

PROSPECTUS



In his first official document, Pope Francis shocked the Catholic world with this observation: “We know that the faithful attach great importance to it [the homily], and that both they and their ordained ministers suffer because of homilies: the laity from having to listen to them and the clergy from having to preach them!”

Catholics in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia express a similar viewpoint. Recent research indicates that only 39% strongly agree that parish preaching helps them by connecting their faith and their everyday life, while 23% do not agree at all that it helps.

They also protest with their feet. Over the past five years (2017-2021), the number of Catholics attending Mass on a weekend has dropped an alarming 39%, to an all-time low of only 12% of the registered Catholic population.

At Saint Charles Borromeo Seminary, we aim to change that!

With grant funding from the “Compelling Preaching Initiative” at Lilly Endowment Inc., Saint Charles Borromeo Seminary will establish a Catholic Preaching Institute, the only one in the eastern USA, whose key activities will help bring about a much-needed homiletic revival in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.

More than an academic degree program or a continuing education academy, this new venture will directly engage archdiocesan clergy assigned to parish ministry (priests and deacons) with new ideas and practices that will enable them to deliver more compelling preaching in the liturgical tradition embraced by Roman Catholics.

Through its key activities, the Institute will provide parish preachers with a new “narrative intelligence” to inform how they interpret both the divine Word and the human community.

The Institute’s interrelated programs will form current and aspiring preachers as true “disciples” of the Word, able to proclaim the Good News to the wide-ranging congregations within each parish, as well as to diverse audiences beyond the neighborhood churches.

By engaging exemplary clergy, seminary faculty, and lay faithful in its work, and by making advantageous use of new forms of digital communications, the Institute will unleash for preacher and parishioner alike the compelling power of the Word, thereby transforming the experience of homilies away from something merely to be endured, or from which to walk away entirely, and toward a beneficial encounter with the God who continues to speak that saving Word to all.

In this way, the Catholic Preaching Institute will play an important role in helping people to deepen their spirituality and grow closer to Christ. Through the experience of more compelling preaching, the faithful will bring a renewed ardor to participation in the liturgical life of parishes.

As a result, the Archdiocese of Philadelphia will be, once again, an exemplary witness to that “Story of stories” that reveals faith and hope and love to a region that could benefit from a resurgence of spirituality.

* * * * *