

Sacred Heart

HIGHLIGHTS ■ 2025 Fall Semester

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Forming Evangelizing Disciples



Letter from the President-Rector

Welcome to this edition of Highlights, which I hope will be my first of many. When I began as President- Rector on July 1, the halls were quiet, though our staff was working diligently with cleaning and upgrading the facilities, collecting application paperwork for admissions, updating course syllabi, and preparing for the arrival of our seminarians and students.

The halls are no longer quiet and now hum with activity. Classes are back in session, and our seminarians' residential wing is full. The first few weeks included orientation, retreat, an uplifting mass, and an energetic banquet to open the new school year. That was followed by the Legacies Conference on the lasting impact of the Councils of Nicea and Vatican II.

Beyond the public celebrations and events is a lot of dedicated work to make it all happen. As I attend staff and department meetings, I am amazed at the thoughtfulness and planning that goes into everything at Sacred Heart. We build on strong foundations and traditions while realizing there's always room for improvement.

I am enjoying getting to know the staff and students who make up the community here at Sacred Heart. I look forward to the journey of faith formation that we are embarking on together.

God Bless!

Fr. Stephen Huffstetter S.C.J.
Fr. Steve

ON THE COVER: Deacon John Akau, seminarian for the Diocese of Honolulu, serves beside His Eminence, Christophe Cardinal Pierre, Apostolic Nuncio to the U.S. throughout the Holy Mass with the Ministry of Acolyte.



Holy Mass for the Opening of the 2025-2026 Academic Year

The Very Rev. Vien Nguyen, SCJ, Provincial Superior of the Priests of the Sacred Heart in the United States Province, presided over the Holy Mass for the Opening of the Academic Year and installed the **Very Rev. Stephen Huffstetter, SCJ**, as the 12th president-rector of Sacred Heart Seminary and School of Theology. The dinner following was marked by joyful fellowship, lively conversation, and the introductions of new students and employees.

Ministry of Acolyte and Heart of Christ Award

Seven seminarians were instituted to the **Ministry of Acolyte** by His Eminence, Christophe Cardinal Pierre, Apostolic Nuncio to the United States during Mass in the Sacred Heart Chapel as follows:

Zachary Arnold

Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee

Adrian Dieleman

Diocese of Hamilton

Rishi Persaud

Diocese of Hamilton

Gerald Przekora

Diocese of Gaylord

Noah Townsend

Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee

Thanh (Andy) Tran

Diocese of Great Falls-Billings

Rider Zerpa Romero

Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee



During a community dinner following the Mass, the Sacred Heart Board of Directors **presented The Heart of Christ Award to Cardinal Pierre** to thank him for his tremendous support of Sacred Heart over the years. The Heart of Christ award recognizes an outstanding contribution by a collaborator that supports Sacred Heart's mission, "To Conform Our World to the Heart of Christ". Over the years, Cardinal Pierre has been a Dehon Lecturer and has spoken at both Sacred Heart symposiums.

Bringing Excellence to Academic Formation

The Sacred Heart Poured Out for the World

Sacred Heart hosted a two-day symposium titled “The Sacred Heart Poured Out for the World: The Church’s Mission in Light of *Dilexit Nos*.” The gathering offered a profound exploration of Sacred Heart spirituality and its enduring relevance for the Church’s mission today, bringing together seminarians, faculty, staff, ecclesial leaders, theologians, clergy, and lay participants for prayerful reflection and scholarly dialogue. The symposium unfolded in two movements, mirroring the dual rhythm of contemplation and mission that lies at the heart of Sacred Heart spirituality.

The first day centered on the theme of personal conversion—conforming one’s heart to the Heart of Christ. Drawing upon *Dilexit Nos*, the final encyclical of Pope Francis, participants considered the theological and spiritual foundations of Sacred Heart devotion as a path of deep interior renewal. Cardinal Christophe Pierre, Apostolic Nuncio to the United States, opened the event with welcoming remarks that situated the symposium within the wider mission of the universal Church.

