

The Faculty and Student Body of
Blessed Sacrament Seminary, Waupaca, Wisconsin

cordially invite you to attend

Solemn Mass

on the occasion of the

Annual Commencement Exercises

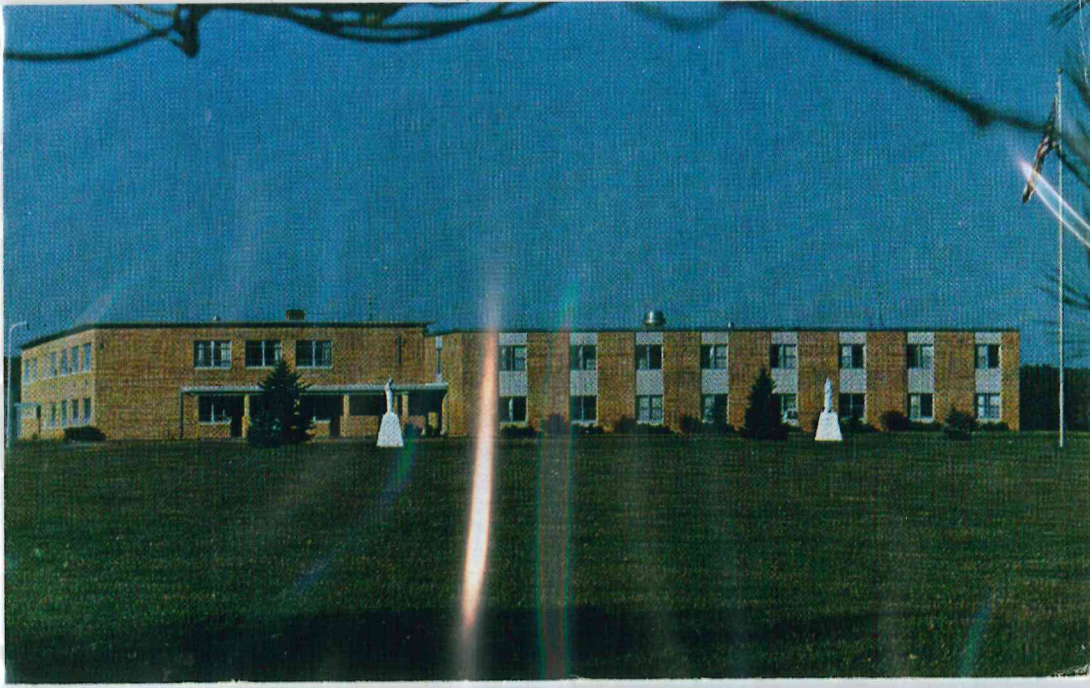
on Saturday, June the sixth, nineteen hundred and sixty-four

at nine-fifteen in the morning.

Presentation of Diplomas at the Seminary Auditorium

at ten-thirty in the morning.

Andrew Byrne



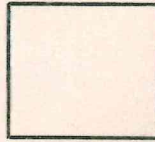
BLESSSED SACRAMENT PREPARATORY SCHOOL

WAUPACA, WIS. 54981

Telephone (715) 256-3201

Seminary for boys of High School age.
located in Central Wisconsin. Affiliated with
Catholic University, Washington, D.C. Accredited
University of Wisconsin, Madison. Five miles
of city of Waupaca on Hw. 54 or two miles
of intersection 10-22-54 on By-Pass.

Send Sacrament Fathers: New York • Cleveland
Chicago • Albuquerque • Hyde Park, N.Y. •
Waupaca, Wis. • Barre, Mass. • Masaka, Uganda
Dj • Manila, Philippines • England • Ireland



POST CARD

HC-P-13-52-5A
Blessed Sacrament Sem.
Waupaca, Wis.

Saint Peter Julian Eymard
1811 - 1868

Founder of
Fathers of the Blessed Sacrament
Servants of the Blessed Sacrament
Priests' Eucharistic League
People's Eucharistic League

Canonized December 9, 1962

Blessed Sacrament Seminary
Waupaca, Wisconsin



Bl. Sacrament Fathers

Litho. in U.S.A.

