

NOTRE DAME SEMINARY

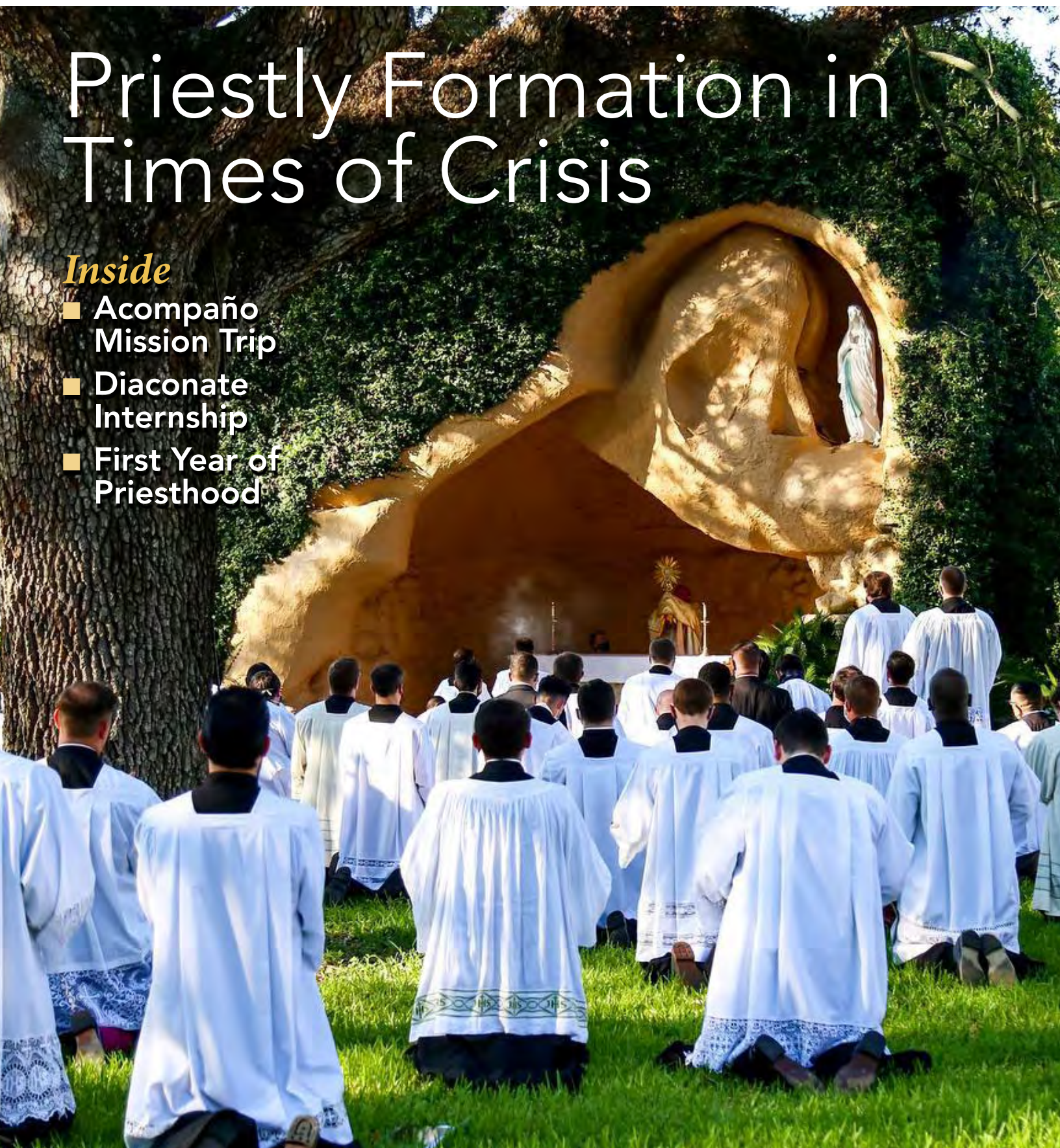
Graduate School of Theology



Priestly Formation in Times of Crisis

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- First Year of Priesthood





Very Rev. James A. Wehner
Rector/President

Dear Friends:

The Year 2020 has certainly been challenging times in our world. The pandemic, social unrest in our nation, seven named hurricanes that hit the Gulf South, clergy scandals, political turmoil, increased attacks on Christians around the world, and the COVID illnesses that affected our seminary community. Yet, the year ends with the great Solemnity of All Saints, the Commemoration of All Souls, the Solemnity of Christ the King, the joy of Advent, and the Christmas Season. All of these celebrations reflect the Victory of the Cross and the Unbreakable Covenant of God's love for us. The mission of priestly formation becomes even more clear as we prepare shepherds in times of pastoral crisis.

