



“The need to intensify the preparation of aspirants to the Major Seminary has become pressing, not only from an intellectual point of view but also, and more especially, from the human and spiritual perspectives.”

St. John Paul II



ST. AUGUSTINE'S
SEMINARY

SPIRITUAL YEAR

“Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?”

LUKE 24:32

THE PROPAEDEUTIC STAGE
*The Gateway to the Formation
of Future Shepherds*



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St. Augustine's is accredited by the Commission on Accrediting of the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada.



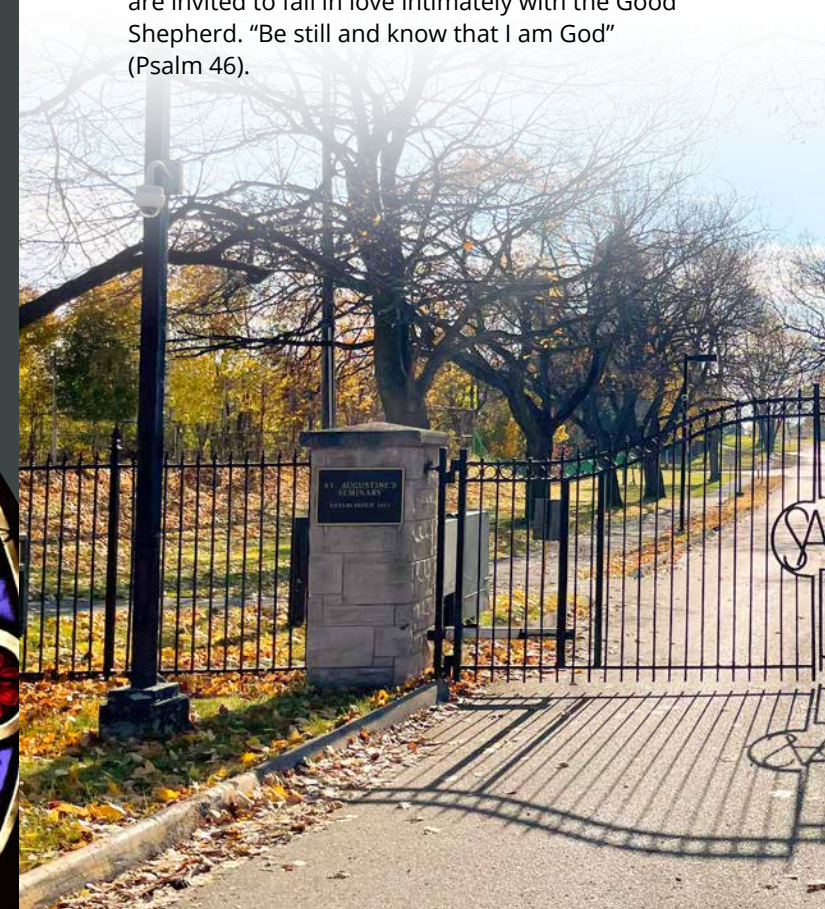
A BRIEF HISTORY

St. John Paul II, in *Pastores Dabo Vobis, Shepherds After My Own Heart* (1992) called to attention the changes in society, which made it necessary to have a period of deep preparation before entering the Major Seminary.

The Dicastery for the Clergy has issued a canonical mandate in 2016 for all seminaries: “The propaedeutic stage is an indispensable phase of formation with its own specific character. Its principal objective is to provide a solid basis for the spiritual life and to nurture a greater self-awareness for personal growth” (*Ratio Fundamental Institutionis Sacerdotalis*, “The Gift of the Priestly Vocation,” 59).

MISSION STATEMENT

The key goal of the propaedeutic stage at St. Augustine's Seminary is to cultivate a spirit of self-giving and self-awareness through initiation into community life and prayerful silence. The seminarians are called to draw closer to the Sacred Heart of Jesus—human and divine—through Eucharistic devotion, meditation on the Word of God, a filial love for Mary, spiritual direction, communal living, and service of Christ's poor. Before seminarians can become shepherds, they are invited to fall in love intimately with the Good Shepherd. “Be still and know that I am God” (Psalm 46).



