



The Sulpicians

A TRADITION OF PRIESTLY FORMATION

The Prayer of Father Olier

*O Jesus, living in Mary,
Come and live in your servants,
In the spirit of your holiness,
In the fullness of your power,
In the perfection of your ways,
In the truth of your virtues,
In the communion of your mysteries:
Overcome every oppressing force
In your Spirit,
For the glory of the Father.
Amen.*





CHURCH OF SAINT-SULPICE (INSIDE)



The Sulpicians

A TRADITION OF PRIESTLY FORMATION





JEAN-JACQUES OLIER

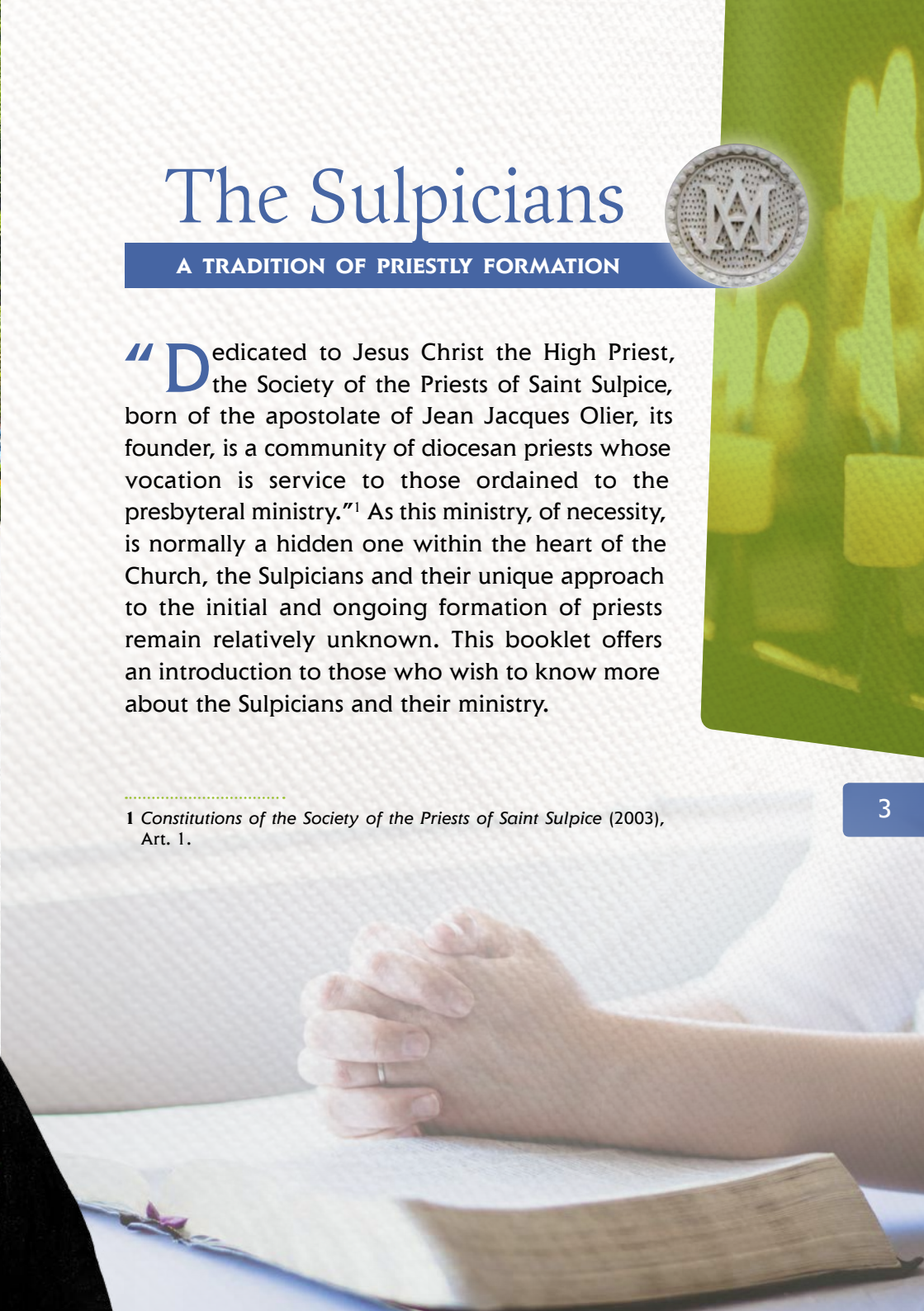
The Sulpicians

A TRADITION OF PRIESTLY FORMATION



“Dedicated to Jesus Christ the High Priest, the Society of the Priests of Saint Sulpice, born of the apostolate of Jean Jacques Olier, its founder, is a community of diocesan priests whose vocation is service to those ordained to the presbyteral ministry.”¹ As this ministry, of necessity, is normally a hidden one within the heart of the Church, the Sulpicians and their unique approach to the initial and ongoing formation of priests remain relatively unknown. This booklet offers an introduction to those who wish to know more about the Sulpicians and their ministry.

¹ *Constitutions of the Society of the Priests of Saint Sulpice* (2003), Art. 1.



ORIGINS OF THE SOCIETY

When seminaries were first established in Europe in response to the directives of the Council of Trent (1545-1563), most were founded by diocesan bishops who wanted to improve the formation of their clergy. Preeminent among these reforming bishops was Saint Charles Borromeo (1538-1584). These seminaries constituted a reform of the clergy from above, targeted at adolescents.