While the seminary can boast of increased enrollment, the moral and unwavering responsibility is to prepare men who are truly prepared to take on the life and ministry of ordained priesthood. It is easy for any vocation to be exercised in times of tranquility but married and family life, those in consecrated life, those living the single life, and those in ordained ministry all must live their vocations with fidelity when we experience crisis, uncertainty, and confusion.

I commend our seminarians for their steadfast commitment to the high standards of priestly formation. Our faculty and staff have discharged their responsibilities with flexibility and loyalty. Our friends and benefactors continue to pray for us and support our mission with the financial support needed for us to sustain all of our programs. As the year comes to a close, thank you all for your friendship and faith in what we do here at Notre Dame Seminary.

2020 NEW SEMINARIAN CLASS



SEMINARIAN ASSOCIATION EXECUTIVE BOARD

The Seminarian Association Executive Board exists to provide Christian leadership and service to the Seminarian Association at NDS. Working closely with the Rector, they encourage active participation and oversee the organization of seminarian events and activities.



Knights of Columbus - Fr. John Arnone Memorial Council

The Knights of Columbus Fr. John Arnone Council No. 17413 at Notre Dame Seminary is dedicated to the memory of Fr. John Arnone, who was a priest of New Orleans and faculty member of the seminary. The council is one of roughly a dozen seminary councils in the world and has been established for the express purpose of supporting seminarians while in the seminary.

Eucharistic Procession

On Sunday, June 14th, seminarians on campus celebrated the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, also known as the Feast of Corpus Christi, with a Eucharistic Procession around campus.



Mass of Reparation

On the Solemnity of All Saints, Fr. Jim Wehner and the priests of NDS celebrated a Mass of Reparation to rededicate the community to Our Lady. The seminary community prayed for the intentions of those hurt by the sins of priests, those who feel alienated from the Church, and those who are struggling with their faith.



DIACONATE INTERNSHIP:

Harvesting is Hard Work But the Harvest is Abundant

by Deacon Michael Lamy, Archdiocese of New Orleans

There is a verse from Scripture that succinctly summarizes my view of life in the parish as a Deacon Intern - "The harvest is abundant..." (Luke 10:2), and although it is very true that the harvest is abundant, *harvesting* is hard work. With a global health pandemic, racial tensions, general civil unrest, an upcoming presidential election, and devastating hurricanes for our neighbors, you get a small sense of the many challenges of ministering to God's people in a fallen world.

With that said, my internship was an opportunity to see the grace of God at work in the midst of chaos, unrest, and suffering. **I can't imagine looking at the troubling times we live in without the eyes of faith** and without the knowledge that we have a God who came to redeem sinful humanity.

My opportunities to be with the people of the parish were greatly limited due to masking and physical distancing regulations, but I found ways to make myself present via social media and in person as much as possible. I even wrote letters to a nursing home that St. Ann Parish is associated with to assure them of our prayers.

By no means has it been easy to

navigate the craziness that has occurred almost two thousand years after Our Lord walked the Earth, but despite all of that and with God's grace, I can honestly say that ***I cannot wait to be a priest.*** My internship has prepared me to be ready for ***almost*** anything.

I am extremely grateful for all of the prayers and support I have received over my years in formation at seminary and since being in the parish. I look forward to my Ordination to the Priesthood and serving the people of God in the Archdiocese of New Orleans for as long as the Lord wills.



Deacon Michael Lamy celebrates a vow renewal and blessing.



Deacon Michael and the Knights of Columbus from St. Ann cooked a delicious meal for the New Orleans seminarians at NDS.



Deacon Michael started a Q & A session on YouTube called "Ask Deacon Michael" for students at St. Ann to ask him questions they had about Church teachings or their Faith.



Deacon Michael traveled with the St. Ann Men's Club and Knights of Columbus to Lake Charles to minister to and serve those affected by Hurricane Laura.

Summer Program: *Called to Serve During Crisis*

by Seminarian Kevin Braski, Diocese of Savannah

Typically, the summer months at Notre Dame Seminary are quiet; however, due to the pandemic, many seminarians were left without the opportunity to participate in their typical summer programs. Adapting quickly, Notre Dame Seminary offered three different programs on campus to assist dioceses with the summer formation of seminarians, and, luckily for me, my diocese opted to send a group of us seminarians to NDS for part of the summer.

