

Feedback Process – Discernment & Formation Process

You have this document because a member of the parish has requested your feedback. The person is part of a discernment – formation process related to his or her interest in ordination as a priest. You are not being asked to make any judgment about that interest. We are not asking you to say if you think the person would make a good priest. In fact, please avoid such a conversation. We need your assistance in the person's learning process. Your feedback may contribute to the person's awareness of how they impact others and be used in creating learning goals to address over the coming months.

The steps

1. Please complete the Feedback Worksheet section of this document. Our interest is an assessment on the person's strengths and needed development in five areas. Each category has a number of examples of the kind of behavior or stance needed by parish priests. Please remember, they are examples rather than a comprehensive list. They are intended to stimulate your thinking in that category.
2. Return the Feedback Worksheet to the person.
3. The person will interview you on your feedback. The form that should take is asking you questions like the following:
 - "You identified the strength (or needed development) of ____ under "Leadership Abilities", could you say more about that or identify an example of something I did?" OR
 - "I have a special interest in feedback about _____. Would you say something about what you have seen in relationship to that?" OR
 - On the last page under "Concerns that if not addressed are likely to get in the way of the person's movement toward priesthood", you wrote _____. Would you say more about what you have seen and/or why that seems so critical for you?"
4. A copy of the Feedback Worksheet you completed will be seen by others working with the person.

On giving and receiving feedback – a few suggestions

These suggestions may be especially useful when being interviewed. In filling out the Feedback Worksheet you are more likely to simply identify things "by title."

Feedback is likely to be more effective if:

- The person receiving it acknowledges the need for it; especially if the person requests it
- When the person can recall the behavior or pattern of behavior. That usually means that if it is timely everyone will be more likely to remember the behavior. In this process that will sometimes be difficult because we are looking at broad categories experienced over time.
- You remember that the feedback is about you, the giver of the feedback. In a sense it is not about the person receiving it. It is an exploration of that person's impact on you. (Note – the same behavior may not have that effect on others).
- It is skillful (see below).

Skillful Feedback – *the closer you can come to using these skills the more likely the person will be able to make use of your feedback.*

- Be descriptive, provide information that describes the behavior and its impact on you; restrict the feedback to what you know (e.g., behavior you have seen and how it has impacted you).
- Avoid exaggeration (“you always get this wrong”), labeling (“you are stupid”), and judgment
- Speak for yourself (“what I feel/experience when you ...”) not for others (“Everyone gets upset when you ...”)
- Don’t press the person for any immediate response

Skillfully Receiving Feedback

- Listen – if something helps you to listen do that, e.g., take notes, ask someone else to make notes on the feedback so you can focus on the speaker
- Ask questions to clarify – “could you give an example of that?”, “when did that happen?”, “who else was there?”
- If others were present during the behavior the feedback is about you might make a note to ask them to offer feedback about that area or event.
- Open yourself. Do not get defensive (you may feel it, don’t act it). Stay focused on hearing what is being said.
- Take time to think about what has been said; if a response is necessary tell those offering the feedback that you will think about it and offer some response on a specific date.

A formula for giving feedback

1. “When you” Note the behavior; describe it as specifically as possible.
2. “I felt” Tell how the behavior affects you. This is just one or two words – frustrated, angry, pleased, etc.
3. “Because I ...” Share why you are affected that way.