

University of Notre Dame  
Religious Bulletin  
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To The Freshmen

Not long ago, the following article appeared in one of the magazines. It's a little story about Notre Dame, your new home, and gives you an insight into the Spirit of Notre Dame -- what makes the place tick -- why it's different from any other school in America -- what is really the "Punch-Back" of Notre Dame.

"If anyone thinks that only sissies pray -- that men don't -- I suggest he spend a day visiting the campus at Notre Dame. He'll change his mind in a hurry. He'll meet men like Jim \_\_\_\_\_, a friend of mine and a football player. Jim's not one of the stars whose name you'll find headlined on the sports page of your Sunday paper during the fall. So far he's only a sub. Maybe he'll never be hailed as a football great. Still, Notre Dame is proud of him and of the many students like him who study at the University year after year. Jim's a typical Notre Dame man, for he has developed through his life on the campus a special love and devotion for Mary, the Mother of God.

"One night, some months ago, after a party at St. Pat's parish, I offered Jim a lift to the campus. It was cold and blowy that night. In fact, the snowdrifts across Notre Dame Avenue were so high, I offered to drive Jim right to the door of his hall, rather than have him walk even the short distance from the main gate to his room.

"Thanks, Father," he said, "But, if its all right with you, will you let me off near the Grotto? I like to stop there every night to say a couple of prayers before I turn in."

"Blizzard or not, Jim wouldn't skip his nightly 'talk' with the Blessed Virgin. He has a strong, manly love for her -- and it's perfectly normal and natural. There's no show to it, and no apology for it.

"Actually, this incident shouldn't have surprised me, for anyone who knows Notre Dame knows that there isn't a more popular spot on the campus than Our Lady's Grotto. Built in 1896, it's a replica of the grotto at Lourdes where, in 1858, the Blessed Virgin appeared to Bernadette Soubirous. The grotto at Notre Dame is built of huge boulders. Some of them weigh two or three tons! High in a niche to the right stands a statue of Our Lady. Looking toward her from the pavement below is a statue of Saint Bernadette --kneeling in prayer.

"If you could visit the campus during the month of May you'd see hundreds of students gather at the grotto each evening right after supper. With one of the Holy Cross priests to lead them, they recite public prayers and sing hymns in Mary's honor. What makes devotion to the Mother of God so strong among Notre Dame men? Why, Notre Dame is her school. It was built for her. It is named for her. Notre Dame is French for "Our Lady."

"You might say almost literally that Our Lady reigns as Queen over her school. For high above the golden dome of the main building at the heart of the campus, 206 feet above the ground, stands a 16-foot statue of Mary. It weighs 4400 pounds. And from her gigantic pedestal the Queen of Heaven smiles upon the entire campus. From that spot she has showered countless blessings upon generation after generation of Notre Dame students who have worked and played, studied and prayed, at her feet. She is their mother. They are her sons."

Here's a great tradition handed down to you. Take good care of it. Stop at the Grotto tonight. You'll need her help in this new life that began with the Mission on Sunday evening, with Father Hesburgh in charge and continues tonight.