

NEWS RELEASE

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University of Saint Mary Graduate Josh Nikes Honored With 2007 Mother Mary Ancilla Award



Josh Nikes, the 2007 USM Ancilla Award Recipient, at Spring Convocation, May 1.

(Leavenworth, Kan.)—University of Saint Mary Class of 2007 graduate Josh Nikes dedicated the majority of his Saint Mary career to helping others. He calls this passion his personal dedication to “selfless service.” In recognition of his passion, Nikes was awarded the 2007 Mother Mary Ancilla Award for his dedication to Christian service and leadership.

The Ancilla Award is presented annually to a graduating senior that demonstrated concern and commitment of time and effort in service to others while at Saint Mary. The award is named in honor of Mary Ancilla Spoor, Mother General of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth from 1950 to 1962.

By virtue of receiving the Ancilla Award, Nikes delivered the invocation to officially begin commencement May 12.

A pastoral ministry major from Leavenworth, Kan., Nikes will be commissioned as a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army May 21. He plans to join the Chaplain’s Corps for the Army, and will attend the Saint Paul School of Theology in Kansas City, Mo. to become an ordained pastor before heading to Ft. Jackson, N.C. to complete his Officers Basic Course (OBC).

Nikes will also be married on May 19 to his high school sweetheart, Brandy Wagner. Wagner will graduate from Saint Mary with a degree in elementary education next year.

Nikes’ service resume speaks for itself. While at Saint Mary, he helped rebuild tattered homes in poverty-stricken Appalachia, Kentucky on two occasions, and most recently helped clean-up and deconstruct ravaged homes in New Orleans on two separate occasions following the destruction of Hurricane Katrina. While Nikes enjoyed helping those in need in Kentucky, he felt called to act to the horrific events following Hurricane Katrina.

“When it first happened, I couldn’t take my eyes off of the news. I had to help,” he said. “I realized there are some people out there that rely on others going out of their way to help. In New Orleans, and every place that was devastated by Hurricane Katrina, the people are trying to do everything they could to get their lives back in order. But it’s really their reliance on people going there to help that makes a difference.”

Nikes made two separate trips to New Orleans, one in May 2006 as part of a Saint Mary-based service mission to help deconstruct homes that were unsafe because they were so severely wind

and water damaged, even nearly a year after the hurricane struck the Gulf Coast. He returned with a similar Saint Mary group in December 2006, shocked to find the devastation had changed very little.

“All the homes we saw there in May looked the same as they did in December,” Nikes said. “Some of them had not even been touched at all. It was that bad.”

In addition to his service trips, Nikes also helps construct homes for Habitat for Humanity and serves as a “Big Brother” with the Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Leavenworth organization.

Now after graduating, Nikes plans to transition to what he calls a “selfless service” to others, serving as a Chaplain in the U.S. Army. He said there is no greater ministry than serving his fellow brothers in arms.

“You can’t be part of an organization where life and death is something you take very seriously, and be a selfish person. You have to be willing to stand up next to your buddy in combat zone—you have to be willing to put yourself second. I just love being in an environment like that. There is not a better ministry for me than to serve my fellow soldiers in the Army.”

The University of Saint Mary is a private, co-educational applied liberal arts university founded by the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth. The University of Saint Mary is located at 4100 South 4th Street, Leavenworth, Kan., with additional locations at 11413 Pflumm in Overland Park and inside Providence Medical Center at 8929 Parallel Parkway in Kansas City, Kan.

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