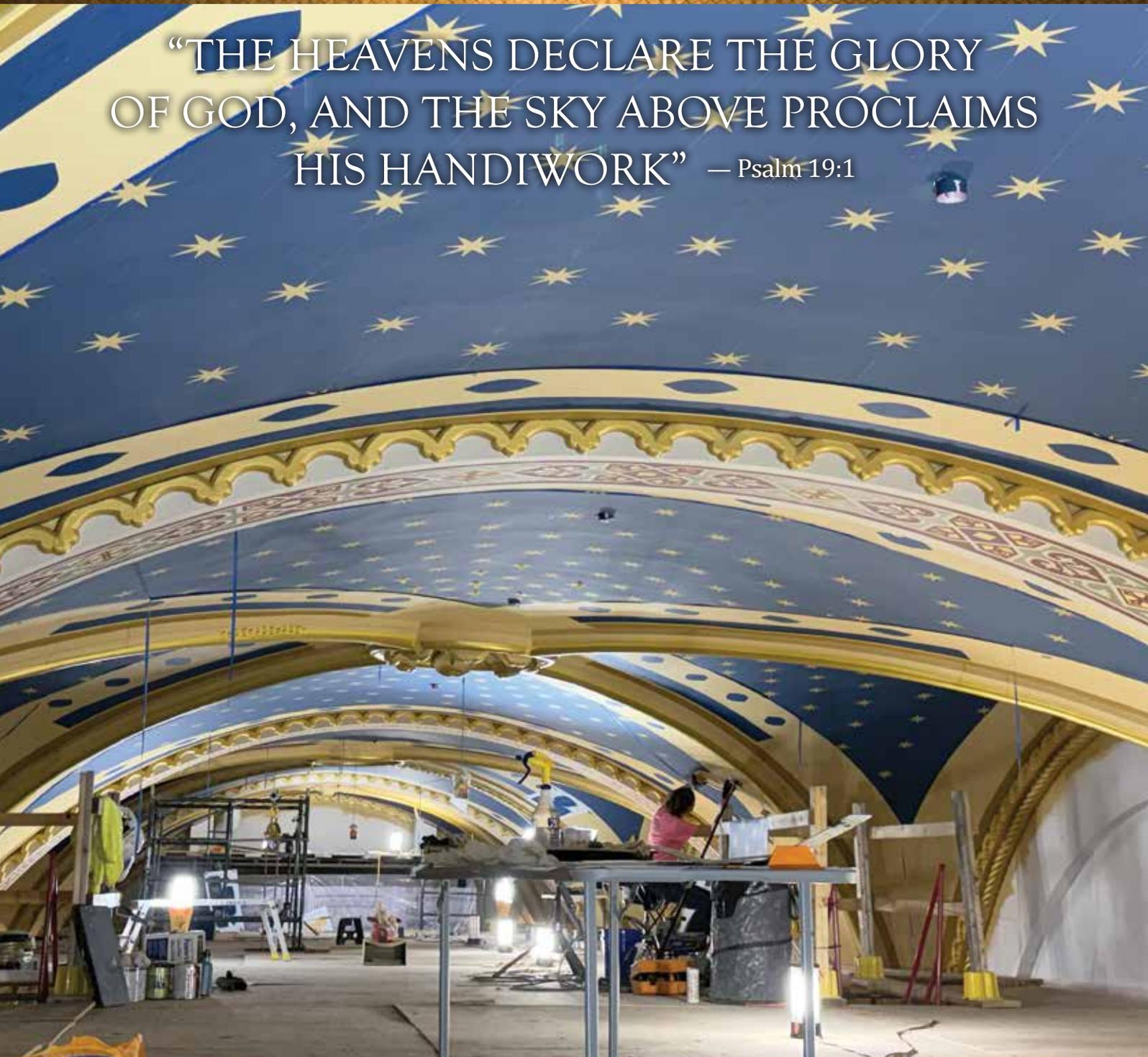




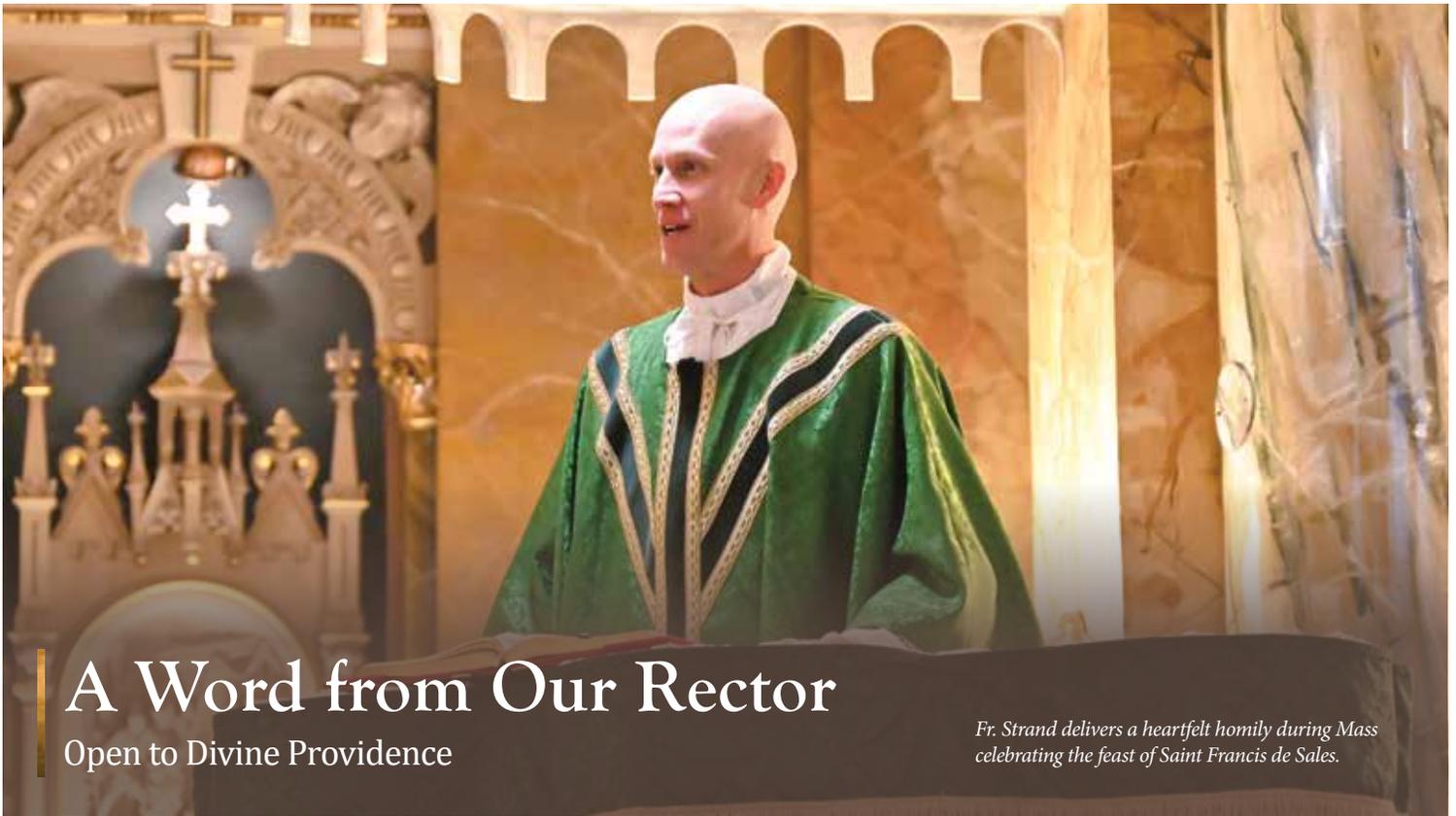
Salt *of* *the* Earth

A Saint Francis de Sales Seminary Communication
Spring 2026

“THE HEAVENS DECLARE THE GLORY
OF GOD, AND THE SKY ABOVE PROCLAIMS
HIS HANDIWORK” — Psalm 19:1



The ceiling of Christ King Chapel is being painted with an ethereal touch.



A Word from Our Rector

Open to Divine Providence

Fr. Strand delivers a heartfelt homily during Mass celebrating the feast of Saint Francis de Sales.

My Dear Friends in Christ,

Seminarians – now priests – who attended Saint Francis de Sales Seminary during COVID often describe that confusing season as one of the most transformational periods of their formation. What could have been a time of stagnation instead became a crucible of growth, forging a deeper reliance on God and others.

Today, we find ourselves in a strikingly similar moment as we undertake the largest renovation project in our 179-year history. The move off our historic campus, the hundreds of decisions required each day, and our continued reliance on the Lord for the resources necessary to complete this work have become an equally transformative chapter for our entire seminary community.

