

**Reflections on the Mission Statement of Holy Family College – Mr. Michael Van Thuyne**  
**August 1995**  
**Opening Meeting of the New Academic Year**

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Good afternoon, Sister Francesca, senior administration, fellow administrators, faculty, professional staff, and members of the Holy Family College community.

As I begin my sixth year at Holy Family, it is with great pride and humility that I stand before you today offering my interpretations and feelings about our college mission statement.

There is an old Chinese proverb that states “Knowledge is but one wing of the bird. Action is the other. It takes both to fly.” To me, this proverb captures the intrinsic meaning embodied within our mission statement.

The knowledge we must attain lies within the values of the Judeo-Christian tradition as revealed in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, the action and/or reaction to these teachings are displayed by our acceptance and active promoting of the dignity of the human person, and the oneness of the human family, by educating men and women, both intellectually and morally to assume their responsibility toward God, themselves, and society.

Our faculty certainly provides an excellent knowledge-based foundation in the various subjects and curriculum taught to our student body. However, we are all students when it comes to studying the teaching of God through His Son, Jesus Christ.

The true knowledge we as a society are seeking can be found within God’s words to us. Unlike some subject matters, which can be debated from both sides of an issue, Christ’s message to us is expressed with purposeful clarity. There is no double-meaning, no two sides to a coin, no room for interpretation based on one’s personal view or opinion.

At this juncture, I look around the room and realize that there are greater and more experienced theological minds present who certainly can interpret and express Christ’s teachings more clearly than I can ever hope to do. Suffice to say that my initial point regarding knowledge is that we must take the time and effort to become familiar and versed with the teaching of Jesus Christ and His Church. This can be accomplished through scripture readings, insightful group discussions, and most importantly, by adhering to our Judeo-Christian heritage by living within the guidelines of God’s commandments and Jesus’ teachings.

Now, once we attain a clear understanding of this knowledge, it is equally as important to act upon it. Our college mission statement is an extremely proactive one. It challenges us, and we readily accept this challenge by stating that we will do our best to lead by example by sharing the teachings of Christ with those around us. This belief stretches beyond both classroom and office walls and into our daily lives as teachers, administrators, managers, and advisors.

When looking back on the people in my life who best exemplify the human spirit in carrying out the action part of what Christ expects of us as Christians, I can find no greater example than that of my father.

My father was a very simple, hardworking man who displayed tremendous logic, intelligence, compassion and humor when dealing with people, especially his family. Beyond these admirable traits, my father lived his life with an unyielding devotion to God. Being a provider to a wife and five children, my father never had much discretionary income to spend on luxuries. Rather, his hard-earned money was basically spent on the essentials. However, my father always taught us that even though one cannot always contribute monetarily towards one's goals, a person can take an active stance and personally work for the attainment of one's goals through hard work and prayer.

By my father's participating in such activities as our parish Usher Society, Catholic Charities, and the Knights of Columbus to name a few, he instilled the value within me that an active, hands-on participation benefits not only the parish, but also the surrounding community. Consequently, this also provided an interesting, introspective view into my own character development, both morally and spiritually.

Within our own organization, we can trace various individuals who demonstrate such dedication and foresight in their daily work at Holy Family. Certainly, our founding president, Sister Neomisia, our second president, Sister Aloysius, our third president, Sister Lillian, and our fourth and current president, Sister Francesca, are among the most distinguished in this dedicated group.

What separates these four women from the rest is that they were chosen by their peers and more importantly, chosen by God, to lead the way and to become visionaries for our great institution. Through their tireless and selfless efforts, each Sister in her own right has raised the spiritual and ethical resonance of our college motto, *Teneor Votis*, ("I am bound by my responsibilities.") to great heights.

Nevertheless, the responsibility to promote our college mission statement lies within all of us at Holy Family. We cannot rely on the "other person" solely to fulfill the responsibilities that go hand-in-hand with being a member of our community. We must look honestly in the mirror and see that we are "the other person" and that our fullest energies are necessary for continued success now and in the future.

Today, Holy Family College faces many serious issues: market expansion within declining enrollment trends, government curtailments and cutbacks in financial aid programs, continuous technology needs and enhancements, competitive pressures, and fiscal budgetary constraints.

But we are also experiencing many positives: institutional growth through our Newtown campus, new and improving library automation, significant curriculum expansion, and numerous technological advancements which have led to a greater sharing of information within our organization.

Likewise, our students are faced with external economic, social, and political pressures which make the attaining of a college education that much more difficult for them. However, as Lee Iacocca once said, “some of man’s greatest accomplishments were first perceived as impossible tasks.” It is this belief and drive of the human spirit that keeps us forging ahead as a college community. It is our interminable will to put forth our best efforts each and every day that proves to be the critical factor of success for our great institution.

Indeed, these are strong words, but we must never lose sight that we alone cannot solve these problems or accomplish our goals without a coordinated work effort. But more importantly, we need God’s strength, wisdom, direction, and love to guide us each and every step of the way. None of us will achieve our fullest potential without a deep-seated faith and devotion to the teachings of Christ, while sharing these beliefs in our daily lives with those around us.

In conclusion, I would like to share a card that was sent to me by one student’s parents last spring semester. This particular student is an education major, the oldest of five children, and the first generation of the family to attend college. The student’s father had recently lost his job and faced the hardship of providing for his family without any visible means. Needless to say, the family was met with the inability to continue their daughter’s education at Holy Family College.

Through a concerted effort and financial planning with the family, this student was able to continue her studies and is doing well. More importantly than this story, however, is the message that was written by this student’s mother:

Dear Mr. Van Thuyne,

“This is just a note of sincere thanks and gratitude for what you were able to do to help my daughter stay at Holy Family and also for the kind words you had about instilling a Catholic education in our children. It makes us feel good to know that as tough as it may be to do this, it is the right choice.”

Yes we can make a difference but more importantly, we do make a difference in our own lives and in the lives of others. May the Good Lord continue to bless all of our work efforts this academic year, while providing the strength and courage necessary to fulfill our duties and responsibilities as outlined in our mission statement.

Thank you for listening, and may God bless each and every one of us.

- Michael E. Van Thuyne, assistant vice president for financial affairs, has worked at Holy Family College since 1989.