice free of all moral pressure along with perfect knowledge of the obligations of their state. Full freedom is prescribed by ecclesiastical law for the reception of Orders and for the validity of the novitiate and profession²¹ and, in virtue of art. 32, § 3 of the Statuta Generalia, in the recruitment of vocations everything must be avoided which could diminish the freedom of the candidates or improperly affect it. Particularly in the free acceptance of this counsel there is discerned the special call from God or

the movement of the Holy Spirit, who interiorly enlightens and inspires a person, who has the other qualifications, to pursue the evangelical counsels or to embrace the priesthood. For the divine inspiration required by St. Pius X²² in a true vocation, or that marked attraction for sacred duties mentioned by Pius XI in his encyclical letter, *Ad Catholici Sacerdotii*,²³ is discerned in their right propensity and intention of mind or the choice of their free will (cf. can. 538), rather than in an inner urging of conscience and sensible attraction which may be lacking.

23. Superiors Should Seek Out Supernatural Motives

Since it is the task of superiors to pass judgment on the vocation of their candidates, they should the more carefully examine the spontaneous response of these candidates or the decision of their free will. Let them examine very frequently into the supernatural motives of vocations in their students, especially if they come from poor families, or are without the means of leading an upright life in the world, or are lacking academic degrees, or if they are known for narrow-mindedness, anxiety or ambivalence, worried by scruples, or completely incapable of facing up to anything important. To provide fuller knowledge of candidates, they can request of them an "historical sketch" of their vocation in so far as this may be possible. Thus they can be brought face to face with genuine personal reflection on their own vocation.

24. Fatherly Help For Those Who Suffer Interior Or Exterior Trials

Superiors should not fail to remind candidates in a fatherly way that if any one, as the result of undue influence from parents or relatives, or because of financial difficulties, feels himself being forced into profession or ordination against his will, he should confidently make the situation known to his superiors or confessor. These latter should show themselves ready to provide assistance to enable the candidate to escape this danger unscathed, providing ways and means, if possible, to help him conveniently obtain a respectable livelihood in the world.²⁴

25. Acquiescence To The Judgment Of Directors Of The Forum

When any student, on the advice of his confessor or spiritual director, informs his superiors that he does not have the qualifications for the priesthood, then the superior should accept this statement and make no further investigation. If the candidate in question is a subdeacon or deacon, then, with his consent, the superior should take up with the Apostolic See his reduction to the lay state.²⁵

26. How To Handle The Hesitant

In the case of candidates who are undecided and apprehensive and who cannot make up their minds either to accept or leave the religious life or to receive or decline Orders, superiors should dismiss those whom they recognize as unworthy. Those whom they deem qualified should be exhorted to make vows or to agree to be ordained. Nevertheless, they should refrain from forcing profession or ordination on them and should leave the final decision to their own free will, avoiding all undue influence which could give the impression of drawing them on to profession or ordination by coaxing or by threatening spiritual disaster and the pains of hell which they would incur if they withdrew from profession or ordination.²⁶

C) Necessary Knowledge Of The Obligations

27. Candidates Should Be Taught The Obligations To Be Assumed

Candidates Must make vows and receive Orders deliberately; otherwise they would not be free. Superiors are seriously obliged in conscience to make sure that aspirants and novices as well as students throughout the entire period of their studies be carefully instructed on the duties and obligations of the religious and clerical life. The duties and obligations of the religious and clerical life should be discussed frequently by novice masters and spiritual prefects, each in his own field, by means of timely warnings and the usual instructions and exhortations. Preachers should likewise take up this subject in retreats before perpetual profession and sacred ordinations. Lastly, in their explanation of the tract on Orders, professors of moral theology should provide lectures on clerical duties and obligations, and candidates for Orders should be questioned on these points in their examinations.

28. Denunciation Of Temerity In Embracing The Religious And Clerical Life

It is commendable to keep the sanctity of the religious life and the dignity and excellence of the priesthood frequently placed before candidates from the very beginning and throughout the whole period of their formation, and defection from a genuine divine vocation is justly censured. But similarly, and even more severely, should rashness in embracing the religious and priestly state be denounced and its manifold dangers pointed out for those who either were not called by God or have become unworthy of a divine vocation, but who venture to make vows or to receive Sacred Orders. Superiors should form the conscience of candidates, carefully avoiding all error and confusion in their teaching on the religious and priestly vocation, and on virginity and Christian marriage. Let all be firmly convinced that the time for sounding out a vocation does not lapse completely with the first admission of the candidate, but continues on to perpetual profession and ordination to the priesthood.²⁷

D) The Required Chastity

29. Importance Of This Point; Young Persons Are To Be Properly Instructed And Warned Of Its Dangers

Among the proofs and signs of a divine vocation the virtue of chastity is regarded as absolutely necessary "because it is largely for this reason that candidates for the ranks of the clergy choose this type of life for themselves and persevere in it." Consequently:

- a) "Watchful and diligent care is to be taken that candidates for the clergy should have a high esteem and love for chastity, and should safeguard it in their souls.
- b) "Not only, therefore, are clerics to be informed in due time on the nature of priestly celibacy, the chastity which they are to observe (cf. can. 132), and the demands of this obligation, but they are likewise to be warned of the dangers into which they can fall on this account. Consequently, candidates for Sacred Orders are to be exhorted to protect themselves from dangers from their earliest years."²⁸
- c) Although virginity embraced for the kingdom of heaven is more excellent than matrimony, nevertheless, candidates for Sacred Orders should not be unaware of the nobility of married life as exemplified in Christian marriage established by the plan of God. Therefore, let them be so instructed that, with a clear understanding of the advantages of Christian matrimony, they may deliberately and freely embrace the greater good of priestly and religious chastity.
- d) But should superiors find a candidate unable to observe ecclesiastical celibacy and practice priestly chastity, then, completely ignoring any other outstanding qualities, they should bar him from the religious life and the priesthood (cf. Stat. Gen., art. 34, § 2, 4°), conforming to the following directives and using all prudence and discretion in the application of the same, namely: