

# CROSS DRESSING: *Incognito at Holy Cross*

by Zack Ordynans and Miss Cathy O'Bwien

This assignment is the least important thing in our lives right now. I mean, who has time for this shit? Do you think this is what we want to be doing? And who the hell are you anyway? Just another Clark student too apathetic to go to Holy Cross yourself? A bundle of joy? A free dinner? No, that's what we got out of this, dumbass.

Back to the issue at hand. We spent a day at Holy Cross impersonating prospective students, primarily to place Clark (and its students) in a wider perspective. What we found may startle, shock or frighten you, but be sure of this: you can leave your books in their library if you want to. No one will steal them or anything (or at least that's what our tour guide told us).

The cheerful greeting as we arrived on the College of the Holy Cross (CHC) campus set the tone for the day. We were ignored by the guard at the security gate and had to fend for ourselves and find our own way to the admissions office. We told them that we were ten minutes late due to inclement weather and even inclementer driving conditions.

The receptionist welcomed us to Holy Cross by telling us that we were ten minutes late for the class she had signed us up for. The class, which was in neither of our departments, was apparently "in a building near the library" and she answered our confused expressions by assuring us that we would "find it."

We did find our way to the class, but were too intimidated by the closed, solid white door to enter the classroom fifteen minutes late. (If you decide to enter the classroom, turn to... Oh nevermind.) We decided instead to wander around the building and see what kind of trouble we could get into. Ultimately, we agreed that it was just a building full of empty classrooms and nothing to be very excited about.

We headed toward the library and trekked up the large, imposing staircase. At the top of a staircase a giant sculpture of the "hand of Christ" (nail and all) stood as a reminder that this was a religious school, an obvious (but important and worth mentioning) difference between CHC and a school like Clark. The library was huge, silent and otherwise not worth mentioning at this point in the story.

We tiptoed back down the long hall to the admissions office just in time for our 3:00 tour. The tour was given by two seniors, very enthusiastic "Crossies" (as we have blatantly generalized in a repulsive yet non-offending way all CHC students) who were able to not only share

insights about Holy Cross, but also provided us with information about Worcester and some of the other educational institutions in the area. Our tour guides, Christine and Katie, spent the next hour and a half leading us through the rain to show us the sights. We managed to engage them in witty banter about deforestation and Holy Cross life. Your mother.

Our group visited a dorm. The hallways were as dull and institutional as Wright or Bullock, and the rooms might have been a little smaller. The student who was living in the room told us that he is a sophomore. "It's mixed. There are some juniors living here too." "Are all the dorms the same?" "No, the one next door has rooms that are a little smaller."

Our next question for the illustrious (although possibly logic impaired) tour guides was about how much an average off-campus apartment rented for. Christine and Katie were both seniors, and neither knew the answer to our question.

"Don't either of you know anyone who lives off-campus?" we asked. "I'm a woman in a city, I don't feel safe," answered Katie, to which Christine added, "in the dorms men are on the first floor. Women are on the upper floors for security purposes." Huh? "You know, if someone breaks in, the men can protect themselves." The tourguides reminded us that they have a great gym.

Somewhere along the way, the topic of conversation turned to Worcester. Here's what they had to say about Worcester throughout the tour:

- "Worcester has three malls and there is a van that shuttles students around between them."
- "It's not Boston." (This was repeated anywhere between three and seven times over the course of the tour.)
- "The main thing is the educational opportunities, the internships that you might not get if you were out in the boondocks."
- "It has the Centrum, where people like Billy Joel and Neil Diamond have played recently."
- "There are eleven colleges so there are a lot of people our age."
- "Holy Cross has a very strong social life, so I'd usually rather be here. Even a dull weekend at CHC is better than WPI."



ues and athletics. We have a great relationship with Worcester. HC students love to give back to the community by volunteering. It's a strong part of our community." "I went to Kentucky last spring break and I was working there. We were doing missionary work."

Is there a lot of interaction between Holy Cross and the other consortium schools? Do HC students ever attend events at other local colleges? "Well, I guess you could if you wanted to, but we usually don't." What are the other Worcester schools like? "Each school has its own thing. You go to WPI to work, work, work; Clark is in a bad neighborhood; and Assumption, well, that must have its own thing too."

We also walked through the modern, brightly lit science building on the way to the library. While in the library, we were reminded, "the competition here can be tough, but it's not so cut-throat that you can't leave your books unattended. You don't have to worry about someone stealing your books or notes. This reflects the kind of high morals that Holy Cross students have. I love to tell people that on tours." Katie was so helpful.

We were also told that the HC library has an extraordinarily high book/student ratio. We hadn't realized how important this was to one's college selection process; maybe this was because we'd never heard of this statistic before.

From there, we trotted through the rain to the Hogan Student Center. We were impressed with the comfortable functionality of the building. The building houses most of the student space on campus, Holy Cross's bigger version of the Pub which doubles as their version of the Bistro ("Crossroads"), a full size bar, a game room, a copy center, the mailroom, the bookstore, a barber shop, the radio station, a theater, band practice space, a convenience store, administrative offices, and even classrooms. The building has everything you could ever want (yes, even that), but also leaves you with no reason to ever want to leave the campus.

