

ST. BEDE ABBEY JUNIORATE POLICY

Section One: The Nature, Purpose and Length of the Juniorate

A) Nature of the Juniorate: The juniorate is the period of monastic formation between the first and final profession of vows. Living under the direction of a junior master and in a situation less structured than the novitiate, junior monks are to engage in a program of formation “whereby their personal growth is stimulated and their theological development is fostered. Likewise they are to be provided with the opportunity to deepen their awareness of and appreciation for the basic elements of the monastic life and the life of their own community” (C 57.2).

B) Purposes of the Juniorate: The juniorate has three main purposes:

1) Fostering of human and spiritual growth: The juniorate is to assist the junior in his efforts to deepen his conversion of heart so that he may experience a growing intimacy with God and an expanding life of charity in community life and service.

2) Vocational Discernment: The juniorate provides the opportunity for further discernment of the junior’s vocation by the junior himself and by the monastic community. The prolonged experience of participation in the daily life and work of the abbey will help to make it clearer to the junior and the community whether he is called to a life-long commitment in this community.

3) Preparation for future service: The juniorate is to further the preparation of the junior for future life and in work the community through the experience of specific kinds of work, the teaching of appropriate skills and on-going religious and professional study, as the circumstances of each junior may dictate.

C) Length of the Juniorate: The length of the juniorate is regulated as follows:

1) General Regulation: “The entire period of temporary profession, to be determined by the abbot after consulting the monastic chapter, is never to be less than three years nor normally more than six years” (C 45).

2) Specific Regulation for St. Bede Abbey: Ordinarily a junior monk will be in temporary vows for three years, at a minimum. During the third year of the junior’s temporary profession, the abbot, in consultation with the junior himself and the monastic community, will discern if the junior needs an additional two years. If so, then the junior will renew his temporary vows for two additional years. If the abbot, in consultation with the junior and in consultation with the monastic community, discerns that the junior is ready for solemn profession, then the junior will be admitted to solemn profession. In all cases, a junior will live and work at St. Bede for at least two consecutive years before being admitted to solemn profession.

3) Extension of Temporary Profession: If after a five-year period of temporary profession it does not seem that a junior is ready for solemn profession, the abbot, after consulting the council of seniors, may admit him to one further year of temporary profession (cf. *The Constitutions and the Directory of the American-Cassinese Congregation* C 47). “To extend the period of temporary profession beyond six years the consent of the monastic chapter is required. The entire time that a monk is bound by temporary vows must not in any case exceed nine years (*Code of Canon Law* 657.2; hereafter *CIC*), with due regard for the provisions that are contained in the proper law of the Congregation regarding transfer of temporarily professed monks” (*The Constitutions and the Directory of the American-Cassinese Congregation* C 48).

4) Anticipation of Profession: “Solemn profession may be anticipated for a just cause, but not by more than three months” (*The Constitutions and the Directory of the American-Cassinese Congregation* C 49).

5) Departure: “During the period of temporary profession a monk who asks to leave the monastery for a grave reason may be granted an indult to leave by the abbot, with the consent of the council of seniors (cf. *CIC* 688.2)” (*The Constitutions and the Directory of the American-Cassinese Congregation* C 94.2). “A monk in temporary vows may leave the monastery when the time for which he made his profession expires (*CIC* 688.1)” (*The Constitutions and the Directory of the American-Cassinese Congregation* C 94.1). He must leave if he has applied for but not been granted admission to solemn profession or an extension of the time of temporary profession (*The Constitutions and the Directory of the American-Cassinese Congregation* C 47).

Section Three: The Junior Master

A) Responsibilities in General: “It is the primary responsibility of the master of junior monks, under the direction of the abbot, to ensure that an adequate program of formation is provided for the junior monks whereby their personal growth is stimulated and their theological development is fostered...The master of junior monks is to take care that the activities of the junior monks are in accord in with their program of formation” (*The Constitutions and the Directory of the American-Cassinese Congregation* C 57.2). Thus the junior master, who may be assisted by others, is responsible for the discipline, organization, direction and didactic aspects of the juniorate program. He is to support and offer fraternal encouragement to the junior as he assumes various duties in the community and continues to discern God’s call.

