

2006 VALEDICTORY ADDRESS

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One of the defining characteristics of a Holy Cross education is the tradition and legacy of the Jesuits. As Holy Cross students we have heard the praises of a Jesuit education countless times, and as we complete our time here at Holy Cross, we should take a moment to reflect upon the impact that our Jesuit education has had on us, and should continue to have on us. The legacy of a Jesuit education is most clearly reflected in the Prayer for Generosity of Saint Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits.

Teach us to be generous, good Lord;
teach us to serve You as You deserve;
to give and not to count the cost,
to fight and not to heed the wounds,
to toil and not to seek for rest,
to labor and not to ask for any reward save that of knowing we do Your will.
- *Saint Ignatius of Loyola*

Much of our time at Holy Cross has been spent trying to find out how to serve God, do His will, and find our place in the world. We have spent these four years on a path to discernment, trying to find what it is that we excel at, that excites us, that gets us out of bed in the morning, besides 8:00 AM classes and lab. As seniors we have spent the year being barraged with the question “What are you doing next year?”. With the help of professors, chaplains, friends, family, reflection, and events such as convocation, hopefully we have found the road that will lead us to our place in the world.

In addition to carrying out the will of God, a Jesuit education implores us to give without consideration of cost. As Holy Cross students we have participated in the community service organizations of SPUD and traveled to the Appalachian region, New

Orleans, or even Africa to assist those less fortunate than us. We have done outreach or service through other organizations such as playing Christmas carols at nursing homes with the Pep Band or teaching elementary and middle school children about science with the Science Ambassadors. We have given of our time, talent, and resources to others, but this generosity must not stop as we exit the gates of Holy Cross. We must continue to give of ourselves and truly become “men and women for others”.

As students here we have learned the importance of determination and a fighting spirit that pushes us regardless of the difficulty of the task. Whether in varsity sports, intramurals, or even on the treadmill by ourselves in the Hart Center, we have learned to push through pain and exhaustion to challenge ourselves. The fight and the pain are not always physical. Some of us have lost loved ones during our time at Holy Cross and with the support of the loving community around us, we have fought through the sorrow and continued to excel.

As Holy Cross students we know the meaning of hard work, to toil and not to seek for rest. Many of our hours are spent in a science lab or in Dinand, researching, studying, reading, or practicing. We have consumed innumerable amounts of caffeine to combat fatigue and continue to work. We have gone to the Midnight Breakfasts during finals to fuel up for more studying. Some of us have defined hard work as being in the computer lab or library on a Friday night until we are told to leave because the building is closing. It is not just in an academic sense that we have worked tirelessly. We have practiced our sports, musical, theatrical, and artistic talents, and worked for social justice.

Not only does our education teach us to work tirelessly without seeking for rest, our Jesuit education also urges us not to ask for any reward for our work, except the

knowledge that through our hard work we have done God's will. Throughout our time here at Holy Cross, we have heard the praises of a liberal arts education and learning for its own sake. We have been encouraged to take classes that are outside our comfort zone, our area of expertise. Classics majors take science courses and chemistry majors must take English courses. We understand that if we are truly invested and engaged in our education, then the work itself, the process, whether it be a lab report or paper, is more important than the grade, the reward. Perhaps you forgave that professor who did not see your work for the true genius that it was, who did not give you the grade that you wanted. You forgave them because their class was interesting and despite the large amount of work the class involved, you jumped at the chance to take another class with this professor. We have learned more from our work than we did from any rewards we received for it.

As we prepare to leave this beautiful city on a hill, I urge you all to take these lessons with you. If we can keep the lessons of St. Ignatius of Loyola close at heart, then we can truly excel in the world beyond Holy Cross just as we have excelled within its gates.