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Holy Cross alumni watch Catholicity of college

By William T. Clew

Alumni form group to renew Catholic identity

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course. The college has a Religious Studies department which offers courses in religions, the Bible, theology and ethics.

He said that when he was a student, he was required to take four years of religion and four years of the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas.

He said in his letter to classmates that the college's mission statement "is lacking in its Catholicity and, amongst other significant items, does not meet the norms of ECE (Ex Corde Ecclesiae)."

The Ex Corde Ecclesiae states that "every Catholic university is to maintain communion with the universal church and the Holy See; it is to be in close communion with the local church and, in particular, with the diocesan bishops of the region in which it is located."

Among other things, it also sets norms for Catholic colleges and universities, including that the president be Catholic, that the majority of the board of trustees be committed Catholics to the extent possible; that, to the extent possible, it recruit Catholics as the majority of the faculty, that all professors be aware of and committed to the Catholic mission and identity of the institution, that Catholic theology be taught and that the institution present authentic Catholic teach-

A group of Holy Cross College alumni has formed the Holy Cross Cardinal Newman Society because of what the mission statement said is a concern among older alumni that the college has "drifted from its strong Catholic moorings."

Victor J. Malfa of Westboro, a member of the Class of 1957 and president of the new organization, said Holy Cross has made the grade as a great liberal arts college but, in the process, seems to have lost its religious base.

In an e-mail letter to members of his graduating class, Mr. Malfa said: "There is much good about the Cross, which indeed has become a top liberal arts college, but most of us also want it

ing.

The Holy Cross Cardinal Newman Society "is dedicated to the renewal of the Catholic identity of the College of the Holy Cross. We are an organization of alumni, students, faculty, local community, concerned Catholics, college leaders and others dedicated to promoting the educational ideal espoused by John Henry Cardinal Newman and further developed by Pope John Paul II in his Apostolic Constitution Ex Corde Ecclesiae," according to the organization's mission statement.

It says that the society was formed in 2002 because some older alumni saw "how far the college had drifted from its strong Catholic moorings."

It lists six plans of the society. They are:

"Gather and disseminate information about Holy Cross concerning its Catholicity.

"Promote discussion and understanding of the message of the Catholic Church concerning the nature and value of Catholic education at Holy Cross.

"Assist Holy Cross leaders, students and alumni in their efforts to preserve the religious identity of Holy Cross.

"Advocate the faithful implementation of Ex Corde Ecclesiae by facilitating an active dialogue among members of the Catholic community.

to be known again as the number one Catholic liberal arts college in the country, one that will unabashedly proclaim and explain real Catholicism - to really lift high the Cross."

He said the society was formed after four Holy Cross graduates sent out a letter to more than 10,000 alumni who graduated before 1971. The four are William M. Cousins Jr., Class of 1945, and Edward P. Kirby, Edgar L. Kelley and Guy C. Bosetti, all of the Class of 1949. The letter expressed concerns that the college began to lose its Catholic identity when the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) who ran the school gave up control to a board of trustees in 1970.

"Support activities that support our goals, such as conferences, publications, lectures, campus contacts and the local bishop's involvement.

"Work with the Cardinal Newman Society and other Catholic college organizations with similar ideals to accomplish our mutual and individual goals."

Mr. Malfa said the letter signed by the four alumni said that more than half of the faculty at Holy Cross is not Catholic even though 95 percent of the student body is Catholic. It quoted a Holy Cross survey that said students do not attend Mass regularly, see little relationship between sex and faith/religion, are very active sexually, do not hold themselves accountable to much church teaching, do not know much about what the church teaches and often experience the church as alienating.

A published report about the letter and the survey also said the survey stated that students pray regularly, yearn for intimacy, pay close attention to homilies, yearn for community, are extremely generous, volunteer regularly and cherish group experiences.

Mr. Malfa said hundreds of alumni communicate with the new society. Some of them are the younger alumni, but more are older alumni, he said.

The letter-writers received about 1,700 responses, of which only 47 did not express concern that the college had become too secular, Mr. Malfa said.

Mr. Malfa said that one thing that concerns alumni is that there is no requirement at Holy Cross that any student take a Catholic religion or Catholic philosophy

Correction:

'Malfa' should be 'Melfa'

of 1957 "expressed their disgust" when the play "The Vagina Monologues" was presented on the Holy Cross campus, he said in his letter. He said he attended an open discussion about the play a few days later on campus. Fifty people, including a Jesuit, a lay professor and an associate dean attended and he was the only one who spoke against it, he wrote.

Mr. Malfa said the point of the play, opposing violence against women, is a good one, but the play crossed the line into pornography and vulgarity to make the point.

In his letter, he said: "Our plan is to first inform more alumni about the true details of what's happening on Mt. Saint James and Ex Corde. Most of us have been very busy with our own lives and haven't kept up on these developments even though we continue to support and promote the College of the Holy Cross. There are many good people on campus who will work with an informed alumni to make things better. By getting the truth out from all sides we can each make better decisions on what this means to us and what we should and can do about it. The truth is the way!"

He said there will be a seminar at Holy Cross from 2 to 4 p.m. June 7 at the Hogan Center on the tonix. "Catholic Identity"