

To the Editor:

I didn't think I was being controversial when I said at a recent meeting of Holy Cross alumni that the college is not in any meaningful sense "Catholic."

Professors like myself, familiar with how the college is run, have known for years that Holy Cross is nearly indistinguishable from its secular counterparts, and has strived to be that way.

The point is conceded by David O'Brien, Loyola Professor of Catholic Studies, who in a recent book affirms that the college's mission statement purposefully avoids saying that the college is Catholic. The term "Catholic college," O'Brien adds, is inherently confusing and should be avoided.

Of course the supposed "Catholic" identity of Holy Cross does get hauled out for alumni fund-drives, the most recent of which is called "Lift High the Cross," in allusion to the Lenten hymn. And also for student recruiting. Someone might regard that as fraud.

President McFarland's big reply is that my understanding of "Catholic" is too narrow. Here's my humble definition, as regards professors: a Catholic professor is someone who gratefully accepts all of the teachings of the magisterium on faith and morals. I claim that there are at best a handful of professors at Holy Cross who are Catholic in that sense. Prove me wrong, Father McFarland.

Father McFarland's other reply is that I'm out of the mainstream. It all depends what stream you want to be swimming in. If the stream is the historic tradition of Holy Cross (before 1970), or the Jesuit saints, or Catholicism as understood throughout the world, then I'm very much in the mainstream. But if the stream is "American Catholicism," with its spirit of dissent, then I concede I'm not in the mainstream, and Holy Cross is.

MICHAEL PAKALUK, Ph.D.

Clark University

Holy Cross still faithful

To the Editor:

Holy Cross is still a first rate liberal arts college faithful to its Jesuit and Catholic heritage. This is the commitment of the Holy Cross trustees, president, faculty and staff, supported by the Society of Jesus, our local bishops, and the vast majority of the college's amazingly loyal graduates. The college offers courses in theology, including Catholic theology, religious studies, and what is now called Catholic Studies, courses engaging Catholic ideas in many disciplines. Our nationally recognized first year program centers on the vocational question "how then shall we live?"

Our campus ministry's liturgical, spiritual and apostolic service programs equal those of any parish or campus community in the country.

In recent years we have added many scholars whose academic vocations center on the relationship between faith and the intellectual life. The new Center for Religion, Ethics and Culture supports cre-

ative projects that exemplify the college's Jesuit and Catholic commitments. Over 30 interns are working this summer in the Worcester community, several with Catholic parishes and diocesan offices. They are supported by a new \$2 million foundation grant to help students utilize our theological and spiritual resources as they discern their life's work.

Seen from Holy Cross, where a lot of local Catholics work hard every day to bring the faith to life, the uninformed criticisms stated so strongly in the pages of the Catholic Free Press seem terribly unfair. Those who devote their lives to Holy Cross are confident that Worcester's Catholics would be very hopeful about the future of the church if they encountered the vast majority of Holy Cross students. The final test of the college's Catholic commitments is found in the lives its graduates live after Holy Cross. In the future as in the past the college will pass that test.

DAVID O'BRIEN

Worcester

Alumni seminar called a success

To the Editor:

The seminar for alumni and others was the first public meeting of the new Holy Cross Cardinal Newman Society (HCCNS) and was a huge success! Without any publicity by the college or class reunion newsletters, the 125 capacity college-provided room was filled with standing room only and many people were turned away! The presentations were the buzz around campus the entire Reunion Weekend as many alumni learned of this important issue. The success confirmed the disapproval of many alumni with the college's secularization and abandonment of a core Catholic curriculum.

Besides speakers Prof. Pakaluk and recent graduate Matt Smith, Dr. David Gregory, Professor of Law at St. John's University Law School, and I, as president of the Holy Cross Cardinal Newman Society, addressed many issues concerning Holy Cross' lack of Catholicity. I reviewed the events leading to the formation of the HCCNS, its progress

and its Web site created to provide detailed information and which includes documents, letters to and from faculty, pertinent links and a open bulletin board forum. Professor Gregory reviewed strategies on implementing the Vatican's Ex Corde Ecclesiae that is the official definition of a Catholic college and which provides guidelines and mandates for Catholic colleges many of whom are resisting what is now canon law.

Timing of the seminar at a Reunion Weekend was of particular importance because then class gifts are solicited and announced. As pointed out, we believe reunion attendance and class donations can be significantly enhanced by openly exploring these issues because many Holy Cross alumni don't attend anymore nor participate in financial support because they feel their concerns are not being addressed.

VIC MELFA

Westboro