

**Reflections on the Mission—Dr. Leanne Owen, Assistant Professor  
of Criminal Justice**

**August 29, 2006**

**Opening Meeting of the New Academic Year**

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Sr. Francesca, Sr. Maureen, fellow faculty, staff, and others in our Holy Family “family”:

Thank you for the privilege of sharing with you today a few thoughts on the Mission and the meaning of family. Sociologists refer to the family as the primary agent of socialization. In other words, it’s through the family that we learn who we are and who we want to become. Family shapes our outlooks, our values, how we treat others around us; in short, how we live our lives. Family is also, for most, a source of constant, unflagging, unconditional support. We can, and often do, make mistakes as we move through life, but remain secure in the knowledge that our family will still “be there” for us, that we will always be accepted and forgiven and granted that all-important second chance. Different families function in different ways. Some freely bestow warmth and affection, others are more authoritarian and stern, but regardless of the method, the message is the same: one always belongs and one will always have a home. Family is forever.

I’ve heard it said repeatedly throughout the past couple of years that “family is our middle name,” and rest assured, that’s so much more than a catchy slogan. All of us who are fortunate enough to work for Holy Family – administrators, faculty, staff – have a genuine concern for the well-being of our students. We strive to impress upon them the oneness of the human family and the importance of treating others with kindness and respect. We seek to instill in them a lifelong love of learning, of examining the world in which they live with a view toward understanding their role in improving it. We inspire them to demonstrate integrity and ethicality in all that they do, to recognize that with the privilege of an education such as they have received comes great responsibility to help others. We hope when they graduate, when they “leave the nest,” as it were, that we have done a thorough enough job at nurturing them that they will not only succeed in living the Core Values of Family, Respect, Integrity, Vision, Learning, Service and Responsibility, but that they will excel with the tools and the drive at their disposal.

I can tell you with confidence that we are, in fact, accomplishing these objectives. I have been fortunate to see several of my students return to Holy Family – where they tell me they know they will always be welcome – to share with me tales from their lives – weddings, births, deaths – and to discuss plans for the future – graduate school, a career in law enforcement, military service. Some even return to build upon their educational foundation because they have discovered, often much to their great surprise, that they want to teach, to motivate others to aim high and work hard. It is a veritable treat to watch them grow as individuals and carve out their place in a world that all too frequently appears fraught with cynicism and despair, and to do so with a sense of optimism and exuberance that must bring us a tremendous sense of satisfaction.

Our “kids” grow up, they depart, and they evolve into the kinds of people we always believed they could be. They’re thoughtful, compassionate, caring, they seek to make a difference in their community in any way that they can, and they never forget their roots, those individuals along the way who encouraged them and helped to bolster them up when they were down. We can be secure in the knowledge that we have done our job – we have raised them right, as the saying goes, and with God’s blessings, we will do so again with the next generation of students and our family will only continue to grow in the future.

Thank you.