

Commentary: Sic Transit Gloria - Goodbye Notre Dame!

By Michael V. McIntire, Notre Dame Class of 1957

Editor's Note: Michael V. McIntire is a 1957 graduate of the University of Notre Dame and was later Associate Professor of Law at Notre Dame Law School. An Oblate of the Order of St. Benedict and an RCIA Catechist, he has authored several articles on the secularization of Catholic colleges and universities. (From Orthodoxy to Heresy – The Secularization of Catholic Universities, New Oxford Review, Sept. 2008; Has Notre Dame Lost its Catholic Credentials?, St. Austin Review, Sept/October 2007).

June 9, 2009 (LifeSiteNews.com) - I love Notre Dame – the Notre Dame that I knew. My father graduated from there in 1930, and he was proud to send his sons there. It was there that I matured in my faith and became devoted to the Blessed Mother. It was there that I met and courted the woman I married two months after my graduation. I formed permanent friendships there which have endured for more than fifty years. But I am now convinced that the proudly Catholic University which I have loved now exists only in my memory.

This past May, my wife and I were stunned and moved to tears at the videos showing small groups of people silently praying the Rosary being handcuffed and arrested by the Notre Dame police. The “lawbreakers” were of varying ages, some quite elderly, many of whom continued to pray aloud as they were handcuffed and led to the police vans. Most striking was the arrest of an 80-year-old Catholic priest in clerical garb who was forcibly carried off as he pleaded with his captors to “Think what you’re doing! I’m a Catholic priest! This is Notre Dame!” Mary, the Mother of Jesus, must have expressed similar pleas as she accompanied her Son on his Passion.

These scenes would have been abhorrent to any right-thinking Catholic even if they had taken place on the property of an abortion clinic. But watching them take place in the shadow of the Dome on the campus we love was heart-wrenching. Along with other Catholic alumni, we question why the university was doing this. Notre Dame has never been a closed campus, and the groups targeted for arrest were so small that they were outnumbered by the police, and they were so quiet that they were scarcely noticeable in the daily hustle and bustle of campus life. What could be the reason for such extreme measures, if not to send a message to “the One who is soon to come” that, like Georgetown, the university would cover up all indicators of Catholic teaching which might draw the attention of the media. Our tears were in part tears of mourning as though a loved one had died; but the sentiment went much deeper. It was not just a sense of loss, but a sense of betrayal.

Father Sorin established Notre Dame more than 150 years ago as a place where the sons of poor Catholic immigrants would grow in their knowledge of God and their faith, while maturing into mature Catholic adults prepared to live in the world as its “salt” and “light.” For this they were scorned and derided as “fighting Irish,” an epithet which they proudly adopted as their logo. That name identified them with oppressed Catholics everywhere who, like generations of persecuted Catholics in Ireland, never compromised their faith or wavered in their witness of it. Such was the basis for the much-vaunted “Spirit of Notre Dame.”

For more than 120 years, Father Sorin’s Notre Dame, which he consecrated to the protection of Mary, the Mother of Jesus, formed thousands of faithful Catholic leaders. As the school grew in size and prominence, it remained loyally Catholic, so that the terms “Catholic” and “Notre Dame” became almost synonymous in the minds of Americans of all faiths. For those of us who were the fortunate beneficiaries of Father Sorin’s legacy, the university’s Alma Mater, “Notre Dame, Our Mother,” is first a hymn in praise of our Blessed Mother and then, also, a tribute to the place dedicated to her honor. It is this Mother who is now betrayed by her children who have taken over her place of honor and profaned her name.

This latest scandal cannot be seen as an isolated incident, to be lamented and then forgotten when football season starts. It is, in truth, the full flowering of the bitter fruit of the University’s rebellion against the Magisterium of the Church which first surfaced over 40 years ago.

