

Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (<https://www.ncronline.org>)

September 29, 2009 at 8:04am

Irish seminarians reach 10-year high

by Ray McMenamin by Religion News Service

DUBLIN -- The number of Irish men entering the seminary to become Roman Catholic priests has risen to a 10-year high following years of dwindling vocations.

The Conference of Diocesan Vocation Directors for the Catholic Church in Ireland said that 36 new seminarians were about to begin studying for the priesthood in Irish dioceses. The announcement came against the backdrop of a recent damning government report about the abuse of children in Catholic institutions.

“Despite ongoing challenges to the gospel values in the modern world, it is encouraging to see evidence that God continues to inspire people to answer his call of service in the priesthood,” said the Rev. Patrick Rushe, national coordinator of diocesan vocations.

The number of seminary entrants represents the highest intake of new students since 1999, and is almost double the number that entered in 2003.

The new seminarians range in age from 18 to their mid-40s, and come from a wide range of backgrounds, including industry, academia, medicine and the civil service.

In addition to the 36 new seminarians, seven trainee priests are transferring from Scotus College in Glasgow, Scotland, to complete their studies after the closure of Scotland's last remaining Catholic seminary earlier this year.

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