



IMMACULATE  
HEART<sup>of</sup> MARY  
Seminary

WINTER 2025–26  
**Newsletter**

*Behold, how good and how pleasing it is  
for brothers to dwell as one.*

Psalms 133:1





# Letter from the Rector

It has been a tremendous blessing to serve as the Rector of IHM Seminary since July 1st of last year. I began my time as Rector with the Propaedeutic move in day only a couple weeks after that, and we have been going hard since the new men arrived. I have been deeply edified by the men who come to IHM both as new seminarians but also those who have returned. The men of IHM Seminary are seeking a profound communion with God and with others. They demonstrate a longing for depth in relationships and for a truly meaningful life by serving others.

Each of the men have areas in which they can grow, and the formation faculty works to know the men personally to hold these areas of growth before him in a fatherly way that seeks to understand and encourage him. We offer paths forward that appropriately challenge and support him in this growth. It can be delicate work, but I am inspired how the men experience it when we are honest and work together to create a plan of growth that is particular to each man's journey of conversion and grace offered to him.

While the semester is filled with many conversations, there is also room for moments of joy and laughter. We have had communal gatherings, meals, and hallway conversations where we laugh both at and with one another. We live in a close community, where we can experience one another's limitations, but it also presents immense blessings of friendship.

One particular note of gratitude: after over 25 years of spiritual direction for IHM Seminary, Fr. Jon Moore, O. Carm. is retiring from making the weekly trip from Austin, MN to offer spiritual direction for seminarians. We are immensely grateful to Fr. Moore for his incredible generosity and depth of insight that he has given to countless seminarians throughout his years at IHM Seminary! Thank you, Fr. Moore!

*May God continue to bless IHM Seminary with the abundance of His Fatherly love and protection!*



“Each of the men have areas in which they can grow, and the formation faculty works to know the men personally to hold these areas of growth before him in a fatherly way that seeks to understand and encourage him.

— Fr. Kern





## Propaedeutic (Freshman) Move-In Day

New Seminarians, with their families, enjoy a meal, play yard games, tour the grounds, and learn about seminarian life at IHMS.





# Come and See Weekend

Article by Joseph Bartosh, Diocese of Winona-Rochester



## **Immaculate Heart of Mary Seminary was blessed to have had its first “Come and See” weekend of the 2025-26 formation year on the weekend of 16 November 2025.**

“Come and See” weekends are designed to welcome young men who may feel an attraction or call to the priesthood and give them a little sense of what seminary life is like. It is a great opportunity to see other men around them who may feel a similar calling or draw to the priesthood, and give them the chance to visit with current seminarians from their respective dioceses and answer questions. IHM hosted young men from across multiple dioceses that amounted close to 70 discerners!

The discerners had the opportunity to pray in common with the IHM seminarians in weekend holy hours, morning and evening prayer, and Mass. Along with experiencing the structured prayer schedule that the seminarians follow on a daily basis, the visiting men also had the chance to engage in fraternity within the seminary community. Activities such as basketball, football, and ultimate frisbee are highly loved by seminarians at IHM, and the opportunity to share in fraternity with the discerners is always a huge blessing. Alongside these activities, seminarians will spend time together on Friday and Saturday evenings watching a communal movie and playing games such as pool, ping pong, and cards. These activities provide seminarians

and discerners an opportunity to get to know one another and provide a sense of welcome into the visitor’s current discernment process.

On Sunday morning, after a shared brunch together as a community, Fr. Jason Kern, Rector of IHM Seminary, gave a conference to the discerners, providing insight into the four pillars of formation which seminarians build their lives around each day: Human, Spiritual, Intellectual, and Pastoral. On Sunday evening, discerners were invited to partake in their respective dioceses’ “Diocesan Night” which is a time for seminarians of each diocese to spend time in fraternity as they will one day, God willing, be brother priests. Common activities different dioceses participate in on these evenings include cooking supper, playing a group game, going on hikes, and watching a movie.

Lastly, on Monday morning, discerners were invited to follow seminarians to their classes and see a bit of what their major of study looks like, philosophy. Overall, the “Come and See” weekend is a great chance for young men who are discerning a possible vocation to the priesthood to see the beauty of seminary formation at IHM, and ask questions that they may have. Having had the opportunity to visit and spend time with discerners on this weekend was a wonderful experience to share the love of Christ. In Him we find our joy!



## IHMS *Fun Facts* So far this year...



**Almost 15 pounds of charcoal** was used for incense during different liturgies such as Mass and Adoration.

**Over 1,600** hosts were consecrated

**Over 16 pounds of wax** was melted from the use of candles during liturgies.





# Propaedeutic Summer

Article By Phil Hodapp

**This past summer, 24 men arrived at Immaculate Heart of Mary Seminary in early July for the start of the propaedeutic year of formation, with almost no expectation of what the summer would bring.**

What made it even more interesting was Fr. Jason Kern had been appointed as the new rector of IHM about two weeks before the propaedeutic men arrived. Nevertheless, come July 12th, the propaedeutic year of formation officially started, and these 24 men officially started their journey through seminary.