In contrast, when the reforms of Trent were finally implemented in France, many seminaries were founded from below, i.e., at the initiative of reforming priests, such as Saint Vincent de Paul and Saint Jean Eudes, and oriented toward adults. Among the most influential of these priests was Father Jean-Jacques Olier (1608-1657), pastor of the Church of Saint Sulpice in Paris. Along with a group of close associates, he founded the first seminaries in the Sulpician tradition.

These early Sulpicians, driven by a deep desire to provide effective spiritual leaders who would renew the Church in France, were released by their bishops to the Society for this purpose. While ministering in seminaries as a community of like-minded men, they remained diocesan priests. Their ministry and approach to priestly formation were so successful that more and more French bishops requested their services in their dioceses.

The Church has recognized that the Sulpicians have a vocation within a vocation, and today the Society is designated as a Society of Apostolic Life of Pontifical Right. Today's Sulpicians continue in the footsteps of Father Olier, understanding with him that "God's purpose for the Society is to spread the priestly spirit in the Church."²

IN SERVICE TO BISHOPS

What constitutes "a vocation within a vocation"? The Second Vatican Council teaches that the ministry of forming diocesan priests is "an entrusted work."³ While the ultimate responsibility for priestly formation belongs to bishops, they normally confide this ministry to others specially trained to carry it out. Within this context, the Sulpicians understand their vocation as a particular expression of this entrusted ministry, remaining diocesan priests yet released by their bishops to a life-long commitment in service to diocesan priesthood.



THE MAIN CHAPEL, ISSY-LES-MOULINEAUX

² *Mémoires* 7, 23.

³ *Optatam totius ecclesiae*, 22: "fidenter concredunt munus."



The Society accomplishes its vocation by placing itself at the service of those bishops who have confidence in its spirit and ask for its collaboration. The confreres whom the Society places at the disposal of bishops receive from them the mission required to accomplish their ministry, while remaining responsible to their superiors and faithful to the specific characteristics of the Society.⁴

The Sulpicians understand this availability to bishops in a fivefold manner. First, *Sulpicians remain incardinated in their dioceses of origin*. Each member of the Society maintains his diocesan roots while being released by his bishop for service to priestly formation within the context of the larger Church. As Father Olier once wrote:

However many members it may have, [the Society] professes that it will not become a [religious] Congregation, so that its love and care may be entirely for the Church of Jesus Christ, and, above all, for the holy clergy, which is her entire light, fervor, power, sanctification, and example.⁵

⁴ *Constitutions*, Art. 2.

⁵ *Divers Écrits* 1, 87.

Second, *the Sulpicians do not incardinate their members*. Each member is permanently released by his bishop for service to the ministry of priestly formation. As diocesan priests, when a Sulpician leaves the Society or is dismissed, he reverts to his diocese without an elaborate canonical procedure.⁶ Further, Sulpicians take special care to become involved in the local presbyterate and various ministries of the dioceses where they serve, seeing this involvement as a means to make themselves better suited to the formation of local diocesan priests.⁷

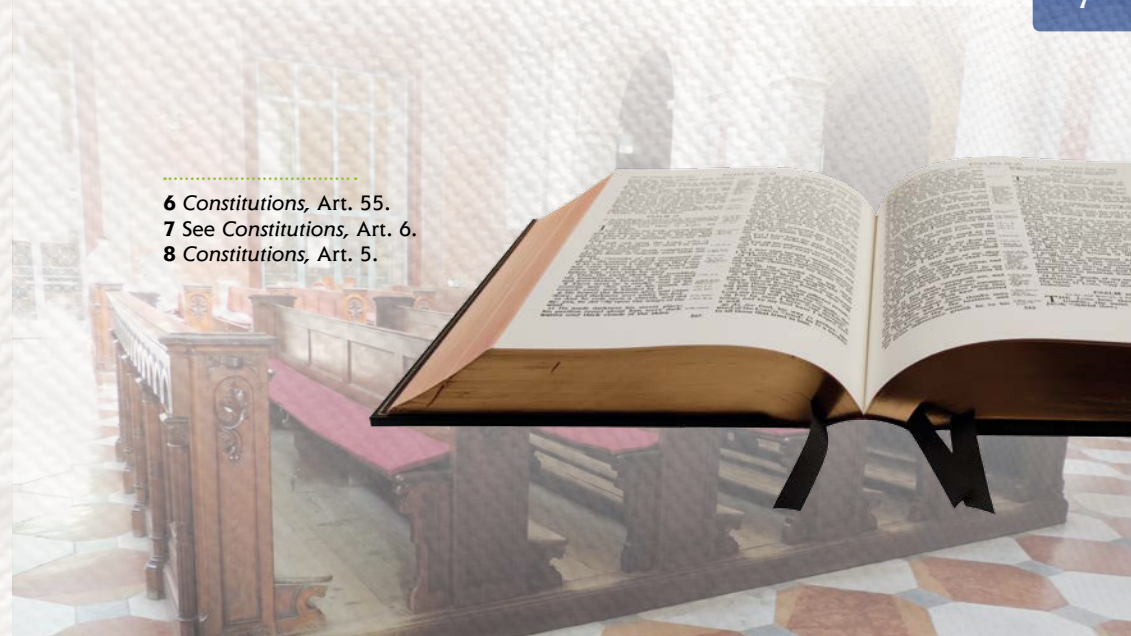
Third, *the Sulpicians constantly and consistently seek docile communion with the bishops and the Holy Father*.

The mission that they have received will lead the members of the Society to draw closer and to be more deeply united with the bishops and the Holy Father. In keeping with a long tradition of loyalty to the successor of Peter, the Society will seek to promote in its own members and in the priests whom it educates an untiring attachment to the person of the Holy Father and a complete docility to his teachings and directives.⁸

⁶ *Constitutions*, Art. 55.

