

WHAT WOULD YOU FIGHT FOR?

# AN AUTHENTIC CATHOLIC RENEWAL AT OUR LADY'S UNIVERSITY

Alumni & Friends Protecting Notre Dame's Catholic Identity



**SYCAMORE TRUST** was organized by a group of Notre Dame alumni who, alarmed by signs of secularization at their alma mater, were determined that Our Lady's University not lose her Catholic identity. With the support of a wide network of similarly concerned alumni and friends of the University, we seek both to hold those in fiduciary roles accountable to Notre Dame's mission statement and to support those on campus who serve the school's distinctive Catholic heritage through their organizations and activities.

## TRIGGERING EVENTS

With events such as the Vagina Monologues and Queer Film Festival gaining notoriety for Notre Dame just prior to the inauguration of Rev. John I. Jenkins, C.S.C., as the University's 17th president, it appeared to many that the school was silently slipping toward the ranks of other formerly religious institutions such as Harvard, Princeton, Yale, and Duke.

That concern became widespread when in 2009 the Jenkins administration conferred an honorary degree on President Barack Obama, the Church's most formidable adversary on the sanctity of life at the time. This act contravened the unanimously adopted policy of the USCCB but, despite the strong objections of 83 cardinals, archbishops, and bishops, the University was undeterred.

Looking beyond those events to their cause, Sycamore organizers found that the underlying problem was a crippling decline in Catholic representation on the faculty. Those startling episodes and many others to follow were simply symptoms of that phenomenon.

## DRIVING ACADEMIC RANKING

In a drive to raise its academic ranking, Notre Dame has chipped away at its formative mission by hiring fewer and fewer practicing Catholics. By the time Sycamore was established, nominal Catholic representation on the faculty had fallen to a bare majority, where it remains. Thus, the University no longer meets its own test of Catholic identity — namely, “the continuing presence of a predominant number of Catholic intellectuals.” (Mission Statement.)

Today, nearly two centuries after Father Sorin assembled his celebrated class of two in the old log chapel, the Catholic truth that was Notre Dame's *raison d'être* is being drowned out by an increasingly dominant voice among faculty who believe that “the University should not compromise its academic aspirations in its efforts to maintain its Catholic identity.” (Notre Dame Faculty Senate.) If their interests prevail, Notre Dame will become no different from its secular peers except for a thin Catholic veneer with “priests under the Dome and in the dorms,” as the saying goes.



# HIGH STAKES FOR THE CHURCH

Notre Dame is matchless in Catholic higher education — both in reputation and in resources. As a result, it holds a unique place in the worlds of academia and ecclesia. If it loses its Catholic identity, Catholic perspectives will fade within academic, research, and civic circles, the Church and the Catholic community will lose a precious and irreplaceable asset, and generations will be robbed of the opportunity for a Catholic education at a university of the first rank. The stakes are simply too high to stand back and watch.

## A PROBLEM OF LEADERSHIP

The only way to restore Notre Dame's Catholic identity is for the University's President, supported by its Board, to insure the hiring of many more qualified Catholics to the faculty.

Although hiring has largely devolved to the faculty, the President retains ultimate authority. And he is not without resources: There remain at Notre Dame a solid core of Catholic scholars, a number of non-Catholics scholars who are committed to the

school's mission, a largely Catholic student body, and several vibrant Catholic centers and programs. And there is Sycamore Trust with its substantial membership and increasing resources.

Certainly, Notre Dame can be pulled back. However, with secularizing influences surrounding every religious institution, we recognize that we have joined in an ongoing battle for the soul of Notre Dame.

*Sycamore Trust is a model of calm and reasonable yet unrelenting friendly questioning of recent events on the South Bend campus.*



## YOU CAN HELP

Learn how you can help to protect Notre Dame's Catholic identity by scanning the QR codes below or by visiting us at <https://sycamoretrust.org/help>. You may also get in touch with us at [info@sycamoretrust.org](mailto:info@sycamoretrust.org). We would love to hear from you with any questions or ideas that you might have about our work.



### DONATE

Help us to take advantage of the many opportunities to expand our work by making a tax deductible contribution.



### SUBSCRIBE

Stay informed of challenges to Notre Dame's Catholic identity by subscribing to receive our free investigative reports.



### RECRUIT

Work with our staff to introduce our work to others who might share your concern for Notre Dame's Catholic identity.



### PRAY

Join our Apostolate and pray with us for Notre Dame's Catholic identity through novenas, rosaries, ember days, and more.



