

Vietnam seminaries expand facilities

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Major seminaries in Vietnam are upgrading facilities to accommodate the growing need of priestly formation after the government relaxed seminary enrollment rules.

Seminarians walking towards the chapel for morning prayers.

Cardinal John Baptist Pham Minh Man of the Ho Chi Minh City Archdiocese told National Catholic Reporter that in recent years the government has eased limitations on recruitment, priestly ordination and the reshuffling of priests.

“Now we are allowed to recruit students every year and to inform the government about seminary enrollments, priestly ordinations and the transfer of priests – without asking for government permission first,” he said.

In the past his St. Joseph Major Seminary was only allowed to recruit 40 students from the archdiocese and the neighboring dioceses of My Tho and Phu Cuong once every two years.

Students used to have to be approved by the government before entering local seminaries, and many were not allowed to join.

Cardinal Man, 80, who retired a month ago due to his age, said the 151-year-old seminary's 40 annual student recruits spend seven years studying philosophy and theology before their ordination.

St. Joseph Major Seminary, where the cardinal himself studied, was not able to afford adequate accommodation for the 300-some students and teachers, though.

To make more room, in 2012 the local church began to build a new seven-story building and to upgrade its four existing ones built between 50 and 80 years ago. The new seminary complex includes a chapel, multi-purpose hall, library, computer room, museum, living room, classrooms and other facilities.

Cardinal Man inaugurated the new building on March 22.

At the ceremony Fr. Joseph Do Manh Hung, the seminary's vice rector, said at that in 2015 they plan to start recruiting 45 students a year – 25 from the archdiocese and 20 from the two other dioceses.

He said 31 local bishops and 1,428 priests have graduated from the seminary since its establishment in 1863.

Two major seminaries in the central cities of Nha Trang and Hue are also building new facilities, and a seminary in the northern Vinh diocese just completed its new additions last year.

In 2013, nine major seminaries throughout the nation served 2,076 seminarians from the 26 dioceses, which hold pre-seminary courses for interested students.

Source: ncroonline.org