My six diocesan brother seminarians and I participated in the “Called to Serve During Crisis” Summer Program, which overall taught us how to interact with the communities we are called to serve during different types of crises. The lectures and panels provided us with the information that is necessary for us to understand how to react to major problems. With topics ranging from the pandemic, racial and social unrest, immigration, finances, and much more, one of the key things I noticed throughout these lectures was the necessity for pastors and the lay faithful to listen, understand, and pray about a problem at hand before making major decisions. In addition to



25 seminarians participated in a three week seminar in which they reflected on how in times of crisis a devotion to the Eucharist is a fundamental and foundational aspect of the life of the Church.

the lectures and panels, we participated in pastoral work, which really helped me stretch outside of my comfort zone. Whether it was making phone calls to our “spiritual directees” or interacting with the homeless, we learned how important our presence is within our ministry. I found that listening to someone’s struggles and giving pastoral feedback was more beneficial than trying to solve all of someone’s problems. Both of these, especially the interaction with our “spiritual directees,” really helped me see a side of ministry that I have never been able to experience.

We, as most of the world, have been living through stressful and uncharted times, which has been spiritually draining; however, having the opportunity to participate in a well-rounded program of prayer, theological learning, and pastoral ministry led me to realize the importance of genuinely listening to people involved and studying issues at a broad level are both important for any good development. Most importantly though, the program reaffirmed the fact that without Christ, we not only cannot make any true social progress, but we will also be unable to find any genuine peace during normal and stressful times.



Priests from around the Archdiocese of New Orleans spoke during a panel session on how to be creative in ministry during difficult times. The panel included Fr. Tim Hedrick, Fr. Joseph Palermo, Fr. Stephen Dardis, and Fr. John Restrepo.



Father Jamin David from the Diocese of Baton Rouge offered seminarians a presentation on seeing the signs of holiness in a broken world.



A group of seminarians along with Fr. Jim Wehner assisted at St. Henry's Catholic Church in Lake Charles.

Acompaño Mission Trip:

Finding the Calm in the Storm

by Seminarian Tristan Stovall, Diocese of Jackson

When I made my first visit to Lake Charles just days after Hurricane Laura, I was not prepared for the scenes of destruction and chaos with which I was met. A group of seminarians from Notre Dame Seminary volunteered to accompany a caravan of aid from St. Catherine of Siena Parish on its way to Lake Charles just days after Laura's landfall. I had never experienced such total devastation. Mighty oaks and electrical poles were snapped as if they were no more than toothpicks. Roofs and foundations of homes and businesses had been thrown around like children's toys.

When we arrived in the Lake Charles at Catholic Charities, an army of religious sisters and brothers, priests, and laypeople met us. They were all in disaster mode and were doing whatever needed to be done to aid in recovery. We were quickly assigned a variety of tasks ranging from food preparation to debris removal. We left at the end of that day, and I was struck by how calm it all had seemed.

The next week Fr. Wehner announced that instead of doing our Acompaño Mission Trip in December, as was the custom, we would be doing it immediately in Lake Charles. Going back to Lake Charles a week later was not much different. In the midst of such chaos and loss, I experienced that same sense of peace and calm.



Seminarians worked with Catholic Charities of Southwest Louisiana providing help and resources to those in need.



Priests and seminarians led a Eucharistic Procession around the Diocese of Lake Charles.



Always finding time for prayer and Adoration during the mission trip, seminarians prayed in a special way for all those affected by Hurricane Laura.

Throughout the week, I slowly began to realize what I was experiencing. In prayer, I kept coming back to the scene from St. Mark's gospel where Jesus rescues the apostles on the stormy sea. St. Mark recounts that Jesus had sent the disciples on the sea while He remained up in the hills to pray. In the middle of the night, the disciples were caught in a terrible storm, and they were on the verge of tragedy. Jesus came to them walking on the water. "He meant to pass by them," St. Mark writes, but Jesus stopped and said to them, "Take heart, it is I; have no fear...and He got into the boat with them and the wind ceased."

This is what I had experienced throughout my time in Lake Charles. In the midst of what was pure tragedy



Seminarian Kevin Braski assisted with debris clean up.

and chaos, I experienced the peace and calm which only Jesus Christ could bring. He was there in Lake Charles the whole time. He was present to the people of Lake Charles in and through His Body, the Church. He was there working to restore peace and calm through the religious sisters and brothers, through the priests and pastors, through the lay men and women, and through us seminarians who had come for that purpose. He was there the whole time through the ministry of His Church bringing that peace "which the world cannot give" and guiding the people of Lake Charles to safety and rest.