B) Consultations: The junior master will regularly consult those for whom the junior works and with whom he regularly has contact. He is to try to identify areas of strength, sources of conflict and room for growth and will discuss these with the junior at his regular meetings with him.

C) Reports: The junior master is to make an oral report to the abbot about each junior at least every six months. Once a year around the anniversary of the junior’s profession he is to give a formal report to the community on the junior. This report should update the community on the progress the junior has made since the last report as well as identify areas of concern and way by which the community can be helpful to the junior.

Section Four: The Junior and the Juniorate Formation Program

A) The Junior’s Responsibilities in General: In pursuit of the juniorate’s goal the junior has the responsibility for active participation in and contribution to the juniorate formation program and the community’s daily life. His attempts to give flesh, in new and more demanding circumstances, to the values taught in the novitiate need to be supported by his fidelity to prayer and by open dialog with the abbot and junior master.

B) Components of Juniorate Formation Program: The program has five major components:

1) Fostering of Human and Spiritual Growth: At least once every two months each junior is to meet with the junior master to address issues of the junior’s human and spiritual growth. These meetings are meant to help the junior reflect in faith on his own personal qualities and his experience of community life, prayer and work, and to assist him to assume greater responsibility for his growth in conversion to God. Four times a year, generally in March, June, September and December, the junior is to make a day of recollection. There should be special concern to help the junior integrate values learned in the novitiate.

2) Elements of a Common Study Program: The juniorate should include a flexible study program which as far as possible involved all the juniors.

a) Conferences and Discussions: For juniors who are residing at the abbey the junior master is to provide through individual or group conferences an opportunity to study and discuss theological issues, topics related to religious life or other matters related to spiritual development.

b) Annual Juniorate Institute: Normally juniors are to attend the annual Summer Institute for Junior Monks. This program offers a valuable opportunity for formal theological study in the context of the experience of life in another monastery and of personal contact with junior monks from many other communities.

c) Theological studies: In accord with his abilities and needs each junior monk is to pursue theological training that will be the equivalent of at least one year of formal studies. This may be done by non-credit courses at St. Bede, or by semester or summer undergraduate studies elsewhere.

d) Local College Courses: The possibility of taking enrichment courses at the local junior college is to be open to all juniors.

3) Schooling for future work and ministry: Following a process of discernment of personal abilities and interests and of community needs, a program of formal schooling for the junior’s future work and ministry may be established.

a) Discernment of Need for Schooling: During the years when a junior is residing at the abbey, he will discuss with the junior master his abilities and interests concerning future work as well as the needs of

the community and local church. The junior master is periodically to share the results of these discussions with the abbot, who may pursue the matter also with the junior and who will decide what further professional education or training may be needed.

b) The place of schooling: The junior master is to suggest to the abbot appropriate places for the junior's schooling. Normally his studies should take place at a college or university which makes it possible for the junior to live in a monastic setting. The junior master is to monitor closely the junior's progress and keep the abbot informed. If circumstances allow, the junior master should visit the junior at school once a year. He should take this occasion to speak with the teachers and the local junior master about the progress of the junior.

c) Discernment of a call to Orders: "The same Lord who calls a person to the monastic life may also call a monk to the diaconate or priesthood" (*The Constitutions and the Directory of the American-Cassinese Congregation* C 61.1). If the question of a call to Holy Order arises during the juniorate, the process of discernment described in 3a above should include discernment of a vocation to the diaconate or priesthood. Under the guidance of the junior master the junior is to consider: signs of a call to Holy Orders; the gifts and limitations he would bring to the ministry; the reality of such ministry in a monastic setting; and the needs of the community and local church. The junior master and junior are to discuss the results of this discernment with the abbot, who, after prayerful consideration, will decide if and when studies for Holy Orders are to begin.

d) The seminary and its program: "Monks preparing for Holy Order are to follow a course of studies approved by competent Church authority. Their theological and pastoral formation must be firmly rooted in their specifically monastic vocation" (*The Constitutions and the Directory of the American-Cassinese Congregation* C 61.2). The junior master is to recommend to the abbot appropriate seminaries for the junior's studies. "Discernment of a vocation to Holy Orders takes place throughout the period of monastic and theological formation. After appropriate consultation, it is the abbot who presents the monk for ordination to the diaconate or priesthood" (*The Constitutions and the Directory of the American-Cassinese Congregation* C 61.1).

