BT BY LAUREN MCCULLOUGH
CRUSADER OPINIONS STAFF

"Early" returns on the second semester

No, 8:00 classes aren't sanctioned, kindergarten-style nap-time sessions. Amazingly enough, I have yet to doze off. Drowsiness doesn't even seem like an option, with the scalding hot water or the frigid outdoor temperatures jolt me awake in a hurry. In reality, the danger of exhaustion peaks impossibly during late night dinner, when the ascent from Kimball seems what precious few scraps of energy remain.

It's a scene that everyone has experienced at least once. There I am, casually walking down Easy Street with a package in one hand and a smoothie in the other. Then it happens. Far in the distance I see a student from my Social Psychology class. As I scan my brain for his name, I quickly decide whether to avert my eyes and walk past him without acknowledgment or whether to offer a wave or quick hello. The distance between us narrows, I decide for the latter because, after all, I did get a package and life is good.

The dreaded event occurs… "Hey! How are you?" I answer, quite cheerfully. "I'm good, how about you?" However, he doesn't stop walking when he inquires of my well-being; quite the contrary, he keeps right on with his path. In fact, he doesn't even answer. Perhaps he has poor hearing and didn't hear my reciprocated query. Perhaps he despises me and has no unpleasant regrets about even gesturing a word in my direction. Either way, this situation has been completely unfulfilling and leaves me feeling uncomfortable and self-conscious. Although these feelings of awkwardness are not entirely uncommon in my daily life, I can't help but wonder why we students at Holy Cross find it necessary to engage in these superficial interactions. I doubt that my classmates had malicious intentions when they greeted me. In fact, I am confident that he didn't because I have been in his shoes and I have reacted the same way. It's hard to know when we see that familiar face whether to say hello or not. It becomes instinctive to just mutter out the catch phrase "Hey, what's up," even though our questions are usually stated without offering any reaction or None at all. And in hindsight, do we really care how he is? Will we stop and offer a smile and a "Hello?" Will we even register in our heads? At a school as small as Holy Cross, familiarity is not always the hard to find. But there exists a vague ambiguity here about how friendly is friendly and when well-wishes can sometimes be returned with a smile. Why do we feel obligated to continue this practice or forced banter when it is clear that we obviously don't care about the response, at least not enough to stop and have a face-to-face conversation? Is this social interaction part of the information that is so rampant in the social scene at Holy Cross? Branching out from immediate close friends, is all that really exists here among students is a simple sense of reciprocated courtesy? These are difficult questions to answer, but I believe that these interactions are a direct result of the overall level of social impersonality on campus. We all have our close friends who comprise our "group," but outside of that we often have no one to turn to. And the average student's reluctance to leave the comfort zone of a "group." Having a "group" guarantees friends in any type of situation. However, it is a shame that because of our complacency we are unable to expand our social horizons. This is why when we meet new people, it is next to impossible to have them as anything but acquaintances. It is impossible to keep the unknown in the unknown. The only light I may have, but the solutions to amend the social migration at Holy Cross are much more complex than what some advice. To the naive few who falsely believe that the unemotional greetings heard on Easy Street are actual sincerity, I implore you to wake up and smell the Worcester air. No one is mean-spirited in their actions, but we are all victims of social conformity, and the reality is that most people who ask me in passing how my break or my weekend was probably don't care. If they did, they would drop in on their tracks for at least one minute and discuss it with me, or at least listen attentively, instead of walking away.

I say: enough with these impersonal interactions! Don't allow these awkward encounters to be the weak replacements for genuine conversations. Take a chance to get to know someone new. Invite them to Midnight Breakfast in Crossroads, and ever a stack of pancakes listen to what they have to say. Who knows what you could result in a simple change in routine. And maybe this isn't for you; maybe you just don't have the time for new friends. In that case, please for my sake, don't ask if you don't care. Save your fellow students the trouble, the headache, the insecurities, and just keep your well-wishes consolidated in a simple and considerate "Hi." That way your intentions can be clearly understood without all the unintended awkwardness.

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