The second day turned to the social implications of this spiritual transformation, examining how conformed hearts are called to act in the world. With reference to *Rerum Novarum* and the Catholic social vision articulated by Pope Leo XIII, the sessions explored the integration of Sacred Heart spirituality with a commitment to justice, solidarity, and the common good.

Together, these two movements—**contemplative and active—**reflected the mission of Sacred Heart Seminary and School of Theology and the Priests of the Sacred Heart: **hearts formed in Christ, poured out in service to the world.**

SYMPOSIUM PRESENTATIONS:

Bishop Donald Hying
“The Relation of the Sacred Heart to the Paschal Mystery and God’s Divine Mercy”

Fr. James Kubicki, SJ
“The Jesuit Roots of *Dilexit Nos*”

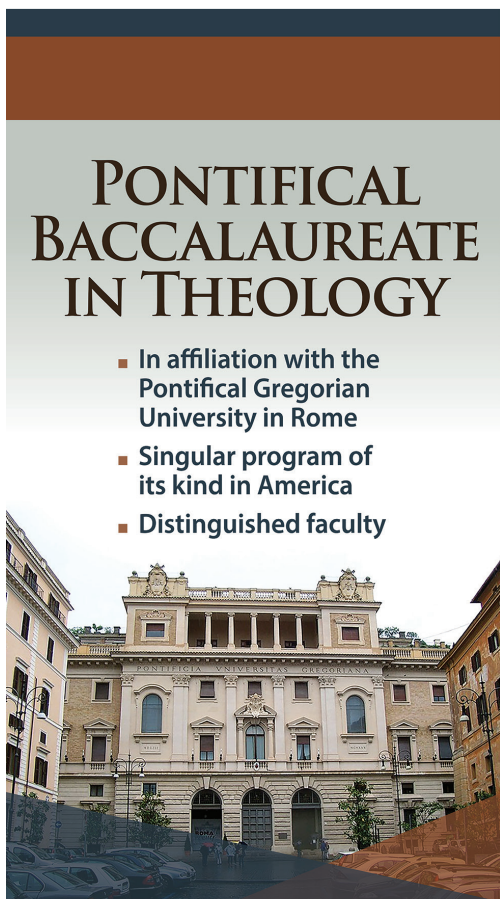
Dr. Jeremy Blackwood
“Out of the Sacristies to the Foot of the Cross: Dehon and *Dilexit Nos* through the Social Encyclicals”

Fr. Eduardo Nunes Pugliesi, SCJ
“The Heart of Jesus: From Devotion to the Official Eucology of the Roman Rite”

Fr. Joseph Mukuna, SCJ
“Piety and Practice: The SCJ Way”

Dr. Paul Monson
“Dehonian Musings on Footnote 99”





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A Grand Achievement

Sacred Heart has received official confirmation from the Dicastery for Culture and Education, which has approved **an affiliation with the Faculty of Theology of the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome**. This affiliation will be through the Institutum Theologiæ Sint Unum, a new canonical entity that will allow qualified students to receive the Gregorian's ecclesiastical Baccalaureate in Theology.

Sacred Heart now stands as the only American seminary to enjoy an affiliated institute that can offer the Gregorian's pontifical Baccalaureate in Theology. This degree will be offered in affiliation with the Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome's premier pontifical university. As a school that can trace its roots to St. Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits, Sacred Heart can now become part of a tradition that has educated some of the best minds of the Catholic Church.

This affiliation strengthens Sacred Heart's mission as one of the nation's largest theologates in service of the universal Church. **Sacred Heart is now able to bridge American and Roman standards in theological education**, in collaboration with the institution that inspired Fr. Dehon's priestly vocation and passion for the intellectual life.



Faithfulness in Love of the Church

Seminarians Take Next Step Toward Priesthood During Rite of Candidacy

The Sacred Heart community gathered for Holy Mass to celebrate the vocational journeys of two seminarians. Fr. Stephen Huffstetter, SCJ, President-Rector, presided over the Rite of Candidacy for Holy Orders, formally recognizing the intentions of those preparing to serve the Church through ordained ministry.

This year's candidates were John Beiting and Rider Zerpa Romero, both seminarians of the Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee. By being admitted to candidacy, each publicly declared his resolve to pursue formation for the priesthood and to dedicate his life to the service of God's people.