Through trials, health crises, the daily battle of the heart, or even the dust and detours of renovation, the Lord continually invites us to more. He reveals His generosity and goodness not in ease or complacency, but in the refining fire of difficulty. Saint Francis de Sales evangelized amid division, refusing to settle for the status quo in the Chablais region. He urged us, “Have patience with all things, but chiefly have patience with yourself. Do not lose courage in considering your own imperfections.” He continued, “We must unceasingly ask for perseverance by making use of the means which God has taught us for obtaining it: prayer, fasting, almsgiving, frequenting the sacraments, association with good companions, and hearing and reading Holy Scripture.”

Our Zeal project embodies this invitation. We are stewarding each dollar prudently for God’s glory through unceasing prayer and



The Lord continually
invites us to more.

association with good companions (some of whom you will hear from in this edition of *Salt*). Construction hums with purpose – preserving our remarkable legacy while preparing for the next hundred years of priestly formation in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee. This work is not easy, and we are not there yet, but the Lord offers daily encouragement to do it well. We cannot fall to mediocrity or complacency; the Lord summons us to greatness and a more profound reliance on Him.

This call extends to our entire seminary community – to you and me. In countercultural obedience, we step beyond ourselves, open to Divine Providence at work among us. Your prayers and generous support ensure that this mission will endure. Thank you for helping us form priests who persevere through trials and respond to God’s call with fidelity and zeal.

Sincerely in Christ,

Very Rev. Luke N. Strand
Rector



Natural Resources

Seminarians Step Up to Repurpose Downed Trees

The Superior seminarians find joy in working outdoors.

Superior seminarians know you don't waste good lumber! This laconic sentiment led Carl Oman and Scott Pederson, seminarians from the Diocese of Superior, to come up with a plan to use the trees that had been taken down during construction. The men were determined that after 80 to 100 years on the Seminary's campus, the once-majestic trees would have a new purpose at the Salesianum. Arborists had already felled the trees and removed the branches, so the men offered to build furniture for the Rathskeller, a special space of fraternity in the basement of Henni Hall.

Carl and Scott are both skilled woodworkers who considered this a labor of love. They borrowed a chainsaw mill from Scott's uncle and got to work cutting the huge logs into planks. Other seminarians helped, especially to move the slabs that weighed more than 400 pounds.

The men milled the wood from 10 huge trees. Most were oak and maple, with some ash as well. They were thrilled with the quality of the wood. The maple has a beautiful coloration throughout, and the oak has interesting knots which give it character.

Carl's grandfather always says that every piece of wood has a story. Milling is a slow process that gives you a lot of time to look at the grain and texture of the wood and think about the way God made it. Carl would ponder how many seminarians had walked by or prayed under these trees over the years.

Scott acknowledged, "Losing big trees is hard. This is a chance to make something out of them to remember the Seminary's story. We will build solid, unique furniture that seminarians will gather around for years. We're not thinking about leaving our mark on the Seminary while we work though; it's about the joy of doing the work."

Carl agreed, "It's great when our skills intersect with the needs of the community. The goal is not to have a lasting impact. The goal is to serve people wherever we are."



Every piece of wood has a story.



Carl Oman appreciates being able to use his woodworking skills for the Seminary.



Scott Pederson patiently mills the last plank from a large tree.



Headway in Henni Hall

Zeal for the Lord's House Is Making Things Happen

Fr. Strand marvels at the work being done to transform Christ King Chapel.

The amazing renovation, restoration, and expansion of Henni Hall continues! It is gratifying to see so much progress in just nine months. The scope of the work is almost unfathomable, but thanks be to God, everything is on schedule. Some of most recent work (since the last issue of *Salt*) includes:

Exterior Work

- The 75-year-old electric and natural gas service into the Salesianum has been replaced.
- The inner and outer commons have been removed to make way for a new, larger refectory.
- Concrete walls were poured for the newly dug mechanicals room basement.
- 432 new windows have been ordered.

Interior Work

- Much of the interior has been demolished to allow for new construction.
- A new formation hall and new music room are being built to enhance formation.
- A new fire suppression system is being installed.
- New foundations and support have been installed to increase structural integrity.
- The 1920s elevator was removed in preparation for a new code-compliant elevator.
- Updated mechanicals are being installed in the 3rd, 4th, and 5th floors, with the remainder of the building to follow.

Christ King Chapel

- The reredos and altar are being restored.
- The mural restoration is nearly complete.
- Chandeliers, pews, ambo, and paintings are in production.
- Donated confessionals are being restored and prepared for installation in the rear of the chapel.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to the *Zeal for the Lord's House* campaign. You are making this possible!

