THE UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME

About

Notre Dame is at once a Catholic university, a national symbol, and an international community of religious faith, intellectual inquiry, and devotion to the powerless. Among its conspicuous features are its academic reputation, an elaborately designed and golden-domed administration building, a famous collegiate football team, a popular shrine to the Mother of God, two fascinating lakes, a pleasantly landscaped campus, and a spirited student body surrounded by an intensely loyal community of alumni and friends who unabashedly refer to themselves as the Notre Dame "family."

The institution was founded on the site of an old Catholic missionary outpost in 1842. The founders were a small and impoverished band of French and Irish religious brothers whose leader was Rev. Edward F. Sorin, C.S.C., an impetuous, strong-willed, and apparently tireless priest. In a memoir titled *My Notre Dame,* Thomas Stritch, professor emeritus of American Studies and Notre Dame historian, wrote that Father Sorin "carved Notre Dame out of the Northern Indiana wilderness and by sheer strength of character made it go. He built and rebuilt, recruited students where he could, and gradually began the unique image Notre Dame still enjoys. In a college or university, reputation is everything. Somehow Sorin developed a favorable one for Notre Dame, one that reverberated throughout the American Catholic world, the Eastern Seaboard as well as the Midwest. Long before football was invented, Notre Dame caught the imagination of American Catholics."

Father Sorin was a member of the Congregation of Holy Cross, a then recently formed Catholic religious community that would own and administer the University from its foundation until 1967, when the University's governance was legally transferred to a two-tiered, mixed board of lay and religious trustees and fellows. The University's bylaws ensure that the Congregation will continue to exert a prominent influence on its administration. They stipulate, for example, that Notre Dame's presidents must always be chosen from among the priests of the Congregation. The Congregation also ministers to the University it founded through the many Holy Cross priests serving on the University's faculty, the counselors and chaplains who live with the undergraduate students in the residence halls, and the staff of the campus ministry office.

In 1972, five years after the change in governance, a new chapter of University history began to be written as the first undergraduate women were admitted to Notre Dame. A quarter of a century later, the majority of living Notre Dame alumni have been graduated from a fully coeducational institution.

Obviously, many other aspects of the University have been changed by more than a century and a half of turbulent and unpredictable happenings in the Catholic Church and in American life and culture. Fires, outbreaks of infectious diseases, the Civil War, waves of European immigrants and refugees, Church controversies, the Great Depression, two world wars and several smaller bloodlettings, the civil rights movement, and other social convulsions in America, all have involved members of the Notre Dame family and have left deep and indelible imprints on the character and rich tradition of the institution. Rev. William Corby, C.S.C., a successor to Father Sorin, played a memorable national role as a Union chaplain at the Battle of Gettysburg; Rev. Julius Nieuwland, C.S.C., a scientist and faculty member, invented synthetic rubber; Notre Dame students were participants in a nationally publicized scuffle with a resurgent Ku Klux Klan; the University's colorful football team and something of its campus atmosphere were enshrined in American history and myth by a film featuring a memorable performance by an actor who later became a president. More recently, a second film dramatized the University's spirit and gave a new name to unheralded athletes — *Rudy.*

Most notably, Notre Dame's reputation, so zealously nurtured, sustained, and celebrated by Father Sorin and his successors, has become increasingly international in recent years because of the establishment of numerous academic and community service programs in the Holy Land, Mexico, Chile, Ireland, England, Austria, France, Italy, Spain, Australia, Japan, and other countries.

Despite these remarkable and generally welcome alterations in institutional shape and scope, Notre Dame's proud and self-conscious claim to be a Catholic university and its intent to be a great Catholic university remain unchanged from Father Sorin's day. The University boasts a core curriculum that includes required courses in theology and philosophy. In administrative and disciplinary affairs, Notre Dame holds itself responsible to the teaching of the Catholic Church, and it holds its students, faculty, and staff responsible for their own conduct, particularly in matters affecting the common good. Precisely because it is a Catholic university, it is a place where men and women from all faiths and backgrounds are to be made welcome. The staffs of the residence halls, campus ministry, the Center for Social Concerns, the Institute for Church Life, and the Alumni Association all continue to invite and encourage Notre Dame students, graduates, faculty, and administrators to pray together, to discuss and share their hopes, joys and sorrows, to bear with and sustain one another, and always to serve those most in need.