



Notre Dame In A Secular World

04Jun
2016

Alumni Protecting Notre Dame's Catholic Identity

SYCAMORE TRUST ANNUAL BREAKFAST 2016

A BRIEF HISTORY

Our first panel discussion was held in the spring of 2007 with presentations focused on Father Jenkins’s approval of The Vagina Monologues. The event that year drew an audience that filled a large lecture hall. So did our 2008 and 2009 events — especially the latter, which dealt with Father Jenkins’s decision to honor President Obama, a decision that was harshly criticized by 83 cardinals, archbishops, and bishops.



In both years we were on the official Reunion Weekend program. But in 2010 the Alumni Association changed the long-standing policy under which that was possible. Expecting a much-reduced attendance, we moved that year to a Morris Inn meeting room and added a breakfast to the format.

As it turned out, we underestimated the program’s draw. Although alumni attending Reunion Weekend were not told of it through the official calendar of events, word got out and the room was filled beyond capacity. So we moved the following year to the Conference Center and, with the exception of 2013, when we met in the Hilton Inn because the Morris Inn was closed for renovations, have been there ever since. We began streaming the program speakers on the Internet in 2013 and now reach hundreds of alumni with informed discussions of issues that bear importantly on the Catholic identity of Notre Dame.

We are pleased to be back on the official program this year.

2016 PROGRAM AGENDA

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| 7:15 AM EDT | COMPLIMENTARY BREAKFAST |
| 8:00 AM EDT | PROGRAM |
| Invocation | Rev. Wilson Miscamble, C.S.C |
| Introduction | Bill Dempsey |
| Why I Left Georgetown for Notre Dame and What I Found | Dr. Patrick Deneen |
| The Virgin, the Dynamo, and the University of Notre Dame | Rev. Wilson Miscamble, C.S.C |
| Student Award | Timothy Bradley ('16) |
| Questions & Answers | Bill Dempsey |
| 10:00 AM EDT | CLOSING PRAYER |



2016 SPEAKERS

NOTRE DAME IN SECULAR WORLD

Our speakers this year will discuss a range of issues relating to the tension between the values of an increasingly secular society and those of a Catholic university, Notre Dame in particular but also, in Dr. Deneen's talk, Georgetown University in relation to Notre Dame.

Professor Patrick Deneen



Dr. Deneen, the David A. Potenziani Memorial Associate Professor of Constitutional Studies in the Political Science Department, is one of the most welcome additions to the Notre Dame faculty in recent years. Announcing the "big news" of his move from Georgetown to Notre Dame, a prominent public affairs commentator observed, "Georgetown just lost one of its brightest young academic stars because it wasn't Catholic enough." Dr. Deneen is a gifted teacher, a respected scholar, and an incisive commentator on issues at the intersection of public policy and religion.

Father Wilson Miscamble, C.S.C.



Fr. Miscamble is a noted scholar of American foreign policy during and after World War II whose most recent book is "For Notre Dame: Battling for the Heart and Soul of a Catholic University." Father Miscamble is a former Chair of the History Department, former Director of Moreau Seminary, and one of Notre Dame's most popular teachers. He is the organizer and past President of the Notre Dame Chapter of Faculty for Life.

Timothy Bradley ('16)



Tim is the outgoing editor-in-chief of The Irish Rover and former president of SCOP (Students for Child-Oriented Policy). Tim has been an outstanding student leader in the effort to maintain and strengthen the Catholic character of the university. The Rover, an independent student voice, reports on Catholic identity as well as other issues with competence and courage, while SCOP organizes events on issues relating to marriage, pornography, drug abuse, and education. SCOP was initially denied official recognition, but the students' persistence aided by a tsunami of criticism prevailed. A theology and economics major, Tim joins us immediately after his graduation.

William Dempsey ('52)



Bill is President of Sycamore Trust. He graduated in 1952 as class valedictorian; received his law degree from Yale; served as chief law clerk to Chief Justice Earl Warren; and practiced law in Washington when not serving as President of the Association of American Railroads and Chairman of the National Railway Labor



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EXTRACTS FROM NOTRE DAME'S MISSION STATEMENT

1

The University of Notre Dame is a Catholic academic community of higher learning....

As a Catholic university, one of its distinctive goals is to provide a forum where, through free inquiry and open discussion, the various lines of Catholic thought may intersect with all the forms of knowledge found in the arts, sciences, professions, and every other area of human scholarship and creativity.... The Catholic identity of the University depends upon, and is nurtured by, the continuing presence of a predominant number of Catholic intellectuals....The University encourages a way of living consonant with a Christian community and manifest in prayer, liturgy and service. Residential life endeavors to develop that sense of community and of responsibility that prepares students for subsequent leadership in building a society that is at once more human and more divine.

2

Notre Dame's character as a Catholic academic community presupposes that no genuine search for the truth in the human or the cosmic order is alien to the life of faith.

The University welcomes all areas of scholarly activity as consonant with its mission, subject to appropriate critical refinement. There is, however, a special obligation and opportunity, specifically as a Catholic university, to pursue the religious dimensions of all human learning. Only thus can Catholic intellectual life in all disciplines be animated and fostered and a proper community of scholarly religious discourse be established.

