

NOTRE DAME SEMINARY

Graduate School of Theology



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- Hurricane Ida Recovery
- New Faculty & Staff
- Dedication to Fr. Lafleur

NDS ANNOUNCES NEW RECTOR: Fr. Joshua Rodrigue

Photo by Frank Methe



Very Rev. James A. Wehner
Rector/President

Dear Friends:

What a semester it has been! For those who have experienced devastation and the effects of Hurricane Ida, know that the seminary community continues to keep you in our prayers. Despite the difficulties caused by the hurricane, we had a good Fall semester, which included welcoming 38 new seminarians and five new faculty and staff members; pastoral ministry in the LaPlace, Lafitte, and Grand Isle communities; the institution of acolytes; and the return of the deacon class.

This semester, we also announced the appointment of a new rector, and I am incredibly grateful that Fr. Joshua Rodrigue accepted the invitation from Archbishop Aymond and the Board of Trustees to serve as the 18th Rector/President of NDS effective July 1, 2022. In the meantime, we

*Because of you, NDS continues to be one of the largest
and most vibrant seminaries in the United States.*

pray for him and
for a successful
transition as
the ministry of
priestly formation

continues to engage our seminarians. I am especially thankful for the prayers and support of so many. Because of you, NDS continues to be one of the largest and most vibrant seminaries in the United States. Thank you and may the Lord bless all those who pray for us and for our seminary community!



NDS ANNOUNCES NEW RECTOR: Fr. Joshua Rodrigue

On Thursday, October 14, 2021, Archbishop Gregory M. Aymond, as chancellor of the seminary, announced the appointment of Father Joshua J. Rodrigue as the next rector/president of Notre Dame Seminary effective July 1, 2022.

Fr. Josh Rodrigue grew up in the St. Charles Community in Thibodaux, LA, and graduated from E.D. White Catholic High School. After completing minor seminary studies at St. Joseph Seminary in Covington, Fr. Rodrigue spent five years in Rome at the Pontifical North American College and was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux on August 10, 2002.

Following his ordination to the priesthood, Fr. Rodrigue returned to Rome for his last year of studies to complete the licentiate degree in sacramental theology. After returning to the Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux, Fr. Rodrigue served in the diocese as Associate Pastor at Holy Cross Church in Morgan City, Pastor at St. Anthony of Padua Church in Bayou Black, and Rector at the Cathedral of St. Francis de Sales in Houma. In 2017, Fr. Rodrigue was granted permission to serve at the Pontifical North American College in Rome, where he has served as Director of Pastoral Formation and a Formation Advisor and then as Director of Spiritual Formation and as a Spiritual Director.

Since 2006, Fr. Rodrigue has been involved in seminary formation and over the years has taught as an Adjunct Professor of Theology at St. Joseph Seminary College (2006-2017), Notre Dame Seminary (2008-2009), the Pontifical Gregorian University (2017-2018), and the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross (2018-present).

To read the official announcement and statements from Archbishop Aymond, Fr. Wehner, and Fr. Rodrigue, visit www.nds.edu/2021/10/new-rector.



Institution of Acolytes

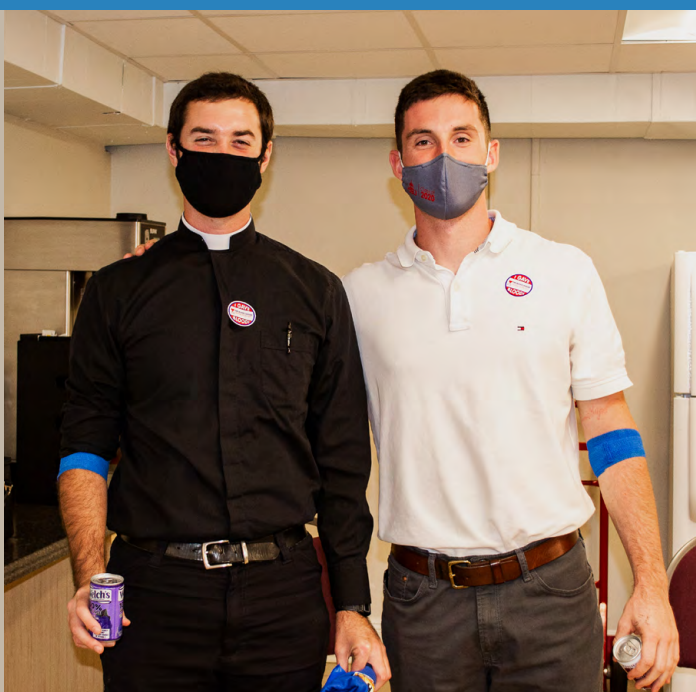


On Wednesday, October 13th, Bishop Robert Marshall, Bishop of the Diocese of Alexandria, presided over the Mass for the Institution of Acolytes. In the rite of institution, the bishop hands those to be instituted a patent with bread and says, "Take this vessel with bread for the celebration of the Eucharist. Make your life worthy of your service at the table of the Lord and of his Church."