⁷ See *Constitutions*, Art. 6.

⁸ *Constitutions*, Art. 5.





THE SULPICIAN SEMINARY AT ISSY-LES MOULINEAUX

Fourth, *Sulpician ministry is always subject to episcopal supervision*. While religious seminaries are exempt from episcopal oversight except in certain very limited areas,⁹ “The Society exercises its mission in complete fidelity to the decisions of the universal Church and the directives of bishops’ conferences.”¹⁰ In a particular way, they follow in the steps of Father Olier who always considered the local ordinary to be the first superior of the seminary.¹¹

Fifth, *The Sulpicians cooperate with the Bishops by assisting them to fulfill their missionary obligations to the larger Church*. They are keenly aware of the teaching of *Christus Dominus*, which says,

⁹ See Canon 259.

¹⁰ *Constitutions*, Art. 9.

¹¹ *Constitutions*, Art. 142.

By divine institution and the requirement of their apostolic office, each [bishop] in concert with his fellow bishops is responsible for the Church... Let them strive... to see to it that suitable sacred ministers... are prepared for the missions and other areas suffering from a lack of clergy....¹²

The Society has from its very beginnings been marked by an apostolic and missionary spirit that first led the Sulpicians to the continent of North America (1657) and later to Asia (1923), South America (1949), and Africa (1955). This particular ministry remains one of the most important marks of the Society:

Collaborating with the bishops, the Society wishes to share in the solicitude for the whole Church and to take part in the mutual aid among local churches. Consequently, its members may be called upon to exercise their ministries in countries distant from their native lands. Wherever they work, “they will organize their pastoral activity in such a way that it will serve to spread the gospel among non-Christians” (*Ad gentes*, 39).¹³

¹² *Christus Dominus*, 6.

¹³ *Constitutions*, Art. 3.



SEMINARIANS AT THE SULPICIAN SEMINARY IN HUE, VIETNAM

A UNIQUE PRIESTLY IDENTITY

The members of the Society of the Priests of Saint Sulpice differ from other groups of diocesan priests involved in priestly formation in at least three ways. First, *Sulpicians are a community of Apostolic Life of Pontifical Right*.¹⁴ As such, the Society has its own community life and authority structures that resemble those of religious communities. From its very beginning, the Society has put great stress on a collegial lifestyle for the sake of the mission of priestly formation.

The Priests of Saint Sulpice should be convinced that, by the very fact of their common vocation, their various functions are complementary. Everyone should cooperate in seeing that the work and experience of all the confreres benefit the common effort.¹⁵

They are united by the bonds of priestly charity and by the resolve to serve priests and future priests, under the authority of their superiors (C. 738), remaining faithful to the *Constitutions* (C. 731), and with the support and demands of life in common.¹⁶

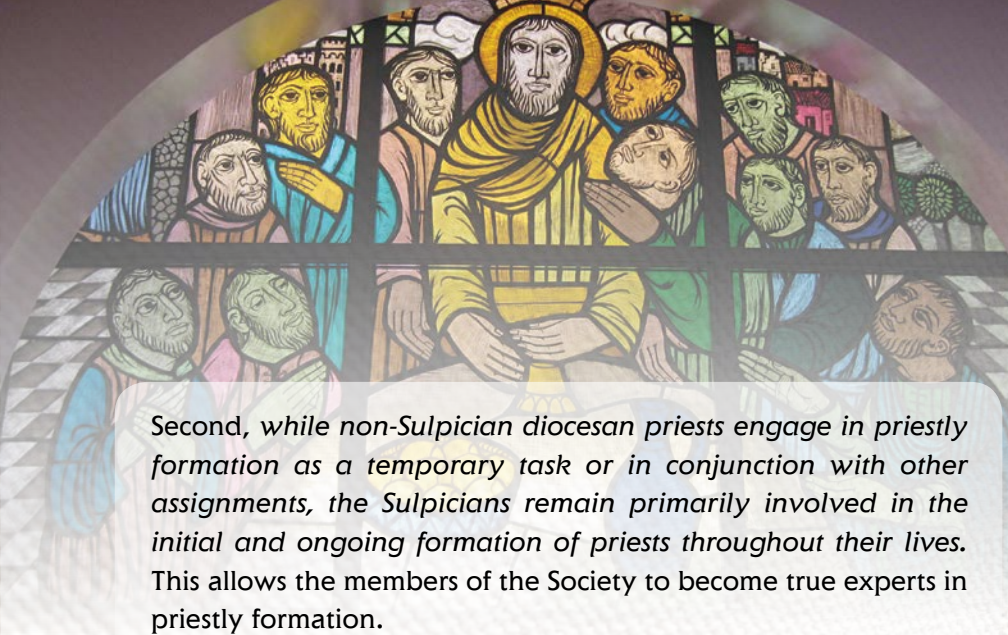
As a community, the Sulpicians train and assign¹⁷ their own members, elect or appoint their own superiors, and provide for the eventual retirement of members.

¹⁴ See Canon 731.1.

¹⁵ *Constitutions*, Art. 7.

¹⁶ *Constitutions*, Art. 4.

¹⁷ Sulpician appointments to seminaries must be approved by the local ordinary. See *Constitutions*, Art. 110 O.R.A.



Second, while non-Sulpician diocesan priests engage in priestly formation as a temporary task or in conjunction with other assignments, the Sulpicians remain primarily involved in the initial and ongoing formation of priests throughout their lives. This allows the members of the Society to become true experts in priestly formation.

