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April 8, 2003

Ms. Kathryn Meyers
The Crusader
College of The Holy Cross
One College Street
Worcester, MA 01610-2395

Dear Ms. Meyers,

This is in response to your letter of January 31 last in the Crusader entitled "A Not- So Hidden-Threat".

You begin by making factual mistakes and continue throughout by drawing unsupported and incorrect charges and conclusions regarding the efforts of older alumni. First may I correct the record.

Following our 50th reunion some members of the class of 1949 and one from the class of 1945 (not 1957) were appalled at the results of a survey done by the Chaplain's office concerning the views and attitudes of students about religion and spirituality. We also learned of the removal from the curriculum of long required courses in religion, philosophy, theology, ethics and scripture. We further became aware of the strong movement toward secularization not unlike that occurring in other Catholic colleges about which their alumni have also registered strong opposition including the formation of organizations to deal with such changes. We then believed we should be pro-active.

You refer to all of this as a threat and an insult and call us dissenters. But, we ask what is the threat or insult in advocating for the integration of courses on Catholicism in an institution which for over 100 years has held itself out as Catholic and even now claims to be a college serving the Catholic community? This advocacy has been central to our efforts. Indeed, we have been told by faculty and administration alike that students come to the school uncatechized. We ask why must they leave uncatechized? Our efforts implement our hopes and prayers for the renewal of Catholic higher education and reflect the direction of Pope John Paul II in Ex Corde Ecclesiae. We in no way threaten anything other than the abandonment of the essential character of Catholic higher education. What does it profit an institution if it gains high ratings in U.S. News and World Report but loses its essential character?

Lest you believe incorrectly that we oppose high academic status, you should know that we have great admiration and pride in the academic accomplishments of the college. Indeed, for over 50 years we have supported the college not only in a material way but also in the way we have tried to live our family, professional, spiritual and community lives in keeping with the truths we were taught at Holy Cross. We also believe, however, that academic excellence and a faith based program are not mutually exclusive. Witness the record of older alumni.

You refer to an alumnus of the class of 1957 and the founding of The Cardinal Newman Society. This alumnus received a prestigious award from the national CNS along with Cardinal Avery Dulles, one of the most respected theologians in this Nation. We would call this good company indeed especially considering Cardinal Newman's central role in Catholic higher education. Moreover this alumnus of 1957 has labored unselfishly for the renewal of the college based on his love and admiration for Holy Cross. With regard to your reference to the response of pre-1970 alumni, 98% of those responding were supportive of our efforts. After 30 years of secularization it is obvious that the responses of post 1970 alumni would be quite different.

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You refer to the Catholic heritage of the College as permeating every thread of the school. How can this be when Catholicism isn't even taught? Or, when the administration has established and maintains co-ed living with the knowledge of immoral behavior? Or, when the college permits the pornographic filth of the Vagina Monologues two years in a row especially in the midst of the Church's sex scandal which has found its way to the Jesuit Order itself? Or, when the college permits and supports gay and lesbian groups? Or, when the College is about to honor a pro-choice alumnus and T.V. personality (Chris Matthews) in violation of its own policy on abortion? Or, when the College planned to honor an Archbishop who was seriously compromised in the sex scandal? Or, when the College has exhibited opposition and indeed intransigence to compliance with Ex Corde?

You refer to adjustments to the shifting climate of the country. The shift, of course, is the decoupling of moral and religious values from our institutions including higher education. Don't you perceive any relationship between this decoupling and dissent from fundamentals of the Faith to the current Church scandals? Obviously, there have been changes in the world which the College must recognize. But the question is how. Does the College follow the world and be of the world. Or, does the College adhere to eternal truths while making the practical changes needed to adapt to changes in technology, science etc.

Again, lest you misunderstand, we do not advocate a return to life on campus as it was before 1970. We see, however, a great need for a required curriculum of the courses noted earlier, given by the best teachers with the best materials in order to provide the intellectual basis and spiritual treasures of the Faith. Surely, the Center for Religion, Culture and Ethics can be a valuable adjunct to curriculum along with retreats etc. But, the Center can not be a substitute for formal learning.

In you next to last paragraph you say we are convicted in our claims. Did you mean "convinced"? You also refer to an appearance on MTV as trivial. With all of the media options the choice of one saturated with sex and violence is hardly trivial. Your reference to a paragraph in a letter from the HCCNS as vindicating both students and administration requires clarification if not correction. And, we would ask students to go to the HCCNS website read the letter and then decide if the entire school was portrayed as a group of heathens. Your characterization was overdrawn at least, untrue at worst.

As to your last paragraph, please know that even older alumni are familiar with much of what we take issue with. Among like minded alumni are persons who have served the College at its highest levels for many years including recent ones. You say "it is not the faith and religion of the students that has changed, but rather the manner in which they practice that (sic)". But, again, we ask how can they practice what they do not know?

We are mindful and take pride in the many laudable activities students perform but given their acknowledged lack of Faith formation we hope they are motivated by beliefs which transcend social welfare.

Although you did not mention it in you letter, we are aware of the survey published in the recent issue of the Holy Cross magazine and the recent HERI-UCLA study of 38 catholic colleges. While the Holy Cross study could be the subject of further correspondence some questions and comments are immediately evident. For example, why was a "scientific" study done in house? The HERI study includes data for Holy Cross and it would be interesting for alumni and others to view this data. Suffice it to say that the HERI study placed Holy Cross in the grouping of the most liberal schools. In context this means stronger in dissent and weaker in the Faith. Further, were students at Holy Cross followed from Freshman through Senior year regarding all questions? What is the merit in comparing H.C. students to Catholics generally and to non-Catholics? Doesn't the quest for excellence impose a higher standard and aren't we getting to the lowest common denominator standard of comparison? How sad it is that only 16% of H.C. Catholics think the Magisterium is very important to being a Catholic and that senior church attendance is weaker than freshmen. It appears that seniors do not even attend Mass every Sunday. The very high percentage of dissent regarding birth control, divorce/ remarriage, abortion and papal infallibility is hardly the profile of a Faith based community. How can H.C. students combine strong religious faith with thoughtful questioning when

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they do not know their Faith because they have not been presented with its intellectual underpinnings and its spiritual treasures? Is the good change you refer to at Holy Cross the Survey's point regarding the degree to which student's critically reflect on their Faith? Again, we wonder how this can be when the students come to college uncatchized and leave in the same state?

We trust in the interest of fairness, you will publish this in the Crusader.

Sincerely yours,

Guy C. Bosetti, class of 1949