The propaedeutic year of formation has always been an optional year of formation that seminarians could take, usually between college seminary and major seminary. That is, until the Vatican released new documents in 2022 to revamp the formation stages in seminaries. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, or the USCCB, then took these documents and reconstructed the Program of Priestly Formation, or the PPF. The PPF gives an outline of the expectations for seminary formation, as well as benchmarks for each stage and pillar of formation. The focus of the propaedeutic year, as the PPF puts it, is to have “a period of consolidation and growth in prayer, trust, and fraternity.” The propaedeutic year has definitely reflected these three ideals in many ways.

The summer brought about a lot of growth within each person, but also within the class. The daily schedule, or horarium, seemed challenging, but it also prepared us all for the academic year at Saint Mary’s University.

During the conferences, there was a variety of material covered. Usually, one of the conferences was reading and discussing a book. Some of the books that the men read over the summer included *The Intellectual Life*, *Rekindling Wonder*, and *The Father’s House*, which discussed topics like studying and academics, resetting our thirst for natural beauty in the world instead of the fast-paced technological culture of today, and our relationship with the Persons of the Trinity.



## Daily Horarium

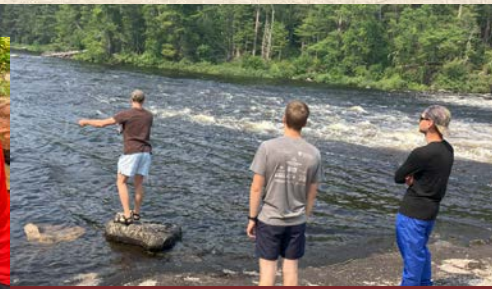
6:30AM	Morning prayer and Mass
7:15AM	Breakfast and Cleanup
8:00AM	Holy Hour
9:15AM	Conference #1
10:15AM	Break
10:45AM	Conference #2
11:45AM	Lunch and Break
1:00PM	Daily Work
3:30PM	Free time/Cooking
5:30PM	Evening Prayer
6:00PM	Dinner and Clean up
6:45PM	Free time
8:00PM	Fraternity Groups

## IHMS *Fun Facts:*



Coffee is a favorite among this propaedeutic class, with **over 45 gallons of coffee consumed over the summer months**





The second conference consisted of a number of different topics and material through the summer, from a two-week crash course in English grammar, writing, and appropriate uses for technology and an overview of spirituality and discernment of spirits. Although the topics widely differed, they all had the same focus: to educate, improve our lives to be better men, and to be more centered in Christ and our vocation.

During the daily work period, the majority of our tasks consisted of yard work. Three senior seminarians joined the propaedeutic men over the summer to help with various needs and serve as leaders and mentors to the new men. One of these seniors, Sam Miron from the Diocese of Winona-Rochester was the former leader of the Yard Crew at IHM. He headed up most of the projects that took place over this summer. When Sam was asked about the daily yardwork, he said, "This summer, the propedeutic seminarians from IHM spent several weeks working at the Carmelite hermitage, helping with groundskeeping and whatever tasks the sisters needed. We also assisted the Christian Brothers in their large garden, pulling weeds, tending plants, and helping with the harvest. Back at the seminary, we teamed up with Tom, the head of maintenance, to tackle tasks such as late-spring cleaning, mowing the lawn, clearing gutters, cleaning the [outdoor] Stations of the Cross, and many other projects. It was hard work but good work. It was also good fraternity even in the heat, reminding us that service and humility are learned just as much outdoors as in the classroom."

Another source of fraternity over the summer was cooking teams. Each day, the propaedeutic seminarians would eat dinner in community in the dining room of the seminary. There were four different groups of propaedeutic men that would take turns cooking, doing dishes, setting up, and cleaning the refectory. Under the leadership of Mona Bork, the secretary at IHM, the cooking teams learned basic cooking skills and explored

different cultural cuisines such as chicken curry and greek euros. We even had authentic Guatemalan tacos, made by Juan Roman-Galvez, one of the propaedeutic men. The cooking typically took place during the free time in the afternoon, but if you were not cooking, you had time to read, exercise, hike, or just relax before evening prayer and dinner.

To end the day, we gathered in our fraternity groups and shared the high, low, and grace of the day as well as prayed night prayer together. Fraternity groups are a place where the men can be vulnerable. This is an amazing way to grow deeper connections within a smaller group of men.

