

6101 Rudyard Drive
Bethesda, Md. 20814
Tel.: (301)-530-3365

July 4, 1990

Dear Fellow Member of the Holy Cross Class of 1941:

With this cover letter I send you a copy of a letter whose story I now relate.

Early in January I read in Crossroads, the alumni journal, of a draft of the college's proposed mission statement. In a letter on January 19 I asked Fr. John E. Brooks, S. J., our president, for a copy. On January 25 he sent both it and the report of the committee which had issued it. He also said that he would "be interested in learning {my} reactions to the report."

With that invitation I wrote the enclosed letter on February 7. It is, I trust, self-explanatory. I sent a copy to our class secretary Bud Ryan, who had earlier suggested I write Fr. Brooks of that unhappiness with the college which I had privately expressed to him. I also sent an FYI copy to Bishop Tim Harrington, bishop of Worcester as well as our classmate.

Seven weeks went by, but I heard from none of them. On March 28 I called Fr. Brooks only to learn from his secretary that he had not received the letter. Hence I immediately sent him another copy, this one by certified mail. Bishop Tim's secretary said he had not received his copy; so I sent him another copy by regular mail. Bud Ryan had received his copy but had done nothing about it because, as he said, he "had not heard from Fr. Brooks."

Six more weeks went by; again I heard from nobody. On May 7 I called Bud, who said he had not seen or talked to Fr. Brooks and had not felt free to use my letter as a class letter without his approval. He also said he needed college approval to give me your name and address so that I could mail it to you.

Seven and a half weeks went by; and silence still reigned. On June 28 I again telephoned Bud, who told me he had discussed my letter with the Director of Development, Fr. George O'Brien, who had ruled that "That letter will not clear." Bud made it equally clear that both the college and he would have nothing to do with mailing the letter to you. He did say I was free to make up my own mailing list from available materials! Since they are perforce incomplete and out-of-date, I am sure my mailing suffers accordingly.

Had I written glowingly about college achievements or breezily about partying on the Cape or golfing in Florida, I would have been saluted with a roll of the drums. However, I wrote thoughtfully but critically about Catholic education at Holy Cross, and that brassy deviation from standard conduct has brought me an official silencing. A case in point: this spring Holy Cross played host to an excommunicated, schismatic, heretical Washington, D. C. priest now flamboyantly flailing our "racist" Catholic Church but has refused to give old Tom Troy, one of its own, your name and address! The experience makes me wonder about that "setting of freedom, tolerance, and civility," which the draft mission statement would have us believe exists on Mt. St. James.

Yours A. M. D. G.!

Tom

c.c. Most members of the Class of '41
Fr. Brooks, Fr. O'Brien

Thomas F. Troy
6101 Ruyard Drive
Bethesda, Md. 20814
Tel.: 301-530-3365

Rev. John E. Brooks, S. J., President
College of the Holy Cross
Worcester, Mass. 01610-2395

February 7, 1990

Dear Fr. Brooks:

Thanks much for your prompt response of January 25 to my earlier request. I would have responded much sooner than now had not the flu laid me low the day your letter arrived. Fortunately the villain has now been routed!

Let me make a few comments about the draft Holy Cross mission statement and the accompanying committee report. But first a retrospective view. When I was at Holy Cross, 1937-41, there was not to my knowledge any mission statement or discussion thereof. Had there been any such, it probably would not have involved the likes of me. Had I, however, or any of my classmates been asked for a simple statement of the college mission, I think any of us would have responded with, at most, six words, namely, the higher education of Catholic men. Those words as applied to Holy Cross then--avowedly and patently Catholic, Jesuit, and liberal--would have been self-explanatory and unarguable. Perhaps I oversimplify the past, but I doubt it.

Today's situation is quite different. At your direction a committee has been trying to define Holy Cross as still liberal, Jesuit, and Catholic. However, in its mission statement, the committee has come up with only one idea, repeated in and dominating each of its five paragraphs. That idea, the liberal arts element, projects Holy Cross as an environment in which people of diverse traditions can discuss fundamental religious and philosophical questions. As for the Jesuit element it gets a sentence re-affirming a commitment to the intellectual life, to faith and justice. As for Catholicism it also merits a sentence, on its "enrich[ment]" of the college. The Holy Cross portrayed here shapes up as a grand ecumenical discussion club, a Great Books forum, a Town Hall, where everyone agrees to disagree but of course does it in "a setting of freedom, tolerance, and civility."

This Holy Cross is clearly a far cry from the Holy Cross where the Jesuit faculty, suffering no failure of nerve, believed it had a body of knowledge, traditions, and values to foster and impart as well as explore and examine. It is a far cry from the Holy Cross where every paper, especially test paper (!), was dedicated "A.M.D.G." It is a further far cry from those words that no eye could miss as one moved up the steps of Dinand--"Ut Cognoscant Te Solum Deum Verum Et Quem Misisti Jesum Christum." However much any of us stumbled, we never had any doubt as to why we were at Holy Cross and what Holy Cross meant to us. If I may say so, there was a mission statement.

