It's always interesting when adults revert back to playground tactics. We all remember how, as children, the mortifying prospect of being called a tattletale kept us silent when an enraged teacher threatened us with detention and extra homework if we didn't reveal the perpetrator of the school's latest prank. I can distinctly remember playground tactics remerging when I was a freshman in high school, as my entire chemistry class was banned from the lab for three months because we refused to turn in the student who ate an entire roll of antacid tablets intended for an acid-base experiment. It didn't help our cause any when the enraged teacher threatened us with detention and extra homework if we didn't reveal the perpetrator.

In the wake of former priest John Geoghan's conviction of child molestation, we've seen the Catholic Church and its local figurehead, Cardinal Bernard F. Law, come under fire for being silent on the issue. Documentation shows that, as early as the 1960's, the Archdiocese was aware of Geoghan's delinquencies. The Church's solution: move the priest, the Catholic Church should not be a political organization like any other. The failure of Law and others to report Geoghan is not an isolated incident. Some 50 priests have been the subject of child molestation complaints in the Boston area over the past 30 years, and not once has the Archdiocese come forward and reported them to the authorities. Moreover, within the Catholic Church, it is more important to avoid being a tattletale than it is to protect church followers. If something is sinful, it should be spoken of.

Cardinal Law, of course, apologized for turning a blind eye to the sexual abuse perpetrated against Geoghan's parishioners, but his "I'm sorry" was about as convincing as the apology of a preschooler caught with his or her hand in the cookie jar. Sorry because he realizes he was wrong or sorry because he got caught? It's hard to tell.

Along with his "heartfelt" apology came Law's declaration of a zero tolerance policy for reporting cases of abuse in the future. Apologize, for this fearless leader for agreeing to do what should have been done all along. What does that make the score now? God 1, Satan 0?

Under pressure to resign, Law has refused to do so. Do I think he should? No. I think that the Catholic Church should institute a cardinal and others like him from its ranks. Nothing he can say will convince me that he won't sweep things under the carpet again. He did it once, and I don't doubt his ability to do it again. If the Archdiocese is really ready to admit wrongdoing on its part, it should start off with a clean slate as a gesture of good faith.

In the end, this controversy is a test of faith for followers of the Catholic Church - not their faith in God or Catholic doctrine, which have nothing to do with the actions of Geoghan and the Archdiocese, but their faith in the institution of Catholic religion. As a representative of the church, Law's responsibility extended not only to loyalty to the religious order. As an intermediary between God and the people, his responsibility was to the victims of molestation, not to the perpetrator of those crimes. Perhaps Law can justify himself in not heeding secular law because spiritual law is his trump card, but does the idea of forgiveness justify subjecting others to the Geoghan's crimes? Shouldn't the delinquent priest have been forced to do his best to right his wrongs in this world before seeking God's forgiveness? I find it hard to believe that a truly repentant soul would be unwilling to accept the consequences of his actions in this world if he were truly sorry for his wrongdoing. Perhaps Law was trying to save a soul by keeping his delinquent priest quiet. But, in doing so, he put hundreds of others at risk. In light of Geoghan's long history of repeat offenses, it seems that Cardinal Law was doing very little saving at all.

If I were feeling generous, I would give the Archdiocese the benefit of the doubt and explain away their silence as a misguided attempt at obedience to spiritual law. Quite frankly, though, I don't believe Cardinal Law's motives were that pure, and, as a result of his actions, our faith in the church as an organization should be shaken, if not altogether destroyed.

Regardless of what explanations Law may offer in the coming weeks, the fact of the matter is that he kept Geoghan's unsavory story quiet because acting to stop the ongoing sexual predators would have resulted in bad press for the Archdiocese. In moments like these, the Catholic Church should not be a political organization like any other. The church gains no support if it's associated with men who molest young boys. Reports of sexual abuse cause parishioners to doubt their spiritual leaders, and doubt can only undermine the church's authority. Keeping things quiet allows the church to avoid criticism, so the church gains no support.

When churchmen forget that their obligation is not to their public image but to God, they've not only betrayed their followers, but also their principles. If they are true believers, Geoghan, Law, and the religious men should worry less about what happens to them, their reputation, and their political organization. They have much more to fear than the retribution of a secular world.

An argument sometimes offered by underclassmen considering whether to pursue study abroad or semester away opportunities is the fear of the changes they will encounter when they return to the Hill. I confess that I shared some of these reservations when I packed my bags for Washington, D.C. last September. And three weeks into the new semester I can attest that these changes do occur, but largely the changes are positive and they should not deter anyone from taking the chance to broaden their educational horizons.

Last fall, I participated in the Washington Semester program through the Center for Interdisciplinary and Special Studies. The program is expertly run by Professor Gary DeAngelis with the help of Melanie Samsel, and their hard work is reflected by the high regard in which the Holy Cross internship program is held in Washington. An internship and a research paper are the major components of the program, rounded out by a public policy seminar taught at the American Political Science Association. This year, myself and 14 fellow Crusaders interned from September to the end of November in Washington. I visited Worcester a couple of times after I finished my work last semester, but when I returned to campus full-time I had to make certain adjustments. Things are indeed different, though the changes vary in degrees of importance.

After working in an office environment for three months it feels different to be back in a classroom again. The last time I sat for classes was in the spring of last year, and I sometimes find myself longing for Washington during a lecture or while I am writing yet another paper. My accommodations are also different from what they have been in the past. While Alumni may be a step up from Healy, it is a leap down from the apartments we interned enjoyed in Alexandria, VA. In the big scheme of things, however, these changes are of little consequence. I will adjust to the coursework, and who really cares about the dorm situation? By far the most important difference between the Holy Cross I left and the Holy Cross I returned to is the social environment. Many juniors study abroad or make the social dynamic changes. Because I was not at school last fall to witness, or participate in, this change, it has taken some time to get used to. I would say that this of all things required the biggest adjustment on my part, but I don't feel that this is a negative consequence of having been away. On the contrary, I picked up right where I left off with my friends, and now I feel blessed to be part of a larger social circle. Moreover, I became close friends with my fellow interns, many of whom I only knew casually before we left for DC.

I would say that last semester was the most interesting semester thus far of my college career. Working for the Secret Service, especially at a time when our nation faces the challenges it does, was an invaluable experience. I feel that I learned more than I would have by sitting in class last semester, and I had a lot of fun doing it. I am sure that the same can be said for studying abroad. Almost without exception students returning from a year of living and studying in a foreign country feel the same way I do about their time away.

When considering leaving Holy Cross for a semester or the year, students are right to anticipate that things will not be exactly the same when they return. Changes inevitable happen. But I urge students not to fear these changes. For many, their most rewarding experience in college was the opportunity to take time away from classes and enjoy a unique experience. For me it was working in Washington, for some it is studying in Greece, for others it is knowing what it is, students considering their future at Holy Cross should not prevent them from what may be an opportunity of a lifetime.