40 Years of Episcopal Ministry

Brother priests extended a blessing upon Archbishop Alfred Hughes as he celebrated the 40th Anniversary of his Consecration as a Bishop! We are incredibly grateful for Archbishop Hughes and his commitment to NDS and the formation of our seminarians.



BLOOD DRIVE

On Monday, September 27th, seminarians, faculty, and staff participated in an on-campus blood drive! The members of the NDS community who gave blood are able to save many lives, especially given the blood donation shortages caused by the pandemic.

EUCCHARISTIC PROCESSION



Following Hurricane Ida, all of the seminarians returned to campus on Sunday, September 12th. The NDS community spent this day in prayer and recollection, which included participating in a Eucharistic procession around campus in order to bless the campus as well as the city of New Orleans.

ORIENTATION WEEK: *Christ Centered Fraternity*

by Caleb Meyer, Archdiocese of Atlanta

Adjusting to life as a seminarian in a new place like New Orleans is easier said than done. Luckily, I was met at Notre Dame Seminary by a dedicated orientation team that included experienced seminarians, formation and spiritual directors, a staff committed to the formation of aspiring priests, and of course, Father Jim Wehner, Rector of Notre Dame Seminary. The new seminarians and I had the opportunity to participate in a week filled with conferences and recreation that were always structured around prayer, which promoted the cultivation of fraternity and community among us.

Coming from Honolulu, Hawaii, I was anxious about meeting new people in a place so physically and culturally far from my home, but the structure of orientation week left no room for feelings of isolation or anxiety. Our days were built around praying the Divine Office and attending Mass, which ensured that no matter what activities the day held, whether we went on a swamp tour or attended formation conferences, Christ remained at the center of our attention. I realized that men from all over were here because of their great commitment to their faith, and never before has the term 'universal church' meant so much to me. While I was



Nick Weiss from the Diocese of Dallas holds a baby alligator on a swamp tour.



Fr. Jim Wehner celebrates Mass for the new seminarians at St. Mary's Assumption.



New seminarians and the orientation team enjoy fraternity and bowling at Rock'n'Bowl.

from a tiny island in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, I am now a part of a brotherhood with men from Louisiana, Texas, Brazil, and seemingly everywhere in between.

After attending orientation week at Notre Dame Seminary, I have been able to confidently and joyfully begin my formation. During orientation week, I survived alligators, piles of paperwork, and the French Quarter, but now, the real work begins...remembering everyone's name!



Caleb Meyer, Johnathan Nguyen, and Austin Thomas prepare to take their photos on picture day.



During opening Mass, Fr. Jim Wehner blesses all of the new seminarians.

CPE: Bringing God into the Tombs of People's Lives

by David Doyle, Archdiocese of New Orleans

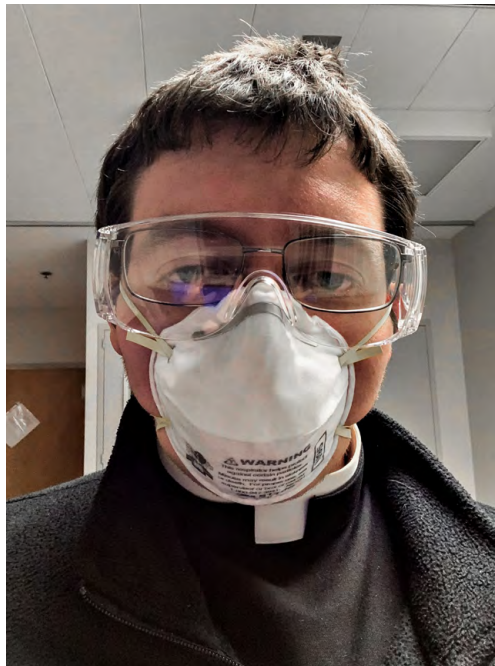
Kansas City, Missouri, was the last place that I expected to spend my summer as I was preparing for my Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) Internship; however, when we tell God our plans, he laughs. Off I went—driving to Kansas City and venturing into the unknown. In the unknown, God was present because I ended up right where I needed to be.