Third, the Sulpicians have a distinctive spirituality and a distinctive method of priestly formation. They are deeply rooted in the traditions of the French School of Spirituality, that great movement for spiritual rebirth that arose in seventeenth-century France under the inspiration of Pierre Cardinal de Bérulle. It became amplified and popularized in the thought of such mystics as Charles de Condren, Jean-Jacques Olier, Saint Jean Eudes, Saint Jean-Baptiste de la Salle, and Saint Louis-Marie de Montfort.¹⁸

When the Sulpicians accept responsibility for a particular priestly formation program, they enter into an agreement with the responsible bishop(s) who is asked to respect their specific form of community life, their distinctive spirituality, and their method of priestly formation.¹⁹ These agreements lead to a relationship that may rightly be described as a collaboration within which the rights and duties of the two parties are clearly defined. The bishop

¹⁸ See Raymond Deville, *L'École française de spiritualité*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 2008). The English and Spanish translations of this work are, respectively, idem, *The French School of Spirituality: An Introduction and Reader* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1987) and *La Escuela Francesa de Espiritualidad – Ayer y Hoy* (Bogotá: Ediciones Montfortianas, 2007). See also, Yves Krumenacker, *L'École française de spiritualité* (Paris: Cerf, 1998).

¹⁹ *Constitutions*, Art. 9.



or bishops, on the one hand, retain the authority to ensure that the priestly formation program conforms to ecclesiastical norms. The Sulpicians, on the other hand, retain the freedom to regulate their own internal life and to infuse the formation program with their own distinctive spirituality and pedagogy. To work well, this mutual relationship requires constant communication and trust on the part of both parties.



A DISTINCTIVE METHOD OF PRIESTLY FORMATION

Since Vatican II's document *Optatam totius ecclesiae*, the Church has tirelessly renewed its efforts to ensure an optimal initial and ongoing formation of priests.²⁰ This work has led to a series of distinctive marks that define the contemporary seminary: the four dimensions of formation (human, spiritual, intellectual, pastoral), a daily rhythm of prayer that includes the Liturgy of the Hours and the Eucharist, days of recollection, an emphasis on *lectio divina*, the encouragement of personal and communal devotions, especially to the Eucharist, Mary, and the

saints, an intense formation in celibate chastity, an emphasis on affective maturity, and the like. While the Sulpician system contains all these elements, they are often nuanced in particular ways by our tradition. Together, they constitute ten distinctive characteristics of the Sulpician method of priestly formation.²¹

²⁰ The most influential of these documents is, of course, *Pastores dabo vobis (PDV)*, the 1992 post-synodal apostolic exhortation of Pope Saint John Paul II. This document forms the foundation of the revised universal program of priestly formation, *the Ratio Fundamental Institutionis Sacerdotalis [Ratio]* (2016).

²¹ Article 14 of the *Constitutions* articulates five of these specifically, the other five are scattered throughout the document.

A Christocentric Trinitarianism

Throughout his writings, Father Olier recounts doing everything “for the honor of the most Holy Trinity, the inexhaustible source of all good things.”²² He consistently calls priests to model themselves after the Trinity, the supreme example of love and self-donation.

They do so by practicing the “virtue of religion,” which calls every Christian to participate in the Lord Jesus’ continual self-offering of adoration in order to give to the Father all that is due. The Sulpician motto, *Vivere summe Deo in Christo Jesu*, expresses this sentiment well, reminding everyone that they must constantly die to themselves inwardly so that they may live fully for God in Christ Jesus, expressing the Lord’s life and virtues in all that they do. With Saint Paul, they constantly strive to embody the truth, “It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.”²³

Such configuration to the life of Christ is possible only through the action of the Holy Spirit, to which every priest is called to surrender. One of Father Olier’s favorite phrases, “*se laisser à l’Esprit*” (Abandon yourself to the Holy Spirit), expresses this well. Such surrender lies at the heart of the Sulpician method of

²² See, for example, his *Mémoires autobiographiques*, vol. 1, p. 1, and *Pietas seminarii*, 2.

²³ Gal 2, 20; *Pietas seminarii*, 1.





VISIT OF THE MAJOR SEMINARY OF ISSY-LES-MOULINEAUX WITH POPE FRANCIS, 2018

discernment, and guides its understanding of priestly formation. As Father Olier also reminds us, the gift of the Holy Spirit enables the priest to conform to the image of the Trinity in continual, self-effacing love for others.

Union with Christ, the Eternal High Priest

In all aspects of priestly formation, the Sulpician tradition emphasizes the necessity of a close relationship with Jesus Christ, the Eternal High Priest. All priests participate in a unique fashion in the one priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the source of all priesthood, the Good Shepherd who calls others to follow in His footsteps in order to “feed” His flock (John 21, 15-19). Sulpician formation strives to ensure that new priests are truly configured unto Christ, Prophet, Priest, and King, in order to exercise properly and fully the priestly ministries of Word, Sacrament, and Pastoral Charity.²⁴

²⁴ Cf. PDV, 46.

