



Office of the Bishop

DIOCESE OF LITTLE ROCK

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July 31, 2025
Feast of St. Ignatius Loyola

To the people of the Diocese of Little Rock:

The cross and resurrection are the central mysteries of our faith. Good Friday was a day of apparent defeat and loss, but on Easter we discovered the power of the resurrection and a whole new beginning for Jesus' followers.

We here in Arkansas have experienced this in the loss we incurred on March 19, 2025, when the former St. Joseph orphanage in North Little Rock went up in flames. At first all we could see was loss. We felt defeated even though the building had long since ceased to function as an orphanage—or any Church use—and yet our loss actually set the stage for new beginnings on that site, a resurrection which will also address a current need in our seminarian program, as follows:

When our current House of Formation for college-level seminarians was founded 13 years ago, it was in effect a College Seminary built for a capacity of 10 seminarians. But we have consistently had a full house—and more—from the very beginning, sometimes reaching up to 14 seminarians in a house built for 10. Moreover, the Vatican has now added an additional “propaedeutic year,” an initial year-long period of prayer and discernment. So now we have a 5-year program in a building built for 4 years. The result is more seminarians—a wonderful problem, but a problem nonetheless. Everything is sized too small: the kitchen, dining room, chapel, laundry room, den, etc. So, our plan—approved unanimously by the Presbyteral Council and the Diocesan Pastoral Council—is to build a new, much larger College Seminary on the site previously occupied by the orphanage. This will be named the “St. Joseph College Seminary”—in memory and honor of the former St. Joseph orphanage, continuing the legacy of ministry there over the decades. The 63-acre site would then be fully dedicated to its operation and other diocesan needs moving forward. We will use insurance money available from the claim on the March 19 fire to build this College Seminary on the land of the former St. Joseph orphanage—so no capital campaign.

Once the new building is completed, the present House of Formation on 12th Street in Little Rock will be repurposed for other uses, including as a retreat center for smaller groups of retreatants. The current Annex will also continue to serve as my residence. Our hope is for the present House of Formation to one day serve as a Theologate for seminarians in their last 3 ½ years of formation.

I know this news will excite many throughout the state and cause sadness for others. But after much prayer and consultation, I am convinced that this is the best use of this property and of our available funds in a way that ultimately benefits everyone throughout the Diocese. It meets an immediate need, while also providing a vision and potential real cost savings into the future. My prayer is that this new vision—resurrected from the ashes of tragedy—will be a blessing to our Diocese for decades to come.

Sincerely in Christ,

+Anthony B. Taylor
Bishop of Little Rock