Good, holy, and compassionate priests are a gift to God’s people and the parishes they serve. Our future as a Catholic community will be even more vibrant if we have a flourishing priesthood.

We are grateful that so many young men are now discerning a priestly vocation; nearly 30 men are currently enrolled as seminarians for the Diocese of Grand Rapids. In the past five years, we have been blest with a 45 percent increase in the number of men entering the seminary. We look forward to their gifts and leadership as a large group of faithful and faith-filled diocesan priests enter their well-deserved retirement.

As a diocese, we are committed to ensuring these young men get the best possible formation and education so that they and we will benefit for decades to come from their priestly presence among us. It is in support of this commitment that the Diocese of Grand Rapids is undertaking the Our Shepherds – Our Future Capital Campaign, a $33 million-dollar campaign to support seminarian education and priest retirement.

We are asking everyone in the diocese to participate. How deeply reassuring would it be if 100% of the families in our diocese stood in solidarity with these young men as they pursue their formation?

We do not expect you to make such a commitment lightly. A gift of any amount to this campaign will be deeply appreciated because we know that what may be considered a small dollar gift for some may well be a large sacrifice for others. We also know that you and others have questions. For four weeks you will find answers in these inserts to some of the most frequently asked questions regarding aspects of this campaign.

If you have a question that was not answered, please submit it to Annalise Laumeyer, diocesan director of communications: alaumeyer@grdiocese.org. She will attempt to provide you an answer promptly.
How much is needed for seminarian education?
The Catholic Services Appeal (CSA) annually contributes $700,000 toward seminarian education, covering the costs of approximately 14 men. A few years ago, when we had fewer seminarians that was sufficient. Today it covers a bit less than half of the $1.6 million needed (2018-2019 academic year). This campaign will raise $29 million to ensure that the diocese can continue to provide for seminarian education for many years to come.

How long will these funds last? Can they be used toward any other purpose?
The money will be used only for seminarian education. We hope to raise an endowment of $20 million while keeping $9 million available to be spent as needed in the coming decade. Because we hope to be blessed with many seminarians in the years ahead, we can’t predict exactly how long these funds will last, but we are confident that parishioners throughout the diocese will experience the benefits of these sacrificial gifts for decades to come.

What is a seminarian’s financial responsibility for his formation?
College seminarians at St. John Vianney pursue an undergraduate education before moving on to priestly formation. They are responsible for paying one-third of their annual tuition. Like any other undergraduate, this is with a mix of help from family, scholarships, financial aid and student loans. Once engaged in priestly formation at Mundelein Seminary, the diocese covers the entirety of the candidate’s costs.

If a seminarian leaves the seminary is he required to reimburse the diocese for the cost of his formation?
A seminarian who leaves the program retains the student loans he has incurred. He will not be required to reimburse the diocese for its portion of his educational costs. The goal of entering seminary is to provide the young man with the opportunity to freely discern his vocation without being hindered by financial obligations.

Why do our seminarians attend seminaries out of state instead of Aquinas College or Sacred Heart Major Seminary?
Our experiences in recent years with both Mundelein Seminary and St. John Vianney gives us confidence in them as partners for the Grand Rapids Diocese. We have active annual reviews of both programs including direct feedback from participating seminarians.

Will the CSA continue to contribute to seminarian education if Our Shepherds – Our Future is raising funds for this same purpose?
The funds allocated to the CSA for seminarian education will remain. The money raised through this capital campaign will allow us to replenish our reserves and create a sustainable long-term funding model for seminarian education.

Thank you for your prayers for this campaign and the discernment of your support!

Please direct questions to your parish office or parish ambassadors. Visit GRdiocese.org to learn more about this campaign and its initiatives.