



# PRESS RELEASE

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For Release: November 29, 2021

(Baltimore, MD) – St. Mary’s Seminary & University—the nation’s first Roman Catholic seminary established for the formation of priests in the United States—has been awarded a grant in the amount of \$1 million from Lilly Endowment Inc. to support the design and implementation of *St. Mary’s Institute for Pastoral Leadership*. The mission of the Institute will be to strengthen St. Mary’s recognized leadership in forming 21<sup>st</sup> century pastors equipped to minister collaboratively with lay ministers and parish leaders to address the spiritual and pastoral needs of those served through the wide variety of ministries and outreach programs in Catholic parishes.

The initiation of the Institute is being funded through Lilly Endowment’s Pathways for Tomorrow Initiative, a three-phase initiative designed to help theological schools across the United States and Canada prioritize and respond to their most pressing challenges as they prepare pastoral leaders for Christian congregations both now and into the future.

“We could not be more grateful to Lilly Endowment for its recognition of St. Mary’s commitment to forming authentic and effective pastors, equipped in every way for the rigors of pastoral ministry in the 21<sup>st</sup> century,” said St. Mary’s Seminary & University President-Rector Revered Phillip J. Brown, P.S.S. “With this significant grant, we will be able to accelerate and expand programs to provide model human and pastoral formation, not only for those seminarians currently in formation, but continuing education and essential resources for priests already in parish ministry addressing the varied pastoral needs of those who depend on them and their pastoral teams each and every day. St. Mary’s mission is to provide the people of God with the kind of priests and pastors they truly deserve.”

St. Mary’s Seminary & University is the birthplace of priestly formation in the United States. At the invitation of Bishop John Carroll, first Roman Catholic Bishop in the United States, Father François Nagot, S.S., led a group of Sulpician priests and seminarians to Baltimore to begin priestly formation here on October 3, 1791. Since then, St. Mary’s has been operated by the Sulpician Fathers, a community of diocesan priests dedicated to the formation of parish priests. Currently, 76 seminarians are in formation at St. Mary’s from 13 dioceses throughout the United States, as well as Hamilton, Ontario and Zhao Xian China, in addition to 4 graduate student priests, for a total enrollment of 80. Among them are also 2 religious seminarians from the Trinitarian Order, one Cistercian, and one seminarian from the Société des Missions Étrangères de Paris.

St. Mary's already provides a holistic curriculum focused on the human, spiritual, pastoral and intellectual dimensions necessary for effective priestly ministry. The changing landscape of the Church in America demands ongoing assessment of the way seminaries prepare men to serve the needs of parishioners in the present day, however. These changing dynamics call for enhanced ongoing formation opportunities for enhanced ministerial skills to support clergy in their ministries. As part of the Institute for Pastoral Leadership initiative St. Mary's will utilize the Lilly Endowment grant to upgrade and expand its existing Center for Continuing Formation.

Inspired by Pope Francis and his insistence that ordained ministry be understood first and foremost as a call and commitment to service, St. Mary's Institute for Pastoral Leadership will focus on three key areas: seminary formation, ongoing formation, and faculty development. The upgrading of formation programs will include academic courses on philosophy of pastoral leadership and communication skills; workshops on essential and foundational communication skills and collaboration skills; experiential learning opportunities to build collaboration skills; and facilitated learning sessions to more effectively integrate pastoral field experiences. Ongoing formation programs will focus on the critical first five years of priestly ministry, in addition to courses on preaching, parish administration, clergy/lay collaboration, guiding volunteers and enabling lay leadership. These areas of concentration were identified based on feedback from interviews conducted for developing ongoing formation programs that can be offered as distance learning modules, along with continued onsite programs. Faculty Development will be designed to ensure that faculty members, supervisors and mentors are able to effectively help seminarians implement and integrate what they learn in formation into their lived experience.

In developing the Institute for Pastoral Leadership, St. Mary's will create a nationally accessible innovative formation program as a resource for other seminarians and priests across the country. It is envisioned that the impact of the Institute will reach far beyond St. Mary's seminarians and alumni and the parishes they serve.

St. Mary's Seminary & University is one of 84 theological schools designated to receive a total of more than \$82 million in grants through the second phase of the Pathways initiative. Together, the schools represent evangelical, mainline Protestant, nondenominational, Pentecostal, Roman Catholic and Black church and historic peace church traditions (e.g., Church of the Brethren, Mennonite, Quakers). Many schools also serve students and pastors from Black, Latino, Korean American, Chinese American and recent immigrant Christian communities.

"Theological schools have long played a pivotal role in preparing pastoral leaders for churches," said Christopher L. Coble, the Endowment's vice president for religion. "Today, these schools find themselves in a period of rapid and profound change. Through the Pathways Initiative, theological schools will take deliberate steps to address the challenges they have identified in ways that make the most sense to them. We believe that their efforts are critical to ensuring that Christian congregations continue to have a steady stream of pastoral leaders who are well-prepared to lead the churches of tomorrow."

Lilly Endowment launched the Pathways initiative in January 2021 because of its longstanding interest in supporting efforts to enhance and sustain the vitality of Christian congregations by strengthening the leadership capacities of pastors and congregational lay leaders.

### **About St. Mary's Seminary & University**

America's first Catholic seminary, [St. Mary's Seminary & University](#) continues its tradition of excellence since 1791 in preparing candidates for the Roman Catholic diocesan priesthood. Following the Sulpician

Tradition of priestly formation, which takes place within a single community of formators and seminarians sharing one rule of life with strong mentoring relationships, we facilitate personal integration of the human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral dimensions necessary for authentic priestly witness and service in the image of Jesus Christ.

Through its Center for Continuing Formation and Ecumenical Institute, St. Mary's also provides for advanced theological study, the ongoing formation of those in ministry, and a center of preparation for missionary discipleship.

**About Lilly Endowment Inc.**

[Lilly Endowment Inc.](#) is an Indianapolis-based private philanthropic foundation created in 1937 by J.K. Lilly, Sr. and his sons Eli and J.K. Jr. through gifts of stock in their pharmaceutical business, Eli Lilly and Company. Although the gifts of stock remain a financial bedrock of the Endowment, it is a separate entity from the company, with a distinct governing board, staff and location. In keeping with the founders' wishes, the Endowment supports the causes of [community development](#), [education](#) and [religion](#) and maintains a special commitment to its founders' hometown, Indianapolis, and home state, Indiana. The primary aim of its grantmaking in religion, which is national in scope, focuses on strengthening the leadership and vitality of Christian congregations in the United States. The Endowment also seeks to foster public understanding about religion and lift up in fair, accurate and balanced ways the contributions that people of all faiths and religious communities make to our greater civic well-being.

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