On top of our daily schedule, Fr. Kern also focused on the natural beauty in the world and day to day life. With that in mind, the propaedeutic men got to be part of many unique experiences. These included attending a Winona community band performance, watching a Shakespeare play, going to a Beethoven concert, taking a boat tour of the Mississippi River near Winona, and going to St. Paul for a Minnesota Twins baseball game. One of my favorite experiences however was the trip to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area, or the BWCA. The propaedeutic men spent four days in the BWCA as part of a seven day retreat focusing on the identities of Christ. The BWCA trip was also an opportunity to be in a beautiful environment, and to challenge the men to live outside of their comfort zone, both in a literal and metaphorical sense. We were also able to participate in a trip to the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Lacrosse, WI and attend the Mass of the Americas with Cardinal Burke, the founder of the Shrine.

Overall, the summer of propaedeutic formation formed connections throughout service, community, and shared experiences. It strengthened the relationships we built with the faculty who guided us and gave us memories that will no doubt stick with every one of us for the rest of our lives.





# IMMACULATE HEART of MARY Seminary

## 2026 Seminarians

### IHMS *Fun Facts:*

#### Class Stats:

##### 23 propaedeutic men

- 8 men had previous college experience
- 2 men attended high school seminaries
- 20 men had transfer credits from college or high school
- 1 former missionary from NET (National Evangelization Teams)
- 1 former firefighter

**DIOCESE OF CROOKSTON**

- + Most Rev. Andrew Cozzens
- 2 Seminarians
- Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception
- 405 Miles
- 6 hr 27 min

**DIOCESE OF SAINT CLOUD**

- + Most Rev. Patrick M. Neary C.S.C.
- 3 Seminarians
- Cathedral of St. Mary
- 181 Miles
- 3 hr 26 min

**DIOCESE OF SIOUX CITY**

- + Most Rev. John Keehner
- 7 Seminarians

**DIOCESE OF SUPERIOR**

- + Most Rev. James Powers
- 4 Seminarians
- Cathedral of Christ the King
- 219 Miles
- 3 hr 37 min

**DIOCESE OF GREEN BAY**

- + Most Rev. David L. R.
- 2 Seminarians
- Cathedral of St. Francis
- 227 Miles
- 3 hr 52 min

**DIOCESE OF LA CROSSE**

- + Most Rev. Gerard Battersby
- 5 Seminarians
- St. Joseph the Workman Cathedral
- 32 Miles
- 36 min

**DIOCESE OF MADISON**

- + Most Rev. Donald
- 6 Seminarians
- Cathedral Parish
- 163 Miles
- 2 hr 33 min



## DIOCESE OF SUPERIOR



- + Most Rev. James Powers
- 4 Seminarians
- Cathedral of Christ the King
- 219 Miles
- 3 hr 37 min

## DIOCESE OF GREEN BAY



- + Most Rev. David L. Ricken
- 2 Seminarians
- Cathedral of St. Francis Xavier
- 227 Miles
- 3 hr 52 min

## DIOCESE OF MARQUETTE



- + Most Rev. John F. Doerfler
- 1 Seminarian
- St. Peter Cathedral
- 364 Miles
- 6 hr 31 min

## DIOCESE OF REYKJAVÍK ICELAND



- + Most Rev. Dávid Bartimej Tencer O.F.M.Cap
- 1 Seminarian
- Cathedral of Christ the King
- 2,953 Miles
- 6 hr 10 min (flight)

## ARCHDIOCESE OF MILWAUKEE



- + Most Rev. Jeffrey Grob
- 9 Seminarians
- Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist
- 236 Miles
- 3 hr 26 min

## DIOCESE OF GARY



- + Most Rev. Robert J. McClory
- 4 Seminarians
- Cathedral of the Holy Angels
- 338 Miles
- 5 hr 7 min

## DIOCESE OF LA CROSSE



- + Most Rev. Gerard Battersby
- 5 Seminarians
- St. Joseph the Workman Cathedral
- 32 Miles
- 36 min

## DIOCESE OF MADISON



- + Most Rev. Donald J. Hying
- 6 Seminarians
- Cathedral Parish of St. Raphael
- 163 Miles
- 2 hr 33 min

## DIOCESE OF PEORIA



- + Most Rev. Louis Tylka
- 11 Seminarians
- Cathedral of Saint Mary of the Immaculate Conception
- 319 Miles
- 5 hr 22 min



# Diving Deeper into the Life of Fr. Matthew Wagner

**Assistant Dean of Formation, IHM  
Judicial Vicar, DOW-R**



**Article by  
Patrick Cullars**  
Diocese of Gary

*With the departure of Fr. Bob Horihan and the subsequent appointment of Fr. Jason Kern as rector, Immaculate Heart of Mary Seminary was pleased to welcome Fr. Matt Wagner as assistant dean of formation beginning this past summer.*

