St Joseph’s Province Discernment process – Outline & Options

1) **First stage - get to know each other:**

We would meet a few times to get to know each other. The Discerner needs to know more about us, and we need to know more about the Discerner. The Discerner would also be able to ask questions, and the Vocations Director will explain our reality, as well as giving you some reading materials about Passionist life and history.

The Discerner would be invited to visit various Passionist houses / communities, to spend some time with our men in our lived context, and they with you.

You may also be asked to fill in a simple questionnaire at an early stage, so we have some simple information written down. This would not be an application form. This stage would take not less than a few months.

2) **Stage 2 : Discernment Program**

Probably 12 months long. **EITHER** - A) taking part in the Discernment Program of St Patrick's Province in Ireland, 5 weekends over a period of 12 months

**OR** - B) meeting with the Vocations Director to go through a formal Application and Discernment Process, including more time spent at Passionist sites and ministries

**OR** – C) living at one of our houses in England, with some combination of work / ministry with us , and possibly doing some other activities, which could include continuing a paid job to earn your own way - I would expect this to be for a minimum of 12 months.

**OR** a some combination of the three options above.

These could happen **EITHER** at the same time **OR** sequentially **OR** in some combination of the two.

If B) is part of the process, it may include living in Birmingham.

We could discern together (Discerner and Vocations Director, in discussion with the Provincial) which of the above may be most suitable.

During **Stage 2**, if the process is going well, the Discerner would go through the formal application process. This includes a lengthy application form, criminal record checks, in depth psychological assessment, physical health check and taking of references and other background checks as necessary.

At least part of this period would most be what is called the **Postulancy**.

This stage is likely to last 1 - 2 years, although it could be longer - again, depending on mutual discernment and our assessment.

After this, we move from a focus on **Discernment,** to a focus on **Formation**, although discernment clearly continues.

3) **Stage 3**: **Novitiate year**. This is a spiritual year of discernment and prayer, with a focus on formation for life in a Religious Community and the Passionist charism. This would include some ministry and exposure to the realities of the ‘crucified of today’ and of the Church in our context. The Discerner would live with a Passionist Community, likely to be either in Britain or Ireland, but it could be elsewhere. At the end of the novitiate, if all went well, the Discerner would take Temporary Vows for 3 years.

4) **Stage 4**: **Studies**. The nature of these would depend on what course of action we have discerned together. A major choice is that between being a Brother and being ordained Priest.

If the Student had chosen to be a Brother, we would seek to discern together what skills or areas of study may be suitable for development of capacity for ministry and service. Previous study, skills and work experience would be taken into consideration, along with other relevant factors.

If it is agreed together that the Student study for priesthood, this would begin after Novitiate. A suitable place for study for the priesthood would be discerned together. This may require living in a Passionist house and travelling to study at a University or Diocesan Seminary, or living at, for example, a Seminary. It may require studying outside the UK or Ireland.

5) **Stage 5:** After 3 years, **EITHER** temporary Vows are renewed for up to another 3 years, **OR** Permanent Vows are taken. If studying for ordination, this can only happen after Permanent Vows. Priesthood studies usually take not less than 5 years, and include pastoral work experiences and training.

None of the above can be taken as a guarantee or a promise. All of it depends on discernment, and our assessment being positive. There are challenges for our Provinces in north Europe in the coming years, which could also lead to significant changes in leadership and decision making.

In deciding what course of action to take at various stages, one factor that we (Passionists) would have to consider is, WHO do we have available to lead this, and WHERE do we have available to do these things, and what other resources are available to help us.

However, Vocation and Formation is one of our Province Priorities, so if we discern together (us and you) that you are called to go forward, this will be a priority for us.

**OTHER FACTORS**

The above is our starting point, but there is flexibility where appropriate. Where there are good reasons for diverging from this outline, the process could be either shortened or extended, for example.