

Biography of Monsignor Watkins

Assigned by Cardinal Donald Wuerl as Pastor of St. Ann's Church, Monsignor James D. Watkins became the Pastor of St. Ann with official appointment on July 6, 2016. He had served previously at St. Ann as Associate Pastor from 1989 to 1992.

Son of the late Admiral and Mrs. James D. Watkins and the fifth of six children and having lived in a Navy family with many childhood moves, Monsignor Watkins finally settled in Washington, DC in 1975, having discerned his vocation to the priesthood at that time. After graduating from St. Anselm's Abbey School for boys in Washington in 1979, he attended The Catholic University of America and, as a Basselin Scholar and seminarian for the Archdiocese of Washington, he earned his Bachelor's degree in (1983) and Master's degree (1984) in philosophy. He then studied in Rome at the Pontifical North American College where he earned his Bachelor's in Sacred Theology (S.T.B.) from the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas (Angelicum) and a License in Sacred Theology (S.T.L.) from the Pontifical Gregorian University.

Ordained by James Cardinal Hickey on June 24, 1989 at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, Father Watkins was assigned as Associate Pastor at St. Ann in Washington, DC. In 1992, he commenced doctoral studies in philosophy at Oxford University (St. Benet's Hall) and the Angelicum in Rome, where he earned his Ph.D. in philosophy in 1997; his area of concentration and interest is metaphysics. He served as Associate Pastor at St. Matthew's Cathedral from 1995 to 2001 before being assigned to Immaculate Conception Church as Administrator in November 2001, while continuing his work as Associate Pastor at the Cathedral until 2003 when he was named Pastor of Immaculate Conception. In his fifteen years of pastoral ministry at Immaculate Conception Church at 8th & N Streets, Northwest in the Shaw community in downtown Washington from 2001 to 2016, Monsignor Watkins successfully restored the 1864 historic church building, the 1879 Tracker organ, as well as the school, rectory, and convent properties. Pope Benedict XVI named him a Monsignor in April 2006 with the title of Chaplain of His Holiness.

Assisting the Archdiocesan Office of Worship from 1995 to 2007, Father Watkins served as the Cathedral's principal Master of Ceremonies for Episcopal Liturgies, compiling over 2000 pages of ceremony notes. He has served as a Chaplain to the Serra Club of Washington, and for many years served as the Dean of the Northwest- East Deanery. He is a member of the Archdiocesan Priests Council and a member of the Archdiocesan Board of Consultors. He is a Chaplain in the Order of Malta in the Federal Association and Assistant Principal Chaplain of the Subpriory of Our Lady of Lourdes in the Order of Malta, as well as a Chaplain in the Constantinian Order of St. George. Since 1990 he continues to lecture to undergraduates as an Adjunct Professor at The Catholic University of America in the School of Philosophy in the natural science of metaphysics (Philosophy of God).

He served in the Air Force Chaplain Reserve with the rank of 2nd Lieutenant. While a student in Rome, he compiled an extensive unpublished work on the Lenten Station Churches of Rome and published in 1995 a widely popular Manual of Prayers (fifth printing). He was awarded The John Carroll Society Medal in 2007 for his many years of dedicated liturgical service in organizing the annual Red Mass at St. Matthew's Cathedral. He is a member of the Metropolitan Club of Washington since 2002 and serves on the Board of We Serve, Inc. which honors national services to our Veterans and their families in the dimensions of healing of mind and spirit.