

History of the Duns Scotus Formation Fund

Who was John Duns Scotus?

John Duns Scotus (1265/66–1308), a Scottish Franciscan friar, was one of the most important and influential philosopher-theologians of the High Middle Ages. His brilliantly complex and nuanced thought earned him the nickname “the Subtle Doctor,” and left a mark on discussions of such disparate topics as the semantics of religious language, the problem of universals, divine illumination, and the nature of human freedom. Duns Scotus believed that God’s love for humanity was expressed through the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, the center and model of all creation, and that Christ was so important to the plan of creation that the incarnation would have occurred out of love, whether Adam and Eve had sinned or not. Scotus further reasoned that if love was God’s intention for creation from the beginning, then the Virgin Mary who gave human form to Jesus would be untouched by original sin. John Duns Scotus was beatified by Saint Pope John Paul II; his memorial is November 8.

What is the Duns Scotus Formation Fund?

In 1930, the Friars Minor of Saint John the Baptist Province established a seminary for friars in initial formation named Duns Scotus College. It was sold in the 1990s and the National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order-USA received part of the proceeds to be used for Franciscan formation. The portion allotted to the National Fraternity is now the Duns Scotus Formation Fund (“DSFF”).

What can the fund do for us?

To promote Secular Franciscan formation at all levels of fraternity, the DSFF provides financial assistance for formation-related needs that cannot otherwise be met. The DSFF is particularly concerned with the development of healthy formation teams and directors. It encourages joint projects among neighboring local and/or regional fraternities. It seeks to foster creativity in formation content and format.

How does the fund operate?

An administrative board, chaired by the Minister of the National Fraternity, oversees the fund. Additional members are the National Treasurer, National Formation Commission Chair, President-in-turn of the Conference of National Spiritual Assistants, an appointed OFS Secretary, and three appointed OFS Members-At-Large.

Those requesting funds evaluate their formation needs and design a plan to meet them. They assess their resources and determine what assistance they may need to accomplish their plan. Then they submit a proposal to the board requesting a grant for their unmet financial needs. The board in turn evaluates each proposal and makes a determination of which proposal(s) it can support under the existing fund guidelines.