

Come Follow Me: A Seminarian's Journey

Installment 2 – Levels of Seminary

1. An Overview
 - Currently, seminarians in the United States will attend seminary for 6-8 years (after high school).
2. High School Seminary
 - High school seminaries have become rare in the United States (only 7 or so remain open).
 - Cardinal Muench Seminary opened in Fargo as a high school seminary in 1962. Because of declining enrollment, the high school program ended in 2001.
3. College Seminary
 - For men who enter seminary after graduating high school or who transfer from college into seminary.
 - Seminarians graduate from a college seminary with a Bachelor of Arts degree in *Philosophy*.
 - Cardinal Muench in Fargo expanded to a college program in 1966. The college program outlasted the high school program. The college remained open until the seminary closed in 2011.
 - After Cardinal Muench closed, the Diocese of Fargo began sending men to Sacred Heart Major Seminary in Detroit. Currently, we send to St. Gregory the Great Seminary in Seward, NE (where I attended).
4. Pre-Theology
 - Men who enter seminary after earning a college degree follow a “Pre-Theology” program.
 - They study philosophy for 2 years.
 - Currently, the Diocese of Fargo sends pre-theologians to St. Gregory the Great and Mount St. Mary’s in Emmitsburg, Maryland.
5. The “Transition”
 - After a seminarian does his 2-4 years studying philosophy, he transitions to study theology.
 - Usually, this involves a change of seminaries. In my case, I graduated from St. Gregory the Great and then moved on to Mount St. Mary’s.
 - When high school seminaries were more common, they were often called “Minor Seminaries” while college and theology seminaries were called “Major Seminaries.” With the decline of high school seminaries, college seminaries are now sometimes called “Minor Seminaries.”
6. Theology
 - A seminarian’s final four years before ordination are focused on the study of *Theology*.
 - The minimum degree is the “M.Div.” (Master of Divinity). A man may also earn a specialized degree in specific disciplines (like Scripture).
 - The Diocese of Fargo currently sends men to theology at Mount St. Mary’s in Maryland or St. Paul Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota.
7. Conclusion? Priests are well-educated!!
 - Perhaps this was a little confusing, but just know that Catholic priests are well-educated—they must know their stuff! They earn a master’s degree with 6-8 years of post-secondary education.

