

University of Saint Mary of the Lake

Mundelein Seminary



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1000 East Maple Avenue • Mundelein, IL 60060

847-970-4801 • USML.EDU • @MundeleinSem



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About Mundelein Seminary

Nestled in the serene surroundings of Mundelein, Illinois, the University of Saint Mary of the Lake's Mundelein Seminary stands as a beacon of hope and inspiration. Founded over a century ago under the visionary leadership of George Cardinal Mundelein.

With a rich tapestry of history and tradition, Mundelein Seminary fosters an environment where individuals can grow spiritually, intellectually, and personally.

It is home to seminarians from over 30 dioceses and religious orders across the country and worldwide. Solidly grounded in prayer, pastoral formation and rigorous academic training, USML's distinctive curriculum includes an innovative Teaching Parish Program, two full-time internships, simulation lab, and a study-pilgrimage.

Our faculty is among the largest in the country, and many of our professors are recognized as leaders in their fields, members of pontifical academies, councils, and the International Theological Commission, and sought-after speakers nationally and internationally.

Here, the warmth of community embraces you, and the dedication of faculty and staff ensures that every seminarian feels supported on their journey toward priesthood. The campus, combining tranquil landscapes with modern facilities, is designed to nurture reflection and study, making it a peaceful haven for learning and prayer.

Mundelein Seminary fosters a supportive community for seminarians, encouraging connections with peers who share similar beliefs. It prepares students for a life of service and continues to nurture new leaders for the Catholic Church through seminars, retreats, and spiritual guidance.

Mundelein Seminary graduates are people of prayer whose hearts are burning to serve as a holy bridge between God and His people. They are formed in tradition, trained in compassion, and prepared to shepherd.





At Mundelein, we foster a clear vision of the parish priest: a man deeply steeped in the rich teaching and history of the Church; who is not afraid to seek out the lost and extend love to those who are most neglected; who strives to guide others to the Father regardless of his own personal sacrifice. Perhaps God is calling you to follow that same vision.

Our Vision of a Priest

Formed in Tradition

At Mundelein Seminary, every seminarian is shaped by the timeless wisdom of the Catholic Church—2,000 years of theology, teaching, and liturgy. They study deeply, worship reverently, and serve actively in parishes—learning not only from professors, but also by teaching and ministering to others. Our formation emphasizes in “Tradition” and by “traditions:” universal truths and the local customs that bring the Faith to life. We prepare parish priests who are grounded in sound doctrine and attuned to the diverse cultures and practices of the people they serve.

Trained in Compassion

A parish priest is called to embody the compassionate heart of Christ—reaching out to the poor, the sick, the lonely, and all who suffer. At Mundelein, seminarians are formed to serve as spiritual healers in a wounded world, just as Pope Francis describes priests in a “field hospital.” Through hands-on ministry in parishes, hospitals, prisons, and missions, they learn to accompany others in their struggles. These real-world encounters inform their theological reflection and deepen their prayer life, forming compassionate, mission-ready priests is at the heart of our work.

Prepared to Shepherd

Like Jesus, the Good Shepherd, every priest is called to lead with wisdom, humility, and care. He guides, encourages, teaches—and above all, listens. At Mundelein, seminarians are formed to lead both spiritually and practically. From their first days through their deacon assignments, they take on leadership roles in the seminary, parishes, and service initiatives. Our curriculum equips them for pastoral leadership, parish administration, and collaboration with staff and volunteers—always with the heart of a shepherd.

Four Dimensions of Priestly Formation

Spiritual Formation

The seminarians' spiritual formation draws them into the priestly path of Jesus so they can configure their hearts to Christ and learn to lead with self-sacrificial love. Seminarians have unceasing opportunities to encounter the Lord through daily Mass, Eucharistic Adoration, praying the Liturgy of the Hours, and twice-a-month meetings with their spiritual directors. Each year, Configuration III seminarians journey on a nine-week pilgrimage where sacred scriptures come to life. Seminarians also attend multiple retreats each year, including an on-campus retreat that begins the school year, a third-year directed retreat, retreats prior to ordination and a cam retreat.

