



News Release

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Sacred Heart seminary enrollment spikes

Sacred Heart School of Theology, the national Catholic seminary for men of all ages in Hales Corners, is seeing its largest group of incoming seminarians in 20 years.

Forty new seminarians have been admitted to the school, approaching the all-time record of 42 new students set in 1990. The average over the last 10 years has been 21 fall entrants.

As the seminary builds its track record of strong academic, human, spiritual, and pastoral formation, it has added five new sponsoring dioceses and religious orders, notes President-Rector the Very Rev. Jan de Jong, SCJ.

“With God’s guiding hand, our graduates shine in their ministry. In this way, He has allowed us to develop a strong national reputation,” de Jong said.

The increase follows the enrollment of nine new seminarians last January, the highest mid-year enrollment since 1996.

“Our alums make an extremely powerful statement about the quality of our formation program. They come out of Sacred Heart with deep faith and love for the Church, solid knowledge of theology and the teaching of the Church, healthy attitudes, and pastoral skills that allow them to offer meaningful ministry in parishes across North America,” de Jong said.

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With last year's strong enrollment the school will have about 111 seminarians enrolled this fall, plus English-as-a-second-language students and 15 non-seminarians in the Master of Arts Program.

The 40 new seminarians include seven from the Milwaukee Archdiocese. They live and receive most of their formation programs at St. Francis de Sales Seminary in St. Francis while taking classes at Sacred Heart.

In addition to serving new sponsors (the dioceses and religious orders with which seminarians are affiliated, and who generally decide where seminarians will study) many sponsors have seen growing numbers of men expressing an interest in priesthood.

It's possible that sustained economic difficulty is prompting men in their 30s and 40s to reflect deeply on what they're doing with their lives, according to the Rev. Thomas Knoebel, Sacred Heart's director of recruitment. "We have some new students who experienced a career upheaval that, in turn, gave them some insight as to where their true calling lies."

"At the same time, we've made a concerted effort, through advertising in sponsoring dioceses' newspapers, to raise awareness of the possibility of vocations for older men," Knoebel added.

Sacred Heart is the largest Catholic seminary focused on men over 30 in the United States. The average age of its seminarians is about 43. Most of the seminarians live at the school. Those whose sponsors have formation houses in the Milwaukee area may commute to Sacred Heart for classes and other formation activities.

Sacred Heart is an apostolate of the Priests of the Sacred Heart, an international religious order with its U.S. Province offices in Hales Corners. For more information on Sacred Heart see www.shst.edu.