

HOLY FAMILY COLLEGE'S MISSION STATEMENT

Mission Statement Presentation

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I volunteered for this opportunity about the same time the President's Summit on Voluntarism was being held in this city. You remember that. It was a giant pep rally to get people to volunteer their services to make the community better. I see this as a similar opportunity, a similar type of meeting—a pep rally.

We should have a fight song, but we don't have a fight song. However, I do have these words of exhortation from the legendary alumnus of a school that once was very much like Holy Family College. Listen, now, to Knute Rockne, head football coach of the College of Notre Dame, as he passionately urges his team to come from behind, overcome the odds, and win the game:

When we get the ball, boys, that's when we go on offense.
We're going inside 'em; we're going outside 'em. And when
we get them on the run, we're gonna keep them on the run.
And we're gonna GO! GO! GO! GO! And we aren't going to
stop until we get over that goal line. And don't forget, men,
today is the day we're going to win! They can't lick us. We're
going to FIGHT! FIGHT! FIGHT! FIGHT!

And Rockne's Fighting Irish went on to win the game. That's the way it is, ladies and gentlemen. We are in a fight to win. We're looking forward to the next game, the fall and spring semesters—not against the students, they are on our team, but against the forces that will be fighting against them: fear, ignorance, laziness, lethargy, selfishness, sloth, and the lack of role models and leadership. Our obligation is to provide in that battle. We must provide the reason to learn, the reason to become a leader, the reason not to be lazy, to work hard, the reason to succeed. We have to give the kids these role models to follow.

Listen to the action words used in the goals of the College's*—and

*Although Holy Family was a college when this presentation was given, the Pennsylvania Department of Education awarded Holy Family "University" status in December 2002

our—Mission Statement: to foster, to promote, to encourage, to cultivate, to develop. What, exactly, are we to do? It is spelled out in the Statement:

Foster a community affirming the dignity of the human person and a living Christian faith.

Promote the formation of persons with a knowledge of God, self, and the human family.

Encourage the development of men and women liberated from self-centeredness.

Cultivate critical, logical, and ethical thinking—in a perspective that is historical, social, and global.

Develop in students a critical sense with solutions based on Judeo-Christian values.

How are we to do these things for our students? Certainly, through the curriculum. But more directly, in the areas of academics, life, and family, we act as role models most effectively through our example. “Do not as I say, but as I do.” It’s a motto that we should follow because actions do speak louder than words. Trite, but true! Our nonverbals tell much more about us than anything we say about ourselves.

In everything we do, we teach students something. Oh, how much we teach them without even realizing it—but we must realize it, all the time. They watch us. They want leadership from us. They will be what we encourage them to be, what we teach them to be, what we let them be. We must stoke the fire of the love of learning, the love of country, the love of God—as directed by our Mission Statement—in these students. Recall Sidney Poitiers in “To Sir, With Love,” or Robin Williams in “Dead Poets Society,” or Richard Dreyfuss in “Mr. Holland’s Opus.” See the difference teachers, counselors, and administrators can make in the lives of the students.

Do students really need our role leadership? Yes, they do. Czech Republic President Vaclav Havel seemed to describe the state of young people today in an address at Independence Hall in 1994:

Today we find ourselves in a paradoxical situation. We enjoy all the achievements of modern civilization that have made our physical existence on this Earth easier in so many important ways. Yet, we do not know exactly what to do with

ourselves, where to turn. The world of our experiences seems chaotic, disconnected, confusing. There appear to be no integrating forces, no unified meaning, no truer inner understanding of phenomena in our experience of the world. Experts can explain anything in the objective world to us, yet we understand our own lives less and less.¹

We see it. They are confused. So, in what context do we act for the betterment of our students? Again, Vaclav Havel, this time at Harvard University in 1996:

The main task in the coming era is...a radical renewal of our sense of responsibility. Our conscience must catch up to our reason, otherwise we are lost....Our respect for other people, for other nations, and for other cultures can only grow from a humble respect for the cosmic order and from an awareness that we are a part of it, that we share it and that nothing of what we do is lost, but rather becomes part of the eternal memory of Being, where it is judged.²

Father Jack MacNamee, a long-time member of this faculty, addressed the value of his work in the circle of poverty known as North Philadelphia. In his book, *Diary of a City Priest*, Jack pondered the futility of his efforts to help a particular man in his parish, impoverished, brutalized by his neighbors, burned over his whole body, now suffering the final insult of AIDS. What good has Jack done? Thinking about it, he writes:

I sense this larger truth...When I slip into Church...where the Blessed Sacrament is there circled by that stylized sunburst, I do sense that there is a larger reality in which that man is encircled, else he would not even exist and the love which gave him or me existence is awesomely greater than any clouding of the splendor of the gift by AIDS or tragedy or whatever. ...Something greater is going on than this melodrama of mine.³

My friends, something greater is going on than this melodrama of ours. We act in a larger context than the present. Nothing we do with a student is insignificant, in the classroom or office or wherever. Vaclav Havel said it, "Nothing of what we do is lost, but rather becomes part of the eternal memory of Being, where it is judged." We are seriously responsible, then, for living the Mission Statement for

our students, for they look to each of us for guidance and leadership, and we owe it to them.

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¹ July 4, 1994 in Philadelphia on occasion of his receiving the Liberty Medal at Independence Hall.

² “Convocation Address”, Harvard University, June 8, 1996.

³ *Diary of a City Priest*, p.141.