While your committee has produced its mission statement, it has also produced a report in which it has rather confusedly admitted its inability to produce such a statement! On page two of its report it declared: "We do not believe there is a consensus among us of what constitutes ideal liberal arts, Jesuit and

Catholic undergraduate education." On page six it further declared that numerous discussions with other faculty members have shown that on the Catholic, Jesuit, liberal triad "there are profound questions on which no clear agreement exists." It went on: No one at Holy Cross, and probably no one elsewhere, can claim to know what is required for authentic liberal arts education today. Nor does anyone have a blueprint for Catholic and Jesuit education, much less for education conducive to inspiring men and women for others." On page eight it declared: "As a community we do not yet share an adequate language for articulating the question of mission, exploring its implications, and sketching out possible modes of response." All we can do, it concluded, is talk. Surely your committee, though obviously serious and hardworking, has filed for bankruptcy.

The cause of bankruptcy seems obvious: it is at bottom the non-Catholic character of the faculty and the questionable Catholicity of the ostensibly Catholic members thereof. This I submit is borne out by many sections of the report. For many, if not most, at the college religion is really separate from the academic. It is not even academic. It is a "non-cognitive realm of experience." It had only a "minimal" role in Jesuit education properly understood. In short, it is as peripheral to the genuine university as the football team or the Senior Ball. The fact that some students attend Mass, or belong to a sodality, or say the Rosary, well, everybody has the right to do his or her thing. But it's not academic.

Hence, how can Catholicism be made an essential element of today's Holy Cross mission statement? And as long as Holy Cross can boast of only a handful of teaching Jesuits, the other professors, the department chieftains, can ignore them. Indeed, the power at the college probably lies in the departments, the narrow, sectarian units, which have no over-arching A.M.D.G. or Dinand inscription to make them yield to any other ideal than themselves and their self-protective "academic freedom." No, it is not surprising that your committee can reach no consensus on Holy Cross as liberal, Jesuit, and Catholic. It has been wrestling with what a Fordham Jesuit, Fr. Moorhouse Millar, once described to me as "an illegitimate problem." Sad to say.

Let me carry this ramble a step further. I find an echo of this lack of consensus in some comments attributed in the last Crossroads to Prof. David J. O'Brien, who recently received the Outstanding Professor Award. I am sure he deserved it. I know of his reputation and read often in the Catholic Historical Review of his activities as an historian. However, this recognizably successful and popular teacher has given us a discouraging picture of capable and bright but demoralized and alienated students at Holy Cross. While as individuals they write fine papers, he laments that there is a "flat tone" in too many of their classroom discussion. Too many of them, he said, are "terribly demoralized." "Even the cockiest lack confidence in themselves and, especially, in their ideas." Their "demoralization" he attributes to the poor quality of Catholic and national life for which he and his colleagues must bear responsibility. Students are "alienated," he said, because "somehow we have not pulled it off," and he concluded that "we must begin to erase the agents of alienation that are affecting today's young men and women." Yes, a discouraging picture.

Intereritingly enough, I was reading those lines above at the very time I was finishing Judge Robert Bork's The Tempting of America. It is easily the most

stimulating book I have read in a long time, and I heartily recommend it, especially for the left liberal in Kennedyland. What brought O'Brien and Bork together for me was the latter's observation that today's "intellectual class...is enormously mistrustful of this society and its institutions, a mistrust so deep that some commentators have characterized it as a state of alienation." He went on to quote a Lichter and Rothman study of the leaders of 74 public interest organizations (ACLU, Common Cause, Center for Law and Social Policy, etc.). They wrote: "The liberalism of public interest leaders shades into profound dissatisfaction with American social and economic order...In fact their alienation was one of our most striking findings...Three out of four believe the very structure of our society causes alienation, and over 90% say our legal system favors the wealthy...Only about half the public interest leaders believe the system can be salvaged." Can O'Brien find here an explanation for that "flat tone" in his classroom, the "demoralization" and "alienation" of his students? Is that what he meant when admitting that "we have not pulled it off"?

If you will bear my frankness, Fr. Brooks, I will link O'Brien and Bork with Brooks! While I have long been respectful of the tremendous energy, enthusiasm, and selflessness with which you have so long served Holy Cross, I have just as long been unhappy with the radical change of events that has gone on apace under your administration in these post-Vatican II years. In the face of your absorption in college affairs, I should tremble to challenge you, but I suspect there are hidden, and yet perhaps not hidden, dangers in your spirited advocacy of two ideas which you obviously hold vital to today's and tomorrow's Holy Cross. The first is the contemporary Jesuit emphasis on "education for others," a puzzling re-writing of the Ten Commandments, which I suspect the average non-Catholic faculty mathematician, linguist, economist, and political scientist finds rather quaint. The second, allied to the first, is the current Jesuit formulation of promoting justice, what you call eliminating the "shameful and abhorrent inequalities" afflicting the world (the bourgeois capitalism supporting the Holy Cross plant?!) Are these twin goals contributing to O'Brien's demoralization and alienation? Are they part of the confusion of goals that stymies the mission committee? Is not the Holy Cross intellectual class, a la Bork, turning its own students against their own society? I think Holy Cross has been cut off from its Jesuit and Catholic roots and is being simultaneously irreversibly secularized and launched on a social revolutionary, nearly Jacobin, trajectory foreign to American society.

One last word. You may use this too-long letter as you wish; you may send it to the mission committee, to Dr. O'Brien in particular. I hope you don't think you owe me a reply in extenso. Having written it, I've had my therapy. Anyhow I don't wish to be remembered as Fr. Brooks's Charles Kingsley. Remember, it's all A. M. D. G.!

I shall send a copy to my classmate Bud Ryan, who has served the Class of '41--as fine a body of men as I have ever known--as generously as you have served Holy Cross.

Sincerely yours in Christ.

Tom