The Catholic Studies Program is an exciting academic initiative that examines the rich intellectual and cultural traditions of the Roman Catholic Church and its comprehensive contributions to human thought and culture — past and present.
The Catholic Studies Program is an innovative way to enhance the university’s Catholic identity and provide an avenue through which students of all faiths can deepen their knowledge of Catholicism’s rich and living heritage. We hope Catholic Studies will offer our students space for reflection on the crucial issues of our time and a deeper maturity of faith.

— Father James P. Shea
President, University of Mary

What is Catholic Studies?

Whether you want to major in business, nursing, education, music or theology, the University of Mary Catholic Studies Program can enhance your perspective and enrich your understanding of your profession and yourself. You will:

- Explore the interplay between Catholicism and culture.
- Encounter faith and reason within multiple disciplines.
- Experience how faith can enliven every part of your life.

This interdisciplinary program will enable you to encounter Catholic thought and culture as it is expressed in art, literature, liturgy, history, technology, music … everywhere around you.
A Unique Program at a Unique University

The University of Mary was founded by the Benedictine Sisters of the Annunciation to serve the religious, academic, and cultural needs of the people in this region and beyond. Founded to prepare leaders in the service of truth, the University of Mary is distinctive in its education and formation of servant leaders with moral courage, global understanding, and commitment to the common good.

Catholic in depth and interdisciplinary in breadth, the U-Mary Catholic Studies Program draws heavily from the riches of the Benedictine tradition. Catholic Studies is more than just an academic program; it is meant to foster community, service, and spirituality — values that already clearly distinguish the University of Mary and the education it provides.

The Catholic Studies curriculum includes a minor (18 credits) and a major (34 credits). Students take classes such as Search for Happiness, Benedict: Yesterday and Today, Religion and Culture, Catholic Imagination, Catholicism and America, and Great Catholic Figures.
As students engage in the interdisciplinary exploration of ideas and world views offered through Catholic Studies, they move from facts to meaning, from knowledge to understanding, from theory to leadership in the service of truth.

— Sister Thomas Welder, OSB
President Emerita, University of Mary

The bell banner of our founders and sponsors, the Benedictine Sisters of the Annunciation, is a monumental symbol of faith. The bells call the Sisters and the university community to prayer, and remind others miles away that someone prays for them. This concrete tower, designed by renowned architect Marcel Breuer, soars over one hundred feet above the campus.
Explore a Rich History and Living Tradition

Designed for students who wish to deepen their knowledge of Catholicism’s rich history and traditions, the Bishop Paul A. Zipfel Catholic Studies Program explores the Catholic Church’s contributions to human thought and culture, past and present, across academic disciplines. The program invites students of any faith to examine ways the Catholic faith can be integrated into any academic field, profession, and aspect of human culture and community. An interpersonal approach provides opportunities for students to grow in their faith by sustained reflection and discussion of significant issues in light of Christian faith.

Through courses and other activities, Catholic Studies encourages a vigorous spiritual and sacramental life in its students as they learn to critically discern ideas and undertake a communal search for knowledge of truth. Catholic Studies also sponsors activities for students, staff, and faculty. Devotions, liturgical prayer, and Community Nights that include Mass, dinner, and conversation provide opportunities for building solid friendships.
I have come to love the Catholic faith even more, and my heart continues to burn with the desire to know more. The program has helped me to take my faith to a deeper level.

— Abbey Heidrich
Catholic Studies student

Study in Rome

Rome is the heart of the Catholic faith and the site of the University of Mary’s newest campus. U-Mary students can live and study abroad while learning about our Christian, Catholic, and Benedictine heritage firsthand. Having been immersed in the cultural and religious splendors of Italy, students return home with a new vision of life and its purpose and an even deeper passion for learning and the truth.

The program is designed primarily for U-Mary Catholic Studies students and sophomores. Qualified students can spend a semester or five weeks in studies and educational travel in Italy and other countries as well.
Students are afforded an in-depth experience of the city of Rome, with all of its ancient and Christian heritage.

U-Mary students have special access to the hidden excavations under St. Peter’s Basilica, the treasures of the Vatican Museum, and an audience with Pope Benedict XVI. There will be rigorous classroom days coupled with excursions into the countryside, including visits to Benedictine heritage sites of Norcia where St. Benedict and his twin sister, Scholastica, were born; Subiaco, where St. Benedict lived in solitude and prayer; and Monte Cassino, where St. Benedict founded his first major monastery and the scene of a famous World War II battle. And, of course, there is free time for students to explore Italy and the rest of Europe on their own.

The best news is that the cost of tuition, room, and board on the Rome campus is the same at the Bismarck campus — and all student financial aid applies in Rome too.
Who is Bishop Paul A. Zipfel?

With a master’s degree in education and 10 years of service as a teacher, counselor, and administrator in the St. Louis Archdiocesan high schools, Bishop Paul A. Zipfel has been a champion of Catholic education throughout his priestly life. During his service as the sixth bishop of the Diocese of Bismarck (North Dakota), he placed special emphasis on communicating with youth and teens and supporting Catholic schools.

Learn more about Catholic Studies at the University of Mary!

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