

Mount Angel Seminary celebrates 125th anniversary, 26 March 2014
by Robert Pfohman, *Catholic Sentinel*



Mount Angel Seminary faculty and students, circa 1890.

Friends of the Benedictine hilltop seminary gathered Friday night to celebrate the school's 125th anniversary. A reception, dinner and talks followed the monks' vespers service in the Abbey church. These evening prayers originated thousands of years ago and were said as the sun set, the oil lamps were lit and the faithful offered thanks to God.

Friday marked the feast day of the death in 543 of St. Benedict, founder of the worldwide religious order.

Cardinal Francis George of Chicago had accepted an invitation to speak, but had to decline when his doctors hospitalized him earlier last week for treatment of dehydration and recurrence of cancer near his right kidney. He received the first cancer diagnosis in 2012 and underwent treatment and the cancer went into remission.

Deacon Owen Cummings spoke in place of Cardinal George. All told, 223 guests assembled and dined on grilled swordfish.

The first monks established Mount Angel Abbey in 1882, following the example of their motherhouse in Engelberg, Switzerland. In 1889, the Oregon monks founded the seminary, and began forming men for the priesthood. Nowadays laywomen and -men receive training at the seminary. This year, 154 seminarians are enrolled.

Mount Angel Seminary is the oldest and largest seminary in the Western U.S. and over the years has sent thousands of priests to serve in nearly 100 dioceses and religious communities. In the Archdiocese of Portland, 163 Mount Angel-formed priests serve.



Photo above by *CATHOLIC SENTINEL* - (From left) Msgr. Joseph Betschart, S.T.L., president-rector of Mount Angel Seminary; Bishop Liam Cary, Baker Diocese; Archbishop Alexander Sample, J.C.L., D.D., Archbishop of Portland; Benedictine Abbot Gregory Duerr, abbot of Mount Angel Abbey and chancellor of Mount Angel Seminary; retired Archbishop Emeritus John G. Vlazny; Archbishop Elden Curtiss, archbishop emeritus of Omaha;

and Bishop-elect Peter Smith, J.C.L., Portland.

Archbishop Alexander Sample pledged his support, saying the formation of future priests is one of the most important tasks for the future evangelization of humanity. “We pray God to give to all who give themselves for the work of this seminary a deep gratitude for the achievements of the past,” the archbishop said.

Benedictine Abbot Gregory Duerr said the hilltop abbey/seminary was considered a holy mountain by American Indians who worshiped their Great Spirit from the heights. They called the sacred place Tapalamaho, the Mount of Communion.

Bishop Peter Smith, the archdiocese’s new auxiliary bishop who studied here, said Mount Angel is a place where lives can be formed, men can be trained and faith in God deepened. “As this place celebrates 125 years we remember all those who have passed through here and who have been blessed by it,” he said during an interview before the event.

The rector of the seminary, Monsignor Joseph Betschart, thanked supporters and asked God to continue to bless us. “As our motto reminds us, “the hope of the harvest is in the seed.”