The Church, in turn, accepted their commitment and called them to continue their preparation with renewed devotion. It marks the moment when the Church officially recognizes a seminarian as a candidate for ordination, entrusting him with intentional growth in human, spiritual, academic, and pastoral formation.

Sacred Heart Food Drive

As Thanksgiving approached this year, the Sacred Heart community came together to serve our neighbors in need. With food insecurity on the rise, students, staff, and faculty responded with extraordinary generosity. Over the course of several weeks, canned goods, pantry staples, and infant supplies were collected. The generosity of the community enabled substantial donations to four different food pantries in Southern Wisconsin. Representatives from the pantries shared their deep gratitude, noting that the school's contributions arrived at a critical time as requests for assistance continue to grow. The food drive was an example of Sacred Heart's faith in action.





Día de los Muertos

November is always a special time to remember and honor our faithful departed. At Sacred Heart, there is a tradition to honor them in an Altarcito that is built in the main chapel. The Sacred Heart community is invited to bring pictures of family members and friends and to place them in the Altarcito. On November 5, following the seminarians' Day of Recollection, the community held an All Souls procession to pray for the dead at the SCJ mausoleum.



Strengthening Hearts & Minds

Catholic Heritage I Excursions

Now in its third year, three regional excursions for the propaedeutic course CA 500 Catholic Heritage I: Sal Terrae continued for the 2025 Fall Semester. The course, the only one of its kind among US seminaries, brought together men from Sacred Heart and the propaedeutic programs of St. Francis de Sales Seminary and the Diocese of Green Bay.

Dr. Paul Monson led the excursions as the instructor. Fr. John Paul Mitchell and Fr. Kevin Ripley joined as the respective propaedeutic formators. Highlights of these excursions included:

- 1 **Visiting Green Bay to focus on the legacy of the French Jesuit missionaries and Bishop Frederic Baraga** in the Great Lakes region, with a visit to the National Shrine of Our Lady of Champion.
- 2 **Venturing to southwestern Wisconsin and the Dubuque area to focus on the pastoral example of Ven. Fr. Samuel Mazzuchelli, OP**, including a visit to his Dominican Sisters at Sinsinawa Mound. Archbishop Thomas Zinkula greeted the group in St. Raphael Cathedral and shared his vocation story and perspective on Church history. At the conclusion of the weekend, the group celebrated Mass with Bishop Donald Hying of Madison in Fr. Mazzuchelli's perfectly preserved St. Augustine's Church in New Diggings, Wisconsin (with a Knights of Columbus honor guard). It was the first time a bishop had celebrated Mass on the altar Fr. Mazzuchelli built with his own hands.
- 3 **Exploring early immigrant and religious communities in the Milwaukee area.** The group learned about the heritage of the School Sisters of Notre Dame and the School Sisters of St. Francis. This final excursion culminated with a special Mass in a forgotten chapel, likely the first time the Eucharist has been celebrated there in 75 years.





Days of Recollection

Sacred Heart held its first Day of Recollection of the semester, a time set aside for prayer, reflection, and renewal. The speaker was Fr. Michael R. Simone, SJ, Pastor of the Church of the Gesù in Milwaukee. He offered a talk titled "The Autumn Rains Cover Them with Joy: Pastoral and Spiritual Wisdom from the Psalms." Drawing from Psalm 84:6-8, Fr. Simone reflected on the imagery of pilgrimage, resilience, and God's sustaining presence in times of trial. He emphasized how the psalm's vision of travelers finding strength through valleys of dryness can inspire the Church today, encouraging perseverance, trust, and joy even amid challenges. The day provided Sacred Heart's community an opportunity to pause amid the busyness of the semester, to pray together, and to be renewed in spirit through the wisdom of Scripture.

Seminarians had an additional Day of Recollection where Fr. John J. Baumgardner, S.T.L. presented on the topic "Priestly Gentleness & Our Lady of the Dark Night - Conferences on the Spiritual Life". The day started with Solemn Morning Prayer and was followed by Fr. Baumgardner's morning reflection. The afternoon reflection kicked off after lunch, which then led to the Sacrament of Reconciliation and Solemn Evening Prayer.



