

Spiritual Autobiography

(To be included with the other materials submitted in your application packet)

A spiritual autobiography is different from your life story. A spiritual autobiography is the story of your faith, your belief system and how it came to be. What do you believe? What is your theology? What influenced your beliefs and spirituality? Who were your models and teachers? In other words, tell us about the formation of your spirituality and how that is continually fed, nurtured, strengthened and challenged. Your spiritual autobiography should be no more than four pages, double-spaced. You may wish to write more, which is fine, but you must edit what you send to us to meet this four-page limit. Spiritual autobiographies longer than this limit will be returned for you to rewrite and may delay your process. We suggest you save a copy of your spiritual autobiography for yourself, as you may be asked to speak to some of its content.

Some things to consider as you are writing your spiritual autobiography:

Just as we look for God's presence and action in our scripture studies, in developing a spiritual autobiography, we likewise look for God's presence and action in our own lived experiences. We reflect on the people, times and events that have been significant in our spiritual lives. We are looking for the things that have made us the spiritual beings we are today. Think about

- Encounters with God (mystical, practical, in alone moments, through other people)
- Significant events (when your faith has been tested, strengthened, revealed)
- Experiences of spiritual growth (epiphanies, gradual enlightenment/learnings)
- The modeling and witness of others (the "Christ bearers" in your life)

Tell your story. What were your parents or another family member's religious or spiritual influence on you? What messages were communicated to you about God by those who had care over you? (For example, "God loves you" or "If you're bad, God will get you!" or "Christians are narrow-minded, judgmental people" or "God does not exist," etc.) What early experiences had great impact on your subsequent spiritual journey? If your family went to church, what was the impact of your church community on your childhood, teenage and adult life? How have later church communities you've been a part of affected your spiritual life?

Finally, tell us what ways God is active in your life today. Through whom or what? What is your understanding of your relationship with Christ today? Say something about the commitments you have made as a result of your life's experiences and your sense, if any, of the Christian vocation you have developed as a result.

Reflect on all this before you begin writing. Make notes for yourself. Then begin writing. You may find that you have exceeded the four-page limit we have given you. If so, keep a copy of the entire spiritual autobiography you have written for yourself. (Your priest or discernment committee or others may also want to see a longer spiritual autobiography.) For the Commission on Ministry, please condense any longer spiritual autobiography to the required four pages before submitting.