Human Formation

Saint Pope John Paul II wrote, "It is important that the priest should mold his human personality in such a way that it becomes a bridge and not an obstacle for others in their meeting with Jesus Christ." Our goal is to develop the leadership qualities of all candidates for priesthood. Not only is a priest a public leader entrusted to direct and guide a parish, he is also a religious leader who represents the larger Church. We also shape fraternity among future priests. Priesthood grows when shared and supported. Many efforts are made to find ways to come to know each other well, to trust each other and to live out their priestly service in a united manner.



Pastoral Formation

Seminarians engage in a range of pastoral experiences to gain exposure to the variety of ministries and work that are common to diocesan priesthood. These include opportunities to minister to the sick, visit the imprisoned, teach OCIA, help the poor, and attend mission trips to Arizona or Peru. All seminarians participate in two immersive pastoral programs: one in a parish of their home diocese and one in a community healthcare setting. They also spend four years serving in more than 60 local parishes through the Augustus Tolton Teaching Parish Program, where they engage in ministry and form authentic relationships with parishioners.

Intellectual Formation

The program of intellectual formation at Mundelein seeks to build the capacity for deeper self-knowledge through the disciplined use of reason guided by the Rule of Faith. Intellectual formation seeks to help a man deepen his appropriation of the content of the Faith, understand it so as to penetrate its mysteries and prepare to share it with Christ's faithful and the world. The Mundelein faculty is among the largest in the country, with more than 30 lay and religious members, many of whom are recognized leaders in their fields.

The Path to Ordination

Propaedeutic Stage

This first year of seminary formation takes place at the Bishop Quarter House next to Holy Name Cathedral in Chicago. It takes place before the study of philosophy (Discipleship Stage) and is a comprehensive program designed to foster spiritual, intellectual, pastoral and human growth. This stage provides candidates with a supportive environment to deepen their relationship with God, develop strong moral values, and prepare them for the more advanced theological studies and pastoral experiences that lie ahead on their journey toward becoming dedicated servants of the Church.

Discipleship Stage

Seminarians who have not completed a degree in philosophy will attend the Mundelein Seminary's two-year Discipleship Stage. This is a foundational period for our seminarians' formation journey. The primary goal is deepening a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and fostering a mature commitment to follow Him as a disciple. The curriculum includes a foundation in philosophy, as outlined in the *Program of Priestly Formation* (PPF 6). Seminarians participate in prayer and community life while also learning to live in fraternity with other seminarians, mirroring the communal nature of the Church.



Configuration Stage

After completing Discipleship or attending college seminary, the seminarians begin their study of Theology. The four-year Configuration Stage focuses on forming the seminarian more deeply in the identity of Jesus Christ as the Head, Shepherd, and Bridegroom of the Church. It is during this stage that the seminarian prepares more directly for the priesthood, especially in terms of how he will live and serve in persona Christi Capitis—in the person of Christ the Head. Emphasis is placed on internalizing the character of Christ as a servant-leader and sacrificial shepherd.

Vocational Synthesis Stage

The final stage of priestly formation begins upon ordination to the diaconate. Rather than continuing studies until the conclusion of the academic year, the deacon transitions to full-time parish ministry during his final months before priesthood ordination. The main goal is to help the seminarian integrate everything he has learned and become throughout formation—humanly, spiritually, intellectually, and pastorally—into a unified priestly identity as he prepares for ordination to the priesthood and full-time pastoral ministry. This stage is not a conclusion, but a harmonization of the seminarian's entire formation process at Mundelein Seminary.



Our Campus

Mundelein Seminary offers a truly exceptional environment for the formation of future priests. Amidst serene beauty and thoughtfully designed amenities, seminarians are invited to embark on a transformative journey of spiritual growth and intellectual development.