Ministering in a Global Church

Multicultural Mass Celebrates the Beauty of the Universal Church

The Sacred Heart community gathered for a moving **Multicultural Mass**, led in collaboration with students from the English and Culture Studies Program (ECSP). Representing seven different home countries, the ECS students brought the richness of their linguistic and

cultural traditions to the liturgy, offering a powerful example of the Church's universality. Throughout the Mass, prayers, readings, and hymns were spoken and sung in multiple languages, showcasing the beauty of unity amid diversity. **It was a joyful exchange of**

language, song, and culture. The congregation was reminded that while the Church spans continents and cultures, it remains one in Christ. The Multicultural Mass stands as a testament to Sacred Heart's mission of fostering global understanding and communion.

Understanding Catholicism in Ethiopia

Rev. Abiyot Agonafer, OFM Cap. presented for the latest edition of the English & Culture Studies Lunch Speaker Series. Fr. Agonafer is a citizen of Ethiopia and is incardinated in the Ethiopian Province of the Capuchin Franciscans. In his talk, he spoke about the **deep history of Christianity in Ethiopia** and the current state of its religious landscape. He also illustrated the fascinating **development of the Ethiopian Catholic Church as it moved towards communion with Rome**. At the end of the discussion, Fr. Stephen Huffstetter, SCJ, presented Fr. Agonafer with his ECS Completion Certificate. Fr. Agonafer will return to Rome next week to continue his studies at the Pontifical Gregorian University.



Interfaith Engagement

The Origins of the Nation of Israel: Biblical, Historical, and Archaeological Data

The Lux Center for Catholic-Jewish Studies hosted a distinguished lecture featuring Dr. Benjamin D. Sommer, Professor of Bible at The Jewish Theological Seminary of America and Senior Fellow at the Shalom Hartman Institute. **Dr. Sommer, one of today's foremost biblical scholars and theologians, has built a career bridging faith, history, and academic inquiry.** He previously directed the Crown Family Center for Jewish Studies at Northwestern University and has served as visiting faculty at leading institutions, including the Hebrew University, the University of Chicago, and Brite Divinity School of Texas Christian University. Dr. Sommer's lecture, titled **"The Origins of the Nation of Israel: Biblical, Historical, and Archaeological Data,"** examined how evidence from Scripture, archaeology, and ancient Near Eastern history reveals the deep and enduring connection between the Jewish people and the land of Israel. The presentation proved both fascinating and thought-provoking, offering rich insight for anyone interested in the Bible, the history of Israel, and the intersection of faith and scholarship.

Exploring the Torah's Rhythm

Mr. Shapiro, President and CEO of the Harry & Rose Samson Family Jewish Community Center, was invited by The Lux Center for Catholic-Jewish Studies to give a lecture highlighting **the central role of Torah in Jewish communal life.** Drawing on decades of experience in Jewish leadership, education, and cultural programming, **Mr. Shapiro spoke with a depth of wisdom** shaped by his work leading over 300 professionals across five statewide JCC sites. He shared how the rhythms of Jewish life were deeply tied to the tradition of reading the Torah throughout the year, with each weekly portion weaving together sacred memory, faith practice, and community identity. The lecture culminated in a reflection on Simchat Torah, the joyous festival that marked both the completion and immediate recommencement of the Torah reading cycle. Mr. Shapiro described this celebration as more than ritual; it was a moment of renewal and recommitment to the sacred text, a time when joy and devotion converged to affirm the Torah's enduring presence in Jewish life. Through his insights, attendees gained not only a greater understanding of the Torah's role in Jewish spirituality but also an appreciation for the ways in which shared traditions shaped faith communities across time and place.





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We want to be YOUR seminary for lifelong ministry.

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Schedule a Visit:

We are located in Hales Corners, Wisconsin, on a 250 acre partially wooded campus, 15 minutes from the Milwaukee Mitchell International Airport and 75 minutes from the Chicago O'Hare International Airport.