A native of Stillwater, Minnesota, Fr. Wagner first came to Winona as a student at Saint Mary's University of Minnesota studying business and sports management. While studying at the university, he encountered the Lord's call first to full reception in the Church, and then to the priesthood. Though baptized Catholic, he had never received his first Holy Communion or Confirmation and entered the RCIA program at Saint Mary's as a freshman. After his full reception, the influence and witness of students at Saint Mary's and friends made at activities at the Winona State University Newman Center led him to be open to discerning the call of priesthood. Interactions with young priests at the seminary and of men in formation especially allowed him to learn more about the priesthood and to consider what God wanted from his life. After his sophomore year of college, he entered seminary and studied for two years here at Immaculate Heart of Mary and then completed theology school at Sacred Heart Major Seminary in Detroit, Michigan. An interesting part of Fr. Wagner's vocation story is that all three of the other formators at IHM influenced him in some way. Fr. Jason Kern, rector, taught him how to serve mass when he was in early college. Fr. Martin Schafer, dean of formation, came on staff when Fr. Wagner entered seminary, and later vested him as a deacon at his ordination. He also served as a mentor to Fr. Wagner in his early priesthood at the behest of Bishop Quinn. Fr. Matt Fasnacht, director of spiritual life, was the pastor of St. Mary parish in Caledonia when Fr. Wagner did his

parish internship summer during theology school. Fr. Wagner would later return to St. Mary as pastor. He counts it a gift to continue to serve alongside them and learn from them.

Continuing to ask what God wanted from his life, and being open to whatever that may be seems to be a continuing theme of Wagner's priesthood. After ordination, his first assignment was as parochial vicar of the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Winona, while also teaching at Cotter High School. He greatly enjoyed teaching, despite having specifically asked the Lord to never be assigned to teach. His next assignment came during the COVID-19 quarantine. He had received it and was preparing to leave when he was suddenly reassigned. This found him as the pastor of St. Mary in Caledonia, St. Olaf in Mabel, and St. Patrick in Brownsville. Although it came as a surprise, this first pastorate turned out to be quite instructive and rewarding. Next, Fr. Wagner was assigned to study canon law at the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. Sad to leave his parishes, this assignment came as another surprise for Fr. Wagner, but, as with his other assignments, and he would say his life overall, the Lord guided him and used his abilities to serve the church. This appointment came amidst the passing of two beloved priests and canon lawyers, Fr. David Wechter and Fr. Michael Cronin. Fr. Wagner recalls listening to the funeral homily for Fr. Cronin as he drove to Washington to begin his studies. He felt a strong sense of the Lord's action in this work and that it would enable him to better serve the people of the Diocese of Winona-Rochester. Fr. Wagner credits the prayers and loving support of the faithful back at home for the success of his studies.





## Fr. Matt Wagner

Assistant Dean of Formation, IHM  
Judicial Vicar, DOW-R

Since completion of these studies, which earned him a licentiate in canon law, Fr. Wagner also serves as judicial vicar for the Diocese of Winona-Rochester. To many, canon law may seem a daunting or difficult subject, a reputation of which canon lawyers are aware. Though surprised at the appointment, Fr. Wagner entered his studies with an open mind. He recalls discussing some canon with a fellow priest who commented on how he had really taken to the subject, to which Fr. Wagner responded “I think that I actually might like it.” Although it may seem drab, Fr. Wagner likes to focus on the fact that canon law is the entire body of that which is just in the Church, and that the law is primarily a vehicle for justice, which redounds to the greater glory of God. It gives an order to the life of the church, a foretaste of the Kingdom of God, where all is just and right.

In his personal time, Fr. Wagner enjoys traveling and considers himself a Francophile. He particularly values the French saints and has been inspired by many of them. St. Thérèse of Lisieux and St. Jean Vianney have been influential in his spiritual life and priesthood. He hopes one day to lead a pilgrimage to Lourdes and Ars, having himself visited both several times. He enjoys music, loves to sing, and plays the piano and guitar. He is a fan of all sports, and especially enjoys playing basketball and watching hockey and football. And, for those wondering, he is a Minnesota fan across the board.

**We are so pleased to welcome Fr. Wagner to Immaculate Heart of Mary Seminary. This first semester, he has already made an impact on the house with his joyful presence, and we expect great things to come. Please keep him and all the faculty and students in your prayers.**





# Seminarian Formation Classes

Each year, seminarians take formation classes in addition to their philosophy majors to gain a deeper understanding of the pastoral, human, spiritual, and intellectual dimensions of entering the priesthood. Seminarian Joshua Braun from the Archdiocese of Milwaukee had the opportunity to ask Immaculate Heart of Mary Seminary formators and seminarians about their experiences with these studies.