In the early 1960s, promotion of the eugenics agenda of John D. Rockefeller III and Planned Parenthood was being frustrated by the Church’s stubborn moral opposition to contraception. Because the Rockefeller and

Planned Parenthood folks considered public acceptance of contraception to be the key to public acceptance of eugenics by abortion, euthanasia and genetic manipulation, they were actively seeking a prominent Catholic voice to assist them in successfully opposing the strength of the Church's teaching on that issue. Notre Dame became their willing accomplice in this quest.

Notre Dame hosted 3 unpublicized conferences, attended only by theologians and academics who were selected because of their opposition to the Church's teaching on contraception, the first of which was chaired by Notre Dame's president. The purpose of the conferences was to develop a "Catholic" position paper justifying the morality of contraception, which was in fact promulgated in 1964 with massive publicity. The paper, popularly referred to as the "Notre Dame Statement," proclaimed that contraception was moral, that the Church's contrary teaching was unscientific and out of touch with modernity, and that those who believed it to be immoral had no right to impose those anachronistic beliefs on others. That proclamation was accepted and taught as authentic Catholic teaching by many Catholics, including many bishops, priests and religious, and contributed greatly to the hostility of many to the papal encyclical, *Humanae Vitae*, which was issued 4 years later. Notre Dame was rewarded for this traitorous activity against the Church with millions of dollars from the Rockefeller Foundation and other foundations whose primary mission for at least three generations has been to finance the worldwide spread of the eugenics agenda throughout the world – the agenda now called "the culture of death."

Three years later, in 1967, the University severed all juridical relations with the Catholic Church, declaring itself to be independent from all Church authority. This was the infamous "Land O'Lakes Statement" which became the new charter of the University, a charter which replaced and essentially buried the faith-based principles of the University's founder. The Land O'Lakes Statement is firmly grounded in religious relativism - the view that religious belief is not based on an absolute objective Truth but on one's personal opinion, and that all such opinions are equally valid provided they are sincerely held. Land O'Lakes proudly declares that the University will no longer promote "theological imperialism," which is a euphemism for the doctrine that the Catholic Church is the one, true church founded by Christ. Paradoxically, while rejecting all Church authority, that statement arrogantly asserts that the University has the authority and the right to pass judgment on the teachings of the Church and to decide what is, and what is not, proper Catholic teaching.

The Congregation of the Holy Cross meekly ratified this rebellion by transferring all interest and control of the University, which formerly belonged to the Holy Cross Province, to a Board of predominately lay trustees. Since then, the University has been just another charitable educational corporation organized under the laws of Indiana and run by a Board of Trustees who, like their secular counterparts, are selected, not for their fidelity to the Church, but solely for the degree to which they can bring money, power and prestige to the University. Whereas formerly the promulgation and proclamation of the Catholic faith have been the primary reason for the University's existence, it has now become the quest for power, prestige and money, a goal with which the May, 2009 abomination is wholly consistent.

Until now I was joined with scores of other truly Catholic alumni who, fully aware of Notre Dame's rejection of Church authority, nevertheless pursue efforts to restore her to her Catholic identity. But I am now withdrawing from that battle. The images of an adoring and giddy university president heaping praise on a man whose avowed intention is to promote and spread the culture of death throughout the world, without a single trustee publicly objecting, has destroyed all hope that Notre Dame can ever recover its Catholic moorings. The rebellion is complete; the revolution is over. The contract by which the soul of the University was sold for earthly prestige and power has been fully performed. The golden Dome has been transformed into a golden calf.

Notre Dame has become a foreign place, a place where I no longer belong. The "Spirit of Notre Dame" is hollow. The Alma Mater is now a contradiction. Some alumni have told me that they intend to return their diplomas to Fr. Jenkins in protest. I will not do so. I am proud to have graduated from an academically rigorous university which was then authentically Catholic. I will retain my diploma as a memorial of the glory that once was the University of Notre Dame.

Good bye, Notre Dame. Thanks for the memory.