

St. Lawrence Seminary: Home, family, future

By Mark Sherry

In some ways and to some people, St. Lawrence Seminary High School is a mystery.

Positioned on top of a hill in tiny, off-the-beaten-path Mount Calvary, few area residents over the years have had reason to venture up the small paved lane leading to the sprawling campus.

But to the more than 9,000 students who have attended the school over the years, St. Lawrence Seminary is not a mystery—it is home, family, and a bright future.

Tim Guiden said the story of his relationship with St. Lawrence Seminary is not unusual, but it does speak volumes about what impact the 148-year-old institution has on people it touches.

Guiden spent his freshman year of high school at St. Lawrence Seminary back in 1974-75. He had to leave the school after that year and return home for personal reasons, but he said not a day went by when he did not think of St. Lawrence.

When his own family suffered a personal tragedy, the first place he turned to after calling home was St. Lawrence Seminary. Guiden had a successful career in the U.S. Air Force, but said, "For 33 years I wanted to come back and be part of this place."

Guiden has come back and has served as St. Lawrence's director of admissions for the past six months. He said he looks forward to a long second career "on the hill." After more than three decades away, he has caught up with changes made at the school and campus. And change has been a constant at St. Lawrence Seminary over the years.

In 1857, two Swiss diocesan priests, Frs. Francis Haas and Bonaventure Frey, arrived in Mount Calvary with the intention of founding the Capuchin Order, which they did. Three years later they opened the Convent Latin School in Mount Calvary. That later became St. Lawrence College, and the facility grew and served as a college well into the 1900s.

St. Lawrence later became a seminary with the sole purpose of preparing



Above is an aerial view of a portion of the St. Lawrence Seminary High School campus in Mount Calvary, taken from the school's observatory. Inside the old buildings is state-of-the-art equipment for students and staff.

Mark Sherry photos



young men for the Catholic priesthood, but that is no longer the only goal of St. Lawrence. It has adopted the name St. Lawrence Seminary High School to bring focus on the fact that it is educating young men not just to be priests but to possibly serve in other vocations within the church.

Guiden said St. Lawrence does not

track how many of its graduates go on to be priests, both because that is difficult to do and because it is not the sole function of the institution. He did add that six of its graduates last year are pursuing religious life as a vocation and nine of this year's senior class of 43 are considering doing so.

But in addition to pursuing the priest-

hood, St. Lawrence Seminary High School students may also intend to serve the church as deacons, brothers, lay singles or lay married individuals, the latter two of which are recognized as vocations within the Catholic church.

St. Lawrence Seminary High School

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is a residential campus. "Everyone lives seven days a week here. You must be Catholic to go here," Guiden said. There are Catholic schools in which less than 50 percent of the students are Catholic, but that is not the case at St. Lawrence Seminary High School.

Guiden said St. Lawrence Seminary High School works to create an environment in which the boys are exposed to the Catholic lifestyle from the time they wake up in the morning until curfew. Everything done at the campus is done in a way which tries to be consistent with the Gospels.

But people should not let that statement or some of the old buildings on campus (St. Joseph Hall was built in 1872) fool them into thinking St. Lawrence Seminary High School cannot be a fun, cutting edge place for boys to receive their high school education.

Standards for admission

For starters, the "new" St. Lawrence Seminary High School is somewhat selective about the boys it accepts for admission. They have to get good grades and tend to rank in the upper 54 percentile or higher on standardized/admissions tests, along with receiving character references from pastors and teachers.

Their academic load abides by all requirements of the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, including four years of English, three years of social studies, science and math, two years of foreign language, and four years of physical education. Four years of religious studies are also required.

"We have been blessed with benefactors who have been very good to this school," Guiden said. That is obvious in the modern and spacious facilities such as the library, computer labs, cafeteria and fitness center. A capital campaign has just kicked off to raise funds to put an elevator in the four-story main building which was constructed in 1881.

St. Lawrence Seminary High School started the current academic year with 221 students, most of whom come from the Milwaukee and Chicago areas. Students are also there from 16 other states as well as nine foreign countries. A little

over 10 percent of the student body are international students.

With students coming in from all over the world and leaving to attend colleges all over the world—including Notre Dame, Cornell, Georgetown and many others—St. Lawrence Seminary High School has developed a strong "word of mouth" network as well as a list of benefactors from Mount Calvary to around the world. Because of that, no boy has ever been turned away because his family could not afford the tuition—presently \$8,000 per year. Scholarships and payment programs can help pay the tuition which only covers one-third of the actual cost of educating the student.

Benefits of St. Lawrence

Parents find there are many benefits to sending their child to St. Lawrence Seminary High School. In some cases, it is a safer environment compared to the cities in which they live, although Guiden said, "It is a culture shock in a lot of different ways. They are shocked at the ruralness of it."

Meeting fellow students from all over the world is another advantage of St. Lawrence Seminary High School. Guiden said, "We have people who have been raised in places which are not ethnically diverse." Alumni are surveyed every three years about their St. Lawrence experience, and Guiden said the number-one answer about their favorite aspect of the school is the diversity.

Students are also expected to take part in at least one extra-curricular activity. Interscholastic sports offered at St. Lawrence include soccer, basketball, baseball, cross country, wrestling and track, but other activities include those found at any other high school and more—yearbook, school newspaper, astronomy (there is an observatory high atop a building on the hill), swimming, skiing, a top-notch forensics program, drama, National Honor Society, and much more.

An evening study hall is mandatory for freshmen through juniors. Each student also connects with his own spiritual advisor at the school, and twice per quarter faculty convene to evaluate each student one by one. It is not an accident that 100

percent of the graduates over the past three years have gone on to college.

"For 150 years, Mount Calvary and the Holyland have benefitted from the seminary being here," Guiden said, including as an employer of area residents as support staff, teachers, coaches, etc.

Father Dennis Druggan is the rector of St. Lawrence Seminary. Dave Bartel of Marytown is the academic dean, and Father Gary Wegner of Fond du Lac is the dean of students.

As the sesquicentennial of St. Lawrence Seminary High School in Mount Calvary nears, perhaps any mystery about life "on the hill" will fade. It can be described simply, yet its importance cannot be overstated: St. Lawrence is a Catholic seminary high school providing an opportunity for young Catholic men to lay a foundation upon which they can build their lives inside and outside the church.

Serving the area for Over 70 Years



▲ PICTURED ABOVE (L-R):
Al Kraus, Pump Installer and Service Technician; **Lisa Olson**, Office Manager;
Mark Weber, Co-Owner, Head of Pump and Service and **Roger Weber**, Owner. Not pictured: **Maggie Lefebvre**, Part-time Office Assistant.

◀ PICTURED LEFT (L-R):
Fritz Rlug, Head of Drilling Operations and **Jay Van Asten**, Driller's Assistant

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