WHAT THE SPIRITUAL YEAR AT ST. AUGUSTINE'S SEMINARY OFFERS

St. Augustine's Seminary of Toronto has developed the Spiritual Year program for over a decade since its foundation in 2011, and it is currently the longest-running program in Canada. It is held on a separate wing and forms a distinct community within the larger seminary body (cf. GPV 60). It draws upon the resources of seminary professors and instructors from a wealth of backgrounds and expertise: lay men and women, priests, deacons, and religious.

The seminarians are initiated to an overall familiarity with Sacred Scripture, Catholic doctrine, and classic spiritual authors. The itinerary consists of retreats, pilgrimages, and seminars. An important element of the year is extended periods of silence and media fast to foster reflection and deeper growth. Seminarians in Spiritual Year "fast" from social media, cell phones, and the internet during the weekdays. It is an exercise of self-discipline and detachment, and it nurtures the interior life.

ENCOUNTERING CHRIST IN WORD AND SACRAMENT

Supplementing the lectionary-based meditations are Ignatian meditational exercises, as well as Carmelite and Patristic approaches to prayer. Eastern and Patristic spiritualities are also introduced.

MARY, MOTHER OF SEMINARIANS AND PRIESTS

Through chapel meditations, spiritual reading, and devotions, the seminarian is enabled to find his own heart-to-heart, filial relationship with Mary.



SPIRITUAL RETREATS

One of the hopes of the Spiritual Year is to prepare the seminarians to eventually experience the 30-day Spiritual Exercises at some point in their seminary formation at the recommendation of their Spiritual Director. Throughout the Spiritual Year, there are opportunities to enter more deeply into prayer and silence:

- Recollection Weekends
- 5-Day Autumn Retreat
- 10-Day Ignatian Winter Retreat

PILGRIMAGES

Following the footsteps of the Canadian Saints, the seminarians journey to some key pilgrimage sites, such as Martyrs' Shrine in Midland to the Shrine of Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré in Quebec.

"Oh Mary, Mother of God, Mother of the Church, pray for us."