Saint Peter Julian Eymard

A BRIEF PERSONAL HISTORY OF BLESSED SACRAMENT SEMINARY, WAUPACA,
WISCONSIN, 1958-1970

Blessed Sacrament Seminary was located in the building that is now used by The Chain O' Lakes Elementary School. The seminary was intended for high school age boys who wanted to study for the priesthood. The Blessed Sacrament Fathers is the name of the Catholic religious order which built the seminary and opened it in 1958. The corner stone of the building is now hidden by the addition that was put on the front of the building. Otherwise, the building looks very much like it did during the 1960's. On the first floor were a dormitory and principal's office. On the second floor were a study hall, classrooms, and chapel. The gym was connected to the main building. The initials, BSS, (Blessed Sacrament Seminary), can be seen in the center of the gym floor. A wing was added on the front of the east side of the main building in 1965 which was to serve as the new living quarters for the Priests and Brothers. During the 1960's, the view to the north and to the east was wide open farmland. To the west, the edge of the woods was closer to Silver Lake than it is now, and, of course, there was no housing back then, so the woods, which was mostly oak trees, was thick with undergrowth. The only sound that would punctuate the silence of the land was that of trucks and cars traveling down Hwy 54.

The Blessed Sacrament Fathers is a small congregation of Priests and Brothers founded by St. Peter Julian Eymard (1811-1868) in the mid- 1800's for the purpose of promoting adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. The boys who attended Blessed Sacrament Seminary came from as far away as Albuquerque, Chicago and Detroit and from the surrounding towns of Rosholt, Antigo and Appleton. The classes were small, and the total number of Seminarians never exceeded sixty at one time. As the decade of the 1960's progressed, the number of boys leaving the seminary increased, and fewer boys were entering, in spite of the fact that the Second Vatican Council in 1963 led to extensive changes in liturgical practices that tried to make the Catholic Church more relevant to a changing society. Also, celibacy became a hot-button issue, and many young men were no longer willing to choose to live that kind of life.

The seminary was staffed by Priests and Brothers. The Priests taught classes and helped out in surrounding parishes by hearing confession and saying Mass on Sundays. The Brothers did household chores and cooked meals. The Priests and Brothers had taken vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. They lived in the old hunting lodge that was located a hundred feet off Hwy 54. A new building now stands on the old foundation of the hunting lodge. The Seminarians walked to the lodge three times a day for meals.

What was a day like in the life of the Seminarians? They rose at 5:45am, attended a spiritual talk at 6:15am, followed by Mass at 6:30am. They then walked over to the refectory in

the old hunting lodge to have breakfast. Chores followed, and then classes began. At 11:15am, there was meditation in chapel, followed by Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. After lunch, classes resumed, with a break in the afternoon for recreation. The Seminarians played football, basketball, handball, and hockey and went on long hikes through all kinds of weather, often to Whispering Pines. After supper, there was another recreation period, and then study hall, night prayers, and lights out at 10:00pm. The schedule kept the boys busy all day. Although there might be twenty boys in a freshman class, by the time of graduation four years later, there might be ten or less. Ultimately, after more than a decade of preparing boys for the priesthood, only a handful had been ordained.

The Blessed Sacrament Fathers had seen a large number of their own members leave the Order during the latter part of the 1960's. This loss in man-power, and the scarcity of young men willing to enter the seminary, contributed to the closure of Blessed Sacrament Seminary in 1970.

It does not appear that the seminary had close ties to Waupaca. It's possible that one reason for this was that there was tension for many years between the Blessed Sacrament Fathers and the pastor of St. Mary Magdalene. In my opinion, the presence of the Blessed Sacrament Fathers and Brothers in Waupaca did not seem to be welcomed by this pastor. The Priests had made several efforts to break the ice by inviting him to the seminary for dinner. But perhaps more than anything that contributed to the distant relationship between the seminary and the town was that the seminary was a community unto itself, seeing itself as independent of needing to maintain close ties with the larger, surrounding community.

Who were these Priests and Brothers? Most of them were of French-Canadian heritage who were born and raised in small towns in Maine and Massachusetts. Many came to deeply appreciate the beauty of the countryside and Midwestern hospitality. They continued to maintain a presence in Wisconsin by ministering to the parishioners at St. Mary's parish in Menasha for several years after the seminary closed.

Blessed Sacrament Seminary had not embedded itself into the collective memory of Waupaca, since it was minimally involved with the city's civic, commercial and religious life. The seminary was situated in the middle of farmland, with no houses nearby, and thus very few neighbors. The seminarians never got to know the people of Waupaca or of the surrounding towns because they seldom made any trips into town. The Seminarians and, for the most part the Priests and Brothers, were generally not well known, certainly not known as individuals, to the town people. The people knew that there was a seminary out there off Hwy 54, but that was pretty much all they knew. It certainly must have struck some people as an unusual place, since the minimal interaction between them and the Priests, Brothers and Seminarians did not

allow for the give and take of open communication that would have built bridges toward a better understanding of each other.

It is hoped that this brief history of Blessed Sacrament Seminary helps remedy what was until now a missing chapter in the history of Waupaca.

Andrew Byrne

Blessed Sacrament Seminary

Class of 1964

Submitted to the Waupaca
Historical Society, August 15,
2013