If you would like to help, scan the QR code or go to sfs.edu/zeal-campaign.



The new basement is 14" deep to accommodate HVAC and other systems so that the mechanicals are not visible above ground.



The main entrance is being returned to its historical placement on the south side. In addition, 432 new windows have been ordered which need to fit 19th century brick openings, each of which is a different size.



The south side entrance will return to its roots as the main access to the administrative wing.



The outer commons is unrecognizable as reinforcements are set for a new, larger refectory.



A new formation hall ensures the focus remains on exceptional priestly formation.



The Grand Staircase is enveloped in scaffolding.



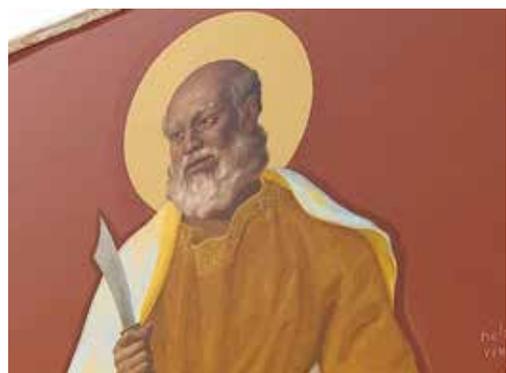
Supports are installed to increase the structural integrity of the building.



High up on the scaffolding, Fr. Strand inspects the repair work to the chapel's iconic mural.



The reredos (high altar) is being restored.



Christ King Chapel will feature new, beautifully detailed paintings of the 12 apostles.



Saint Francis de Sales Project

A Preservation of Heritage

The Seminary retains its architectural integrity from its construction in 1856.

By **Steven Chamberlin, Chamberlin LLC**

Most long-standing historic buildings in the Milwaukee area have stood the test of time by adapting—through repurposing, reinvention, and new uses that differ greatly from their original intent. Saint Francis de Sales Seminary stands apart. Since its inception in 1856, it has continued to function as it was originally designed: a sacred and intentional place for the formation of priests.

Saint Francis de Sales Seminary is an important part of the rich history and enduring fabric of our community. Its continued mission, uninterrupted for generations, makes it not only historically significant but culturally and spiritually irreplaceable.

Having had the privilege of participating in a wide range of community-building and historic restoration projects throughout the Milwaukee area, it becomes clear that there are common threads present in every truly successful endeavor. These projects are successful not merely because they are completed, but because their purpose is fulfilled. The Seminary project naturally embodies each of these critical elements:

1. An unwavering commitment to the cause,
2. Pursuit of the optimum solution,
3. Full community support,
4. The right, hand-picked team,
5. A disciplined approach to execution.

Perhaps the most important characteristic of Milwaukee's most successful "signature" projects is that they are never approached simply as buildings. They are understood as purpose-driven spaces. A hospital is approached as a place of healing, a museum as a cultural experience, and a seminary as a carefully and uniquely designed environment for priestly formation. Saint Francis de Sales represents centuries of Catholic tradition and intellectual history, often housing vital archives and serving as a true "place of memory"—one that connects the present Church with its past.

Historic restoration, at its best, is not merely about repairing walls or restoring finishes. It is about reviving the values and guiding principles that served as the foundation for generations. In the case of the Seminary, the restoration effort brings forward the spiritual, educational, and architectural ideals that shaped the institution from the very beginning.

With thousands of designers and contractors operating in the Milwaukee area, true signature projects distinguish themselves by intentionally hand-picking specialized talent aligned with the unique needs of the work. As with other notable historic preservation efforts—such as the Milwaukee Symphony, Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, and the Milwaukee Repertory Theater—the Saint Francis de Sales project assembled a team selected for its understanding of historic design, craftsmanship, and reverence for "old-

