



[About Us](#)

[Support Our Mission](#)

[Subscribe](#)

[E-Edition](#)

CATHOLIC HERALD

Serving the Archdiocese of Milwaukee

[Home](#)

[News](#)

[Events](#)

[Subscribe](#)

[Advertise](#)

[Contact Us](#)



[< Previous](#) [Next >](#)

Sacred Heart Thrives in Assisting with 'Second Vocations'

Read Time 6 min

By Karen Mahoney | Oct 27, 2020 | Featured, Local



Dcn. Dan Kostelc is studying for the priesthood at Sacred Heart Seminary and School of Theology. (Submitted photo)

Recent Posts

- > Local Catholics Reflect to Elevation of Archbishop Gregory
- > DSHA Incorporates Marian Scholars Program
- > Teachers' 'Success Stories' Reach National Audience
- > Knights of Columbus Sponsors Concert to Rebuild Kenosha
- > Give Us Shepherds: Fr. Jonathon Schmeckel

Categories

Dcn. Dan Kostelc, a permanent deacon from the Diocese of Cheyenne, Wyoming, recalled the many years he donated to the Priests of the Sacred Heart in Hales Corners. At least 10 men from his diocese received their education at the seminary known for late or second vocations to the priesthood.

Little did the 67-year-old widower know that one day he would also be studying for the priesthood at Sacred Heart Seminary and School of Theology.

“My wife died in 2005 and about six months after she passed, I began getting a strong desire to celebrate the Eucharist, hear confessions and anoint the sick,” he said. “I remember asking God about it and I think he put the desire in my heart to become a priest.”

It was an unusual situation for the recently widowed father of four daughters. As a permanent deacon, he would be unable to remarry after the loss of his spouse; yet the call to serve as Bridegroom of the Church was strong.

“Before I could think more about entering seminary, I needed to raise my daughters as they had to be on their own,” Dcn. Kostelc said. “I continued my work of 32 years, selling woodburning stoves, doing chimney inspections and working to keep people safe and warm in front of their fires.”

Currently, Dcn. Kostelc’s youngest daughter, Christina, is in the nursing program at Casper College in Casper, Wyoming. His oldest, Theresa, lives in Vietnam, where she edits books for print. His daughters, Mary and Gina, work for a company in Newport News, Virginia, that contracts with the U.S. military to build ships and submarines.

With the desire for the priesthood growing, Dcn. Kostelc remembers talking to Christina to get her feedback of him possibly becoming a priest.

“She said, ‘Dad, Theresa, Gina, Mary and I got together years ago and we said we would be surprised if you didn’t become a priest.’ So, that was my stamp of approval,” he said.

Select Category ▾

Archives

Select Month ▾

The priestly program at Sacred Heart averages between four and six years, said Dcn. Steve Kramer, D.Min., director of homiletics, director of recruitment and associate professor, pastoral studies at Sacred Heart Seminary and School of Theology.

“However, Dan’s bishop asked he move toward the priesthood a bit quicker; so he is in a two-year program,” said Dcn. Kramer. “He had a lot of education and served as a permanent deacon for the past 15 or 16 years. Every year, we have a couple of bishops that ask to move the process along a bit quicker.”

Dcn. Kostelc is in his second year of the program and plans to be ordained in June. He enjoys the program and recommends it to anyone contemplating the priesthood.

“It is an excellent program. The faculty and staff are extremely knowledgeable and helpful. They want to see me, and the rest of the seminarians, succeed and get an excellent education as well as spiritual and pastoral formation,” he said. “It is a challenging program for me, since it has been 45 years since I have been in college and the most difficult thing I have ever attempted, but so worth it.”

On most days, there are about 90 men studying at Sacred Heart Seminary and School of Theology, said Dcn. Kramer. Among those men are second vocation seminarians, priests from religious order communities and seminarians from Saint Francis de Sales Seminary. Also included are international students studying ECL (English and Cultural Studies) and go on to further studies somewhere else.

Saint Francis does not have an academic faculty; so seminarians attend Sacred Heart for those courses. Because Saint Francis is a provincial seminary, all of the dioceses in the state send their seminarians there to study.

“Sacred Heart is an apostolate of the Priests of the Sacred Heart and seminarians come here from all around the country. We typically have older guys, normally 30-65 or so. Our oldest is Dcn. Dan, who is 67,” he said. “Some are widows, divorced, with kids or without and some have had careers in the military. These guys are wonderful because they have a knowledge of life, and when they leave and are ordained, they can go out and be a pastor and develop personal relationships with people. We need both young men who can serve

40 or more years and older men who can give 10-15 years to be good priests.”

Since the COVID-19 Safer at Home mandate, the seminary went online last semester and held classes through Zoom. They are back holding classes in person, but Sacred Heart has found that more men are questioning whether they have a calling. In lieu of in-person visits, the seminary began hosting Zoom “Meet and Greets” for men to have open, honest conversations with no pressure, to ask about the process. Younger men usually discern into a religious order or a diocese through a vocation director. As many older men don’t know where to start, they can contact Dcn. Kramer and he will direct them to the right sources.

MORE INFORMATION

In addition to four priestly degree and formation programs, Sacred Heart also offers programs for the laity, such as Master of Arts, Cor Unum and Lumen Cordis, as well as various enrichment opportunities.

To learn more, visit: <https://www.shsst.edu/>

Or contact:

Mailing Address:

Sacred Heart Seminary and School of Theology

7335 S. Highway 100

P.O. Box 429

Hales Corners, WI 53130-0429

Physical Address:

Sacred Heart Seminary and School of Theology

7335 S. Lovers Lane Rd.

Franklin, WI 53132

414-425-8300

frontdesk@shsst.edu

Share This Story, Choose Your Platform!



About the Author: Karen Mahoney



Karen Mahoney has been a Catholic Herald correspondent since 2002. She can be reached at mahoneyk@archmil.org.

CATHOLIC HERALD

QUICK LINKS

> [Subscribe](#)

> [Advertise](#)

> [Submit Story Idea](#)

> [Wisconsin Pastoral Handbook](#)



3501 S. Lake Drive
Milwaukee, WI 53235-0913
Phone: (414) 769-3464
Email:
catholicherald@archmil.org

3501 South Lake Drive
PO Box 070912
Milwaukee, WI 53207-0912
Phone: (414) 769-3300

Copyright 2020 | Catholic Herald | Serving the Archdiocese of Milwaukee | All Rights Reserved | Powered by Mercury

