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St. Bernard's celebrates centennial



Students at St. Bernard's Seminary in Rochester gathered for a group photo on the Lake Avenue school's front lawn in 1893. Founded by Bishop Bernard J. McQuaid, the seminary opened in 1893 with 39 students.

Institute continues seminary's work of training leaders for today's church

By Lee Strong
Senior staff writer



St. Bernard's Seminary was founded in 1893 amid doubts that it could survive in a diocese as small as Rochester.

This year, St. Bernard's Institute — the seminary's current incarnation — will mark 100 years of offering graduate-level Catholic theological education in Rochester and, through an extension program, for the past four years in the Albany diocese.

This year finds the institute with approximately 140 students in the Rochester diocese and 100 in the Albany extension program.

And even as the institute celebrates its first century with a variety of events (see accompanying box), its staff and board of trustees are already beginning to plan for the years ahead, noted Charles Meder, who has served as SBI's interim president since Jan. 1, 1993.

Among those plans, Meder said, are developing a closer working relationship with the Diocese of Rochester in terms of providing education for diocesan employees and in finding jobs for SBI graduates; attempting to forge relationships with other dioceses, perhaps along the lines of the Albany extension program; and recruiting students not only from the Rochester and Albany dioceses, but the entire northeastern United States as well.

Further, SBI will try to recruit more students who are interested in spiritual development and theological education, but not necessarily graduate degrees, Meder continued.

"We envision ourselves getting more deeply involved in the area of lifelong learning," Meder said. This will take place, he observed, through such means as workshops and courses with broader appeal — something which has already begun at the institute.

If the past is any indication, SBI will continue to evolve to meet people's needs, yet continue to provide quality graduate education, suggested Father Sebastian A. Falcone, who served as the institute's president from 1981 to 1992.

"St. Bernard's is the only Roman Catholic institution (in the United States) that started out as a seminary and has been able to change to a full-time lay school of theology," Father Falcone remarked.

(St. Bernard's) will continue to work as long as we have a viable idea and as long as we have students to darken our doorsteps," Father Falcone quipped.

The "viable idea" now embodied by the institute is

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Debbie G. Augustin/Photo editor



File photo
After opening St. Andrew's Preparatory Seminary in 1870, Bishop Bernard J. McQuaid became determined to build a seminary in Rochester following his 1879 trip to Rome.

Roslyn A. Karaban (left), associate professor of ministry studies at St. Bernard's Institute, answers questions during an April 6 class on pastoral counseling. The popular course is interpreted for the hearing impaired (hand at left).

SBI schedules events to mark first 100 years

St. Bernard's Institute, 1100 S. Goodman St., has scheduled the following events to mark the 100th anniversary of St. Bernard's Seminary, which was dedicated on Aug. 20, 1893:

- June 2: "Celebration of Catholic Women," to be held at SBI.

- Aug. 20: "St. Bernard's Day," to be proclaimed during a morning press conference at City Hall, 30 Church St., Rochester, followed by a luncheon at SBI.

- Aug.-Sept., 1993: historical exhibition at Rundel Library, 115 South Ave., Rochester.

- Oct. 25, 1993: Alumni reunion, including a workshop for seminary

and institute alumni, followed by a cocktail party and dinner at St. John of Rochester Church, 18 Wickford Way, Fairport.

- Oct. 25, 1993, 3:30-5 p.m.: Faculty lecture, in conjunction with reunion. Father Robert J. Kennedy will speak on the topic of liturgy.

- Nov. 10, 1993, 7:30-9 p.m.: Faculty lecture. Dr. Marvin Mich will speak in Horseheads on the subject of medical ethics. The lecture will be repeated Nov. 17 at SBI.

- 1994: Two other faculty lectures will be scheduled. Speakers, topics and dates have yet to be announced. Call 716/271-1320, ext. 290, for information.