

Notre Dame News

University President Rev. John I. Jenkins, C.S.C., to serve as 2024 Commencement principal speaker

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President Rev. [John I. Jenkins, C.S.C.](#), will be the principal speaker at the University of Notre Dame's 179th University [Commencement Ceremony](#) on May 19, Notre Dame Board of Trustees chairman Jack Brennan announced today.

“At the request of the Board of Trustees, Father Jenkins has agreed to deliver this year’s address at the Commencement Ceremony,” Brennan said in a letter to campus. “We believe Father Jenkins’ leadership and exemplary service to the University make him a most fitting choice, as we recognize and celebrate the accomplishments of the Class of 2024 and our distinguished faculty.”

Elected in 2005 as the University’s 17th president, Father Jenkins announced in October that he will step down as president at the end of the 2023-24 academic year to return to teaching and ministry at the University.

“Notre Dame is and has been incredibly blessed by Father Jenkins’ courageous and visionary leadership,” Brennan said. “Together with the remarkable leadership team he has assembled, he has devoted himself to advancing the University and its mission, fulfilling the promise he made when he was inaugurated — to work collaboratively to build a great Catholic university for the 21st century.”

For 19 years as president, Father Jenkins devoted himself to fostering the University’s unique place in academia, the Church, the United States and the world, leading Notre Dame to become the country’s leading Catholic research institution.

“Serving as president of Notre Dame for me, as a Holy Cross priest, has been both a privilege and a calling,” Father Jenkins said at the time of his announcement. “I look forward to celebrating with the Class of 2024 on their most special day.”

Throughout his presidency, he has been committed to combining teaching and research excellence with a cultivation of the deeper purposes of Catholic higher education. While pursuing academic distinction, he has brought renewed emphasis to Notre Dame’s distinctive mission, rooted in the tradition of the Congregation of Holy Cross, the University’s founding community, to educate the whole person — mind, body and spirit — to do good in the world.

These commitments have been made manifest in the University’s dedication to excellence in undergraduate education in the classroom and beyond, while simultaneously building a reputation as a leading global research institution — all in the context of Notre Dame’s Catholic identity. In his inaugural address in 2005, Father Jenkins articulated the vision

that Notre Dame would be “one of the preeminent research institutions in the world, a center for learning whose intellectual and religious traditions converge to make it a healing, unifying, enlightening force for a world deeply in need.”

In 2023, under Father Jenkins’ leadership, the University was [invited to join the Association of American Universities](#), a consortium of the nation’s leading public and private research universities, making it the only religiously affiliated university in the nation to be so honored. In 2022, the University attracted more than \$281 million in external research funding and is among the fastest-growing research universities in the U.S.

Under Father Jenkins’ leadership, Notre Dame has dramatically increased financial aid, meeting 100 percent of demonstrated financial need for every student. The University provides more than \$210 million in need-based aid for undergraduates, a number that has grown by 350 percent during his presidency, with 60 percent of all students receiving some form of aid.

Over the last decade, Father Jenkins’ commitment to the South Bend-Elkhart region has resulted in collaborations with local civic and industry partners and played a leading role in a regional strategy that has secured more than \$130 million in grants for economic development activities, leading to unprecedented investments in research facilities, workforce development programs, new transit connections, cultural amenities and housing in the area.

Within the University and beyond, Father Jenkins has called for civil discourse — grounded in the Christian view of others as equally made in the image of God — as a way to find common ground.

A philosopher trained in theology and a member of Notre Dame’s [Department of Philosophy](#) since 1990, Father Jenkins earned undergraduate and advanced degrees from Notre Dame, a doctorate of philosophy from the University of Oxford, and a master of divinity and licentiate in sacred theology from the Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley.

He is the author of “Knowledge and Faith in Thomas Aquinas” and of scholarly articles published in the Journal of Philosophy, the journal Medieval Philosophy and Theology, and the Journal of Religious Ethics.

Father Jenkins is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. A popular teacher, he has taught courses on ancient and medieval philosophy, faith and reason and Thomas Aquinas. He is the recipient of honorary degrees from the University of Notre Dame Australia (2023), Aquinas College (2011) and Benedictine College (2006), and in 2023 was elected as an Honorary Fellow at St. Edmund's College at the University of Cambridge.

He has served on the Independent Commission on College Basketball led by Condoleezza Rice and on the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities board of directors. Father Jenkins has written numerous op-eds that have appeared in the New York Times, Wall Street Journal and other prominent publications on a wide range of topics, including the importance of civil discourse, the future of college athletics and the University's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The University Commencement Ceremony will be held at 9 a.m. May 19 (Sunday) in Notre Dame Stadium and live streamed at commencement.nd.edu.

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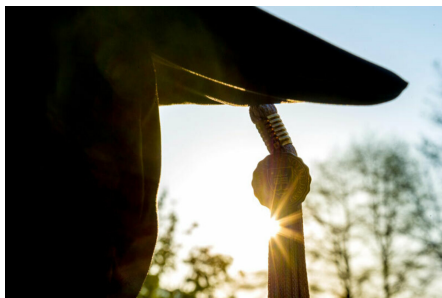
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