

NEWS RELEASE

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University of Saint Mary Welcomes New Students with Candlelit Matriculation Ceremony

(Leavenworth, Kan.)—The University of Saint Mary officially welcomed the newest students to its decades-old community at the university’s traditional matriculation ceremony Wednesday, Aug. 25, in Annunciation Chapel on the Leavenworth Campus. The matriculation ceremony preceded the official start of fall classes on Aug. 26.

Packing the chapel for this week’s candlelit ceremony was the biggest USM freshmen class in recent history—about 135 students strong. The students proceeded into Annunciation Chapel from the center of campus, and then lit candles at the chapel altar to form a “circle of light” around the building’s interior. The new students were blessed by the administration, faculty, staff, and upperclassmen in attendance.

“You are the light of the world, and your light will flourish here at Saint Mary,” USM President Sister Diane Steele told the students before the candle-lighting. “You have the next four years to develop this light... This day, you become Saint Marians.”

The University of Saint Mary is one of only a handful of American universities with a formal matriculation ceremony. Among institutes of higher learning, the tradition of a matriculation ceremony dates back to the 15th and 16th centuries.

USM began holding its ceremony in the 1980s and it serves as an official welcome to—and blessing of—the university’s new freshmen and transfer students. The university considers it a solemn sign of the joint commitment between the university and the students.

Sister Susan Rieke, chair of USM’s English department and a key figure in establishing the matriculation ceremony, has said the event’s purpose “is to really celebrate the new students... it makes them feel like a part of Saint Mary in an official way.”

You can view images from USM’s matriculation on www.stmary.edu, or on the university’s official Facebook page.

The University of Saint Mary is a Catholic co-educational applied liberal arts university founded and sponsored by the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth. The University of Saint Mary is located at 4100 South 4th Street, Leavenworth, Kan., with additional locations in Overland Park and Kansas City, Kan. Visit www.stmary.edu for more information.

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