

THE BISHOPS OF PITTSBURGH AND ST. PAUL SEMINARY

Rev. Frank D. Almade



Bishop John J. Wright (early 1960s)

Source: Archives of Diocese of Pittsburgh

Bishop Wright had a vision.

Pope John XXIII appointed Bishop John Wright, ordinary of Worcester, the eighth bishop of Pittsburgh on January 23, 1959. He was already known as an intellectual among the U.S. Catholic bishops. His appointment to the large diocese of Pittsburgh (more than 950,000 souls) was a sign of the pope's affirmation of his apostolic ability.

The 1950s were a time of great increase in the number of Catholic parishes, schools and institutions in our country. Upon his arrival in Western Pennsylvania Bishop Wright pursued many initiatives in his new diocese. His grandest was a vision of establishing in his diocese twelve years of Catholic seminary education for future priests.

Pittsburgh's first bishop, Michael O'Connor, had begun a tiny seminary following his arrival in the city in late 1843. It continued, on and off, until 1876. After this, the Diocese of Pittsburgh mainly relied on St. Vincent Seminary in Latrobe for the education of its seminarians.

Bishop Wright began to implement his vision by sending several priests to graduate schools, so that they could return with appropriate doctoral degrees and teach in Pittsburgh's yet-to-be-established seminary. Second, he approached the Maryland Province of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) to come to Pittsburgh and start a high school seminary – the Bishop's Latin School, which opened in 1961. The third part of his vision was to open a free-standing college seminary on the grounds of the St. Paul Orphanage, in the Crafton neighborhood of the city of Pittsburgh. After a century of ministry

to orphans, the Sisters of Mercy had closed the institution in January of 1965. The diocese saw that the buildings and grounds could easily be converted into dormitories, classrooms, refectory, kitchen and athletic facilities for seminarians.

However, by 1965 Bishop Wright saw the national trends of declining enrollment in college seminaries. Was starting a new college feasible, or even prudent at this time? He also knew the Roman tradition of "colleges," that is, residences for seminarians and aspirants of religious orders while they attended a university on the other side of a city. He himself had lived at the North American College in the 1930's, while pursuing theological studies at the Gregorian University in Rome.

A decision was made. Bishop Wright would open St. Paul Seminary – but not as a free-standing college. The men would live and study at 2900 Noblestown Road, but daily ride buses to attend classes at nearby Duquesne University. The seminary faculty would provide spiritual direction and formation for the seminarians. The *horarium*, or daily schedule of Mass and prayer, would guide the men into the discipline of priestly spirituality. Thus was the beginning of St. Paul Seminary in September 1965. Twenty-nine students were in the first class. This was one of the first American seminaries where the students took their university coursework mingling with the rest of the co-educational student body.

Bishop Wright appointed Father Donald Kraus as the first rector. Msgr. Kraus, a veteran of World War II, held doctorates in philosophy and theology, and was 38 years old at his appointment. Wright also appointed Father George Saladna as vice-rector. He was a



Chapel of St. Paul Seminary
(demolished after 1977 fire)

Source: St. Paul Seminary

scholar of Sacred Scripture, with a prestigious S.S.L. degree from the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome. Father (later auxiliary bishop) William Winter was the first spiritual director.

Bishop Wright was named a Cardinal and appointed Prefect of the Congregation of the Clergy in April of 1969 by Pope Paul VI. His successor, Bishop Vincent Leonard, continued oversight of the seminary. In November 1977 a fire destroyed three buildings used by the Diocesan Purchasing Commission as warehouses, as well as the seminary's kitchen on the first floor and large chapel on the second floor. As a result, a recreation room in Boyle Hall was converted into a chapel, and a basement storage area became the kitchen and dining room.

When Msgr. Kraus was named pastor of St. Scholastica Parish, Aspinwall, Bishop Leonard named then-Father Donald Wuerl as rector in 1981. Father Wuerl had recently returned from Rome, having served Cardinal Wright as secretary until his death.

Pope John Paul II tapped the second rector of St. Paul Seminary to be auxiliary bishop of Seattle in November of 1985, and personally ordained him a bishop in St. Peter's Basilica on January 6, 1986. Bishop Anthony Bevilacqua appointed Father Ted Rutkowski to lead St. Paul Seminary.