The 15 major buildings are at the west end of the campus, overlooking a lake. The buildings are built in the Colonial Revival mode, common in the early 20th century, and include the centrally located Chapel of the Immaculate Conception, Administration Building, Feehan Memorial Library, McEssy Theological Resource Center, Theology Lecture Hall, Mundelein Hall, Theology Residence, Conference Center Hall, and Faculty Residence. Mundelein Seminary also has a gymnasium with facilities for basketball, swimming, handball, racquetball and bowling; an auditorium with a full stage, theater organ and projection equipment; a dining hall; two computer labs; and two studios to assist the seminarians in the Homiletics and Liturgical Practicum courses.



Simulation Lab



University of Saint Mary of the Lake/Mundelein Seminary has established a simulation center, a safe haven for practicing pastoral encounters in a supportive environment. This center, inspired by the biblical verses "Pastores Dabo Vobis" 'I shall give you shepherds' and "Cor luxta Meum" (After My Own Heart) from Jeremiah 3:15, is a testament to our commitment to comprehensive training. The Cor luxta Meum Project incorporates new teaching methods, such as simulated encounters, into the formation of seminarians. The center uses hyper-realistic simulations to prepare future priests, ensuring they are ready for the challenges of parish life.

The Cor luxta Meum Project, with its state-of-the-art simulation lab, is a testament to our commitment to comprehensive training. It features three distinct simulation rooms, each with a unique environment that mirrors the diverse settings of a typical parish--a large conference room, a pastor's office, and a small meeting room, ensuring our learners are well-prepared for any situation.

To prepare for the realities of parish life, seminarians, priests, and lay ministers can participate in simulated scenarios that mirror real-world challenges priests face. These scenarios could involve marital issues, offering spiritual direction, navigating disagreements with Church teachings, or leading productive parish council and staff meetings. The process of simulation is integral to the development of future priests and lay ministers. Seminarians extensively study core texts related to compassion in preparation for simulated encounters. The process of simulation is integral to the development of future priests and lay ministers. Seminarians extensively study core texts related to compassion in preparation for simulated encounters.

Tolton Teaching Parish Program

Forming Shepherds for a Lifetime of Parish Ministry

At Mundelein Seminary, the Tolton Teaching Parish Program stands at the heart of our seminarians' formation. This innovative and immersive program places each seminarian—beginning in the second year of the Discipleship Stage—with a dedicated teaching parish where he will remain for the duration of his seminary journey.

With more than 60 participating parishes across the Archdiocese of Chicago and neighboring dioceses, the program enables seminarians to develop meaningful, long-term relationships with parishioners and clergy alike. By spending time weekly in their assigned parishes throughout their time at Mundelein Seminary, they gain firsthand experience of parish life—learning directly from seasoned mentor pastors, participating in liturgies and ministries, and integrating themselves into the spiritual and pastoral rhythm of the community.

While the program is an essential part of their academic and pastoral formation, it is also a mutual gift: our seminarians bring energy, faith, and presence to the communities they serve. They often assist with OCIA and religious education, lead Bible studies and small faith groups, and participate in youth and young adult ministry—all while discerning their own priestly identity in service to others.

Through this consistent and formative experience, each seminarian grows in the image of Christ the Good Shepherd—compassionate, humble, and ready to serve. The Tolton Teaching Parish Program helps form priests who are deeply connected to the people they will one day shepherd, grounded in pastoral love and prepared for a lifetime of faithful parish ministry.





Pilgrimage and Mission Experiences

At Mundelein Seminary, priestly formation extends far beyond the classroom. Through opportunities for international pilgrimage and hands-on mission work, our seminarians are immersed in experiences that deepen their faith and prepare them to serve as compassionate, Christ-centered parish priests.

Walking Where Jesus Walked

Thanks to the generosity of our donors and the Theological Education Endowment, third-year seminarians embark each January on a nine-week Scripture Study Pilgrimage to the Holy Land or a spiritual journey such as *In The Footsteps of Saint Paul*.

This life-changing experience allows them to study and pray in the very places where Jesus lived and ministered—bringing the Gospels to life in a powerful new way. From Nazareth to the Sea of Galilee to Jerusalem, seminarians encounter the living Word of God in the land where it unfolded. Surrounded by sacred sites and supported by fellowship and reflection, many return with a renewed sense of vocation and a deeper commitment to their priestly call.