CPE is an intensive hospital ministry, which has both clinical and educational aspects. I spent time every day meeting with my group of interns, going over readings, discussing cases, and learning strategies to become better ministers. I spent the rest of my time on my assigned units, mainly oncology and the COVID-19 units. My ministry experience on both units was extremely diverse, but in one way or another, God was there in each one of them. In addition, I was assigned overnight call shifts. During these shifts, I was the only chaplain in the hospital. I quickly learned that I was able to survive on little to no sleep. These call shifts taught me what it means to really give of myself

even when I thought I had nothing left to give. There were moments where I had to deal with the reality of death when all I wanted to do was sleep. Through these long nights, I learned that giving of myself does not always involve doing something. Sometimes it is more important to sit, listen,

pray, and just be present. Even though I may not have been able to physically heal the people I encountered, I was still able to give of myself in a meaningful way and offer spiritual guidance.

Throughout my experience, I witnessed the messiness and sorrow of death, the joy and revival of cancer remission, and everything in between. I was blessed with the opportunity to help bring God into the tombs of people's lives. I was privileged to enter the most intimate moments of people's lives and be present to them. At the same time, I was invited and welcomed by others with open arms as an integral member of the care team. In the end, Kansas City gave me exactly what I needed—a foretaste of what is to come and the excitement of what it will be to bring God to his people as one of his priests.



David Doyle equips himself with personal protective equipment as he ministers to COVID-19 patients.



David Doyle (far right) attends meetings with the other interns throughout their CPE Internship.



Seminarians gather to pray with those affected by Hurricane Ida.

Finding Christ's Light in the Midst of Hurricane Ida

by Alex Koshakji, Diocese of Dallas

While my seminarian brothers and I were assisting with hurricane relief in Lafitte, I encountered a young family who sacrificed their Saturday morning to help their community. The father, a strong gentleman with a beaming smile and warm demeanor, shook my hand and then pointed to his two young sons. Drenched from the rain, his two sons trudged through the mud to hand out warm lunches to grateful hands. The father told me that he brought his sons along to give them an opportunity to serve and to help them mature into good Christian

men. It was incredible to see this young family come together to support their community. It was even more extraordinary that this was *only* one of the many families that came to serve that day.

Witnessing these families respond in times of such crisis was awe-inspiring. As my fellow seminarians and I served, we noticed such joy exuding from the families that were working alongside us. We heard jokes and lively conversation in spite of the aftermath of Hurricane Ida and the heavy rain falling all day. Watching the community come together lifted my spirits, which increased my desire to return to this service site. They brought a palpable energy that



Seminarians and volunteers assist in gutting and cleaning a family's home.



Kevin Kolker removes debris over a month after Hurricane Ida made landfall.



Simon Peter Kagimu removes dry-wall from a home that had severe water damage.



Seminarians and volunteers work together to remove downed trees and debris after Hurricane Ida.



Patrick Chester and other seminarians cut and dispose of tree limbs.

was infectious. Through their energy and joy, I recognized the powerful and unique presence of the Holy Spirit.

Participating in the relief efforts with these people made it evident that good can come from trying situations. After reflecting on my experience in Lafitte, a section from C.S. Lewis' work *The Screwtape Letters* resonated with me. The demon, Screwtape, instructs his protégé on man's demise. He writes that a crisis situation has "certain tendencies inherent in it which are, in themselves, by no means in our favor." C.S. Lewis recognizes that a crisis ultimately fails to go in the evil one's favor, and I was able to witness this first hand as Hurricane Ida brought people together to serve and strengthen the community. Although moments of crisis are often tragic, they can also be an opportunity to build up the Body of Christ. The families we encountered radiated Christ's light in the midst of a storm. They shared their joy and faith with others through service, inspired others to serve, and brought hope to those affected by the storm. Lafitte demonstrated to me that a crisis is an opportunity for God to orchestrate a renewed sense of faith and community for his beloved.



In Grand Isle, seminarians shovel mud as they assist in cleanup efforts.



The seminary community travels to Lafitte to help with severe hurricane damage.



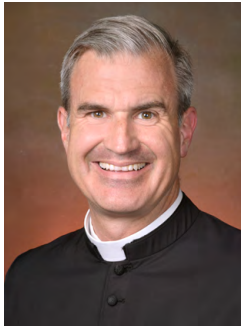
NDS WELCOMES NEW FACULTY & STAFF



Rev. Joshua Neu, S.S.L.

