

HOLY FAMILY COLLEGE'S MISSION STATEMENT

Reflections on Holy Family College's Mission Statement

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The Mission of the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth relates to the Mission Statement of Holy Family College* in many ways. The most obvious word in common is *family*. We share the word family as part of our name.

But, I'm not going to focus on "family," as there are other mission core values that we do not speak about or think about as often. They deserve our attention also.

I can touch upon only a few aspects of the mission core values within the limits of the time I have, but I offer them for your ongoing reflection and invite us to continue our dialog as this new academic year unfolds.

The two core values I chose for reflection are integrity and vision. Integrity flows out of vision, and vision is what best informs our thoughts, words, and actions and can guide us in all that we do. I have learned many things as an associate of the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth. Sharing with them has been a great blessing, and I am grateful for all that has come to me through them.

One of the most important insights that they have shared with me is that concerning what Vatican II calls "everyday holiness." Blessed Sister Frances Siedliska, Mary of Jesus the Good Shepherd, their Mother Foundress, was a woman ahead of her time. Her wisdom came from her conversations with God, from her ability to listen with an open heart and follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit. She teaches us that the most simple and ordinary experiences of life are opportunities for encounter with God.

*Although Holy Family was a college when this presentation was given, the Pennsylvania Department of Education awarded Holy Family "University" status in December 2002

If you look at Sisters' Mission Statement, you will read that the Sisters are guided by the vision of their foundress. In viewing their patrons, the Holy Family of Nazareth: Jesus, Mary, and Joseph – patrons that the Sisters share with Holy Family College, we can appreciate a very important gift that the Sisters give to us. This is the symbol of God present in the Holy Family of Nazareth, and, by extension, in all our families, including our “family” at Holy Family College.

The Holy Family models for us God present in the human family in all of its relationships and responsibilities. It is this vision that most clearly shows us how our mission core values of family, respect, integrity, service and responsibility, and learning should all fit together.

In the relationships we have with each other, we are challenged to respect and serve each other as we respect and serve others together. Jesus, Mary, and Joseph were a family unit, and each relied upon the other. While Jesus had wisdom greater than His parents, he was subservient to them because they were His parents. As we contemplate their lives, we can see the opportunity we have for holiness in each of our roles.

We have colleagues, bosses, and direct reports. Fellow members of committees, task forces, ad hoc teams. We have schools, departments, and divisions. We have students, advisees, parents, volunteers, and the general public. We have consultants and visitors. The list is endless. So is the opportunity to encounter God in each of these relationships. So is the opportunity for everyday holiness.

We can hire with love. We can fire with love. We can cooperate and disagree with love. We are challenged to let go of our fears and celebrate both our differences and our ability to come together as one. It is our recognition of God present that can enable us to do this well. We are called to understand our dependency and interdependency. We are challenged to be virtuous in the simplest tasks. Answering the telephone, writing a memo, submitting grades on time.

What are the things that you think of, when you think of everyday holiness? Have you learned to disagree or correct someone in a “holy” way? What characterizes the “holiness” of such an action?

When we behave in a “holy” way, do we not exhibit many of the other mission core values, such as respect, responsibility, learning, service, integrity? Sister Francesca, Moya Kaporch, Regina Hobaugh, and I will have the opportunity in September to attend the 8th Annual Mission Advancement Gathering of the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth in

Pittsburgh. We will participate in a dialog on the topic “Courage and Conversation: Inviting the Soul to Work,” with the keynote speaker David Whyte, a poet who has transformed the corporate world by his presentations.

As I think about the opportunities we have here at Holy Family College and anticipate what we might be talking about in Pittsburgh, I invite you to think about what “bringing your soul to work” might mean to you. I think I can safely assume that we work at Holy Family College because we have already made a commitment of soul to the college and its mission.

But I ask you as I ask myself, how can we deepen the presence of soul in our work? What is it that we need to do to maintain our awareness of mission together?

We certainly have “talked” about the mission. People even complain that we talk about it too much! Do we need to identify “mission moments” as they come up in our shared work life? Find ways to compliment each other when someone does something that especially reflects the mission? Do we need to wave the flag of mission effectiveness when we see something that is about to violate the mission? Do we need to storm the offices of those whom we feel have not applied the mission correctly?

Or, do we need to teach by example, maintain the vision of love, and trust that our living the mission better will help others in our family live it better, too?

Take a moment sometime today and read the mission core value “vision” in the College Mission Statement. As you do so, think of the Holy Family of Nazareth and how the ancient wisdom of love that They embody is the connector between the past and the future. Think of how the vision of love that they represent grounds both teaching and learning and allows the practical and theoretical, traditional classroom methodology and the new technology to blend comfortably.

