

**NEW HORIZONS
LOOKING BACK AND MOVING AHEAD**

On October 1 I began my term at St. Mary of the Pines and Sacred Heart. I look forward to this term. I write this article so that you will better know me.

I was born on January 25, 1961 in New Orleans, Louisiana. I lived the first ten years of my life in Algiers, Louisiana on the West Bank of the Mississippi River.

When I was ten years old my family moved to Concord, California. Dad worked as a petroleum geologist for Chevron Overseas Petroleum and was transferred to the office in San Francisco. While in California I joined the Boy Scouts, and at 15 years old I earned the rank of Eagle Scout. I developed a love for camping and hiking through the Boy Scouts, and I continue to love both. In fifth grade, my first year in California, I began to study Spanish in school. Learning Spanish and interacting with Hispanic heritage has been an advocacy of my life.

During the summer before my junior year in high school, Dad was transferred to Madrid, Spain. The family moved to Spain. Mom and Dad lived in Spain for seven years. I attended the American School of Madrid for two years. During that short time, I enjoyed journeying with family throughout Europe. My family have all moved back to California. I have two brothers, Hilrey and John and a sister, Jan. They and my mother all live in different parts of the San Francisco Bay Area. Upon graduating from High School in 1979, I moved back to New Orleans in order to attend Tulane University.

I earned a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Spanish in 1983 from Tulane University. After graduating I moved to Baton Rouge and entered the Master's Program in Social Work at LSU. I focused my studies on Hospital Social Work. I graduated with a Master's Degree in Social Work in 1987.

Soon after graduating with my Master's Degree in Social Work, I took the civil service exam and applied at the LSU Medical Center in Shreveport. I was hired by the Medical Center and worked with patients who were recovering from surgery and from cancer from 1987 to 1991.

After working at the Medical Center for four years, I decided to apply for the seminary in order to begin the process of formation which would lead to ordination to the priesthood. Bishop Friend sent me to St. Mary Seminary and University in Baltimore, MD. I studied at St. Mary Seminary from 1991 to 1996. These were wonderful years of theological growth as I prepared to be ordained. On Saturday, June 8, 1996 Bishop Friend ordained me to the priesthood for the Diocese of Shreveport.

My first placement was at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church. Among the ministry which I took part in was starting a ministry for students at LSU-S. Those first two years of priesthood were very influential in helping to form me as a priest and later as a pastor.

Bishop Friend next named me the Vocation Director of the Diocese of Shreveport from 1999 to 2003. These years left me with a sense of the importance of working for vocations to the priesthood. In 2003 Bishop Friend named me pastor of Jesus the Good Shepherd Church in Monroe. I was pastor of Good Shepherd from 2003 to 2011. Bishop Duca next placed me as pastor of St. Patrick Catholic Church in Lake Providence and at Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Oak Grove. I remained at these parishes until 2017. I was then named pastor of Christ the King Catholic Church in Bossier City. During this time, I worked hard to build a sense of unity among all of the parishioners. On July 1, 2019 I was named pastor of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church. While I have enjoyed each of my past pastoral placements, I now look forward to this next chapter in my life at both St. Mary of the Pines and Sacred Heart.

My favorite past times are going to movies, writing, reading and hiking. I believe in making the world a better place through the living out of my faith.

I look forward to getting to know the parishioners of both of these parishes. I hope that the ministry of St. Mary of the Pines and Sacred Heart will grow while I am pastor. I look forward to the future and to helping build up these parishes in love and faith.

Fr. Mark Watson