4) Work program: At the beginning of the juniorate the abbot, after consultation with the junior master and junior is to give the junior his major work assignments. In February of subsequent years the junior master is to discuss with the junior, then with the abbot, the junior's past work assignments and may need for changes. After speaking with the junior the abbot will plan the major assignments to be given him for the next year. In addition to these assignments, the junior master may also give him other, lesser duties.

5) Schedule of the Day: At the beginning of the juniorate the junior is to develop a personal schedule that will organize his day in such a way as to include time for *lectio*, personal prayer, work obligations and community recreation. This schedule is to be discussed with and approved by the junior master. Every six months the junior master and junior will review the schedule to resolve any tensions that may have arisen. The schedule may also be reviewed as changes in work assignments dictate.

6) Juniorate Observances: Since the period of juniorate formation is a time of preparation for living in the community as a solemnly professed member, juniors are to observe the discipline established for the solemnly professed, except for the differences in the formation program outlined above and for the following matters:

a) Community and chapter meetings: Juniors are to attend all community meetings and workshops. They shall also attend chapter meetings except when a report on a person in formation is given or the abbot decides for other reasons that they are not to attend.

b) Gifts: Monetary gifts are to be turned in to the junior master, who will keep them in the junior's account. Permission of the junior master is required for any gift that is not an item of ordinary daily use.

c) Purchases: For the purchase of necessary items not available at the monastery, the permission of the junior master is required.

d) Radio, CD player, desktop/laptop computer: Juniors are not to have a radio or CD player in their room. The junior master will make available a CD player to meet occasional needs. Possession of a desktop/laptop computer by a junior will be determined case by case.

e) Absence from the property: Permission to leave the St. Bede grounds is to be obtained from the junior master, who is also to be informed of absences required because of work assignments.

f) Home visits: Juniors are usually to have a seven-day home visit in the summer. Unless special permission is received from the abbot, the visit is to extend from Sunday to the following Saturday inclusive.

Section Five: Transition to Solemn Vows

A) Growth in Personal Responsibility: During the years of the juniorate the junior is to be made increasingly more responsible for the manner in which he lives the monastic life and serves both community and church, so that he may be well prepared for a life with fewer external regulations.

B) Self-evaluation: In the latter part of each year of temporary profession the junior is to engage in a process of self-evaluation. In the third and fifth years, if junior has not made solemn profession by his fifth year, this process is to be more lengthy and profound, with a focus on whether or not the junior is ready to apply for the renewal of temporary vows or to be admitted to solemn profession.

C) Evaluation by the abbot and community: Following a report to the monastic chapter on a junior who has applied for admission to solemn vows, and with the consent of the monastic chapter, the abbot may, when the entire period of temporary vows has expired, admit a suitable candidate to solemn profession (cf. *The Constitutions and the Directory of the American-Cassinese Congregation* C 47).

D) Planning for the profession rite: The date and hour for the rite of profession is to be determined by the abbot. The junior master, after consultation with the choir master and the liturgy committee, is to coordinate all special arrangements for the celebration.

E) Retreat: Before solemn profession the junior is to make a five-day retreat, as arranged by the junior master.

F) Legal Documents: “Before his solemn profession a monk is to sign a document, valid in civil law and effective on the date of his solemn profession, giving his property to whomever he chooses” (*The Constitutions and the Directory of the American-Cassinese Congregation* D 54.2.1). “He is also to sign a document of renunciation and a last will and testament, both documents valid in civil law and contingent upon his solemn profession, determining that whatever he may acquire after solemn profession is acquired for and in the name of his monastic community. The current abbot and his successors in the office of abbot are to be named as the executor of the last will and testament” (cf. *CIC* 688) (*The Constitutions and the Directory of the American-Cassinese Congregation* D 54.2.2).