Director of Spiritual Formation

Fr. Joshua Neu was ordained in 2015 for the Diocese of Tyler after completing his seminary formation at the Pontifical North American College. He holds an S.T.B. from the Pontifical Gregorian University and an S.S.L. from the Pontifical Biblical Institute. He most recently served as the Director of Vocations of the Diocese of Tyler. Fr. Neu joins the seminary community to serve as the Director of Spiritual Formation.



Rev. Bryce Sibley, S.T.L.

Professor of Moral Theology

Fr. Bryce Sibley is a priest of the Diocese of Lafayette. He studied at the Pontifical North American College in Rome and was ordained to the priesthood in 2000. In 2001, he received his Licentiate degree from the Pontifical John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and the Family in Rome. In 2010, Fr. Sibley was appointed as pastor and chaplain at Our Lady of Wisdom Church and Catholic Student Center on the campus of the University of Louisiana at Lafayette where he served for 11 years. Fr. Sibley joins the faculty as a Professor of Moral Theology.



Dr. Susie Veters, D.Min.

Assistant Director of Human Formation

Dr. Susie Veters graduated from LSU with a Bachelor of Science in Accounting and worked for many years as a CPA in public accounting. In 2000, she felt a tug to ministry in the Church and began studies at Notre Dame Seminary, where she graduated in 2003 with a Master of Arts in Theological Studies. In 2018, she obtained her Doctor of Ministry Degree from the Oblate School of Theology with a concentration in Pastoral Leadership. Dr. Veters returns to NDS as Assistant Director of Human Formation and continues to teach as an Adjunct Instructor of Lay Ministry.



Matthew Keller

Business Office Assistant and Front Office Coordinator

Matthew Keller joined the Notre Dame Seminary Community as the Business Office Assistant and Front Office Coordinator in June. His position allows him to serve the Church by assisting with the daily operations of the seminary. A New Orleans native and Archbishop Rummel High School graduate, Matthew graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration in Finance from The University of Southern Mississippi in 2019 and subsequently served as a campus missionary with the Fellowship of Catholic University Students (FOCUS). He and his fiancé will be married in 2022.

ANNUAL FUND 2021-2022

FORMING PRIESTS AS SPIRITUAL FATHERS & MEN OF THE EUCHARIST

Since 1923, Notre Dame Seminary has prepared priests with a formation experience that leads seminarians on a journey into the Heart of Jesus Christ the Good Shepherd. No doubt, throughout the past ninety-nine years of formation, our programs at Notre Dame Seminary have adapted to meet the needs of the Church and the faithful. To meet these needs of the Church, Notre Dame Seminary aims to form priests as **Spiritual Fathers** and **Men of the Eucharist**.

Your support of priestly formation enables us to prepare our seminarians for the many aspects of pastoral ministry, where they will serve you, your families, and your parishes for many years to come. Your gift to the 2021-2022 Annual Fund ensures that we are able to continue to form our seminarians for ministry in today's Church as spiritual fathers and men of the Eucharist.

To make a gift to Notre Dame Seminary's 2021-2022 Annual Fund, please visit www.nds.edu/donate-now or return the donation envelope enclosed in this newsletter.

DEVELOPMENT OFFICE STAFF



Caroline Thriffley
Director of Development

Caroline Thriffley will continue to serve the Notre Dame Seminary community in her new role as Director of Development. Caroline graduated from Mt. Carmel Academy in 2012 and went on to attend Louisiana State University where she received her Bachelor of Science in Marketing in 2016. Following graduation, Caroline worked as a Digital Marketing Coordinator in Baton Rouge, LA. In June 2017, she joined the development office staff as the Director of Events and Communications. Caroline will continue to work on and oversee all of the seminary's fundraising initiatives and development efforts alongside the new Development Coordinator.



Maria Whitworth
Development Coordinator

Maria Whitworth joins the development office as the new Development Coordinator. Maria is from Central Texas, and she graduated from the University of Dallas in 2021 with a Bachelor of Arts in English and Politics. While at UD, Maria chaired initiatives and campus events to raise funds for local charities and served in several leadership roles in student organizations. Maria will assist in the various projects of the development office including coordinating events, marketing, social media, and alumni relations.

From Annual Giving to Legacy Giving, there are many ways to support the mission of Notre Dame Seminary. Contact the Development Office for more information by phone at (504) 866-7426, ext. 375 or 374, or by email at cthriffley@nds.edu or mwhitworth@nds.edu.

