



PROPAEDEUTIC YEAR

Saint Charles Borromeo Seminary
Wynnewood, Pennsylvania



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The vision of seminary formation has been greatly enhanced by the 2016 *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis*, which offers a very holistic approach to training and forming men for the ministerial priesthood. The new 6th edition of the *Program for Priestly Formation* (USCCB), has confirmed and implemented this vision by requiring programs to examine themselves through the lens of “stages”, instead of academic structures. The “Propaedeutic Stage” is the first stage, designed to be a period of preparation that enables the men to properly enter into the life of the seminary with a solid foundation of human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral formation. During this stage, participants begin to develop a life of prayer, study, fraternity and appropriate docility to formation (PPF).

Saint Charles Borromeo Seminary has significantly benefitted from offering a “propaedeutic stage” through its well-established “Spiritual Year,” now in its 9th year of operation. Based on much practical experience, and with the wisdom of our seasoned formators, we are well equipped to transition to the new model envisioned by the Ratio and the PPF#6. Effective Fall 2023, the Seminary will begin offering **two** distinct Propaedeutic Year programs – one for those entering Pre-Theology, and one for those entering College seminary. The duration of each program will be one full calendar year (August – July).

St. Matthew's Parish, Conshohocken, PA, home parish to the Propaedeutic Stage



KEY COMPONENTS:

Campus Living/Rule of Life

Men in each of the Propaedeutic Year programs will share in a life of prayer, study, recreation, and fraternity within a more intimate setting. Those who will eventually enter Pre-Theology will reside in the former convent of St. Matthew Parish, Conshohocken, Pennsylvania....not far from the seminary main campus. Those who will eventually enter College Seminary will reside in a distinct wing of the main campus.

Their life together will include their own distinct horarium, under the supervision of a Priest Formation Director and Spiritual Director. The calendar and daily schedule will strengthen men in faith-filled communal life, personal responsibility, self-initiative and discipline, joyful fellowship, simplicity, silence and detachment. Other activities include days of service, excursions, pilgrimages, and retreats.

Media Fast

During the Propaedeutic Year, men will have extensive restrictions placed on their media use, including phones, tablets, computers, television, radio, music and movies. An appropriate amount of technology use will be allowed at various intervals. This “fast” facilitates freedom to be guided by the Holy Spirit, quality interpersonal interactions and conversations, the capacity to be present to others in the present moment, and fortifying healthy leisure activity. While encouraging a balanced approach to internet use, the fast also promotes recovery from addictions to it or excessive reliance upon it.



*“If a tiny spark of God’s love already burns within you,
do not expose it to the wind, for it may get blown out.*

Stay quiet with God.

Don’t spend your time in useless chatter.”

Saint Charles Borromeo





THE FOUR DIMENSIONS

Human Dimension

As part of the foundational growth as a human person, the men will attend workshops, seminars and conferences that focus on self-awareness, self-knowledge, social intelligence, self-discipline, emotional intelligence, time management and communication skills. The intimate setting of house life will foster a very good opportunity to grow in virtue and Christian Charity. Through the accompaniment of a formation director, and with the availability of a house counselor, the men will be offered a safe and nurturing environment in which to develop their identity as Catholic men who are beloved sons of God the Father.

Spiritual Dimension

Familiarity with Christ is the essential component that supports the period of ascertainment of a vocation. It allows for the hearing of the Lord's call. Training in a personal spiritual life is a priority. The men will focus on the basic principles of prayer and spiritual direction. They will follow a schedule for liturgy, communal and individual prayer and devotions. Particular attention will be given to the importance of silence in developing an interior life. Scriptural meditation and the art of *Lectio Divina* will be taught. They will also be introduced to a history of the major schools of spirituality and spiritual masters that have blessed the Church over the last two millennia.



*“The priesthood is the
love of the heart of Jesus.”*

Saint John Vianney





Intellectual Dimension

The propaedeutic year is “an ideal opportunity to acquire an initial and overall familiarity with Christian doctrine by studying the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.” (337 Ratio Fundamental^{is}, no.59). A varied program of courses, conferences and workshops will offer the men a solid foundation of the basics of Church teaching. They will also be immersed in introductory scripture study, the spiritual traditions of the Church, the lives of the saints, and classic faith-filled literature. Intercultural competency will have a high priority, particularly through the study of the Spanish language. Through reading assignments, interviews, reflection papers, journaling assignments, and other means of assessment, the men will be offered a solid foundation from which they can enter philosophical studies.

Pastoral Dimension

In addition to regular prayer and study, the propaedeutic year will include a weekly “apostolate” in the local community, as well as a month-long targeted “Poverty Immersion” program for the college graduates, and a modified age-appropriate experience for the younger men entering college seminary. Emphasis will be made on further developing the capacity for self-gift, as well as opening oneself to differing cultures. “Pastoral charity is at the heart of the Church and the priesthood; so demonstrating a genuine concern for others, a spirit of generosity, and a developing habit of self-donation” (PPF #373) will be at the heart of this foundational stage of pastoral formation.



*“The world looks to the priest, because he looks to Jesus!
No one can see Christ; but everyone sees the priest,
and through him they wish they could
catch a glimpse of the Lord.”*

Pope Saint John Paul II





Daily Rule of Life and Schedule

**Tentative, daily schedule subject to change*

6:30	Eucharistic Adoration, Morning Prayer and Benediction
7:45	Breakfast
8:15	Interior Time, Reading, Studying, Constructive Conversation
9:30	Classroom instruction
11:45	Mass
12:30	Lunch
1:00	Work Hour
2:00	Recreation/free time
5:30	Evening Prayer
5:50	Dinner
6:40	Rosary
7:00	Discretionary time (varies by day)
9:00	Night prayer, Grand Silence



*“Let us pray for all good and faithful priests who
dedicate themselves to their people with
generosity and unknown sacrifices.”*

Pope Francis





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