Seminarians removed downed trees and debris from homes and church parishes.



Seminarians served meals to those affected by Hurricane Laura.

First-Year Priest: *Surrendering to the Lord*

by Alumnus Father Patrick Riviere, Diocese of Houma/Thibodaux

When I was first asked to write this article reflecting on my first year of priesthood, many things were different. After being ordained a priest for the Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux on June 1, 2019, I was assigned to St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Church on the campus of Nicholls State University in Thibodaux. I began thinking about this article as we were concluding the spring semester retreat on campus, which was the weekend before the cancellation of the celebration of public Masses due to the Coronavirus pandemic. Through these months, I have since moved parishes, currently serving as the Parochial Vicar of Holy Cross Catholic Church in Morgan City, LA, as well as working with the Diocesan Office of Parish Support, which seeks to accompany parishes in making missionary disciples.

The word that describes the most rewarding element of priestly life is the word “father.” Being on campus provided me an incredible opportunity to be a father to the students there, to walk with them in their own relationship with Jesus Christ. Spiritual direction and the Sacrament of Reconciliation were two privileged places of encounter where the Lord was especially present. It is humbling to both have people open up about their deepest struggles and see the Lord work in their hearts through His mercy and grace. Seeing the faith of the students provided a constant source of inspiration and renewal for me in my own spiritual life, and plugging into campus life has been a joy as well. It has been especially rewarding to walk with men as they discern

diocesan priesthood and religious life.

The situations surrounding the Coronavirus pandemic have certainly provided many challenges. Before that, I was really still transitioning into priestly life and learning how to balance all the demands and responsibilities. The pandemic threw everything up in the air, and although has been a struggle, it has been a beautiful opportunity for me to surrender to the Lord in new ways as well as to see how



Fr. Patrick Riviere gives a thumbs-up for his first outdoor Mass during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Fr. Patrick welcomed students to campus and their new dorms at Nicholls State University.



Fr. Patrick Riviere celebrated Mass outside during the COVID-19 pandemic.



At Nicholls State University, Fr. Patrick would ride around campus in “The Mercy Mobile”, where he would hear confessions on the go at different locations around campus.

others are surrendering to Him. We are clearly out of control, but I think that is when we are most open to seeing how God, in His providence, can powerfully work.

Transitioning now into a new parish and new roles in the diocese, that surrender is something the Lord is still inviting me to. If there is anything I have learned and anything I would want to impress on the men in formation, it is to expect the unexpected. I am not sure what I expected priesthood to be, but this first year has shattered all expectations. However,

because of that, I have been able to see the Lord working in my life more powerfully than I thought. This has without a doubt been the best year of my life, and I look forward to seeing how God continues to break my expectations to offer something even better.



2020-2021 ANNUAL FUND: Forming Priests to Strengthen Our Church **RESILIENT | STRONG | FAITHFUL**



The seminary community recognizes the difficult times our world, nation, and local communities are facing. In the midst of loss, illness, and unrest, HOPE prevails here at Notre Dame Seminary as the work of priestly formation continues. Now more than ever, our Church needs priests who are resilient during times of crisis, leaders who are strong and can shepherd joyfully, and servants who are faithful to the Gospel.

The 2020-2021 Annual Fund is our largest fundraising appeal and vital to the day-to-day operations of the seminary. All gifts to the Annual Fund support our mission of forming holy priests to build and strengthen our Church. We are grateful to the many loyal friends of NDS who have already supported the 2020-2021 Annual Fund appeal this year.



If you have not already done so, we invite you to prayerfully consider a gift to the 2020-2021 Annual Fund. We know that many were impacted by the pandemic, so please know that we do not take your support for granted. We invite you to join us as a faithful supporter of priestly formation with your gift to the Annual Fund.

To partner with Notre Dame Seminary and donate to the Annual fund, please return the enclosed envelope or make an online gift at www.nds.edu/donate-now/ or contact Yvette LaCour in the Development Office at 504-866-7426, ext. 374.

Father David Kelly Celebrates 90th Birthday



Fr. Kelly received an Apostolic Blessing from Pope Francis on the occasion of his 90th birthday.

