

-----  
The Challenge in the Statue.

A few years ago a student came in to tell his story, and he made the request that it be handed on to other students in years to come. His request was not heeded while he was here, although he asked that it be done; there was danger that he might be known. He is gone now, and forgotten; there are probably not three people here who could recall him if you mentioned his name.

Briefly, his story was this: His father was wealthy but careless, both in religion and morals; his mother, who died when he was ten years old, was a good and pious woman, intensely devoted to the mother of God. His early days with his mother were passed happily enough, and they were the only days he could recall without remorse. The death of the mother evidently gave the father no added sense of responsibility, for the son was left to his own devices to find pleasure when he was not in boarding school; and boarding school was a help for only a few years, for the father soon granted him permission to live at home unshielded while he pursued his studies in a day school.

Precocious and unmitigated vice was the result. He had all the money he wanted to spend, and when you have that you have plenty of friends -- of a sort. He took a certain pride in his mind, and this caused him to be a fairly diligent student; but his mind was active enough also to demand a reason for his vicious conduct, and this resulted in his reading atheistic authors and associating with blasphemers in the hope that he would find safety in numbers. At seventeen he was conversant with as many agnostic writings as were his professors, and he was a full-fledged libertine, as cruel as he was impure. And nothing caused a break in his way of life or his philosophy until he came to Notre Dame.

Why he came here he could not say. He had heard of the school as having a particularly good course in the profession he expected to follow, but had given no thought to the fact that it was a religious school. This fact came to his attention after he had sent in his application, so he made a supplementary request to be allowed to live off-campus. He felt, however, that he was immune from any religious influence, and he came on to Notre Dame with really very little thought about the matter.

His shock came when he saw the statue on the dome. "When I first saw it," he said "my heart almost stopped beating." I was an agnostic, but my philosophy did me no good. I had gloried in my conquests and in my cruelty to women, but now I felt a sickening sense of shame. My tongue had dripped filth, but now it stuck in my cheek. Here was the Mother of the God I had blasphemed -- serene, peaceful, majestic, merciful, bountiful -- undisturbed by all the evil in my heart and in my ways. Here was the Woman to whom my mother had taught me to address the Hail Mary.

"That was six months ago, and that statue has tortured me day and night. I know my sins. Things long forgotten have come up to haunt me. I have tried to run away from this place, and I can't. I have planned wicked deeds and have been unable to carry them out. I close my eyes and try to forget, and I always see that statue -- majestic, peaceful, serene. I need no arguments now for the existence of God. I know there is a God because He has a Mother."

He made his First Holy Communion over again the next morning, and he was not ashamed of the tears he shed. He got a pair of beads, and a medal to wear about his neck. At the end of the year he moved on from Notre Dame, and no word has come since of his fate. But he wanted his story told for the edification of other students, and here it is told for the first time -- during the Novena to the Immaculate Conception.

PRAYERS: Bob McDonald was called home to California last night by the illness of his father; Don Wilkins '27 asks prayers for an aunt who is dying. Three special intentions