

## HOLY FAMILY COLLEGE'S MISSION STATEMENT

### *Reflections on the Mission Consortium Meeting*

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**I**n preparing for the Mission Consortium Meeting, I have constantly been reminded of a scene from the film, *Superman II*. In this scene the evil villain has escaped from prison in a hot-air balloon and he is headed toward the frozen north accompanied by his “dumb-blonde” girlfriend, Miss Tessmacher. Miss Tessmacher, shivering, says to her boyfriend, “Why are we here? Where are we going?” The villain responds by saying, “This is not a philosophy seminar, Miss Tessmacher, this is a getaway.”

A job is not a philosophy seminar. Yet, if we do not frequently ask ourselves, “Why are we here? Where are we going?” we may not achieve the results desired.

The book *Total Quality Management (TQM) – Putting Structure Behind Philosophy*, shows how goal focusing is the first step to making philosophy operational. The book states:

The majority of the employees of an organization have no idea what the goals of the organization are... Obviously, if the employees do not know what the goal of the organization is, then how should they know if what they are doing helps achieve this goal.

This need to focus on an ultimate goal or mission is also endorsed by management guru, Peter Drucker. Drucker said clearly that the main thing a company (including nonprofit organizations like Holy Family) must do is to keep asking, “What business am I in?” In other words, we must keep asking why we are here at Holy Family College, what our focus is trying to accomplish and where we are going?

The answer to all these questions lies in the heart of Holy Family College's\* Mission Statement. In April, several people from Holy Family,

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

representing a cross-section of the College community, attended a workshop sponsored by the Collegiate Mission Consortium at Neumann College. There were a number of Catholic colleges represented to discuss “The Mission of Catholic Higher Education in a *Business Culture: Opportunities and Tensions*.” The title parallels the mission, since the mission is mentioned at every opportunity.

I am sure everyone is familiar with Holy Family College’s Mission Statement and I would like to present a challenge today. Think about the main reason you are working at Holy Family. Why are you here? Where are you going?

What is your own personal mission? Although I have tried to cover all the points shown in our Personal Development Plans, I would answer the question about my personal mission by saying, “My mission is to teach!” Therefore, I push for or complain about anything that could help or hurt my mission. Since our individual missions should all dovetail with the College mission, we should all find ourselves working for the same overall purpose.

The next question is how do our personal missions, as well as the mission of the College, fit into a business culture? Thinking about business and my personal mission as a business educator, has brought a particular paradoxical point of view to my mind. Education for business has often been seen as terribly vocational. And yet, don’t those who find themselves called to a religious life speak of their vocation? I believe that those who find themselves called to be accountants, managers or computer people, can serve God in their vocation just as nurses, teachers or priests can.

As Saint Paul wrote, “God has given us a variety of gifts.” It is not for us to judge which gifts are superior, but rather to appreciate that these various gifts can all be used to further the mission of God.

I began to wonder how Holy Family’s mission and the mission of other Catholic colleges really differed from non-Catholic church-related colleges. Certainly, other church-related colleges may also have goals such as: to affirm the dignity of the human person, to witness a living Christian faith, to promote by means of liberal arts the formation of integrated persons, and to develop in students a critical sense...based on Judeo-Christian values.

Even non-church-related colleges may be devoted to the other parts of our mission, such as: to provide professional programs, to encourage

the development of men and women toward their potential, to cultivate things like “critical, logical, and ethical thinking.”

What about the mission of Holy Family College? It is definitely a Catholic college and it should definitely admit and perhaps emphasize this aspect. However, does one have to be Catholic to carry out that mission? Does one even have to be Christian to carry out that mission?

In thinking about this question, I remembered the story of the Good Samaritan. Samaritans were not seen as “good” by the Jews of Jesus’ time. They were outsiders of unacceptable religious beliefs. And yet a Samaritan was used as an example of a true neighbor to the “man set upon by thieves.” Why? Because the Samaritan carried out the essence of the mission “to love his neighbor as himself.” This Samaritan carried out the spirit of the mission of Holy Family College: witnessing the dignity of the human person (including a person of a different faith), the oneness of the human family (even though that human is from a different background and culture), and the values of the Judeo-Christian tradition as revealed in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.

One of my students, who happened to be an older, foreign student, told me he decided to attend Holy Family College because he was so impressed with the Mission Statement in the catalog. The student commented, “It agrees completely with my own thinking.” I know he is not Catholic, and I believe he is Muslim. Yet, the Mission Statement is the thinking that attracted him to Holy Family.

The book, *Getting Employees to Fall in Love with Your Company*, says:

Cynics scoff...believing that the creation of a vision or mission statement is a waste of time and energy. They miss the underlying reasons why we humans desire such statements. An inscription on a church wall reminds us why such proclamations are vital. The inscription reads ‘a task without a vision is drudgery. A vision without a task is but a dream, but a vision with a task is the hope of the world.’

Our mission statement provides the vision in its initial paragraph describing a “small, coeducational, Catholic college what witnesses to the dignity of the human person, the oneness of the human family and the values of the Judeo-Christian tradition as revealed in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.”

The tasks are cited in the six basic long-range goals to be achieved by the attainment of specific objectives. The Mission Statement sounds so splendid. It will be splendid only if we make it happen by each of us working as individuals and all of us working together.

As you deal with the frenzy of a new semester—the student who registers just before the first test, the problems of broken copy machines and uncooperative computers, and the constant choices about how you should spend your time and energy—I ask you to reflect upon your own personal mission and how it fits with the Mission Statement of Holy Family College. When these difficulties occur, and we all know they will, remind yourself of why you are here and where you are going.

Thank you.