Details for these and other ways to help are at [SycamoreTrust.org/help](https://SycamoreTrust.org/help)



# COMBATING SECULARIZATION

Combating secularization is not a simple one-and-done program. It is a long march that requires a concerted effort on multiple fronts. However well intentioned, strategies that seek a quick course correction by withholding alumni donations, writing protest letters, circulating board petitions, or filing canonical lawsuits are easily outlived by institutions that have been captured by secular interests. Those in charge simply go about their business while the attention and those responsible for it fade away. Although our most visible method of combating secularization at Notre Dame is to spotlight signs of secularization in the investigative reports that we send to tens of thousands of subscribers and media contacts, that is by no means all we do. We also create opportunities for collective action among those who share our love for Notre Dame and value her Catholic identity. And we provide assistance and resources to support campus efforts that are aligned with our mission and contribute to Notre Dame's Catholic identity.



## INVESTIGATIVE REPORTS

In our regular bulletins, we report what's going on at Notre Dame that undermines its Catholic identity. As Professor Walter Nicgorski observed at a Sycamore event, it is known now on campus that you can't just "sweep everything under the rug."



## ANNUAL BREAKFAST

With speakers drawn from the very best of the faculty and student body, our Annual Breakfast during ND Reunion attracts an overflowing audience in person and wide participation online for a candid update on Notre Dame's Catholic identity.



## OPEN LETTERS

When we believe that collecting signatures can effectively pressure Notre Dame to act in line with its Catholic identity, we invite alumni, students, faculty, staff, family, and friends of Notre Dame to join us in signing open letters.



## STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

Students are on the front line in the fight for Notre Dame's Catholic identity. Accordingly, through financial and other means, we support and encourage their efforts – both to live out their faith and to speak up for the truth of Catholicism.



## STUDENT AWARDS

We draw attention to the essential role of students to our mission through several financial awards that are conferred annually to students in recognition of outstanding contributions to protecting Notre Dame's Catholic identity.



## YOUNG ALUMNI

Under the name *Sycamore Decade*, young alumni pursue projects that support Catholic identity organizations on campus and that create opportunities for recent graduates to connect around their shared values and love for Notre Dame.



## FACULTY RECOMMENDATIONS

Through our NDCatholic.com website, we provide information and resources for students who want to participate in the Catholic academic tradition as well as specific recommendations of teachers who will contribute to a truly Catholic education.



## APOSTOLATE

Mindful that the battle for Notre Dame's Catholic identity cannot be won without a constant outpouring of prayer, our Apostolate promotes prayer projects that focus our mission as it relates to alumni, students, faculty, and administration.

# SYCAMORE TRUSTEES

Sycamore Trust was established in 2007 as a tax-exempt nonprofit organization and is governed by a self-perpetuating Board of Trustees who are all alumni of the University of Notre Dame and elected to the Board because of their commitment to their alma mater's Catholic identity and their ability to advance the organization's mission.

## OFFICERS

William H. Dempsey, '52 — Chairman  
Stephen O'Neil, M.D., '87 — President  
Charles A. Donovan, Jr., '74 — Vice President  
Lisa Scapellati, '81 — Treasurer  
Elizabeth Kirk, JD '96 — Secretary

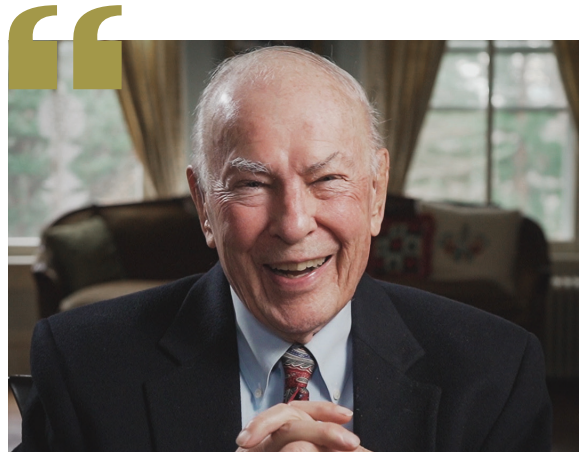
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## STAFF

Day-to-day operations are managed by a full time Executive Director who supports the organization's various activities, projects, and initiatives, oversees any personnel, and develops financial and other resources to advance its mission.

*Alumni at other Catholic schools didn't realize that their schools were losing their Catholic hearts and minds until it was too late to stop it. That shouldn't happen at Notre Dame.*



William H. Dempsey, '52



*Like ghosts of birds, the flocking flakes  
Amid the leafless branches fly.*

—The Dome, V. 39.

Sycamore Trust takes its name from the "Guardian of the Grotto," the ancient tree standing watch over the Grotto that, according to legend, reaches with its gnarled branches toward God in prayerful memorial to the innocent Indian murdered where it took root. As this sentinel is perpetually protective of the Grotto, so, too, have Notre Dame alumni been protective of the school's formative heritage as it is adapted to the challenges of each age. At the heart of that heritage are Notre Dame's Catholic identity and its sustaining relationship with the Church, even as institutional links have been dissolved.

## OUR MISSION

The mission of Sycamore Trust is to provide a source of information, a vehicle for the exchange of views, and a collective voice to Notre Dame alumni and others in the Notre Dame family who are concerned about preserving the Catholic identity of the University.



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