

Holy Savior Inter-Eparchy Major Seminary

Holy Savior is an Inter-Eparchial Major Seminary in Asmara, Eritrea, where young men train for priesthood in the Ge'ez Rite Catholic tradition. The seminarians come from four Catholic Eparchies of Eritrea: Asmara, Barentu, Keren and Segeneiti. Since 1995, the Holy See erected the latter three Eparchies, making Eritrea "sui juris" 2016.

The current location of Holy Savior Major Seminary started in 1958. However, since 1839 the Ge'ez Rite Catholic Church prepared seminarians in various locations, including at the Ethiopian College, Vatican City. The Chapel of St. Stephen Proto-Martyr within walls of Vatican City, also known as St. Stephen of the Abyssinians or Ethiopians, became the foundation for the Ethiopian College built in 1920s. Currently, Ethiopian and Eritrean priests use the Ethiopian College as residence for graduate studies.

Since its foundation in 1958, Holy Savior Major Seminary has produced 165 priest and 5 bishops. Currently, the average number seminarians is about 50 each academic year. The formation process takes 8 years, i.e., a propaedeutic year, two years of philosophical studies, a year of pastoral practice and four years of theology.

Like any Catholic seminary formation, Holy Savior Inter-Eparchial Major Seminary follows the four Programs for Priestly Formation (PPF):

- **Human Formation** – each seminarian developing healthy human maturity to become person of integrity with personality and temperaments essential for priesthood.
- **Spiritual Formation** – each seminarian growing spiritually in close encounter with Christ through personal and liturgical prayers, contemplation, retreats and spiritual direction.
- **Intellectual Formation** – each seminarian developing academic skills and intellectual curiosity honed by rigorous educational disciplines of philosophy and theology rooted in and sustained by his faith.
- **Pastoral Formation** – each seminarian acquiring pastoral capacity, interpersonal skills, socio-cultural agility, preparing to be a servant leader in his eparchy or anywhere of his assignments.

These four dimensions of Program for Priestly Formation (PPF) are comprehensive and holistic structure of seminary formation that guides the development of the seminarian to priesthood in the Ge'ez Rite tradition. Each area of PPF is distinct and naturally linked to the other based on the four discernment staged laid out in "Ratio Fundamentalis," 2016.

Holy Savior Inter-Eparchial Seminary's PPF enhances the regular formation stated in the syllabus prepared by the Eritrean Episcopal conference. The curriculum is inclusive of other Church documents for priestly formation, and liturgical preparation. Additionally, the program includes formation particular to the Ge'ez Rite tradition and cultural sensibility.

Holy Savior Seminarians further develop their pastoral skills by serving in Asmara area parishes and chapels on weekends. During school vacation, seminarians are assigned to specific parish or pastoral activities under the supervision of a parish priest in their respective Eparchies. This approach enriches seminarians to have comprehensive pastoral experience in the process of their formation.

The Eritrean Catholic Church, known as Ge'ez Rite is one of the Eastern Rite Catholic Churches of Alexandrian Tradition. In Eritrea, the Catholic Church is a minority. However, it has big footprints everywhere, serving people of Eritrean regardless of religious or ethnic background through education, healthcare, human development, etc. Unfortunately, the Catholic Church in Eritrea is under tremendous government pressure. For example in the last three years, the government closed high school seminary, nationalized healthcare systems, and all Catholic school system, grade and high schools.

The Seminarians also face additional pressure from the government, who target them to serve in the national military service with no time limit. In spite of such constant obstacles, and personal risks, the young men follow their call to priestly formation. In such an environment, having a good number of seminarians is a testament to their faith, commitment and tenacity. These seminarians need moral and material support to continue their priestly formation. The Eritrean Catholic Church has become a sign of hope and prophetic voice in the midst of such low scale persecution and harassments.

The Eritrean Eparchies though generous, supporting the poor and the destitute, they do not have enough means to support their seminarians. Most of the seminarians also come from poor families. Eritrea as a nation is one of the poorest countries in the world, where young adults cannot earn a living. The mandatory military conscription has caused a mass exodus of the young adults from the country, at the risk of losing their lives.

Holy Savior Inter-Eparchial Seminary Program for Priestly Formation is courageous act, witnessing to the Gospel, in spite of all odds preparing priests to be leaders and shepherds to their people. Supporting Holy Savior Inter-Eparchial Major Seminary in this time of need will sustain the hope and courage, preparing seminarians for priesthood "refined by fire like gold." We thanks you in advance for your generosity and constant prayers.