

Come Follow Me: A Seminarian's Journey

Installment 4 – Studying Theology

1. An Overview

- After the seminarian studies philosophy (2-4 years), he transitions to study theology for his last four years before ordination. (I am in my 3rd year of studying theology at Mount St. Mary's.)
- Theology is the study of God and the Church. God has revealed himself through history, especially in the incarnation of Jesus Christ.
- The following is a brief overview of some of the topics (*names of semester classes in italics*).

2. Systematics

- This branch of theology studies the mysteries and doctrines of the faith in an orderly and rational way (drawing from the seminarian's philosophy background).
- **Some classes:** *Introduction to Theology* (How do we study theology?), *Trinity* (How is God 1 and 3?), *Creation and Theological Anthropology* (How and why did God create the universe and man?), *Sacraments* (What is the meaning of the 7 sacraments?), *Christology* (What is the Incarnation? How is Christ both God and man?), *Ecclesiology* (What is the Church?), *Mariology* (Who is Mary?), *Ecumenism* (How do we dialogue with people of other religions?), *Soteriology* (How did Christ accomplish our salvation?), and *Eschatology* (What about judgment, purgatory, heaven, and hell?)

3. Scripture

This branch of theology studies the books of the Bible. Seminarians write “exegesis” papers on the literal and spiritual meaning of Scripture passages and think about how they would preach with different scripture readings.

- **Some classes:** *Intro to Biblical Studies* (How to study Scripture), *Pentateuch/Historical Books* (The historical story of Israel in the Old Testament), *The Prophets*, *Matthew/Mark*, *Luke/Acts*, *John/Revelation*, and *Paul/New Testament Letters*

2. Moral Theology

- This branch of theology studies morality in light of the 10 commandments and the teachings of Christ and his Church. The seminarian learns skills that will help him in confession and end-of-life issues.
- **Some classes:** *Fundamental Moral Theology I and II* (What is a moral act? What is sin?), *Justice and Social Teaching of the Church* (What is the social doctrine of the Church?), *Sexual/Medical Ethics* (What about sexual morality, abortion, euthanasia?)

3. Church History

- This branch of theology simply studies the history of the Church through the ages.
- **Some classes:** *First Millennium*, *Medieval*, *Modern*, and *American Church History*.

4. Practical/Pastoral

- *Homiletics* (How to prepare and preach a homily), *Pastoral counseling* (How to counsel parishioners effectively), and “*Practicum*” classes (How to celebrate Mass, hear confessions, be a deacon, etc.)

5. Other Classes

- *Pastoral Music*, *Formation Seminars* (celibacy, parish finances, public speaking, pastoral administration & human resources, pastoral leadership), *Electives* (study other topics further), *Liturgy*, *Canon Law*, and *Christian Spirituality*.

(Next Week – Installment 5 – Seminarian “Ministries”)