



## **The Doctor of Ministry (D.Min.) degree through Vilatte Theological Seminary**

**Important Notice to students:** *The Vilatte Theological Seminary plans to achieve and maintain a standard of excellence in all coursework and degree programs. While we are not an accredited academic institution, we propose to approximate those standards and we hope eventually to be able to apply for and obtain state and regional recognition of our coursework and degrees. Realistically, that is not going to happen anytime soon. Currently and for the foreseeable future, VTS degrees are what the Missouri State Division of Higher Education calls “Bible Degrees”, that is, non-academic degrees from a church related educational program. Thus, the student needs to be aware that receiving a “bible degree” through VTS does not have the same status and stature as a degree from a state or regionally accredited educational program such as Saint Louis University or Fulton Theological Seminary, or other fully accredited college or university.*

*On the other hand, a degree from Vilatte Theological Seminary does provide the cleric or layperson with a title and recognition indicating that they have achieved the level of competence in ministerial studies that is described below and in our Seminary catalog.*

*Finally, the VTS degree program serves a need within the Old/Independent Catholic Church community for an educational program that prepares clergy and laity to be leaders knowledgeable in Catholic theology and Scripture. The administration and faculty of VTS give their personal and professional assurance that a person who places M.Div. or D.Min. behind his/her name based on the degree having been awarded by VTS has earned that degree through a demonstration of educational competence in ministerial studies. VTS does not award honorary degrees and does not “sell” degrees.*

+Rev. Carl T. Swaringim, President

February 20, 2008

### **General Description**

Completing a doctorate in a particular field of study or competence implies that a person has learned enough about his/her area of expertise to be able to contribute something new to that area. The awarding of a Doctor of Ministry requires that a person become an expert in some area of ministry and contribute something new to the body of knowledge.

In addition to completing a course of studies, either by successfully completing courses through VTS, or at another acceptable institute, or through a combination of study and experience, the candidate must complete a project of historical or empirical research or through the competent completion of an acceptable project that will solve or help solve an identified need in the Old/Independent Catholic movement.

Each doctoral dissertation must meet the research standards of the Vilatte Theological Seminary and receive the approval of a faculty committee consisting of the President or his representative and two other members of the faculty.

### **Pre-requisite Coursework**

The doctoral candidate must have completed prerequisite coursework as described in the current VTS catalog or its equivalent. While specific course titles may vary, prerequisite course work must include successful broad study in the following areas: Sacred Scripture, Doctrinal and Moral Theology, Church History, Homiletics, Catechetics, Spiritual Direction, Spirituality, Liturgy, and Church Administration.

This required coursework is available through VTS in a 64 Credit Hour course of studies divided by coursework preparatory for ordination to the Diaconate and Priesthood.

### **Requirements**

- 1) Completion of course competencies in the area described above.
- 2) Selection of an approved topic. (*Sign-off required*)
- 3) Development and presentation of a “plan of completion” of proposed research to Doctoral Committee. (*Sign-off required*)
- 4) Chapter by Chapter approval by Doctoral Committee. (*Sign-off required*)
- 5) Final approval and sign-off by Doctoral Committee. (*Sign-off required*)
- 6) Bound copy of dissertation presented to VTS library.
- 7) Certified pdf copy of dissertation presented to VTS library.
- 8) Release to post dissertation on VTS library’s public website.
- 9) The student has three (3) years to complete the dissertation from the time that the topic is approved.
- 10) Fee payment schedule: fees for three credit hours are paid when the topic is presented for approval; fees for the final three hours are due when Chapter Three is presented for review and approval. The graduation fee is due when the library copies of the dissertation are accepted by VTS.

## **Dissertation**

Showing competence in research related to Ministry.

The dissertation is a major writing project and normally will be between 100 and 200 one sided pages typed (Times New Roman #12 size font, double spaced, with margins 1 ½” on left and right; 1 ½ ” on top and bottom of page; page number at bottom in middle of footer. Footnotes to clarify a statement in the text are placed at bottom of page; references are placed at end of document presented numbered by chapter; bibliography after reference list, and Vita of author after bibliography. (See the VTS publication Style Sheet in the Student Resource Center of our website.)

## **Chapters of Dissertation**

### **Historical Research**

Chapter One: Rationale for Research

*“Why is this research important and needed?”*

Chapter Two: Review of topic in the literature.

*“What is the literature saying about this topic?”*

Chapter Three: Research Design.

*“How and where are you going to research this topic? What are the parameters of your research?” For example, the Church Fathers of the first three centuries; the first Seven Ecumenical Councils.*

Chapter Four: Presentation of Research Data.

*“What does your research show, prove, or indicate about your topic?”*

Chapter Five: Conclusions and Recommendations

*“Now that we have this research data what does it mean and what should be done with it?”*

For a description of the methodology of historical research see:

<http://www.ischool.utexas.edu/~palmquis/courses/historical.htm>

*Note: There are many resources on the Internet about doing historical research; most apply to civil rather than religious history. The methodology to be used in any historical research is identical or at least similar.*

## **Empirical Research**

Chapter One: Rationale for Research

*“Why is this research important and needed?”*

Chapter Two: Review of topic in the literature.

*“What is the literature saying about this topic?”*

Chapter Three: Research Design.

*“How are you going to collect data?”*

Examples: Questionnaire; Interviews; Anecdotal Observations; Tests.

Explain sampling process and confidentiality of data collection.

Chapter Four: Presentation of Research Data.

Statistical presentation supported by explanation of what the data mean.

Chapter Five: Conclusions and Recommendations

*“Now that we have this research data what does it mean and what should be done with it?”*

For a description of the methodology of empirical research see:  
<http://www.mdx.ac.uk/www/study/research.htm>

## **Project**

Chapter One: Rationale for Research

*“Why is this project needed?”*

Chapter Two: Review of topic in the literature.

*“What is in the literature about this need?”*

Chapter Three: Research Design.

*“How will the project be completed?”*

Chapter Four: Presentation of the Project.

*Details and artifacts. For example, if the project is a book of liturgical instructions, the book would be included here.*

Chapter Five: Conclusions and Recommendations.

## **Identifying a topic.**

The topic should be one that interests and motivates the student to write the dissertation. It should be something useful to the Old/Independent Catholic movement.

### **Example topics:**

#### Historical Research

- Implications of the “filioque”.
- Women in Early Church Ministry.
- Homosexuality in Scripture and Early Church.
- Relationship of East and West Prior to 1054 AD
- Variations in Eucharistic Liturgies in the Early Church.

#### Empirical Research

- Church Identify in the Independent Catholic Movement.
- Self-concept of Independent Catholics
- Prerequisites for Unity in the Old Catholic Movement
- Core Beliefs and Level of Adherence in the Independent Catholic Movement.
- Levels of Educational Preparation for Clergy in the ICM.

#### Project

- Liturgical Manual for the Independent Catholic Movement.
- Handbook of Expectations for Clergy in the ICM.
- Handbook for Growing a Independent Catholic Congregation.
- Liturgical Manual for Independent Catholic Bishops.

### **Bound copies for Seminary Library**

One hard copy bound according to VTS standards.  
One certified pdf copy presented on a CD.  
Release to post dissertation on VTS library webpage.

### **Conferral of Degree**

The degree is conferred only after all requirements have been met and signed off on by the appropriate person and all fees are paid. A formal letter and document will be sent when the degree is actually conferred. A conferral ceremony will be arranged at a time and place mutually agreeable to the student and VTS, if the candidate wishes to have his/her degree presented in this manner.

2/20/2008