

The Window for Oct 17, 2007

The Jesuit College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Massachusetts, is in trouble.

[Bishop Robert J McManus, S.T.D., issued a statement on October 10th warning President Michael McFarland, S.J., that the official Catholic status of Holy Cross was at risk.](#)

The reason for the showdown? On October 24, representatives of both Planned Parenthood and NARAL are scheduled to speak on campus as part of a "Teen Pregnancy Conference" sponsored by the Massachusetts Alliance on Teen Pregnancy.

This could be historic -- a clash that has been decades in coming between a bishop and a Jesuit college. Remember, even Jesuit colleges receive their "Catholic" status from the local bishop.

No university, even if it is in fact Catholic, may bear the title 'Catholic University' except by the consent of the competent ecclesiastical authority" (*Code of Canon Law* 808). The "competent authority" within each diocese is the bishop.

Holy Cross is renting space to the Massachusetts Alliance on Teen Pregnancy for the conference, and President McFarland responded to Bishop McManus by saying Holy Cross has "contractual obligations" and cannot cancel the conference or dictate its speakers. (Sorry, but Holy Cross had plenty of time to cancel the conference. A spokesman for the diocese, Raymond L. Delisle, said the bishop had a number of discussions with Father McFarland over the past two weeks.)

The Holy Cross statement also included the following:

“The college believes a meeting of adult professionals pooling resources, engaging in a dialogue and exchanging information is a beneficial way of grappling with pressing issues related to the health and well-being of Massachusetts teenagers and children.”

When October 24 arrives and the Holy Cross Jesuits have not acted in accord with the statement of Bishop McManus, a domino effect may begin toward the *official secularization* of Jesuit institutions in the United States, beginning in Massachusetts.

Will Father McFarland lead his school out of the Catholic Church? [He's already remembered for defending the honorary degree awarded to Chris Matthews in 2003, in spite of Matthew's explicit comments about being "pro-choice."](#)

Bishop McManus's warning doesn't sound like an idle threat:

“It is my fervent wish that the administration of the College of the Holy Cross will unequivocally dissociate itself from the upcoming conference . . . so that the college can continue to be recognized as a Catholic institution committed to promoting the moral teaching of the Roman Catholic Church.”

Like so many Catholic colleges inviting their students to embrace "the dialogue" of the virtues of abortion, Holy Cross alumni are dividing on the issue. John P. Hamill, chairman of the college's board of advisers, commented, "I find it very hard to understand why this is an issue of great concern after six years." (As it turns out, NARAL and Planned Parenthood had been guests on the campus for the previous five years.)

Vic Melfa, a Holy Cross alumnus, class of 1957, is co-founder and president of the Holy Cross Cardinal Newman Society. "It's a great concern to me because the group that's sponsoring the conference is diametrically opposed to Catholic teaching on life. President McFarland should have said 'no.'"

If this clash does reach a head, it will be the direct result of a document signed in 1967 at the Land O'Lakes Conference organized by then-president of the University of Notre Dame, Rev. Theodore Hesburgh, C.S.C.

The opening statement of the document set the wheels in the motion for a sea change in Catholic colleges and universities:

“The Catholic University today must be a university in the full modern sense. . . . To perform its teaching and research functions effectively the Catholic university **must have a true autonomy and academic freedom in the face of authority of whatever kind, lay or clerical, external to the academic community itself** (Emphasis added).”

Now, forty years later, Bishop McManus has challenged the heart of the Land O' Lakes statement (one of the signatories was the president of the Catholic University of Puerto Rico, the former-Right Rev. Theodore E. McCarrick).

Will the local bishop and Canon 808 prevail over the Jesuit president and the Land O' Lakes document? We shall see.

Posted by Deal Hudson on October 17, 2007 at 04:20 PM |