**Joshua Braun**  
Diocese of Gary

Article by Joshua Braun | Diocese of Gary

## Propaedeutic Stage Formation Class—Prayer



**Fr. Fasnacht:**

**Q. What is the goal for your formation class?**

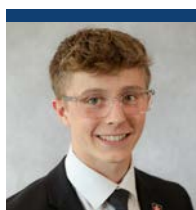
To teach the seminarians how to pray and grow in holiness.

**Q. What resources/books do you use as a guide for this class?**

The main books I use are the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and *The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas a Kempis.

**Q. Which topic during the course of the formation year is your favorite to teach?**

Prayer is my favorite topic during the formation year.



**Isaac Timmerman:**

**Q. Describe what your formation class is about this year.**

Fr. Fasnacht is taking us through the prayer section of the *Catechism* and helping us dive deeper into what the spiritual life looks like.

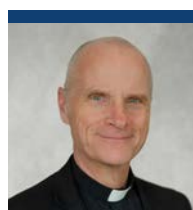
**Q. How has this class helped to form you in the Spiritual dimension?**

I am learning why the Lord chooses to reveal himself (or not reveal himself) in the way he does.

**Q. What are a couple of insights you have gained from this class that you will take with you?**

Always pray through Mary's intercession. She is so close to her son that he always listens to her.

## Discipleship I Formation Class—Sexuality and Celibacy



**Fr. Schaefer:**

**Q. What is the goal for your formation class?**

My approach is that the man who comes into this formation class is already praying and knows himself in relationship with Jesus. With that being said, this class is where the spiritual dimension and human dimension meet—encountering Jesus in these. Through encounter with Jesus comes the revealing of true identity. Our identity emerges from relationship with Christ. This includes discovering we are sexual beings created by God—discovering ourselves as masculine, as men. We also look at God's plan for sexuality. We start with TOB (Theology of the Body). Then we explore the charism of celibacy—we explore it apart from priesthood and discern celibacy and the capacity to live chastity. The last part of the class is getting to know our own sexual history and healing of any woundedness or disorder that might exist—as Bob Schuchts says in *Be Restored*, “healing wounds through the merciful love of Jesus Christ.”

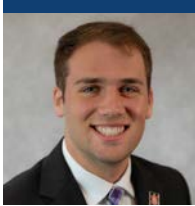
**Q. What resources/books do you use as a guide for this class?**

We use *Theology of the Body in One Hour* by Jason Evert, *How We Love* by John Mark Falkenhain, and *Be Restored: Healing Our Sexual Wounds through Jesus' Merciful Love* by Bob Schuchts.



**Q. Which topic during the course of the formation year is your favorite to teach and why?**

Bringing the life of celibacy to life through sharing my experience and sharing my life in a way that will hopefully inspire the men. Witnessing to living happy, healthy, holy in the life of a priest in an integrated way.



**Daniel Miller:**

**Q. Describe what your formation class is about this year.**

As my classmates and I have begun the Discipleship stage of formation, we have been exploring the theme of our weekly formation class: Sexuality and Celibacy. Our class is characterized by authentic vulnerability, discussion, and appreciation of sexuality and celibacy. There is a clear focus on the intrinsic goodness of the body, with plenty of foundation provided by Pope St. John Paul II's *Theology of the Body*. Mr. Peter Martin and Fr. Schaefer have been our main teachers; they have been instrumental to our learning not only by providing important theology, but also by their joy filled personal experiences and testimonies.

**Q. How has this class helped to form you in the Human dimension?**

This class has been essential to my development in the human dimension. The teaching is centered around the beautiful dignity of myself and of others. It has opened my eyes to the places where my heart lacks that recognition. I can gain awareness of my wounds, and I can begin to let the Lord glorify them—and this is the crux of human formation.

**Q. What are a couple of insights you have gained from this class that you will take with you?**

*Theology of the Body* has provided so many insights, but all boil down to one word: love. JP II said “the opposite of love is use.” This short quote I carry with me now, and I often ask myself if I am loving the person, or if I am using the person. Another takeaway from the class so far has been the beauty of celibacy. Specifically, as it is the heavenly fulfillment of the spousal meaning of the body. I cannot wait to see what else this class has to offer us, and so my classmates and I can continue to learn to offer ourselves.

## Discipleship II Formation Class— Ignatian Discernment of Spirits



**Fr. Kern:**

**Q. What is the goal for your formation class?**

The goal of the formation class focused on Discernment is to give seminarians a deeper awareness of the *Rules for Discernment of Spirits* from St. Ignatius of Loyola. Going deeper into the Rules for Discernment allows for seminarians who have regularly been praying holy hours to understand how the affective movements that arise in the heart each day can lead us toward or away from God. It teaches the men to learn to abide in Christ throughout their day and also gives them greater clarity about where God is leading them as they discern God's will for their life and potential vocation to the priesthood. It leads them to a choice. We supplement this with other Catholic Spiritual traditions like the Carmelites to widen the lens of holiness and contemplation in prayer.

