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## **Final Mass celebrates gift of Cardinal Muench Seminary**

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With more than 100 former students of Cardinal Muench Seminary now serving as priests, the seminary served the Diocese of Fargo well during its 49 years in existence, Bishop Samuel Aquila said during the May 26 thanksgiving Mass at the seminary.

"It fulfilled a dream of Cardinal Muench and it served well in its time in history," he said of the seminary in north Fargo. Cardinal Aloisius Muench was the third bishop of the Diocese of Fargo.

The Mass was the final public Mass to be held at the seminary, which closes this month. The faithful and clergy "will all continue to lift our hearts in gratitude to God for the priests he has formed in this seminary," Bishop Aquila said.

He also spoke of the cycles of vocations the diocese has seen, at times having an abundance of vocations to the priesthood, at other times having very few. "It is ironic that, as we close the seminary this year, we already have seven men in application for entry into the priesthood and three others who are looking at it seriously," he said.

A study done more than a year ago, before the decision was made to discontinue the seminary program, showed that the seminary would need consistent enrollment of at least 30 to 40 college-level seminarians to make operation of the seminary financially feasible. Since 1988, the number of seminarians had risen above 20 only twice.

Bishop Aquila noted in his homily that a recent study of seminaries commissioned by the Vatican concluded that there are currently too many seminaries in the United States.

Four of the priests who served as rector of the seminary over the years were at the Mass, including Msgr. Val Gross, Father James Ermer, Msgr. Brian Donahue and the present rector, Msgr. Gregory Schlesselmann.

"The Diocese of Fargo was tremendously blessed in the service of the rectors," Bishop Aquila said.

The Mass and reception that followed were filled with emotion and the sharing of memories. This was a time to celebrate the gift of the seminary and the gift of priests and other holy men who attended the seminary who now serve the Catholic Church so well.

*For more information about Cardinal Muench Seminary, visit [www.cardinalmuench.org](http://www.cardinalmuench.org).*