3

In all dimensions of the University, Notre Dame pursues its objectives through the formation of an authentic human community graced by the Spirit of Christ.



OUR ORIGIN AND HISTORY



Sycamore Trust is a model of calm and reasonable yet unrelenting friendly questioning of recent events on the South Bend campus.

Ralph McInerny
1929-2010

Sycamore Trust was established in 2005 to provide a source of information, a means of communication, and a collective voice to Notre Dame alumni and others in the Notre Dame family concerned about preserving the Catholic identity of the University.

The flashpoint for the founders of Sycamore was Father Jenkins's authorization of the student on-campus performance of *The Vagina Monologues*. What was especially disappointing was that he retreated in the face of faculty opposition, for he had initially said that he thought this obscene play probably should not be staged at a Catholic university. (Ultimately, Notre Dame became the poster school in a tiny group of only 15 out of some 225 Catholic institutions welcoming the *Monologues*.) At the same time, moreover, Father Jenkins approved the continuation of *The Queer Film Festival*, albeit under a less revealing name.

We soon discovered that the problem was not simply a few errant presidential decisions but something much more fundamental: the radical deterioration of the Catholic identity of the faculty over the past several decades. So said a number of concerned faculty members, and our examination of many studies of the secularization of religious schools confirmed that it always results from the loss by the faculty of its anchor in the founding faith. The episodes that visibly clashed with Catholic identity during the tenures of both Father Malloy and Father Jenkins — including the 2009 honoring of President Obama, the Church's most formidable adversary on abortion — are symptoms of this phenomenon.

The *Vagina Monologues* and Obama episodes reflect two of the school's most serious problems: the dominance of secular forces in the faculty and the disjunction between the University and the Church. Thus, Father Jenkins's reversal respecting *The Vagina Monologues* resulted from a clamor by faculty in the name of academic freedom and the school's image in secular academe, while the honoring of Obama in violation of an important policy of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and despite the protests of 83 Cardinals, Archbishops, and Bishops disclosed an alarming breach between University and Church.

As to the faculty, Catholic representation has plunged so far that the school no longer meets its own test of Catholic identity. The Mission Statement declares, "The University's Catholic identity depends upon the continuing presence of a predominant number of Catholics." The author, then-President Rev. Edward Malloy, C.S.C., said this "means more than a mere majority," and Rev. John Jenkins, C.S.C., the current President, speaks of "Catholic faculty" as "those who have been spiritually formed in that tradition and who embrace it." Provost Thomas Burish declared that the Mission Statement requires "a majority of faculty who are Catholic, who understand the nature of the religion, who can be role models."

Notre Dame does not come close. The proportion of those who check the "Catholic" box on a form has plummeted from 85% in the 1970's to 54% today. This indisputably includes a large, if indeterminate, number of merely nominal and dissenting Catholics. Plainly, there is no longer close to a majority of committed Catholics.

Dr. Walter J. Nicgorski, one of Notre Dame's most respected and longest serving professors, took note of this phenomenon and its consequences during a recent panel discussion. While praising Notre Dame's many fine attributes, he sounded this sobering alarm:

Consider this also, along with the steady and steep decline of the percentage of faculty who are Catholics to about 50 per cent, there is the widely shared recognition that a large number of those who list themselves as Catholics are not inclined to be involved in any concerns about the religious character of this university....So it is increasingly the case today that a young person going through the critical and questioning formative years of an education at Notre Dame might not encounter a practicing Catholic informed and engaged by the Catholic intellectual



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OUR ORIGIN AND HISTORY

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tradition, that curricular decisions and other decisions, including counseling decisions, will not be notably impacted by a Catholic perspective. One might say that beneath the large symbols of the University as a Catholic institution, there is reason for concern that the day-to-day struggles for learning and intellectual and professional development are not notably impacted by the Catholic tradition.

The attitude of the dominant forces on the faculty toward the loss of Catholic identity has been dramatically displayed in a recent resolution of the Faculty Senate adopted after a survey of the faculty:

The University should not compromise its academic aspirations in its efforts to maintain its Catholic identity.

At a school in which Catholic scholars predominated, this statement would, of course, be exactly reversed.

The insidious aspect of this transformation of the faculty and accordingly of what is taught — the heart of the university — is that it takes hold gradually and out of sight. The outward signs of Catholicism remain much the same, and accordingly alumni and others believe the university is just as Catholic as it has always been. And most probably do not really want to think otherwise.