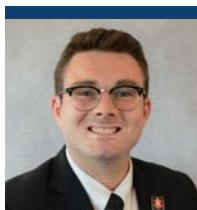
**Q. What resources/books do you use as a guide for this class?**

The resources we use throughout the year are Fr. Timothy Gallagher's books including, *The Discernment of Spirits*, *Discerning the Will of God*, *The Examen Prayer*, and *Spiritual Consolation*. We also utilize *Searching for and Maintaining Peace* by Fr. Jacques Philippe, *The Fulfillment of All Desire* by Ralph Martin, and *Fire Within* by Fr. Thomas Dubay. We don't read all of those books, but we cover a fair amount of their content!

**Q. Which topic during the course of the formation year is your favorite to teach and why?**

My favorite aspect of the course is teaching the men to pray with their whole being, meaning not to stifle the desires arising from within but learning to relate them to God and then resting in the presence of God in contemplation and communion. Helping men surrender their minds and hearts to God is a beautiful gift as they learn to live generously in service to others but always seeking to abide in Christ while doing so.





### Cade Sullivan:

**Q. Describe what your formation class is about this year.**

My formation class this year is with Fr. Kern and it is all about the St. Ignatius' *Discernment of Spirits*, an integral part of

the Church's spiritual patrimony. Thus far we have gone through two of Fr. Timothy Gallagher's books about Ignatian spirituality in order to take the insights to our daily holy hour, and of course our yearly silent retreat, which is based upon St. Ignatius' teachings.

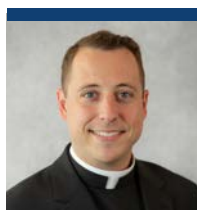
**Q. How has this class helped to form you in the Intellectual and Spiritual dimensions?**

This class has given me "tools for my spiritual toolbag" as Fr. Kern often refers to his teachings as. Being able to take St. Ignatius' *14 Rules for Discernment* into my holy hour has given me better language to articulate movements in my prayer life, while also learning how to respond to desolation and consolation as they come up in prayer.

**Q. What are a couple of insights you have gained from this class that you will take with you?**

Many of the insights I have gained from the class come from Fr. Kern's anecdotes about his life as a priest, which inspires me and reminds me why I am ultimately here at seminary. The fruitfulness of priestly ministry depends on the receptivity and surrender that the individual priest cultivates in his prayer life. Fr. Kern has done this in a way that is truly apparent in his life as Rector here at IHM. It has taught me not to focus on accomplishing the most that I can in formation, but learning how to love and be loved by my creator each day.

## Discipleship III/IV Formation Class—Priestly Identity



### Fr. Wagner:

**Q. What is the goal for your formation class?**

The goal of the formation class is to examine what a priest is. We discuss 'Priestly Identity', drawing from Papal Encyclicals, Decrees,

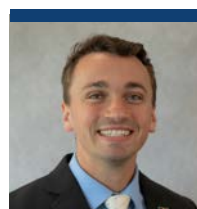
and other documents, aiming to help the men understand who the priest is, what is his function within the Church, and what that looks like practically in the 21st century.

**Q. What resources/books do you use as a guide for this class?**

The men in my formation class will be reading *Priests for the Third Millennium* by Cardinal Timothy Dolan, and we have watched excerpts from the TV Series "Band of Brothers".

**Q. Which topic during the course of the formation year is your favorite to teach and why?**

This is my first year teaching this course, so I'm not sure I have a favorite topic yet, but thus far I've greatly enjoyed discovering how the men perceive priesthood. The men who I'm walking with have a great desire to emulate Christ, first and foremost, but also many of the parish priests who they have come to know over the years. As we examine what those characteristics are, as well as what it takes to be a good and holy parish priest, I have been edified by their insights and aspirations.



### Zachariah Steffens:

**Q. Describe what your formation class is about this year.**

The Senior year formation class is all about Priestly identity, learning from Christ the High Priest. We have been

spending time looking into church documents related to the Priesthood and the various roles of the Priest. Reading *Presbyterorum Ordinis* has enriched my view of this vocation in their call to works of charity, the embrace of the celibate lifestyle, and the voluntary call to embrace poverty—all of which are seen in the life of Jesus the High Priest. We have also watched and analyzed themes in the episode series 'Band of Brothers.' This shows the importance of a fraternal brotherhood within the presbyterate and emphasizes good leadership that is for and with the people they are serving, taking notes from Pope Francis' emphasis that the 'shepherd must smell like the sheep'.

**Q. How has this class helped to form you in the Pastoral dimension?**

We have been getting practical skills and advice that we can take into our future Priesthood. We've looked deeply into the healthy leadership qualities of a Priest and how they ought to 'spend themselves' for the sake of the people. Even more important than that is the Priest's personal and intimate relationship with Christ, which is the source that flows into every area of our lives.