DIACONATE INTERNSHIP: *Encountering the Great Builders of the Kingdom of God*

by Deacon Nick Ware, Diocese of Lafayette

My diaconate internship began like any typical diaconate internship in South Louisiana, with a music festival! This action packed weekend was the springboard that launched me into the remaining months, which were filled with so many grace-filled opportunities and moments. During my internship at St. Bernard Parish in Breaux Bridge, diaconal ministry found many different expressions. I had the opportunity to lead Exposition and Benediction; deliver meals to the poor; coach the middle school football team; teach a class for adult confirmation candidates; bless houses; assist with bible studies; preach and serve at Mass; celebrate baptisms, funerals, and a wedding; and so much more!

During these ministry opportunities, I was encouraged by the members of our parish who welcomed me warmly into their parish family. I collaborated with the lay faithful in their service to their families, their local community, and beyond. I was inspired by their zeal for assisting their neighbors in crisis, particularly in our hurricane relief efforts for those affected by Hurricane Ida. The parishioners of St. Bernard truly embody what it means to be “the humble, yet great builders of the Kingdom of God,” a phrase coined by St. John Paul II when writing about the lay faithful.

I am grateful to these men and women at St. Bernard Parish who continually labor in the Lord’s vineyard and provide examples of holiness and charity that deeply impact those called to ordained ministry, particularly a newly ordained deacon. I anticipate my ordination to the priesthood next summer with a renewed zeal for service to God and His Church!



Dcn. Nick serves Mass as a deacon alongside pastor, Fr. Garrett McIntyre.



Dcn. Nick Ware celebrates a baptism and welcomes a new child of God to the Church.



The parishioners at St. Bernard in Breaux Bridge assist in Hurricane Ida relief efforts.



Dcn. Nick coaches the middle school football team.

Fr. Joseph Verbis Lafleur:

NDS Alumnus Advances in Cause for Canonization

On Thursday, October 14th, Bishop J. Douglas Deshotel, Bishop of the Diocese of Lafayette, unveiled and blessed a refurbished plaque in the lobby of Notre Dame Seminary in honor of NDS Alumnus and Servant of God, Fr. Joseph

Verbis Lafleur. Born in Ville Platte, LA, Fr. Lafleur was interested in the priesthood from a young age. He entered seminary formation in 1927 and attended St. Joseph's Seminary and Notre Dame Seminary. Fr. Lafleur was ordained to the priesthood in 1938 for the Diocese of Lafayette and served as parochial vicar at a parish for three years. In 1941, just months before the U.S. became involved in WWII, Fr. Lafleur joined the Army Air Corps and served as chaplain for his unit in the Philippines, which came under heavy attack on

December 8, 1941. His actions of assisting the wounded and dying earned him the United States Army's Distinguished Service Cross, the Purple Heart, and the Bronze Star.

In May 1942, Fr. Lafleur was taken as a prisoner of war. As a POW, he provided a priestly presence and spiritual care to his fellow prisoners for over two years. On September 7, 1944, Fr. Lafleur died after a Japanese boat transporting

prisoners of war was torpedoed. He died at sea while ministering to nearly 800 Americans and helping others escape the sinking ship. Survivors from the boat remember Fr. Lafleur for his heroic acts.



Dr. Jose Bautista, Celeste Rushing, Archbishop Gregory Aymond, Bishop Glen John Provost, Carrol Lafleur, Bishop J. Douglas Deshotel, Bishop Robert Marshall, and Archbishop Alfred Hughes following the blessing of the plaque.



Bishop J. Douglas Deshotel, Bishop of Lafayette, blesses the refurbished plaque in the lobby of Notre Dame Seminary.

On September 5, 2020, the Diocese of Lafayette, led by Bishop Deshotel, opened Father Lafleur's cause for beatification and canonization. On June 17, 2021, the USCCB approved advancement of Fr. Lafleur's cause for canonization.

Fr. Joseph Verbis Lafleur, Pray for Us!

SAVE THE DATE for SPRING 2022 EVENTS

Bible Marathon

January 31st – February 2nd

Alumni Day

February 24th

Gala & Auction

March 12th

For more information about Notre Dame Seminary's Spring 2022 events, please contact the Development Office at (504) 866-7426, ext. 374 or 375.



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The funds raised from our 2021 #iGiveCatholic Campaign will support the intellectual formation programs at Notre Dame Seminary. Your gift to Notre Dame Seminary this Giving Tuesday can help fund scholarships, purchase school supplies, and enhance the study areas for students.

For more information about supporting #iGiveCatholic, contact pcosse@nds.edu or cthrieffiley@nds.edu.