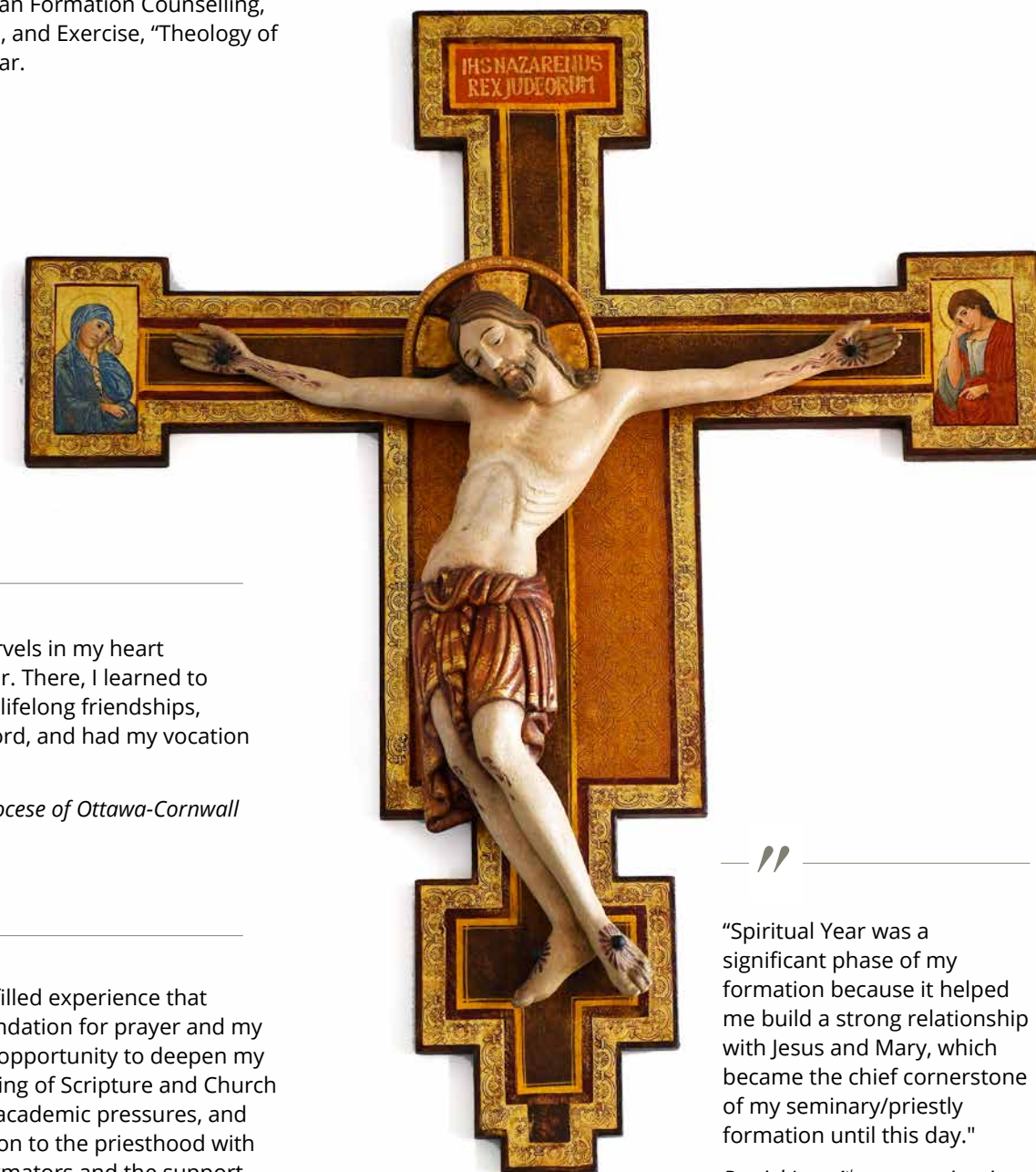
HUMAN FORMATION: PERSONAL GROWTH AND SELF-AWARENESS

Keeping in mind St. John Paul II's insight that the priest's humanity should be a "bridge" and not an "obstacle" for our people to encounter Christ (*Pastores Dabo Vobis* 43), many resources are provided to help gain self-knowledge and build up character: Yearlong Seminar on Human Formation, Human Formation Counselling, Coaching in Nutrition, Sleep, and Exercise, "Theology of the Body in Ministry" Seminar.

APOSTOLIC OUTREACH

Expanding the Heart to be Missionary Disciples

- Weekly Apostolic Outreach: sent out two by two
- Immersion Month Serving Christ the Poor
- Exploring the Universal Church in Liturgy: in parishes on Sundays



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"Truly, the Lord worked marvels in my heart throughout my spiritual year. There, I learned to live in community, fostered lifelong friendships, grew in intimacy with the Lord, and had my vocation confirmed."

Fr. Michael El-Nachef, Archdiocese of Ottawa-Cornwall

— ” —
"Spiritual Year was a grace-filled experience that provided for me a solid foundation for prayer and my relationship with Christ, an opportunity to deepen my knowledge and understanding of Scripture and Church teaching without the usual academic pressures, and freedom to discern a vocation to the priesthood with the guidance of pastoral formators and the support of a fraternity."

Ryan Nigli, 4th year seminarian

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"Spiritual Year was a significant phase of my formation because it helped me build a strong relationship with Jesus and Mary, which became the chief cornerstone of my seminary/priestly formation until this day."

Daniel Lee, 4th year seminarian