**Q. What are a couple of insights you have gained from this class that you will take with you?**

A theme from the 'Band of Brothers' film stuck out to me. They emphasized the importance of jumping into a brother's 'foxhole' when things are hard. This really displays the need that we have as humans for community. Talking with a brother or a friend about the difficulties and the blessings in life helps us continue to grow towards sanctity.





## IHMS *Fun Facts:*



**Almost every propaedeutic seminarian was given a nickname over the summer**, which usually was created after a funny event or memory. To this day, the nicknames are still used every now and then. Some of the nicknames included: Teach, Boss, Big Toe, Timmy, Rat, and Tadpole.







THE RELIGIOUS SISTERS *of* MERCY  
*of* ALMA MICHIGAN



# Convent Construction

Located next to Immaculate Heart of Mary Seminary and in the heart of Saint Mary's University campus is the Immaculate Heart Convent.

The presence of the Religious Sisters of Mercy of Alma, MI there began with one sister commuting to Winona every few weeks from Jackson, MN, where the sisters had a convent for over 30 years. In Spring 2012, the Superior General and Vicar General of the Religious Sisters of Mercy came for an annual visitation of the Jackson Convent, and Bishop Quinn invited them to a Holy Hour and dinner at his house. That is when he offered the Religious Sisters of Mercy a convent by the seminary, and the Superior General accepted!

Since then, the Religious Sisters of Mercy have become an active and valued part of the Winona community. Over the past nearly 14 years, their presence has allowed them to offer a variety of spiritual and educational opportunities, including work with Catholic Charities, the Newman Center on the Winona State Campus, and teaching from pre-kindergarten children all the way up to graduate level students, including at Cotter Schools and Saint Mary's University. Several Sisters have also benefitted from educational opportunities in Winona.

The convent is where the sisters receive the grace and mercy of God in their prayer and common life to be able to go out and serve in the diocese. While the convent has served as a comfortable home for over a decade, growth in both the number of sisters assigned to Winona and their outreach requires physical expansion.

As of Monday, October 27, construction on Immaculate Heart Convent is officially underway. With gratitude and anticipation, the Religious Sisters of Mercy watched as the first steps of the building project took shape—removing the old driveway concrete to make room for a new addition that will soon become a space of hospitality and prayer. Since then, significant progress continues to be made, even through the winter snow and ice.

**To donate or request mailing materials, call or visit online:**

**507-858-1275**

**[catholicsmn.org/convent-expansion-project](http://catholicsmn.org/convent-expansion-project)**



To help fund the \$730,000 project, the sisters have launched the Heart of Mary Convent Campaign in partnership with IHM Seminary and the Catholic Foundation of Southern Minnesota.

Every gift—no matter the amount—is received with deep gratitude and remembered daily in the sisters' prayers.

**Donors who contribute \$1,000 or more by April 30, 2026 will be honored on a plaque within the convent as a lasting sign of gratitude to those who helped build this home of mercy.**

At the completion of the project, all are invited to attend an open house and blessing of the new space.