Serving Christ in the Margins

In addition to pilgrimage, seminarians also participate in mission trips to Peru and the U.S.–Mexico border in Arizona. These experiences invite them to live out the Church’s call to solidarity and service.

In Peru, they minister to the sick and the poor—offering prayer, companionship, and sacraments to people living in deep poverty. In Arizona, they serve migrants and refugees seeking a better life, offering hospitality and support while gaining personal insight into the complexities of immigration and human dignity.

Through these immersive encounters, our seminarians grow in pastoral sensitivity, cultural awareness, and Christ-like compassion. They return to the seminary not only with stories to share—but with hearts transformed by the people they met and served.

Campus Life

The campus itself is a haven of peace, providing a sacred space where seminarians can cultivate an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ. The tranquil surroundings foster an atmosphere of contemplation and prayer, allowing for deep reflection and spiritual discernment.

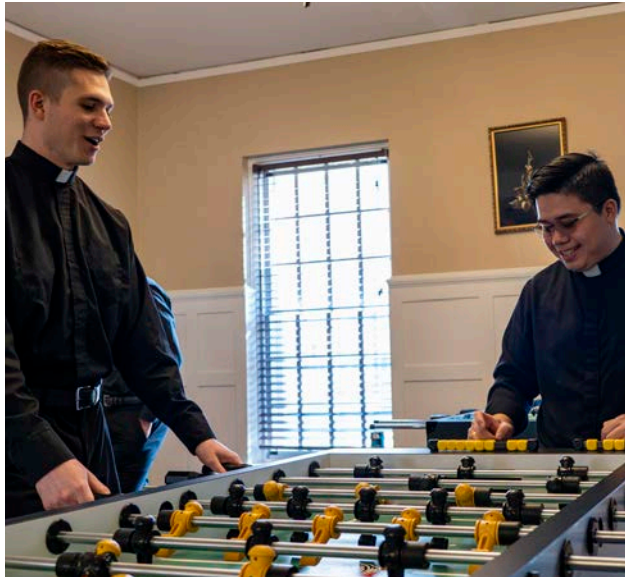
Beyond the spiritual heart of the seminary lies a wealth of amenities designed to support each seminarian's holistic development. The expansive sports fields, tennis courts, and gyms provide ample physical activity and recreation opportunities, promoting a healthy balance of mind, body, and spirit. For those seeking a more leisurely pace, the bowling alley and boating facilities offer enjoyable outlets for camaraderie and relaxation.



Intellectual pursuits are nurtured at Mundelein through its outstanding academic resources. The Feehan Memorial Library and McEssy Theological Resource Center, housing over 200,000 volumes, provide an unparalleled collection of theological works, including notable collections in patristics, canon law, scripture, systematic theology, and church history.

The Writing Center offers invaluable support to students at all levels, providing expert guidance on research, writing skills, and academic formatting. With its ESL specialists, the Center for Speech and Writing further ensures that seminarians develop the communication skills necessary for effective ministry.

The Music Department enriches the seminary's spiritual and cultural life, fostering a deep appreciation for the beauty of sacred music. The Recreation Room provides a space for fellowship and relaxation, while the dormitory rooms with private bathrooms offer comfortable and private living quarters.



At Mundelein Seminary, every aspect of life is designed to support the formation of well-rounded, compassionate, and effective priests. The serene campus, coupled with its unparalleled amenities, creates an environment where seminarians can truly flourish, growing in their faith, knowledge, and commitment to serving the Church. It is a place where the seeds of vocation are nurtured and where future priests are formed in the image of Christ.

Support the **Seminary**

Your financial support of Mundelein Seminary helps form future parish priests who will serve the Church with faith and dedication. Every gift provides essential resources for their spiritual, academic, and pastoral formation. By giving, you become a partner in their vocation and help ensure a strong future for our Church.

Visitors are welcome on our campus from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. daily. Please check our website for updated hours and scheduled closures. We also invite the public to attend our annual events including the Christmas Concert, Rector's Mass, May Crowning and more.



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