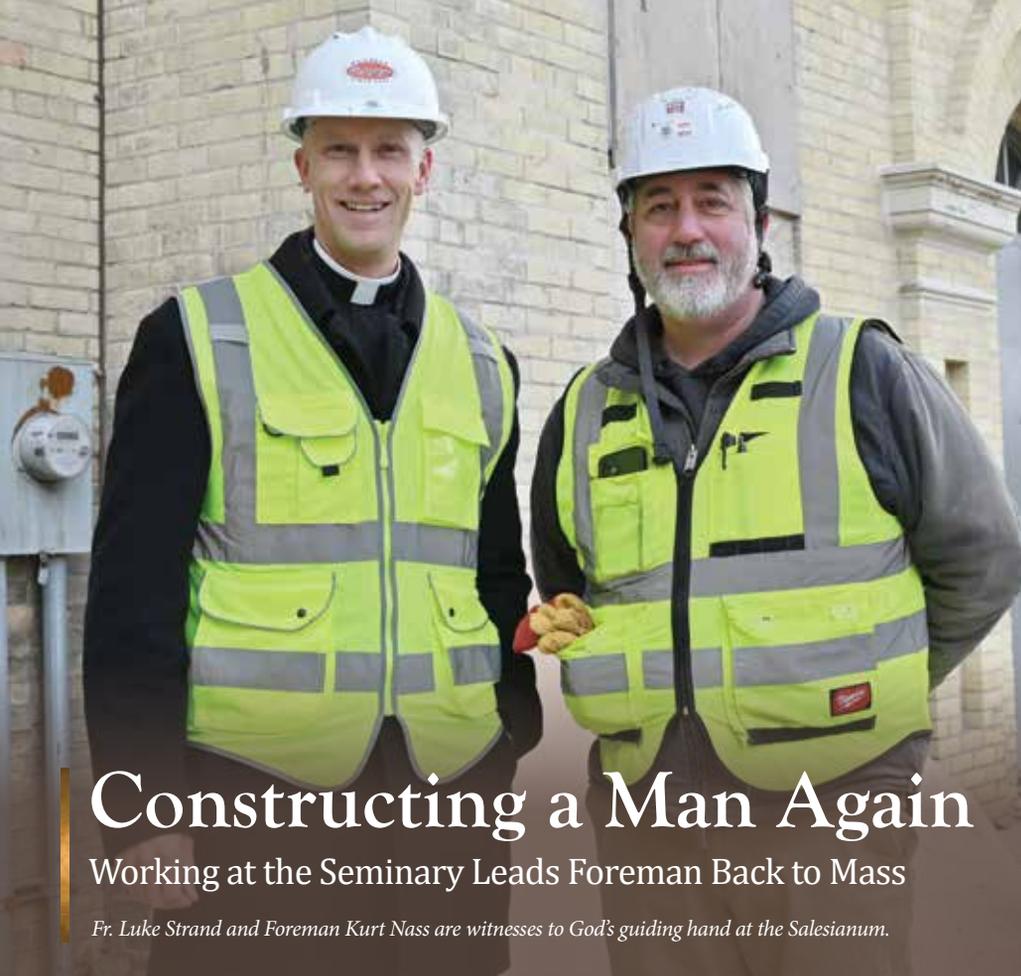
world" construction techniques. This approach ensures that Milwaukee's special historic places are preserved with integrity and authenticity.

Most projects are discussed in terms of a 25- or 50-year building life cycle. The Seminary exists on an entirely different timeline. Its mission is measured not in decades, but in generations—ultimately extending into centuries. This long view fundamentally changes how decisions are made, materials are selected, and craftsmanship is executed.

In many ways, the project mirrors the historic preservation philosophies found throughout Europe, where commitment to heritage and continuity forms the foundation of cultural identity. The Seminary's restoration reflects this same respect for history, permanence, and purpose.

These restorations safeguard the education and formation of future priests within their original, historic environment—allowing the Seminary to remain both a living institution and a preserved landmark. The Saint Francis de Sales Seminary restoration project stands as a powerful example of how our most meaningful historic spaces can and must be carried forward for generations to come.

Chamberlin is a construction industry management and advisory firm. Steven Chamberlin is overseeing the Seminary's construction teams and operations.



Constructing a Man Again

Working at the Seminary Leads Foreman Back to Mass

Fr. Luke Strand and Foreman Kurt Nass are witnesses to God's guiding hand at the Salesianum.

“
Beyond the bricks,
drywall, and paint,
God is at work in many
different ways at the
construction site.

There is more going on at the Salesianum than meets the eye. Beyond the bricks, drywall, and paint, God is at work in many different ways at the construction site. You just have to dig a bit to see it.

Kurt Nass is a foreman for Rams Contracting, a company that specializes in digging. They have been doing excavation and site preparation for the Seminary since late summer. Rams Contracting previously worked on Fiserv Forum, the Wisconsin Center District, and the Northwestern Mutual Tower, among others, so the Seminary is far from its biggest project, yet it is the one that changed Kurt's life.

Kurt was raised Catholic, attending St. Agnes Parish in Butler where he went to Sunday school and served as an altar boy. He loved the priests at the parish whom he fondly remembers as being incredibly kind. But, as Kurt said, "Life happens."