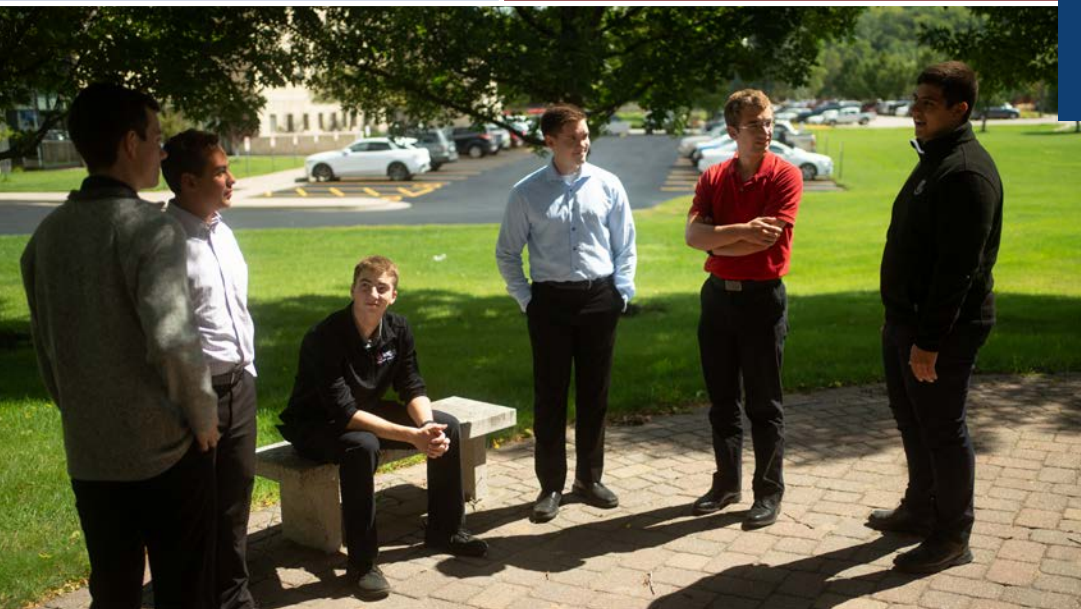
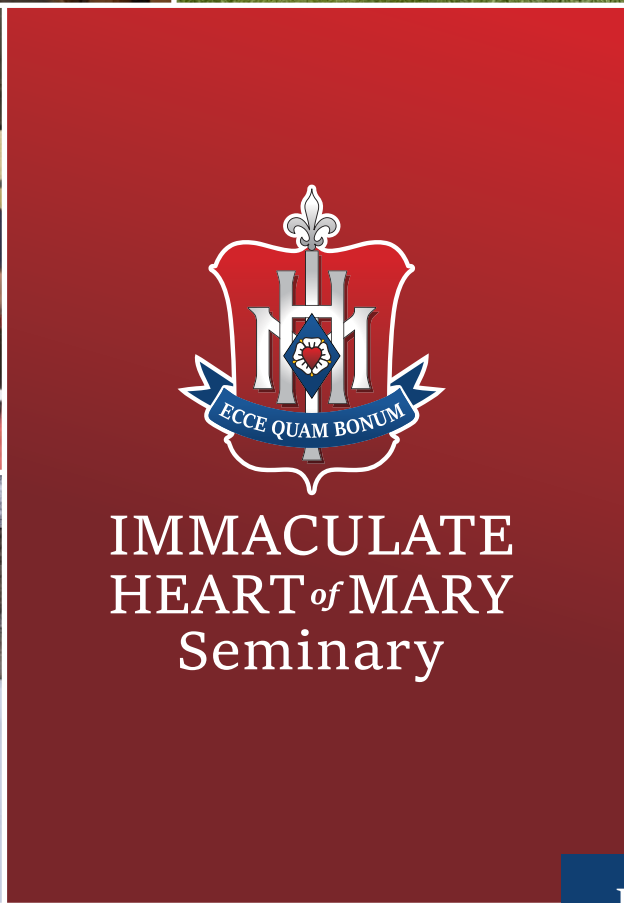
THE RELIGIOUS  
SISTERS *of* MERCY  

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of ALMA MICHIGAN







IHMS

*Fun Facts:*



## Seminarians create a new term: "Porching"

Porching consisted of two or more people would gather together and talk about random things for more than ten minutes. This usually took place in the evening after night prayer. The place that you porched at was considered the POP, or the place of porching. The longest porching session was approximately four hours long.



SAVE THE DATE

# BISHOPS & RECTOR DINNER

FRIDAY, APRIL 17, 2026

ROCHESTER INTERNATIONAL EVENT CENTER | ROCHESTER, MN

4:30 – 5:30 PM **Social Hour** (cash bar)

5:30 PM **Dinner/Program**

MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR THIS SPECIAL  
EVENT HONORING MSGR. JAMES SHEA

For questions about the event, contact IHMS:  
507-858-1275 or [info@catholicfsmn.org](mailto:info@catholicfsmn.org)



## UPCOMING EVENTS 2026

December 30–January 3  
Seminarian Retreats

January 5  
Spring semester begins at  
Saint Mary's University of  
Minnesota

January 22  
March for Life

February 24–26  
and March 15–18  
Vocation Information Weekends

March 2–10  
Spring Break

March 19  
Founders' Day, Saint Mary's  
University of Minnesota

March 23–24  
Vir in Christo Weekend

March 25  
Chrism Mass

March 28–April 1  
Easter Break

April 17  
Bishops and Rector Dinner

May 4  
Saint Mary's University of Minnesota  
Commencement

### IHMS Communication Contact:

**IHMS OFFICE:** 507-205-9237

**IHMS EMAIL:** [info@ihmseminary.org](mailto:info@ihmseminary.org)

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*IHMS is more than a place.*

It is an experience...an opportunity  
for men to follow Christ.

The Immaculate Heart of Mary Seminary is honored to be represented  
by the following dioceses, who have entrusted us with their  
seminarians' formation.

Diocese of Cheyenne, Diocese of Crookston, Diocese of Duluth, Diocese  
of Gary, Diocese of Green Bay, Diocese of La Crosse, Diocese of Madison,  
Diocese of Marquette, Archdiocese of Milwaukee, Diocese of Peoria,  
Diocese of Rapid City, Diocese of Reykjavík, Diocese of Sioux City,  
Diocese of Sioux Falls, Diocese of Saint Cloud, Diocese of Superior,  
Diocese of Winona-Rochester.

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