



THE ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF PHOENIX

Historic New Seminary to Open in the Diocese of Phoenix **Nazareth Seminary to Keep Future Priests in Arizona to Study & Discern**

PHOENIX (Oct. 3, 2023) – For the first time in Arizona and in the 53-year history of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Phoenix, a full seminary will open to form future priests for the 1.7 million Catholics who live in the diocese. **Bishop John P. Dolan** announced today that the **Nazareth Seminary** has been created, allowing young men to study and discern to become priests in Arizona, a first for one of the fastest growing dioceses in the United States.

The Nazareth Seminary will house and educate all its seminarians in the Diocese of Phoenix as they complete their higher education, and their philosophy and theological studies, in preparation for priestly ordination. Historically, Arizonans who wanted to become priests had to travel out of state, with most recent seminarians from the Diocese of Phoenix attending St. John Vianney Seminary in Denver, where seminarians from the diocese have been studying for more than a decade.

“Priests are formed in homes not institutions,” said Bishop Dolan, who was named the fifth bishop in the history of the diocese in August of 2022. “So rather than sending our guys away, we find that we can respect their love for family by keeping them in the community, our own portion of the Lord’s vineyard.”

Bishop Dolan is carrying on the commitment of his predecessor, Bishop Thomas J. Olmsted – who in 2019 established the Nazareth House near St. Gregory Parish in Phoenix, a two-year, college-level house of formation for men entering seminary. From there, the seminarians would head to Denver.

The household model of formation takes into consideration the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ “Program for Priestly Formation, Sixth Edition,” which supports a household model where men live in community as in a family.

The newest house of studies, Our Lady of Perpetual Help House, created for men in their third year or Spirituality Year, opened in August on the campus of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish in Scottsdale.

The diocese plans to open the third house, St. Mary’s House, in the fall 2024 at the former friary at St. Mary’s Basilica in downtown Phoenix. It will be retrofitted to house 20 men in their Philosophy Year, while St. Joseph’s House is expected to open in fall 2026 for men in their Theology Year in preparation for ordination.

“What we’ve found is that as men are closer in a community setting, they experience more personal growth,” said Fr. Paul Sullivan, rector of Nazareth House, now in its fifth year. Men in formation at Nazareth House are in the entry phase and new to the seminary and embarking on college courses.

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“As seminarians are formed closer to their parishes, we’re finding that it stirs up in men a greater love for their diocese. And when men live in a smaller community they are known more; they have to be more accountable to guys in the house. It’s a model that is closer to rectory living,” Fr. Sullivan explained.

Another exciting element of the Nazareth Seminary is the unique arrangement between the Diocese of Phoenix and Mary College at Arizona State University (ASU) in Tempe. Mary College is an extension of the University of Mary based in Bismarck, N.D., sponsored by the Benedictine Sisters.

Located in the heart of the ASU campus, Mary College is a domestic exchange program where students can study in the Catholic intellectual tradition. Mary College members enrolled at ASU can take a variety of Catholic Studies courses taught by University of Mary faculty and fulfill ASU general course requirements.

Seminarians studying for the Diocese of Phoenix can now take Catholic Studies courses at Mary College to earn credits toward a University of Mary degree.

“I’m excited for the ASU students,” said Professor Scott LeFor, program director and assistant professor of Catholic studies at Mary College. “It’s healthy for young people to study with seminarians. There’s something beautiful about an engineering student from ASU and a seminarian in the same class. It’s about building relationships. There’s a level of excitement with the seminarians and the other students.”

Once all four formation houses are open by 2026, Nazareth Seminary will fully meet the specifications from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ “Program For Priestly Formation.”

The diocese hopes to celebrate the Ordination to the Holy Priesthood Mass for the first class of men to graduate from all four houses of formation of Nazareth Seminary in June of 2030.

NAZARETH SEMINARY

Household Model Seminary Program

1. Nazareth House – Formation years, located near St. Gregory parish in Phoenix (opened in 2019)
2. Our Lady of Perpetual Help (OLPH) House – Spirituality year on campus of OLPH in Scottsdale (opened in August ’23)
3. St. Mary’s House – Philosophy years at former friary at St. Mary’s Basilica in downtown Phoenix (opens in August ’24)
4. St. Joseph’s House – Theology years, expected to open in fall of 2026 in Phoenix

Founded on December 2, 1969, the Roman Catholic Diocese of Phoenix consists of 94 parishes, 23 missions, 29 elementary schools, seven high schools, three universities, and one seminary, and is one of the fastest growing dioceses in the United States, with an increase of over 300,000 Catholics in the past 10-years alone. The Diocese of Phoenix is comprised of Mohave, Coconino (except Navajo Indian Reservation), Yavapai, and Maricopa Counties, and the Gila Indian Reservation in the State of Arizona for a total of 43,967 square miles.

VIDEO VERSION OF HISTORIC ANNOUNCEMENT: <https://youtu.be/vRumv7sr1s8>

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