



SEAN DOUGHERTY

College of the Holy Cross graduates, above, make their way to Fitton Field for yesterday's outdoor commencement ceremony. At right, umbrellas protect family and friends from the rain.



# 'Hardball' host hails HC grads

## Demonstrators stage protest

By Emilie Astell  
TELEGRAM & GAZETTE STAFF

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**WORCESTER** — MSNBC's Chris Matthews doesn't blame Bishop Daniel P. Reilly for refusing to attend the 157th commencement at the College of the Holy Cross yesterday because of Mr. Matthews' abortion rights stance, saying the head of the Catholic Diocese here has the right to make that decision.

But in a split-second turnaround, Mr. Matthews, of "Hardball" fame, smilingly reminded reporters during an interview that in 2000, he and the bishop shared the same stage at the Anna Maria College commencement in Paxton where Mr. Matthews was the featured

speaker.

"You figure," he said, answering a reporter's question concerning the bishop's boycott. "I like Bishop Reilly."

The bishop announced on Wednesday that he would not attend commencement because of Mr. Matthews' support of abortion rights. This was the second time the bishop has refused to attend a Catholic college's commencement in his eight-year tenure here.

In 1999, he declined an invita-

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## Commencement at HC

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tion to Assumption College because the featured speaker, Lt. Gov. Jane M. Swift, supported abortion rights.

"I cannot let my presence imply support for anything less than the protection of all life at all its stages," the bishop said in a statement earlier this week outlining his decision concerning Holy Cross.

Despite the bishop's absence and a group of two dozen anti-abortion protesters who demonstrated outside the college campus, Mr. Matthews told reporters after the ceremony that he was not offended by the protests, saying he would be surprised if there were none.

"I accept the teaching of the Catholic Church," he said.

He is also commencement speaker tomorrow at the University of Scranton. Bishop James Timlin has declined to attend that ceremony, saying Mr. Matthews holds a view on abortion that is contrary to Catholic moral law.

The controversy did not seem to bother parents and relatives who waited patiently for commencement to begin yesterday at Holy Cross.

Robert Butler, of Monticello, N.Y., said he is not fond of Mr. Matthews or his politics, but "I'm very much a free-speech advocate. He has the right to voice his opinions. That's the single thing that makes this country great."

Mr. Matthews addressed 697 graduates and their families gathered for the outdoor ceremony at Fitton Field.

He outlined rules for success, emphasizing getting involved in the game at hand, asking for something you really want and following hunches.

"If you want to play a game, go to where it's played," he said.

Mr. Matthews, class of '67, mentioned best-selling author Joe McGinniss, whose works include "Fatal Vision" and "The Selling of the President," as one of his heroes. Mr.

McGinniss, a Holy Cross graduate and a reporter for the Telegram & Gazette in 1964-65, had the city buzzing when he was a columnist for The Philadelphia Inquirer.

"McGinniss was so hot in Philly that radio talk shows would start the morning off taunting the audience with 'What did you think of McGinniss this morning,'" Mr. Matthews said. "Now that's hardball."

His speech made no mention of his position on abortion, although he discussed the issue when he met with TV and print reporters.

Deciding to have an abortion is a personal decision allowed in a free society, he said, although he emphasized that he supports limiting the number and frequency of abortions.

Mr. Matthews' abortion stance and his choice as commencement speaker kicked off a controversy that started in April when alumnus and former Board of Trustees Chairman Charles E.F. Millard criticized the Rev. Michael C. McFarland, president of Holy Cross, for inviting the TV host.

Mr. Millard, class of '54, sent a letter to the college asking that Holy Cross distance itself from Mr. Matthews by adding a carefully worded disclaimer to the honorary degree he received yesterday. College officials refused.

Mr. Millard, who received an honorary degree from the college in 1999, also sent letters to alumni asking for support on the issue.

The dispute continued yesterday as protesters held placards expressing their displeasure as they stood along College Street.

Laurie Letourneau, of the Life Action League of Massachusetts, said Catholic students attending Holy Cross "don't have a clue" about the controversy over Mr. Matthews or whether they are attending a Catholic school.



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Chris Matthews, right, watches yesterday's commencement at the College of the Holy Cross with Dr. Michael Collins, chairman of the school's board of trustees.

She held a sign that read "Rev. McFarland supports abortion."

After having a few curse words hurled at her by passers-by, she said, she realized people were not outraged over Mr. Matthews speaking at commencement.

"They don't know and they didn't seem to care," she said.

She was also critical of the two other honorary degree recipients, Iris Cantor, president of the Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Foundation, and Cardinal Avery Dulles, S.J., the first American theologian to be named to the College of Cardinals and the first American Jesuit to become a cardinal.

Ms. Letourneau said abortions are done at medical centers supported by the Cantor Foundation. She said Cardinal Dulles should not have attended when there were abortion rights supporters receiving honorary degrees.

Victor J. Mella, class of '57 and a Shrewsbury businessman, earlier organized a Holy Cross chapter of the Cardinal Newman Society working to return a Catholic identity to Holy Cross.

"There's a disconnect," he said, "between what they should be learning about Cath-

olic teaching and a society that allows abortion."

The local graduates are:

### BACHELOR OF ARTS

- Ashby: Robert S. LaBlanc.
  - Auburn: Michael J. Mahar.
  - Cheriton: Jennifer A. Luukko, Patricia S. Luukko and Daniela M. Wilmet.
  - Clinton: Jared C. Connors.
  - Dudley: Erin E. Hyka.
  - Fitchburg: Anna Hohos.
  - Grafton: Timothy F. Holahan\*\* and Ahlenna D. Myers.
  - Holden: S. Peter G. Bak\*\* and Megan E. Deedy.
  - Hubbardston: Daniel M. Confi\*\*\*.
  - Leominster: Taha N. Dickey and John S. Lombard.
  - Millford: William J. Andruskevich, Laura M. Cianciolo, Timothy M. Hoppe\* and Christina M. Toschas.
  - Millbury: Morgan A. Cassista and Michael R. Ewanowski.
  - Millville: Megan M. Conlon.
  - Northbridge: Lisa M. Komp.
  - Oxford: Clinton F. Bookler.
  - Putnam: Amanda M. Cormier.
  - Shrewsbury: Laura E. Batbouta, Ailina C. George\*, Brian H. Kavanagh, Daniel J. Lucey, Katie M. Perry\*\* and Jennifer M. Saba.
  - Sutton: Ilona T. Nagy.
  - Townsend: Douglas R. Howgate\*.
  - Westboro: Andrew M. Flynn and Bradford S. Wagner.
  - West Boylston: Meghan E. Barry and Abbie Raj.
  - Worcester: Hector O. Cordero-Freyes, Brian P. Coughlin, Julia R. Crowley, Michael J. Grandone, Kaitlyn M. Hanner, Thuan T. Huynh, Kate K. Mack, Ana E. Moriarty, Colleen A. O'Connor, Georgia Panagiotopoulos\* and Holmes P. Wilson.
- \* denotes cum laude  
\*\* denotes magna cum laude  
\*\*\* denotes summa cum laude