
Diocese of Buffalo

Office of Communications



FOR RELEASE: FEBRUARY 4, 2020

Christ the King Seminary to Cease Operations in Current Form *Steering Committee Formed to “Re-Imagine” Priestly Formation, Diaconate Training and Lay Continuing Education*

(Buffalo, NY) - Bishop Edward Scharfenberger, Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Buffalo, announces that the Board of Trustees of Christ the King Seminary has approved a motion to cease operations of the institution at the end of the current academic year. That plan has also been approved by the five governing Members of the Corporation. Bishop Scharfenberger further announces the formation of a Steering Committee to “re-imagine” and provide specific recommendations as to how priestly formation will continue for seminarians of the Diocese of Buffalo, while also providing ongoing education in pastoral ministry and theological training for lay women and men, as well as for those seeking ordination to the permanent diaconate.

“The Diocese of Buffalo has been blessed to have benefited from the superior academic education offered to the laity along with the priestly and diaconate formation programs that Christ the King Seminary has provided these many years,” said Bishop Scharfenberger. “We now have an opportunity to re-imagine how best to continue this legacy of educational and formation excellence in a manner that is not only economically sustainable but which continues to reflect the requirements of those who wish to pursue a life of ministry in the 21st Century. I have full confidence that the members of the Steering Committee will now consider the full range of possibilities and provide recommendations - looking at similar situations around the country - that support our commitment to attracting and preparing individuals for the spiritual, intellectual, emotional and pastoral rigors of priestly ministry while continuing to provide formation and quality education for diaconate and lay ministry candidates. I encourage all to see this not so much as an end of an era, but the beginning of a new and promising one.”

Over the past 10 years, Christ the King Seminary has experienced an operating deficit, amounting to \$500,000 on average annually. In some years, the Seminary has been the recipient of extraordinary financial gifts which have served to offset the operating deficit, but which cannot be relied upon year-over-year. The Members of the Corporation of the Seminary have determined that it is not responsible from a fiscal standpoint to continue to operate with such a structural deficit that requires extraordinary support to sustain operations. Other factors that the Bishop Scharfenberger and the Board of Trustees and Members of the Corporation took into account include fluctuating student enrollment, the need for ongoing capital improvements to the 60-plus-year-old facilities, increasing operating costs, and the likelihood that further financial assurances by the diocese would be necessary to maintain accreditation standards. As an institution of academic excellence, the seminary is formally accredited by The Association of Theological Schools as well as the Middle States Commission

Diocese of Buffalo

Office of Communications



PAGE 2 – Christ the King Seminary Announcement

on Higher Education. Moreover, reserves that have been sustaining the institution despite persistent deficits, are expected to be depleted over the next 18 months.

Father Kevin G. Creagh, CM, Seminary president-rector, acknowledged the strong commitment of the seminary's trustees and leadership in recent years to position the seminary to respond creatively to today's Church and the requirements of ministry. "The Board's strategic focus and initiatives, as carried out by our dedicated faculty and staff, have guided our efforts to prepare our future priests, deacons, laity, and religious for collaborative ministry. Unfortunately, diocesan financial constraints, uncertainties surrounding future vocations, and the current environment in which we operate have brought us to this point. We are committed to forging a path that will continue our legacy of superior training and formation for those who seek a life of ministry here in the Diocese of Buffalo."

In the current academic year, there are 26 seminarians enrolled at the Seminary which sits on a 132 acre campus, 20 miles southeast of Buffalo. This number includes 15 seminarians who are in priestly formation for the Diocese of Buffalo, two of which are in their final year of theological studies and are expected to be ordained on June 6, 2020. The other students enrolled at the Seminary are from other dioceses. In addition, there are 36 individuals preparing for the permanent diaconate and various lay ministries.

A process for identifying alternative academic and formation preparation for all other students will commence immediately. The future training of those seminarians belonging to other dioceses will be determined by their respective bishops and vocation directors.

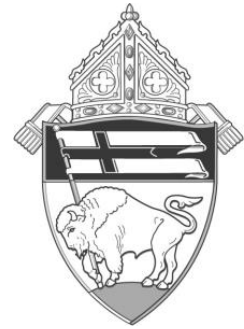
The academic offering of the Seminary includes the following degrees: Masters of Divinity I (for seminarians); Masters of Divinity II (for lay individuals); Masters of Arts in Theology; and Masters of Arts in Pastoral Ministry.

The members of the newly-formed Steering Committee are the following:

- Reverend Peter Karalus - Vicar General and Moderator of the Curia
- Reverend Kevin Creagh, CM - President Rector, Christ the King Seminary
- Ms. Eileen Warner - Pastoral Associate, St. Amelia Parish
- Deacon Tim Criswell - Director of the Deacons
- Reverend Andrew Lauricella - Director, Office of Vocations
- Ms. Nancy Ehlers - Christ the King Seminary Office of Finance
- Mr. James Beardi - Chair, Finance Council, Diocese of Buffalo
- Mr. Joseph Stoeckl, Esq.
- Mr. Richard Suchan - Executive Director, Foundation of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Buffalo
- Reverend Monsignor Paul Burkard - Pastor Emeritus, OLV Basilica
- Ms. Theresa Kazmierczak - Former Christ the King Board Member

Diocese of Buffalo

Office of Communications



PAGE 3 – Christ the King Seminary Announcement

ABOUT CHRIST THE KING SEMINARY

Christ the King Seminary began as an integral part of St. Bonaventure College, which was founded in 1857 at Allegany, New York. For more than 100 years, the College, under the direction of the Order of Friars Minor, was engaged in the formation of diocesan clergy. In 1950, St. Bonaventure was elevated to the status of University, and the Seminary became its School of Theology. In 1951, new self-contained quarters for the Seminary were opened on the upper campus of the University. The Seminary was incorporated separately from the University in 1974. In 1974 the trustees of St. John Vianney Seminary, East Aurora, invited Christ the King Seminary to relocate to its spacious 132-acre campus, 20 miles southeast of Buffalo. The trustees of Christ the King Seminary accepted the offer, and the move was made in September 1974. In June 1990, the Diocese of Buffalo assumed corporate sponsorship of the Seminary.

-END-