Father Julius Madaki from the Archdiocese of Kaduna, Nigeria, is seen in this undated photo. H

Father Julius Madaki from the Archdiocese of Kaduna, Nigeria, is seen in this undated photo. He earned his doctorate in Rome after receiving a scholarship from The Papal Foundation. Based in Philadelphia, the foundation's mission is to serve the pope and the Catholic Church "through faith, energy and financial resources." (CNS photo/courtesy The Papal Foundation)



by Catholic News Service

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Ninety-six priests, brothers, sisters and laypeople on five continents now have the chance to study in Rome as part of The Papal Foundation's St. John Paul II Scholarship Program.

The foundation announced a total of $798,244 in scholarships and recipients will choose from one of 16 universities in Rome for their studies.

"We are committed to St. John Paul II's vision to prepare Catholic leaders and educators for service," Eustace Mita, president of The Papal Foundation's board of trustees, said in a Sept. 15 statement. "We aim to ensure those called to build up the Church all over the world are trained and prepared to lead in their own dioceses."

Since its founding, the program has provided nearly $13 million in scholarships to more than 1,600 individuals, known as Saeman Scholars, to advance their education and prepare them to return to their own countries to teach.

The foundation describes its mission as serving "the pope and the Catholic Church through faith, energy and financial resources."

In 1998, St. John Paul envisioned providing scholarships for tuition, room and board to priests, religious sisters and laity from disadvantaged countries, allowing them to study in Rome and then return to their dioceses "to teach future church leaders in a way that is faithful to the magisterium," the foundation said.

In 2000, John and Carol Saeman of Denver launched the scholarship program with an initial $5 million gift that was matched by The Papal Foundation.

Father Julius Madaki from the Archdiocese of Kaduna, Nigeria, was able to earn his doctorate studying in Rome because he received one of these scholarships.

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"Words alone cannot express the sentiments of gratitude and appreciation in me," he said in a statement. "Studying under the auspices of The Papal Foundation has influenced my life in no small way."

"I promise to make you proud, be of service to the church and keep you always in my prayers," he told foundation officials. "Rest assured that your commitment to spreading the kingdom of heaven here on earth will never go unrewarded."

Dave Savage, who in July was named executive director of The Papal Foundation, said that for the organization "to play a role in the formation of leaders in the Catholic Church is a blessing."

"St. John Paul II will always be remembered for the lessons in leadership he personified, which is one reason we at The Papal Foundation are honored to carry forward his vision of training scholars to effectively lead in their communities," he said.

The foundation, he added, remains grateful for the "incredible generosity" of the Saemans," who make this work possible."