Less than two years later, the second rector of St. Paul Seminary returned home to become the eleventh bishop of Pittsburgh when Bishop Bevilacqua was appointed archbishop of Philadelphia. For the next 18 years, St. Paul Seminary would be the second home for Bishop Wuerl. He expanded the facilities of the St. Paul plant with a television studio, and oversaw renovations to Phelan Hall, as the Marriage Tribunal offices were moved from the downtown diocesan building to more spacious offices. Bishop Wuerl increased the opportunities for clergy continuing education with annual spring and fall clergy conferences, lectures and a spring clergy picnic to honor priest-jubilarians. He expanded the mission of St. Paul Seminary beyond forming college age men, with a two-year pre-theology program for those who already were college graduates. One of the rectors he appointed, then-Father Edward Burns, would later be named Bishop of Juneau.

Pope Benedict XVI appointed Wuerl as the archbishop of Washington, D.C., in May of 2005, and later named him a Cardinal. Sixteen months later, the first graduate of St. Paul Seminary was named as the twelfth bishop of Pittsburgh by Pope Benedict. Bishop David Zubik entered St. Paul's in the fall of 1967 for four years of study along the way to his priestly ordination in 1975, the third class to be ordained from the college residence. He was named auxiliary bishop of Pittsburgh in 1997, and Bishop of Green Bay in 2003. Upon his return to Pittsburgh, Bishop Zubik chose to make the seminary his permanent residence. A suitable episcopal apartment in Domenec Hall (the administration building) was constructed.



David Zubik (future Bishop of Pittsburgh) and Daniel DiNardo (future Cardinal Archbishop of Galveston-Houston) appear in this group of Seminarians at St. Paul Seminary

Source: Archives of Diocese of Pittsburgh

He led efforts to redo O'Connor Hall, renovating the auditorium and naming it for the longest-serving auxiliary bishop of Pittsburgh, John B. McDowell, and creating a new gathering space where the swimming pool had been located. This was named the Cardinals Great Hall, in honor of seven princes of the church with ties to Pittsburgh. One of the seven, Cardinal Daniel DiNardo, Archbishop of Galveston-Houston, lived at St. Paul Seminary for the first two years of his college formation.

St. Paul Seminary has seen the number of its residential seminarians decrease over its 50 years. The bishops of Pittsburgh have expanded its services, to include vocation recruitment efforts, a pre-theology program, leadership development training, clergy and ministerial formation, various diocesan offices, and now a first-class gathering space for the faithful of the entire diocese in the Cardinals Great Hall. As it passes its 50th anniversary, St. Paul Seminary will continue to serve the bishops, and the faithful, of the Diocese of Pittsburgh for many years to come.

OFFICIALS OF ST. PAUL SEMINARY, PITTSBURGH

BISHOPS OF PITTSBURGH SINCE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ST. PAUL SEMINARY	
John J. Wright	1959 – 1969
Vincent M. Leonard	1969 – 1983
Anthony J. Bevilacqua	1983 – 1988
Donald W. Wuerl	1988 – 2006
David A. Zubik	2007 – to date

RECTORS OF ST. PAUL SEMINARY	
Donald W. Kraus	President July 7, 1965 – February 1, 1980
	Rector February 1, 1980 – June 29, 1981
Donald W. Wuerl	June 30, 1981 – May 18, 1985
Theodore A. Rutkowski	May 19, 1985 – June 1, 1986
William M. Ogradowski	February 24, 1986 – June 1, 1990
Charles S. Bober	June 1, 1990 – July 5, 1993
Joseph J. Kleppner	July 5, 1993 – July 8, 1996
Edward J. Burns	July 1, 1996 – October 27, 1997
David J. Bonnar	October 27, 1997 – July 8, 2002
James A. Wehner	July 8, 2002 – August 18, 2008
Edward J. Burns	August 18, 2008 – April 2, 2009
Dennis P. Yurochko	March 4, 2009 – May 9, 2011
Joseph M. Mele	May 9, 2011 – July 1, 2014
Brian J. Welding	July 1, 2014 – to date