


Coronavirus (COVID-19) Response

Updates and Information for the Notre Dame Community

Fr. Jenkins: letter to undergraduate members of the Class of 2020

 March 30, 2020

Dear Members of the Class of 2020:

I write now to you a letter I had hoped I would not need to send. We have all been following the news about the spread of the novel coronavirus, and I have consulted with several experts on infectious diseases. Although there remains a good deal of uncertainty about the trajectory and duration of the pandemic, it is becoming clear that it would not be prudent to host on May 16-17 the Notre Dame Commencement on our campus—a large gathering bringing together families from across the country and around the world, many with older and at-risk members. The Notre Dame Commencement and the events leading up to it mean so much to our graduates, their families, our faculty and to me personally, and so it is with greatest regret that I tell you we will not be able to gather you on campus for Commencement this May.

Despite this disappointing turn of events, as I pledged to you a few weeks ago, we will celebrate your Commencement and bring you back together. We will, however, need to approach the celebration in stages. Because you will need your degrees conferred and certified in May for employment and further studies, we will hold an on-line ceremony on the originally scheduled date of May 17. We will ask our speakers, including our Commencement speaker, Patriarch Bartholomew, to record their addresses and we will post them at that time. I will confer on you your degrees via live-stream, and the University will mail your diplomas to your home address in June.

Although the on-line ceremony and conferral will be important, we also want to gather the class in person and give you the opportunity to spend time with your friends, classmates, faculty and others who have been part of your Notre Dame experience. We will, then, invite you back to campus on Memorial Day weekend 2021 to gather as a class and to celebrate your accomplishments. We are currently thinking of a gathering that will begin on Thursday and conclude on Sunday, but we will be working with a group of student leaders to plan the details of that event. Although we know that by then you are likely to be working, or engaged in further studies or service, I hope you can take several days to gather as a class, spend time together on campus and—albeit belatedly—mark together your graduation as the Notre Dame Class of 2020. In the coming weeks and months, we will have further communications about that gathering and celebration. We hope that by giving you a good deal of advance notice of the date, you and your families can plan accordingly. Please be sure to share this news with your parents and guardians.

Again, I am so sorry to have to deliver this message to you, but I believe we can make these celebrations special at every stage. The Class of 2020 will have something in common with the Notre Dame Class of 1879, when students were sent home abruptly on April 23rd after a terrible fire left the campus in ashes. The University, and that class, arose from the ashes of 1879 even stronger. You will as well. The Class of 2020 will always have a special place in the hearts of all who are part of Notre Dame. I look forward to the celebrations to come. Through our patroness, Mary, I ask for God's blessing on each of you and on your loved ones in this trying time.

In Notre Dame,

Rev. John I. Jenkins, C.S.C.
President

Posted In: [Letters](#)

Notre Dame values the many people of different nationalities and cultures who are cherished members of our community. It is important that we avoid stigmatizing anyone who comes from a country where the coronavirus is prevalent or who has been in quarantine.

CAMPUS SAFETY AND UNIVERSITY OPERATIONS ›



Coronavirus (COVID-19) Response

Notre Dame, IN 46556 USA

© 2020 [University of Notre Dame](#)