An Emphasis on Word and Sacrament

Long before the Second Vatican Council described the primary ministry of priests as a ministry of Word and Sacrament,²⁵ Father Olier emphasized these aspects of priestly identity. He wrote:

God has two treasures for which he made the Church a depository: the first is his body and precious blood; the second is the Word or His Scripture, His divine testament, which is the deposit of His secrets and divine wishes. ...Because this sacred treasure of Scripture has been given with confidence into the hands of the Church, which has then confided it to the priest so that it may be heard by and explained to the people,... it should be accorded the greatest respect and reverence it merits, as Saint Augustine remarks when he says that he wants us to give the same respect to the least syllables of Scripture that we give to the particles of the Blessed Sacrament, because they are like envelopes, curtains and sacraments which contain the Holy Spirit, being the ordinary instrument through which He acts in the Church.²⁶

Olier himself exemplified this dual devotion. To honor the Word he enshrined the Bible in his room and encouraged this custom in Sulpician seminaries. He practiced daily reading of Scripture for an hour a day and

²⁵ See *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 4-5; also PDV, 26 and *Constitutions*, Art. 33 O.R.A.

²⁶ Jean-Jacques Olier, *Le Traité des Saints Ordres*, 125-26.



FATHER OLIER'S BIBLE

invited the Sulpicians and seminarians to practice a similar daily *lectio divina*. So intense was his personal devotion to the Word that he insisted on teaching the Scriptures in the seminary himself. His own writings reveal a firm foundation in the Scriptures, especially in the letters of Saint Paul and the Gospel of John.

To honor the sacraments, Olier equally emphasized their role in sanctifying priests and the faithful, especially through regular and intense devotion to the Holy Eucharist,²⁷ which Vatican Council II calls “the source and summit of the Christian life.”²⁸ Such devotion leads to an interior transformation through identification with Christ’s continual sacrifice of Himself in the Holy Spirit to the glory and honor of the Father. Underlining the closeness of the priesthood and the Eucharist, Olier invoked the transforming power of the Eucharist:

According to Saint Paul, being a living victim, *hostiam viventem*, does not mean that we merely have the outward appearance of death, but rather that we be alive interiorly, that one’s interior life be like that of the sacred host on the altar... in which there is a divine life, a holy life, a spiritual life of union with God....²⁹

²⁷ For example, *La Journée Chrétienne* (Paris: Jacques Langlois, 1655), *passim*, and *Pietas seminarii*, 2. Father Olier’s consideration of the office of priesthood in *Le Traité des Saints Ordres* also shows a consistent identification of the priest with the Eucharist.

²⁸ *Lumen gentium*, 11.

²⁹ *Divers écrits*, 1, 19.



A MASS CELEBRATED IN THE SMALL CHAPEL AT ISSY-LES-MOULINEAUX

This intertwined devotion to Word and Sacrament remains essential to the Sulpician approach to priestly formation.

A Love of the Church and the Priesthood

From its very beginnings, the Society has been marked by a profound love of the Church and the priesthood. Father Olier understood that the priesthood was a key element to reform in the Church. If the evangelizers could be remade, then the laity would follow. He understood that the formation of holy priests would ensure that the Church increased in holiness permanently as they offered their lives in pastoral ministry. He wrote:

God wishes me to renew his Church by instructing many priests in the ecclesiastical spirit so that they will then go forth to serve God wherever He is pleased to call them. ...God’s purpose for the Society is to spread the priestly spirit in the Church.³⁰

The Society has always maintained this strong connection between the priesthood and the Church, for both are instruments of God’s love.

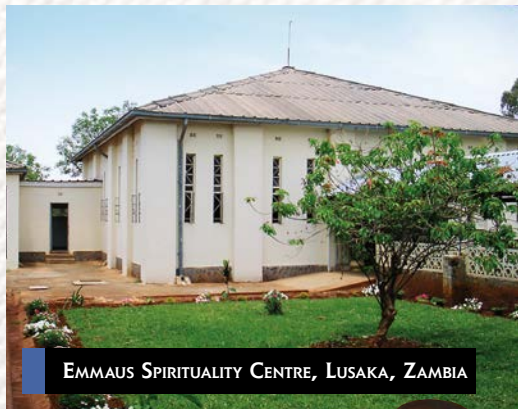
³⁰ *Mémoires* 3, 83 and 7, 23.



OPENING OF THE SCHOOL YEAR 2018 AT ST. MARY'S SEMINARY, BALTIMORE



ST. ANTHONY'S SEMINARY, KACHEBERE, MALAWI



EMMAUS SPIRITUALITY CENTRE, LUSAKA, ZAMBIA



SULPICIAN SEMINARY IN HUE, VIETNAM



SULPICIAN SEMINARY IN CÚCUTA, COLOMBIA



SOME SEMINARIANS FROM MALAWI AND ZAMBIA

Spiritual Direction

“The ministry of spiritual direction holds first place in the Sulpician tradition.”³¹ In contrast to other models of priestly formation, the priest members of the formation faculty, with the exception of the rector, render themselves available to be freely chosen by seminarians as spiritual directors (confessors). They maintain a strict distinction between the external and internal forums by ensuring absolute confidentiality in the spiritual direction relationship. Thus, a seminarian’s past or present spiritual director never participates in the evaluation of that seminarian or in the formulation of any recommendation to the bishop regarding him. Nor do they communicate information to others about the seminarian’s progress in the interior life. At every stage in the growth of a directee’s spiritual life, his spiritual director strives to protect and develop his “spiritual freedom” in response to a discerned understanding of God’s will for him.³²

³¹ *Constitutions*, Art. 18.

³² A 2009 document of the French Province, *Formation for Freedom: Suggested Guidelines for Priestly Formation Today* (Baltimore: Society of the Priests of Saint Sulpice, 2018), treats these themes extensively.



THE CANADIAN PONTIFICAL COLLEGE IN ROME

A Formative Community

The Sulpicians deeply believe that formation is an organic process within which all aspects of the formation program contribute to the development of a candidate for priesthood. The community itself, therefore, is a central factor in the development of a priestly character.

