

Architecture alumnus turned priest leads Tulane Catholic Center

September 15, 2014 11:00 AM Alicia Duplessis Jasmin
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The Rev. Thomas Schaeffgen's life has come full circle from Tulane student to director of the Tulane Catholic Center. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

After obtaining a degree in [architecture](#) from Tulane University in 2006, Christopher Schaeffgen's life came to a crossroad.

Down one path was life as an architect. The other path led to Dominican priesthood, a life he'd first gained interest in as an active participant of the [Tulane Catholic Center](#).

He took a job at a Denver firm, but the thought of entering priesthood reemerged.

“While I was in Denver I called Father R.B. Williams who was the former pastor here at Tulane,” says Schaeffgen, who was seeking spiritual direction. “I was pretty sure I did not want to be a priest, but I wanted to deal with it so that I could say for sure that I'm not called to do that.”

During college, the Memphis, Tennessee, native studied Spanish, spent a year abroad in Spain and attended the student-run service trip, Mission Honduras. In retrospect, he says the decision to become a priest was clear, but that he didn't always know it.

“In 2004 I went to Honduras and that's when I really started to think about it,” Schaeffgen says. “There was such a deep faith in the people, and I could see their desire for leadership.”

Eight years later, the road Schaeffgen chose has led him back to the uptown campus as director of the Tulane Catholic Center, which recently broke ground on the new 8,000-square-foot [Father Val A. McInnes, O.P. Center for Catholic Life](#).

The center, located at 1037 Audubon St., is expected to open in fall 2015.

“When you go from high school to college you are making a leap academically. It should be the same with your faith,” Schaeffgen says. “My vision is that students who come to the university will be able to go deeper into faith rather than lose it.”

Since entering religious life, Schaeffgen no longer uses Christopher, his birth name. Instead, he has assumed the name Thomas, after the patron saint of architects.

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