After getting out of the Army, he married and had two children. They baptized the children at St. Agnes even though his wife is not Catholic. The youngest child's baptism was the last time Kurt went to Mass. That was 18 years ago.

When Kurt arrived at the Seminary in August, he was blown away. He loves history and was astonished Henni Hall had been built by hand with bricks made from clay mined onsite 170 years ago. He toured Christ King Chapel and saw the tombstones of Seminary founders Archbishop Michael Heiss

and Father Joseph Salzmann. He looked at old photographs and heard fascinating stories of the Seminary's legendary history. Mostly, he "took in the feeling of this place" and came to appreciate, "This is sacred land."

Kurt was further amazed when he met the rector, Fr. Luke Strand. Father Strand reminded him forcefully of the priests of his youth – so kind, good natured, and easy to talk to. He said, "I see Father around all the time. You can talk to him about anything!" He also met a lot of seminarians whose commitment to the priesthood intrigued him.

All of this led Kurt to realize there was a pull on his heart to return to Mass. He explained, "I never lost my faith; I just didn't shade the doors of a church for almost 19 years. My faith took a backseat." Kurt decided to change this and went to Mass on Christmas for the first time since his son was baptized. He was delighted that his son wanted to go with him!

"It's all new to me again. It's exciting. It brings peace. And I am not going to be a Christmas and Easter guy, even if it means going by myself! I like the ritual of the Mass and its reverence. I am comfortable in the Catholic Church."

Kurt can't fully describe his desire to return to Mass, but he said being at Saint Francis de Sales Seminary and meeting the men here is a big part of it. God is, Kurt offered, "constructing a man again."

A Festival of Lessons and Carols

Celebrating the Christmas Season

The schola cantorum continues the Salesianum's legacy of exceptional sacred music. Photo by Bob Graushar.



On a cold December night, the Seminary community gathered to prepare for Christmas with songs and Scripture. The event was held at St. Anthony the Hermit Parish in Menomonee Falls. The capacity crowd of 800 was enthralled with the schola cantorum's magnificent performance under the direction of Dr. Agnieszka Kosmecka, director of liturgical music. The evening ended with a high-spirited reception where friends and family shared the joy of the season.



Seminarians welcome guests in from the cold night.



Fr. Brad Krawczyk presides over the seasonal readings and songs.



St. Anthony's is filled with enthusiastic benefactors. Photo by Bob Graushar.



John Francis (La Crosse) and Daniel Meyer (Milw) add notes of joy to the evening. Photo by Bob Graushar.



Deacon Nathan Budde (Green Bay) reads one of the lessons. Photo by Bob Graushar.



Seminarians pray along with the worshipful gathering.



Deacon Mark Wagner (Madison) delivers a stirring performance.



Joseph Bailey (Lafayette-in-Indiana) plays a graceful melody on his flute.



Dr. Agnieszka Kosmecka listens during Deacon Andy Swietlik's (Milw) last performance at Lessons and Carols.



Guess enjoy visiting after the uplifting evening.



Seminarians are grateful for the opportunity to serve those who so generously support their formation.



Honoring the Gentleman Saint

Patronal Feast Day Events Commemorate St. Francis de Sales

Archbishop Jeffrey Grob processes in for Solemn Vespers.

The feast of St. Francis de Sales arrived with subzero weather and dangerously cold windchills, but nothing could prevent the Seminary from celebrating its beloved patron saint!

On Friday, January 23, Archbishop Jeffrey Grob led solemn vespers for priests at the Basilica of St. Josaphat. The Basilica has been very generous in welcoming the Seminary for liturgies during our construction.

On Saturday, January 24 – the actual feast day – Vice Rector Fr. John Baumgardner celebrated Mass for the inhouse community in the St. Francis de Sales Chapel at the Pastoral Center. The following day, we returned to the Basilica for a glorious Mass with 350 benefactors who braved the cold. Fr. Luke Strand presided, and the schola cantorum provided inspiring music that filled the huge church with song.



125 priests and seminarians worship in the stunning Basilica.



Bishops Joseph Perry, James Schuerman, and Jeffrey Haines pray with the priests at vespers.



Archbishop Grob imparts words of encouragement to the priests.



Priests and seminarians appreciate time together after vespers.



Fr. John Baumgarder presides at Mass on the feast of St. Francis de Sales.



The Mass for benefactors is our opportunity to pray with the people who make priestly formation possible.



Deacon Redmond Tuttle (Milw) proclaims the Gospel from the Basilica's grand pulpit.