The Judeo-Christian worldview: the affirmation of the dignity of the human person and the oneness of the human family, represents a paradigm that never needs to be replaced. It is a vision for every age.

That vision, stated in the College Mission Statement, directly reflects the vision of the Holy Family contemplated by the Sisters of the Holy Family. Our shared vision is a vision that limits our liberty as humans,

in the sense of “license,” by demanding mission-effective behavior.

At the same time, it is that vision, in our relationship with the Divine, that most frees us to go beyond our inadequate humanity to live lives that reflect the transcendence in our creation as persons made in the image and likeness of God.

The Sisters’ Mission Statement suggests the college mission core value of “integrity” in many ways. The statement that “God is present in the most simple and ordinary experiences of human life” connects all of life’s thoughts, concerns, and actions and offers God as the binding force.

The college Mission Statement calls attention to the strong tradition of liberal arts that helps to direct the learner toward the pursuit of truth as the integrating factor in education and personal development, which does not lose sight of moral values or social justice.

The mission core value of “integrity” ensures that learning takes place in a balanced way. The faculty addresses the need to combine theory with practice, and academic programs provide opportunities for co-operative education, creative scholarship and research, and courses that focus on values-based education.

Believing that God is Truth, one can see the Holy Spirit present to guide the learner to go beyond knowledge to wisdom. It is in helping our students to become truth-seekers that we help them to build integrity into their lives. The Sisters indicate in their Mission Statement that their service and ministries are an outgrowth of their vision. They teach us by their example that integrity of belief and action is their template for living.

The best teachers teach by example. Our faculty is superb at teaching by example, at mentoring. We all know that teaching takes place as part of the sacred relationship between faculty and student. It also takes place in the sacred relationship between supervisor and supervised, or, in terms of one’s “boss” and oneself. Each of us represents a part of the truth and synergistically we grasp more of it.

The Sisters model for us a Congregation that does its work as a community. They worship together and work together and are interdependent in their relationships. In the arena of teamwork and team building, we are called to appreciate the fact that the best teams consist of people with different talents. We need the creativity of a person with vision, someone who sees the goal and keeps it before our

eyes. But, we also need those who question the goal and ask about the practicality of the means. We need those who forge ahead and those who plod, those who see the forest and those who see only the trees and attend to them. We strive to develop students who do not say one thing and do another, and we are called to practice this among ourselves in all of our relationships as well.

The “oneness of the human family” that is mentioned in both the CSFN mission and college Mission Statements reminds us of the importance of discovering the truth of our commonality, as well as the understanding of our differences and similarities.

We help to build integrity in personal development by nurturing openness of heart as well as mind in our truth seeking. We also reflect integrity when our own plans and actions – when our strategic initiatives and our implementation of those initiatives – are the result of our hearts and minds working in harmony.

What the Sisters teach us is that God is present to us in all circumstances, including when they are burdensome. We all experience our own “Flight into Egypt.” We all have others depending on us as the Holy Family depended on Joseph to work as a carpenter, and Mary to care for the home, and Jesus to do His chores and remain obedient as a child.

The ministry of the Sisters of creating communities of love and hope assures us of their prayerful support for us and for the mission of the college. The Sisters reveal in their Mission Statement that they are an “apostolic Congregation.” This tells us that they are “change agents.” The college represents a community of change agents as well, agents changing ignorance into knowledge and wisdom, skills and abilities.

As the Sisters create communities of love and hope, the college community helps to develop individuals who represent hope for a better world. The college endeavors to create “whole” persons who can experience the “fullness of life” of which the Sisters are mindful.

In so many ways, the mission core value of “integrity” at the college is reflective of the mission and ministries of the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth.

The prayer for Mission Effectiveness reflects integrity in numerous ways.

Holy Family of Nazareth, we invoke your prayerful presence in our lives that we may appreciate the gift of your lives and how they model family life as designed by God to be one, while distinct in the roles of each person.

Help us to hold before us the vision of Blessed Mary of Jesus the Good Shepherd, Sister Frances Siedliska, Foundress of the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth, who saw in each of you as holy persons, a reflection of creation, both human and divine, united in dignity, and love.

Blessed Sister Frances, as your spiritual sons and daughters, working with your holy Sisters in ministries blessed by God and the Church, pray that we may work with holiness in executing the simplest everyday tasks to which we are called. Pray that we will learn to live the truth that no assignment, no undertaking, is without possibility of merit, if it is performed in a spirit of true humility for the sole purpose of glorifying God.

Patron family and patron blessed, intercede for us with our Father in heaven, that we may receive all the graces necessary to transform our work into worship.

All this we ask in the name of Jesus. Amen.