On the way out of the campus center, we caught sight of the parking lot. A fellow touree asked about the availability of parking on campus. It was at this moment that we learned that, because Holy Cross is on a hill, only Juniors and Seniors are allowed to park on campus.

Next stop was the chapel, which was quite holy (what other word is appropriate to describe a chapel?). The organ was great. We asked if attending mass is required, and Christine said that it is not required but is a part of Holy Cross life. What if you're not Catholic? "You can talk to the Chaplain and he can help you find a church in the area." Katie gave Christine a dirty look and added, "or a synagogue."

Our next question was about the percentage of students that are Catholic. "We don't ask stu-

• "HC is the oldest and most traditional school in terms of val-





dents when they start here. We don't keep track of those things."

During the tour's concluding remarks, it was reiterated to us that, "because of the Jesuit tradition, Holy Cross students are mostly very moral and good." We decided that the tour was over. Actually, they decided that for us when they said, "this tour is over," but we like to think we were in control all along.

We went back to Admissions to engage a counselor in general chit-chat and beg for a free din-din. We talked to someone named Dave (although for the purposes of this article we shall use the pseudonym Aveday), who addressed our GPA concerns. "People don't drop out of Holy Cross, so transfer admissions is very competitive."

The referral sheet, (part of the application) stressed the positive with the only questions being, "Has this person been a disciplinary problem at your school?" and the always classic, "Would you allow this student to return to your school?"

Having had quite enough of Aveday and the rest of the Admissions office, and having scored a free dinner, we returned to the student center where we acted as participant observers during the next couple of hours. At around six o'clock we stumbled to the Upper Kimball dining hall. It was one very large, ornate room divided into one section. There were tables all in fairly straight rows and there seemed to be many people sitting around eating.

We strategically placed ourselves on the outskirts of a crowd of people, hoping that we



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that we observed between Holy Cross and other schools that we've seen.

There was also an apparent "dress code" among the groups. Interestingly enough, we cracked it: of the two of us, the male was wearing a plaid flannel shirt tucked into blue jeans and Miss O'Bwien was wearing a sweater and a pink tutu. This was more or less how everyone else in the room was dressed. The only thing that we forgot that would have helped us blend in were our dirty white hats. It seemed like everyone had one. One must wonder what Holy Cross would be like if plaid shirts were outlawed. Our guess is that they'd all be running around in their plaid pajamas.

Dinner also gave us the opportunity to recognize the unusual breakdown of student social groups that appear to exist at Holy Cross. There appeared to be only two distinct groups of students: (and because everyone is required to be on the meal plan, it is fair to assume that this was a correct representation of the student body) the average white, Catholic, former prep school students that make up over 90% (our guess) of the school, and the seeming-

would soon be accompanied by various Crossie types. Much to our dismay, we ended up simply observing. The dining hall turned out to be a good place to get a good sense of the groups of students at Holy Cross. We noticed that the majority of students were dining in same sex peer groups. We're not exactly sure what this would imply, but it was a definite difference

ly out of place and seldom seen minority or foreign students that comprise the rest of the student body.

As we walked into the dining hall, there was a sign taped to the wall. It had a big headline that read, "Diversity Thought of the Week" and then "This campus isn't homogenous. Each of us just refuses to celebrate his or her own individuality. We prefer to hide in the anonymity of the masses." This statement seemed to sum up the situation at Holy Cross as we observed it throughout the day.

At Clark, we have a lack of school spirit because we are extremely concerned with being individuals, whereas at Holy Cross the opposite is true. Holy Cross students tend to sacrifice this sense of individualism in favor of a larger social identity. It is unclear whether the students arrive at Holy Cross with this identity already established or if it is a result of time spent at HC, but either way the average Holy Cross student would be easily identifiable as such. To take it out of psychology terminology and put it into



tech-theater lingo, "they're all rivets in the same plank."

After dinner (which was alright, but nothing special), we reverse-marched over to the little movie theater-type thing that they have going on and sat through the Very Brady Sequel, which was, well, very Brady. And also very appropriate as a symbol of the mainstream American values that most Holy Cross students represent.

Next on the agenda was an unscheduled tour (we snuck in) of a random dorm. There seemed to be a closed door policy in effect, and we were able to discover no new information. A second dorm proved slightly more interesting than the first, if only because we found the TV lounge. We were, in fact, so tired after our long day (we had been at Holy Cross for ten hours by this point, by far the longest investigative expedition that either of us have ever been on) that we sat on the couch and actually watched an entire episode of Star Trek because we were too tired to get up and change the channel.

We made the decision that after we both graduated we would become drifters and visit colleges all across the country for free food and shelter. We decided that when the money ran out and the Pinto broke down, we would become migrant workers. But perhaps most importantly, we decided that we were tired and went home. •

*Authors' Note: We would like to thank someone who made our day at Holy Cross a little more pleasant. First and foremost in our minds will always be that unknown, unwashed, probably unwed soul that used his card entry to let us into a dorm. It is no doubt because of his contribution that Holy Cross will remain a school upon a hill.*