Bishop James Schuerman joins the priest faculty in the sanctuary at the Sunday Mass.



The Basilica is filled with wonderful friends who support our mission.



Fr. Luke Strand celebrates Sunday Mass for the intentions of the Seminary's benefactors.



Fr. Strand gratefully acknowledges guests after Mass.



Starting the Year in Silence

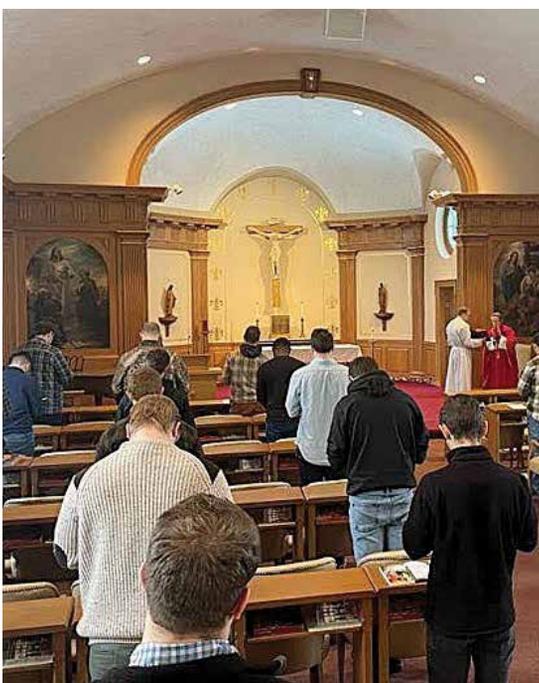
Retreats Offer Seminarians Quiet Time with the Lord

Seminarians gather with Fr. William Slattery at the end of the five-day retreat.

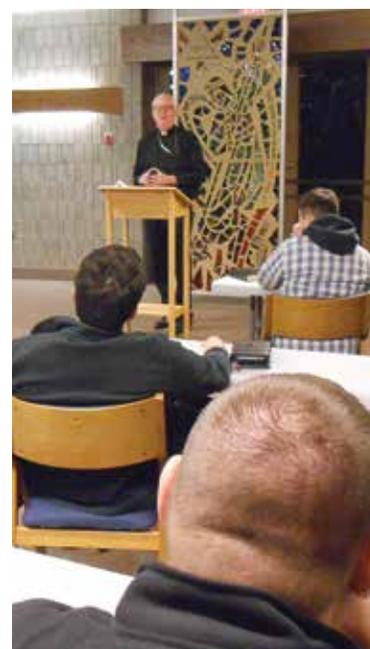
Before seminarians returned to class in January, they made a five-day silent retreat. It was a time to deepen their relationship with God and focus on their spirituality. The men in Discipleship I and II and Configuration I and II were led by the Irish-born Fr. William Slattery whose theme was “Fully Alive: A New Year Retreat to Re-ignite Your Life in Christ.”

The men in Configuration III, who anticipate being ordained to the transitional diaconate this spring, were led by Fr. Kenneth Omernick, pastor of St. Charles in Hartland. His theme was “Spiritual Exercises for Striving to Become a Saint.”

The Configuration IV class eagerly anticipates ordination to the priesthood this year. Bishop Donald Hying of the Diocese of Madison helped them prepare with conferences based on “The Priesthood of Jesus Christ: Identity and Mission.”



The main retreat is held at Bellarmine Retreat House in Barrington, IL



Bishop Donald Hying leads the canonical retreat for the men who will be ordained to the priesthood in 2026.



A crackling fire provides a comfortable setting for contemplation.



Fr. Ken Omernick counsels the seminarians in Configuration III.

Vocation Office News



Archbishop Jeffrey Grob and Bishops Jeffrey Haines and James Schuerman celebrate Mass before the St. Andrew Dinner.



Vocation Director Fr. Michael Malucha welcomes the young men and priests.

Vocation Office Update: “Come and See”

Vocation Office hosts St. Andrew Mass and Dinner for Young Men Open to God’s Call

Vocation Director Fr. Michael Malucha hosted our largest St. Andrew Mass and Dinner yet at the Cathedral of Saint John the Evangelist. On December 22nd, we welcomed 136 young men, 33 priests, and our Milwaukee seminarians for Mass with both Archbishop Jeffrey Grob and our Auxiliary Bishops, which then was followed by dinner, discussion, and witness talks from Dcn. Peter Danner and Fr. Brady Gagne.



Almost 200 men fill the Cathedral's atrium at the St. Andrew Dinner.

