What do they know, anyway?

BY JOHANNA SCHNITZ  CRUSADER OPINIONS STAFF

So what do three Holy Cross alumni from the 1940’s know about college life in the 21st century? Many people were probably wondering this after the recent article in The Crusader about the letter written by three Holy Cross Alumni critiquing Catholicism on campus. The letter implied great disappointment in the role of religion here. It seemed possible, though, that the letter was just an example of college life evolving, but was that all it was? Well, that’s a question worth debating.

Did it seem easy to shrug off the overzealous attempts of some of Holy Cross’ older alumni trying to evaluate Holy Cross today? I know I thought it was. At first it only struck me as a clear sign of the times. Quite clearly, some of the points may very well have seemed off base. One of the first things that struck me was the concern that students are much more sexually active today. There are several possible reasons for this, one of which could be a result of a dwindling Catholic presence on campus. However, after examining the letter, it became clear that the letter was sent only to those who graduated between 1930 and 1970. Does something about this strike anyone? Perhaps it could be that Holy Cross was an exclusively male college until 1975. I don’t know about anyone else, but it does occur to me that “easy access” to the opposite sex might play a large part in this increase in sexual activity.

The alumni also noted that the month of October at Holy Cross ignites the adoration of Mary and focuses “instead” on Rainbow Alliance Week, as though that were a bad thing. I cannot explain the smaller role of Mary in the month of October, but the fact alone that the alumni brought up Rainbow Alliance Week in opposition with Mary seems yet another example of the one certainty in life: times change. As we attempt to learn more about many other religions besides Catholicism in our courses, so also do we grow to educate ourselves on the different lifestyles and experiences each individual lives.

Pretty cut and dry so far, right? And yet, there may be something more to it. It’s really easy to ignore complaints about the life all of us students are comfortable living. But there is more to read into all of this than just the concerns of three alumni. Personally, I am comfortable with the way the college has structured the Jesus presence on this campus; students always have a choice: a choice in classes, mass attendance, etc. But on a different level, moving away from just Holy Cross, is it possible that this letter just might be reminding us all of something that is easily lost in our busy lives…religion?

A lot of times if one of my peers should ask me how often I go to church I tell them that I go once every week. To my surprise most people almost always look at me wide-eyed and say, “You must be a really religious person!” With that remark I am quick to say, “of course I’m not.” It’s just something I choose to do, I’m not like a nun or anything!

Two questions though come to my mind every time. Why is it that going to church once a week defines a person as “really religious”? And why is it that I am always so quick to say that I’m not? There is an issue today of how we, as a generation, value our religion for ourselves. Quite clearly our values are different than our parents, but often it seems that many of us don’t even express any religious values. Over break I visited a nearby parish with some other college students to discuss spirituality with a group of high-schoolers on re-treat. We broke down our group of 36 into small groups to discuss spirituality in our lives. However, it wasn’t long before I realized that discussing spirituality with a few of these students was going to be much more difficult than I had planned. Talking about spirituality seemed practically pointless when they told me that they didn’t see how religion mattered at all in their lives. It reminded me of my own experiences in religious education classes that may be similar to those of my peers. The smart CCD student would answer questions in class in simple words such as God, faith, light, and kindness to cover any number of religious themes. The faster this was accomplished the sooner one could go home. At the time, and often still today, many students felt religion was “just not their thing.” But why is that?

Many kids are placed into Catholic schools or CCD classes by their parents without being given a choice. I imagine most kids have tried the “I’ll hide under the bed so they can’t find me” approach to avoid mass. I wonder, now, if church has become more of a burden to many, better left off their schedules. Perhaps that can explain some of the reasons why young people, more and more, are starting to move away from the church, and why my weekly church attendance seems so impressive to some of my peers.

Yet, I am still not much more confident in my Catholic practices than I think most other people are. I am often quick to “un-define” myself as really religious, because it seems somewhat passé. I have my ways of practicing my faith, really religious or not, and others have theirs. Slowly, I am learning to become more confident in believing in God and many, though not all, of the Catholic Church’s teachings. I still do hope that someday attending church will no longer be considered an overly holy endeavor.

Though many ideas in the alumni’s letter may be out of touch today, there is still a hint of truth in their concerns. Religion should be a greater part of all our lives, maybe not by textbook terms or church attendance, but something meaningful and supportive for each individual. Having previously spent all my life in public school I don’t have an extreme loyalty to religious institutions, but I do have a loyalty offering myself a chance to grow in my own faith. It may not be Holy Cross alumni’s version of faith, but I owe it to myself to decide for myself where and how God is present in my life.

By Lindsey Veautour  CRUSADER OPINIONS STAFF

John Hughes is a brilliant writer, director, and producer, well known for his unforgettable arsenal of classic 80’s movies including “Pretty in Pink,” “Sixteen Candles” and the ever popular, “Breakfast Club.” It is in this film, “The Breakfast Club,” where Hughes succeeds in remolding everyone to what extent labeling jars, not people can not only irritate us, but also mean to us. If you have about others. If you have any questions or beliefs about others, you can apparently learn everything there is to know about me just by glancing at me, as if my personality could be read as easily as the nutritional values chart on a package of pepperoni. So, I ask myself, are we all living in a “Saved by the Bell” or “90210” universe where high school and all that went with it simply carries over and becomes “the College Years?” Is it really conceivable that within four months we already assume we know everything about the girls with whom we share a hall , or the boy who sits next to us in class? I am frustrated when I hear from the group of girls I have come to consider my friends that there is already tension and hard feelings from being seen as “a member of the group” with a specific role to play in conversations. I am equally frustrated that these same girls, includ- ing myself, are eager to search out new people in order to escape those labels we thought we had lost in the transition from high school to college.

For any freshmen who feel the same way, I offer you the little advice I have been able to come up with myself. First, don’t feel that you need to go find new people. This means to reinvent yourself, or show a part of yourself you feel you can’t in front of the people with whom you have started to make connections. In addition to offering more of yourself, and in return getting to know those in your established “group” better, add to your collection of acquaintances by erasing some of the prejudiced ideas you have about others. If you have only seen or talked to someone a few times, can you really make an educated opinion about him or her? And most of all, remember that maybe everyone isn’t as brave as you. Give those who were so overwhelmed with this new college lifestyle a second chance to show you who they truly are, for it is quite possible you didn’t get an accurate picture.

In the immortal words of John Hughes, “Each one of us is a brain, and an athlete, a basket case, a princess, and a criminal.” Let’s take a more mature outlook here at Holy Cross and try to see the many facets of each fellow student.

Label jars, not people

Where do you want to live next year?

Compiled by Martha Wallace ’04

By me, myself and I  ’04

-Vantrice Taylor  ’04

In Carlin or Alumni  ’04

-Chiomawasomba  ’04

China  Kevin Burke ’04

In Lower Kimball  With those lights it would be like a club, 24-7.

-Sara Stockman ’03

In Your Face!