Convinced that sharing of their priestly life is the most profound and effective teaching, the Priests of Saint Sulpice will live in a closely-knit community with the candidates for the ministry. This will open the way to a true dialogue, which will enable everyone to feel responsible for the community. By this means the concrete conditions of the exercise of ministry in the Church, under the double aspect of fraternal life and of participation in a common mission, will have been explored and already actually experienced. It is within such a context that aptitudes for ministry will show themselves more clearly.³³

Through the witness of priestly virtue that arises from the bonds of a common life, the Sulpicians strive to ensure that each member of the community, in his proper role and level of formational development, works together to achieve the goals of seminary formation.³⁴

³³ *Constitutions*, Art. 25.

³⁴ See also, *PDV*, 60, which speaks of the seminary as a continuation of the apostolic community of Jesus.



Collegiality

The Society of Saint Sulpice has its own structures determined by its mission. The Sulpicians are organized collegially as a group of priests who share in solidarity the responsibility for the work entrusted to them. From its origin, the “Assembly of the Directors” has collegially assumed the responsibility of formation within the context of the seminary, making decisions relating to its function by majority vote.³⁵



SOME SEMINARIANS FROM ZAMBIA

Although the rector (superior) of a local Sulpician formation team exercises a strong moral, spiritual and administrative leadership within a specific community, all major decisions of policy for that community, as well as the recommendation to orders of individual candidates for priesthood, are made by a majority vote of all the members of the formation team.

This collegial openness to the work of the Holy Spirit in coming to decisions has proven its wisdom over the centuries. It promotes a thorough discernment of any decision before it is made, mitigates against overly biased decisions on the part of one or more individuals, and promotes unity in the formation team by ensuring that each member assumes personal responsibility for a collective enterprise. Moreover, the practice of collegiality provides a good example of collaboration for seminarians to implement in their pastoral assignments, both before and after ordination.

³⁵ *Constitutions*, Part Three, Introduction.

A Missionary and Apostolic Spirit

Because Father Olier saw the seminary as the embodiment of the time between the Ascension and Pentecost, when the apostles withdrew to deepen their understanding of their experience of the Lord Jesus through prayer, study and common decision making, he had a great devotion to the feast of Pentecost. He even commissioned the famous artist Charles Le Brun (1619-1690) to depict the scene of Pentecost as the first painting to grace the chapel of the nascent Seminary of Saint Sulpice. Thus, whenever the community assembled to pray before the altar, they would see the apostolic goal of their formation. Further, Olier encouraged each member of the community to pray daily for an apostolic spirit.



This “*esprit apostolique*” led him to send missionaries to Montreal during his lifetime, even though he was never able to realize his own dream of becoming a missionary. As Olier exclaimed:

I feel such great desire to save the whole world, to spread the zeal of the love and glory of God in the hearts of all people. I think so much about being able to have a thousand subjects whom I could send everywhere bearing the love of Jesus Christ....³⁶

³⁶ *Mémoires* 2, 279.

An apostolic spirit also guided Olier’s early formulation of a seminary program for the bishops of France, which he expressed in idealistic terms:

If there were three apostolic men in a seminary filled with humility, kindness, patience, zeal, charity and poverty, with the knowledge and wisdom needed for this heavenly work, they would be able to sanctify a whole diocese... they would sanctify many people and would be able to affect not only the seminary of a diocese, but a whole kingdom. Such is the power of the apostolic and selfless spirit.³⁷

Deeply aware of the missionary orientation of the priesthood,³⁸ this apostolic and missionary zeal continues to enliven the Sulpicians as they strive to form priests throughout the world to fulfill the Lord’s command to “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations.”³⁹ Today, this missionary spirit continues in the Sulpician desire to implement the Church’s “new evangelization,” as called for by Pope Francis and his two immediate predecessors.⁴⁰

³⁷ *Projet de 1651*, 228-289.

³⁸ See *PDV*, 16, 23, and *Ratio*, 33.

³⁹ *Matt* 28, 19.

⁴⁰ See the apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013).



A Gradual and Integrated Approach to Formation



From the first days of pre-theology to ordination to the priesthood, the Sulpicians strive to provide a graduated, holistic approach to priestly formation.⁴¹ This approach meets those entrusted to their charge on the level of their particular needs and place of development in relationship to the four dimensions of formation—human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral. It also calls them to develop their personal priestly identity after

the heart of Christ, the Good Shepherd and Eternal High Priest. This initiation and integration presumes that each seminarian lives a life marked by personal responsibility and accountability. Respecting and treating their candidates for priesthood as adults, the Sulpicians constantly challenge them to direct their own formation program appropriately.⁴²

For Sulpicians, initial and ongoing formation programs form an organic whole designed to configure priests and seminarians to become more like Jesus Christ, the Eternal High Priest, and to be effective co-workers with the bishops in their mission in the Church.⁴³

A Priestly Marian Piety

Although it has become commonplace to evoke the Blessed Virgin Mary as a model for priests,⁴⁴ the image was fairly novel in the time of Father Olier and other members of the French School of Spirituality. Having chosen the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary as the foundational feast (November 21), Father Olier

⁴¹ See *Constitutions*, Art. 14.

⁴² *Pastores dabō vobis* and the *Ratio* state explicitly that each seminarian is the first agent of his own formation (*PDV*, 69; *Ratio*, 53).

⁴³ See *PDV*, 70-81 and *Ratio*, 79-87.

