

# Holy Cross asked to distance itself from honoree's abortion views

By WILLIAM T. CLEW

**WORCESTER (CNS)** — A former chairman of trustees at the College of the Holy Cross has asked the Worcester college to dissociate itself from what he called the "pro-choice" position on abortion of this year's commencement speaker, Chris Matthews.

Matthews, who graduated from Holy Cross in 1967, is an author and hosts the nightly political analysis and debate show, "Hardball With Chris Matthews," on MSNBC television. He is to speak at the 157th Holy Cross commencement May 23 and receive an honorary degree.

Charles E.F. Millard told *The Catholic Free Press*, Worcester diocesan newspaper, that he has no objection to the

school honoring Matthews as long as the college dissociates itself from his abortion stand. Millard is a 1954 graduate of Holy Cross and was chairman of its board of trustees from 1977 to 1982.

Katharine McNamara, director of public affairs at Holy Cross, took issue with Millard's characterization of Matthews' position on abortion because she said his view is "not inconsistent with the position of the Church or the college."

She said Jesuit Father Michael McFarland, Holy Cross president, has had several conversations with Matthews on the subject of abortion. The college president said Matthews "views abortion as morally wrong."

Father McFarland said

Matthews differs with some Catholics on how intrusive government should be in controlling abortion. That is a matter of practical judgment and is allowable in Catholic thought, the priest said.

The priest said there is no "over-simplified purity test for honorees. If we checked their conformity with every point in Catholic teaching, we would have no honorees, including Millard."

Father McFarland said he has received "a handful" of letters about Matthews from alumni who have accused Holy Cross in the past of being too secular.

In a press release, Millard said he first expressed his concerns privately to the college administration and trustees in letters March 14 and April 2.

He said he made his objections public only after he received no response from them.

Millard said that Matthews has said "five or six times" on "Hardball" that he is "pro-choice." For example, Millard said that in June 1999, Matthews described himself as "pro-choice" during a discussion on the program. When asked what he meant, Millard added that Matthews said, "People know what we're talking about. I'm for abortion rights."

He said Matthews also said that he was for abortion rights in a discussion with former Vice President Al Gore on a program in December 2002.

Both McNamara and Millard cited Matthews' book, "Now, Let Me Tell You What I Really Think," to back their

statements.

Holy Cross's 1991 "Statement of Position on Abortion" says the college "has no desire to suppress intelligent discussion and debate on issues such as abortion."

"Nevertheless," it adds, "Holy Cross wishes publicly to affirm and bear witness to Catholic Christianity's longstanding insight that all of human life is sacred in the mystery of its origins and that abortion thus cannot be condoned... The college, therefore, will not grant official recognition to any organization that seeks to or is perceived to advance a right to abortion, nor will it allow college funds to be used to such a purpose."

Matthews did not return *Catholic Free Press* calls seeking his comment.