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Bishop Carl Kemme of Wichita is pictured with seminarians and Fr. Garrett Burns (at his left), a

Bishop Carl Kemme of Wichita is pictured with seminarians and Fr. Garrett Burns (at his left), and Fr. Chad Arnold in an undated photo. Kemme has announced his plan to formally establish a new seminary in the Wichita Diocese on Aug. 26, 2026. (OSV News/Courtesy Diocese of Wichita)

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A Kansas diocese will open its own seminary at the end of August, realizing a dream more than two decades in the making.

The Diocese of Wichita announced Aug. 6 that Bishop Carl Kemme will formally establish St. Philip Neri Seminary, named for the 16th-century priest and founder of the Congregation of the Oratory who helped to revive both clergy and church during the Counter-Reformation.

The seminary's patron was "renowned for his joyful spirit, deep holiness, and dedication to forming priests and evangelizing through authentic friendship," said Kemme in the diocese's press release.

Effective Aug. 26, the new seminary will succeed the St. Joseph House of Formation, which Kemme opened in 2017 "to provide local formation for college seminarians," according to the diocese.

Fr. Chad Arnold, a diocesan priest who has directed the house of formation since 2023, has been named the founding rector of St. Philip Neri Seminary. Fellow diocesan priests Frs. Garrett Burns and Michael Brungardt have been appointed vice rectors for, respectively, pastoral formation and academic formation.

The seminary's opening caps more than 20 years of envisioning and developing the project, which had even been "shelved" for over a decade after initial discussions and feasibility studies were undertaken in the early 2000s, according to the seminary's website.

Kemme took up the idea in 2017, opening the St. Joseph House of Formation as a two-year program. The initial enrollment of seven seminarians soon doubled to 16, prompting the diocese to acquire a convent for housing and to expand the formation team.

The house for formation had grown to a full, four-year college seminary by 2019, teaming up with Newman University in Wichita in educating the seminarians. Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the first graduating class — five in all — completed the program in 2020.

The program's first priests were ordained in 2024, with 10 to date and three Kansas dioceses — Wichita, Salina and Dodge City — served by the soon-to-be-seminary.

"What began with seven seminarians has grown into a thriving community of 42 men preparing for the priesthood and serving three dioceses across Kansas," said the diocese in its press release.

"The growth of this program has been made possible through the prayers, generosity, and sacrifices of countless faithful Catholics throughout our diocese," Arnold said. "This milestone belongs to the entire diocesan family. We are deeply grateful for all who have supported priestly vocations and helped make this day possible."

"The establishment of St. Philip Neri Seminary is a moment of profound gratitude for the Diocese of Wichita," Kemme said. "It reflects the Lord's abundant blessings on our efforts to foster priestly vocations and our commitment to forming holy, joyful,

and faithful priests who will serve the people of God for generations to come."

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