Serving as a Professor of Moral Theology and a Spiritual Director at NDS, Father Kelly is a beloved member of the NDS Community where he is known as one of the “Grandfathers of the House,” along with Archbishop Hughes. On Tuesday, November 3, 2020 the community gathered to offer words of gratitude and blessings to Father Kelly as he celebrated his 90th birthday.

Father Kelly spent most of his pastoral ministry working in Central and Latin America, and after retiring from missionary work with the Maryknoll Fathers, he continued his missionary work with the poor in the United States. In January of 2008, after an invitation from Archbishop Hughes, Father Kelly came to NDS to teach moral theology, where he has worked to integrate theology into the pastoral and missionary work of seminarians.

During the celebration, Father Jim Wehner, Rector/President, and Yvette LaCour, Director of Development, introduced the **Father David Kelly Pastoral Formation Fund** to benefit the pastoral formation programs at NDS. Father Kelly’s sister, Elaine Bennett, initiated this endowed fund as a way to celebrate her brother’s milestone birthday. Since then, Father Kelly’s family, along with the faculty, staff, seminarians, lay students, and friends of NDS have contributed to the fund to celebrate and honor Father Kelly for the many years of service he has given to the seminary community. The NDS Community is incredibly grateful to

Father Kelly and the many ways in which he loves, supports, and serves the seminarians of Notre Dame Seminary.

To make a donation to the **Father David Kelly Pastoral Formation Fund** in honor of Father Kelly’s 90th birthday, please go to www.nds.edu/donate-now/ or contact the Development Office at 504-855-7426, ext. 374



The NDS Community sings ‘Happy Birthday’ to Fr. Kelly!



Fr. David Kelly celebrated his 90th birthday on November 3rd.



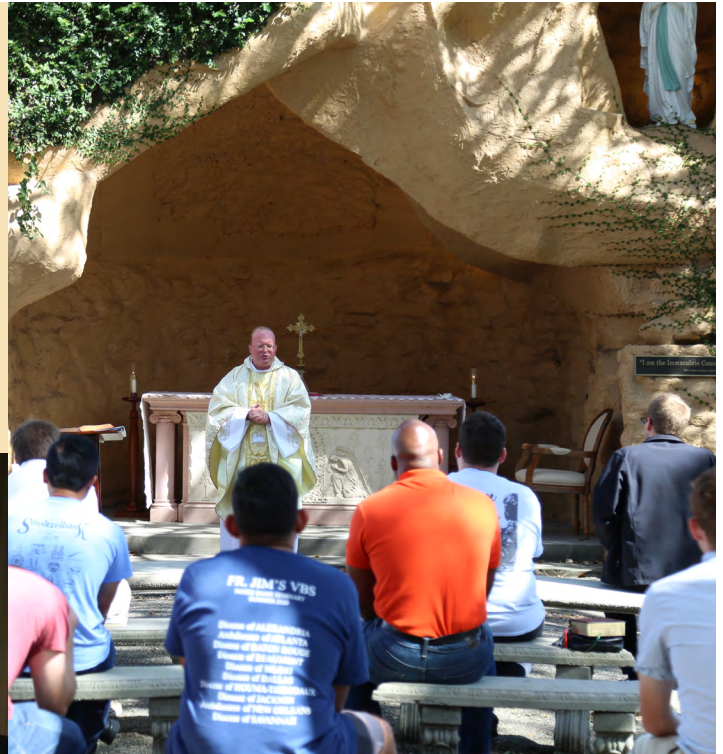
The NDS Community gathered during lunch to celebrate Fr. Kelly’s Birthday.



Fr. Jim Wehner offers words of gratitude and blessings to Fr. Kelly

Night of Adoration and Praise & Worship

Seminarians gathered for a beautiful evening of Adoration in the Chapel on November 16th. Fr. Kurt Young offered the Exposition and Benediction, and seminarians led praise and worship.



Mass at the Grotto

Fr. Jim Wehner, Rector/President, celebrated an outdoor Mass at the Grotto daily during the month of October when 56 seminarians and resident priests tested positive for COVID-19.



Seminarian Whiffle Ball Tournament

While not being able to venture off campus this semester, the seminarians have found plenty of time for recreation. Many seminarians participated in a Whiffle Ball Tournament. The Benchwarmers (pictured above) were the Champions!



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SAVE THE DATE

NOTRE DAME SEMINARY GALA & AUCTION

Saturday, March 13, 2021

Notre Dame Seminary

*For more information, contact the Development Office
at (504) 866-7426, ext. 375.*