⁴⁴ E.g., *PDV*, 82; *Constitutions*, Art. 34.

understood Mary as a perfect model for priests, not only because she heard the Word of God and kept it, but also because her entire life is marked by an ever deepening union with the One whom God gave her the privilege to bear. Always obedient to the Word she has heard, Mary constantly ponders it in her heart and seeks to engender it in her life.

Sulpician devotion to Mary has been especially preserved in their praying, among themselves and with their seminarians, Father Olier's prayer, *O Jesus Living in Mary*, one version of which is found at the end of this document.⁴⁵

The Society of Saint Sulpice Today

Always few in number, the Society of the Priests of Saint Sulpice today consists of some two hundred sixty members who continue to be leavened⁴⁶ for priestly ministry through initial and ongoing formation of priests.⁴⁷ They serve in eighteen countries on five continents.

The Society consists of three provinces, France (1641), Canada (1657) and the United States (1791), with headquarters located respectively in Paris, Montreal, and Baltimore. Each province is governed by a Provincial Council, which consists of the Provincial and four consultors, who are elected for six-year terms by a Provincial Assembly, the highest governing body of the province.

⁴⁵ Adapted from an earlier version by Charles de Condren, Father Olier composed several versions of this prayer, which has become known as the Prayer of Father Olier. See Bernard Pitaud, *A Brief Biography of Jean-Jacques Olier* (Baltimore: Society of the Priests of Saint Sulpice, 2013; Fr. orig. 1996), and *ibid.*, *Prier 15 Jours avec Monsieur Olier* (Bruyères-le Châtel: Nouvelle Cité, 2007), 49-54. Pope Saint John Paul II called this prayer a "summation of all Marian doctrine." See James Cardinal Hickey, *Mary at the Foot of the Cross: Teacher and Example of Holiness of Life for Us* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989).

⁴⁶ See 1 Cor 5, 6.

⁴⁷ Since 2014, the official initials for members of the Society have been P.S.S., PSS, or sometimes "p.s.s."





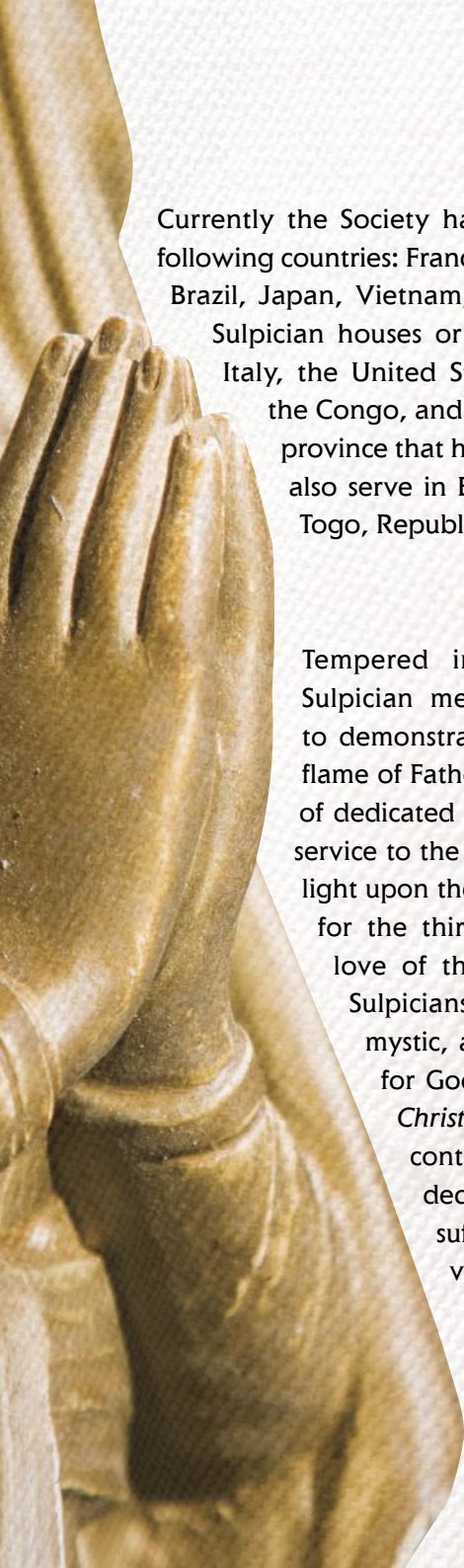
A PAINTING OF THE HOLY SACRIFICE OF THE MASS, 17TH CENT., ANONYMOUS (ISSY-LES-MOULINEAUX)



OUR LADY OF THE ANGELS CHAPEL (BALTIMORE)

The Society also has a General Council that exercises ordinary authority over the whole Society. It consists of the Superior General and four consultors, who are elected for six-year terms by the General Assembly, the highest governing body of the Society. International in character, three of the four consultors represent the three provinces of the Society. The fourth ensures representation from those countries located far away from the Provincial centers.

The Society has also maintained regular contact with the Holy See, especially through its Procure in Rome, founded in 1864 and currently located at the Canadian Pontifical College, and through regular contact with various dicasteries during periodic visits to Rome of the General Council and Provincials.



Currently the Society has charge of twenty seminaries in the following countries: France, Canada, the United States, Colombia, Brazil, Japan, Vietnam, Malawi, and Zambia. There are also Sulpician houses or programs of continuing formation in Italy, the United States and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and responsibility for some parishes in each province that have historic ties to the Society. Sulpicians also serve in Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, China, Togo, Republic of the Congo (Brazzaville), and Tahiti.

