

Ill: John Madden, Badin University of Notre Dame
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An Open Letter To An Anonymous Critic.

Notre Dame gives no assurance that all her students will be loyal to the ideals of the Church, that all will live up to their Catholic responsibilities as devoted modern apostles. There will always be those who fail. The kingdom of God on earth, Our Lord tells us, will be made up of cockle as well as wheat, of bad fish as well as good.

He came not to call the just but the sinner to penitence. Only those who are ill need the physician. But the scandals of the wicked have the unfortunate quality of attracting headlines, just as crime is bigger news than virtue which seldom makes the front page.

There is a particular brood of scandal-monger who knows everything about a few bad Notre Dame men, but know little or nothing at all about the very many good ones. How true it is that the evil of the few can obscure the virtuousness of the many.

It is no valid objection against Notre Dame, or any other Catholic institution for that matter, to argue that some of her graduates do not turn out well. Notre Dame no more expects to have perfect graduates than Our Lord expected to have perfect apostles or an unbroken succession of canonized saints as popes. If Notre Dame graduates or undergraduates are bad, it is not because they are Notre Dame men. It is because they have failed to cooperate with the graces offered them when students and after. These graces increase responsibility, but they do not force compliance. They increase blame, but they do not guarantee impeccability.

Why is it that outsiders are so scandalized at graduates from Notre Dame who betray their faith and blame them more than they blame graduates from a state university? Because they expect more, abundantly more of Catholic college graduates. Evil discolors its own viciousness when compared to the ideal. The very disgust the vigilanti express at the fall of a Catholic College graduate is a tribute to the courageous virtue they expect of him.

All men are created to know, love and serve God. But let no one forget that all lives are not lived out according to plan. Nor should unsympathetic critics place themselves in the judgment seat belonging to God alone. It is true Christ came to lead all men to the perfection of His Heavenly Father. And the saints are His honor and glory. But even the "weaker brethren", burdened by the weight of the moral struggle, have their own contribution to make, slight though it may be. The world needs saintly men, but holiness in its less perfect forms is in demand as well. The ideal must be kept aloft, but the highest and the greatest and the most heroic are not to be without compromise demanded of all. Christ came to cast fire upon the earth. He did not come to quench the smoldering flax.

Scandals of the "fallen ones" cannot be condoned in high places or in low. However the Notre Dame man betrays his Catholic heritage or his Alma Mater, the full extent of his defection God alone will judge.

During the Chair of Unity Octave, now in progress, the Church Militant prays for "one flock and one Shepherd" and for the return of lapsed Catholics. Every Notre Dame student will reflect upon his own personal responsibility to be a good example in a world ten to one against him. He knows that outsiders will be attracted to the Faith through his devotion to the Church and her divinely-held truths; that many an anxious convert who reaches the threshold of the Church undismayed by the lies of the fiercest of bigots will turn away in dismay because of the bad word and example of a Catholic not worthy of the name.

Prospective converts will not be forced but led into the Church by good example. A Notre Dame man who pursues moral excellence, who manages to master himself, modeling his life upon the Master of all men, is alone best capable to lead others in the way they need to be led today.

Notre Dame teaches that that brand of leadership can be learned by all her students. Some do not learn their lessons well.

Prayers: (deceased) sister of Prof. Frank Skeeler's wife; friend of Fudy Unger (Mor); father of Rev. Jos. English, '37; Ill, friend of J. Dobyms (Dil); mother of C. Zweber.