Dr. Alfred J. Freddoso, a long-time and distinguished philosophy professor, has captured these dual characteristics of the University in his memorable description of Notre Dame as “something like a public school in a Catholic neighborhood.” He continued in this illuminating and troubling passage in his introduction to Dr. Charles E. Rice’s book “What Happened to Notre Dame”:

This might sound appalling to some, but it is, I submit, what the vast majority of present-day administrators, faculty members, students and alumni mean when they sincerely, though mistakenly, claim that Notre Dame is a Catholic university. For they assume without much thought that the Catholic character of the university is borne almost entirely by the ‘neighborhood,’ i.e., by the university’s sacramental

life and associated activities such as retreats, bible study groups, sacramental preparation courses, etc; by various good works and service projects on and off campus; by a set of faith-inspired rules governing campus life; ... and by the sheer number of ‘outdoor’ and ‘indoor’ manifestations of Catholicism such as the statue of Our Lady atop the Golden Dome, Sacred Heart Basilica, the Grotto, and scores of statutes found all over the ‘neighborhood.’ It is here that virtually all of a student’s moral and spiritual formation, if any, will take place....The classroom or laboratory, by contrast, is a wholly different venue.... This is where ‘reason’ resides on campus and where ‘the mind is educated’; and it has little or nothing to do with Catholicism.

In these circumstances, while Notre Dame is probably the most Catholic of the major Catholic universities except for Catholic University, and while a committed and discriminating student can still obtain a splendid Catholic education, the situation is not so happy for the vast run of the students; and worse, the future looks bleak absent a major reversal of the hiring pattern of the last several decades. That is the heart of the problem.

Unhappily, while the Administration has taken some steps to promote the hiring of Catholics and the downward spiral has been checked for the moment, it has adopted a hiring policy that will permit the worsening of an already bleak situation. The new policy is the hiring of 50% “check the box” Catholics annually. If the faculty does no better than that — and there is every reason to believe they will not — a truly Catholic Notre Dame will become but a dimming memory.

Still, hope remains because of an outstanding and still substantial corps of Catholic scholars, a number of supportive non-Catholics, an 85% Catholic student body, the continuing, if diminished, presence of priests on the campus, and important features of “Catholic neighborhood” such as those identified by Dr. Freddoso.

We believe that Sycamore Trust can play a role in the realization of that hope. In its short life, Sycamore can look to some positive results that can reasonably be attributed in some substantial measure to its efforts.



OUR ORIGIN AND HISTORY

36,163 website visitors last year

Here is what has happened on some of the issues upon which we have focused:

1. A board member who had been a major contributor to a pro-abortion organization resigned.
2. Another board member who is an important promoter of embryonic stem cell research did not stand for re-election.
3. The Vagina Monologues has quietly disappeared.
4. So, too, has the Queer Film Festival.
5. Father Jenkins left his position on the board of a prominent organization, Millennium Promise, that promotes abortion and contraception. (So, too, did a major Notre Dame donor.)
6. Most importantly, the decline in Catholic faculty has been arrested for the moment. Six years ago, it seemed likely that by now Catholics would have slipped into even an arithmetical minority. Until Sycamore put the spotlight on this crucial problem, few outside the university knew anything about it and no effective action had been taken by those within the University.
7. Our investigation into the University's asserted justification for its support of the prosecution of the pro-life demonstrators who protested the honoring of President Obama almost certainly played a role in the University's finally reversing its position and securing dismissal of the charges. Father Jenkins had asserted that the University must treat all trespassers the same. We discovered that it does nothing of the sort. Rather, on Father Jenkins's watch, the University had decided against prosecution of pro-gay and anti-military demonstrators who had been arrested for trespass. This embarrassingly disparate treatment was to have been an important element in the defense of these pro-life advocates.
8. We marshaled substantial and critically needed financial support for three important student organizations: NDResponse, the federation of student organizations opposed to the honoring of President Obama; The Irish Rover, the independent voice of Catholicism on campus; and ND Identity, the organizer of the impressive annual Edith Stein Conference, the student Catholic voice on issues of gender, sexuality, and morality. We regard the support of centers of Catholicism on campus as part of our mission.
9. A contraceptive ad on The Observer Internet site was taken down immediately upon our complaint.
10. So, too, was a link to a porn site of uncertain provenance on a web site of a student organization.
11. The University eliminated its web site recommendation of an unofficial women's faculty organization that promotes pro-abortion organizations.

To be sure, there are qualifications to some of these successes. For example, as we have said there is good reason to think that the halt in the faculty erosion may be temporary; and in any case, the stabilization is at a wholly inadequate level and the new hiring policy threatens to make the situation even worse in the long run. Again, the Monologues and the film festival might return.

Even so, there has been sufficient progress both to keep hope alive and to support our conviction that, with the help of alumni and others with a deep interest in Notre Dame and Catholic higher education, Sycamore Trust can play a significant role in the effort to restore the Catholic identity that is the defining heritage of this precious institution.



Alumni at other Catholic schools didn't realize that their schools were losing their Catholic hearts and minds until it was too late to stop it. That shouldn't happen at Notre Dame.

William H. Dempsey, '52
Sycamore Trust
Founding President



Alumni Protecting Notre Dame's Catholic Identity

Like the ancient Sycamore tree standing watch over the Grotto, Sycamore Trust, with its broad base of supporters within the Notre Dame Family, seeks to protect the school's formative heritage — its Catholic identity and its sustaining relationship to the Church.

Established in 2005 as an alumni-only membership, Sycamore Trust has expanded steadily and now includes a broad representation of the Notre Dame family and a growing number of committed Christians troubled by the secularization of higher education in general. Our fight is against the forces of secularization that will continue to press on the University. To join us in this fight, please get in touch with us.



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