A Living Tradition

Tempered in the fires of apostolic zeal, the Sulpician method of priestly formation continues to demonstrate its effective adaptability today. The flame of Father Olier's wisdom, embodied in a group of dedicated diocesan priests who offer their lives in service to the ministerial priesthood, continues to cast light upon the challenging ministry of forming priests for the third millennium. Filled with a profound love of the Lord Jesus and of His Church, the Sulpicians follow in the footsteps of this great mystic, attempting as he did, to live supremely for God in Christ Jesus—*vivere summe Deo in Christo Jesu*.⁴⁸ Following Olier's example, we continue to pray that the Lord will send us dedicated formators to ensure that there are sufficient workers for the harvest of priestly vocations (Matt 9, 38).

⁴⁸ Rom 6, 1





The Society of the Priests of Saint Sulpice around the world



For further information:
Please visit our websites
<http://generalsaintsulpice.org>, www.sulpiciens.fr,
www.sulpc.org, et www.sulpicians.org, all of which have
hyperlinks to other important sites and resources.

Or write to:
The Superior General
Society of the Priests of Saint Sulpice
6, rue du Regard
75006 Paris, France
Tel: [+33] (0)1.45.48.12.10
Email: psssuperiorgeneral@gmail.com

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ÉDITIONS DU SIGNE

1 rue Alfred Kastler - B.P. 98094 – Eckbolsheim
F-67038 STRASBOURG CEDEX

E-mail: info@editionsdusigne.fr

Tel: +33 (0)3 88 78 91 91 - Fax: +33 (0)3 88 78 91 99
www.editionsdusigne.fr - e-mail: info@editionsdusigne.fr

Author: Ronald D. Witherup, PSS
Editorial Manager: Isabelle Lasser
Layout: Sylvie Tusinski

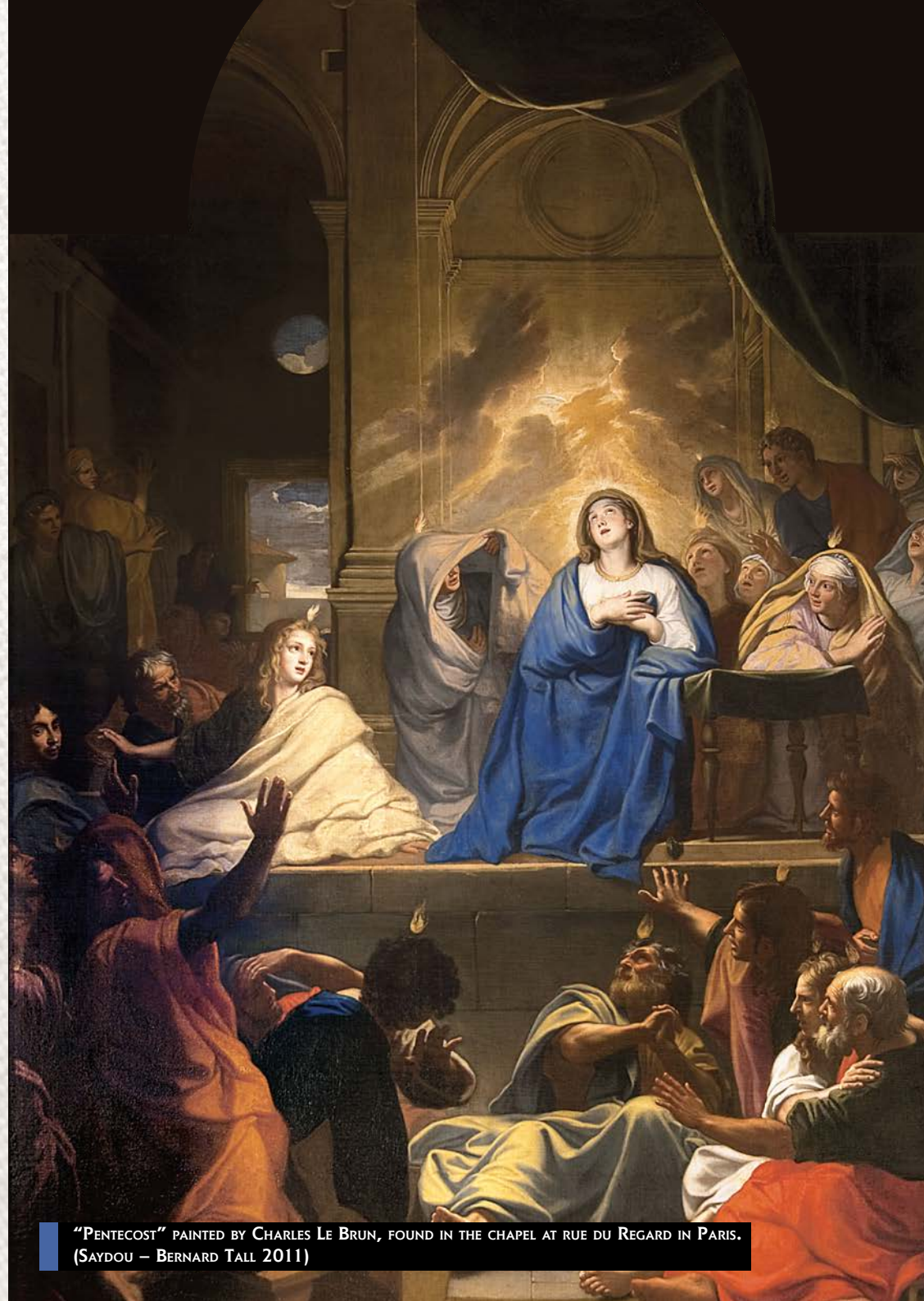
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