Save the Date – Upcoming Vocation Office Events

Spring Come and See

March 20-22

Saint Francis de Sales Seminary

Ages 18-35

Wojtyla Day

April 25

High School Students

Camp de Sales: Summer 2026

Middle School

Day Camps

June 27, July 18, August 8

High School

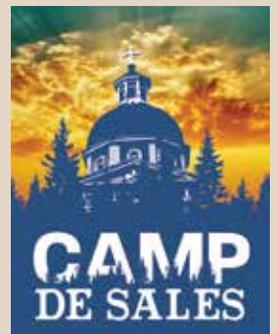
Overnight Camp

June 14-17

Vianney Expedition Day

August 4

Scan the QR code or visit thinkpriest.org/events for more information, as well as registration. You can contact the Vocation Office at vocationoffice@sfs.edu or 414-747-6437.





Scenes from the Salesianum

Thirteen men are instituted into the Ministry of Acolyte by Bishop James Schuerman on Saturday, November 15 at the Basilica of St. Josaphat. Front row: Daniel Graber (Madison), Todd Ashburn, Jr (Madison), David Marrone (Madison), Michael Janczakowski (Green Bay), Olivier Ndorimana (Green Bay), Robert Reynebeau (Green Bay), Collin vanWaardenburg (Gary). Second row: Noah Giebel (Milw), Charles Pomroy (Milw), Zephyrinus Ogbenna (Albany), Bennett Feudner (Milw), Spencer Wagner (Milw), Michael Milam (Milw). Back row: Fr. Luke Strand, Bishop James Schuerman.



The Shoremen pose with the St. Lawrence Cup after defeating Nashedah House Theological Seminary in an annual game of flag football.



A 20' pine tree dwarfs Frs. Baumgardner, Malucha, and Strand. Carl Oman (Superior) and Fr. Strand cut down the tree on the Seminary's campus and brought it to Cervus Commons for Christmas.



Seminarians process to the cemetery after vespers on All Souls Day.



Prayers for the faithfully departed are especially poignant in the dark, quiet cemetery.



Participating in St. Leonard's Turkey Trot is a Thanksgiving tradition for our seminarians.



Seminarians visit the Seraphic Adorers of the Child Jesus (and their goats!) in the Diocese of La Crosse.



Milwaukee seminarians spend time together over Christmas break.



Boot hockey is a favorite pastime at the Milwaukee seminarians' winter gatherings.



Propaedeutic seminarians Nate Hartwig (Milw), Caleb Taggart (La Crosse), and Anthony Leo (Albany) spend three weeks at the Ignacio House in New York City working in prison ministry.



Ben Harris (Lafayette-in-Indiana) and Christian Brayer (Milw) meet up with Fr. Malucha during the March for Life in Washington DC. The propaedeutic seminarians are in DC to work at the Missionaries of Charities' Gift of Peace House.

2026 Events



Saint Francis de Sales Seminary, Inc.
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St. Francis, WI 53235

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Annual Seminary Dinner

Friday, Oct. 9 • Baird Center

This year's Annual Dinner promises to be one of great excitement as the Seminary's restoration will be nearly complete! We are already making plans to share scenes of the new Salesianum with you, and of course, we will introduce you to the amazing seminarians who are answering the Lord's call.

It will be a night of hope and joy for all. Invitations will be mailed in August. We encourage you to respond promptly to reserve your table. Last year's event sold out in record time! Visit sfs.edu/events/annual-dinner for more information.



Seminary Golf Outing

Monday, June 22

Wisconsin Country Club

Save the date for the best golf outing of the summer! Held at the renowned Wisconsin Country Club, the event has something for everyone. Golfers will love the scenic and well-maintained course. Non-golfers can join us for the entertaining cocktail reception and delectable dinner. Either way, you will be helping to raise important funds for priestly formation. Visit sfs.edu/events/golf-outing for more information.



Please Support Your Future Priests

Be part of our mission to form priests in the image of Jesus Christ.



Please pray for us and keep Saint Francis de Sales Seminary in mind as you plan your year-end charitable giving. Checks made payable to Saint Francis de Sales Seminary can be mailed to: 3257 South Lake Drive, Saint Francis WI 53235

Secure online contributions can be made at sfs.edu/support/donate or use the QR code.

Every gift is appreciated by the men who will serve as your priests!

For more information or to support the mission of Saint Francis de Sales Seminary, visit our website at www.sfs.edu.
Follow us on Facebook, Instagram, and X to keep up to date with the latest news and photos.

414- 747-6400