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Dear Middle of the Last Century Classes,

This is a long note from Bill Scott, Class of 1955, and it is a hot day here in College Station, just before the 4th of July. I would like to play the “remember game” with you for a few minutes, and talk to you about the great and wonderful times at “Cow College on the Brazos.”

Times were changing in the '50s, but the Catholic presence at Texas A&M College was there and had been growing since Msgr. John B. Gleissner noticed some young men in uniform at Mass in Bryan's St Joseph Church. Inspired by these Aggies, who had walked six miles, he said the first Mass on campus about 50 years before we got there.



Msgr. Gleissner is a legend, and he began a campus ministry program that has become legendary in its impact on the Church and society.

As young Catholic men, we came to Texas A&M COLLEGE to learn, and we brought with us a lasting legacy from our FAITH. We grew and got an education on the campus. Across Sulphur Springs Rd. (now University Drive) was a small Catholic church built in the late 1920s, and this is where our Faith was fanned and came to burn within us. The church was small; hot in the summer and cold in the winter, but it was our faith home. I was in the Newman Club my freshman and sophomore years, but drifted away. However, the faith that I received from my mother was nurtured by Msgr. Gleissner and Father Tim Valenta.

When we graduated, we couldn't wait to hit Hwy 6 to begin our professional lives. I served my time in the U.S. Army and came back home to Bryan-College Station. I got a job, met a girl and asked her to marry me. She said “yes” and then it hit me! I am Catholic--I have to see Father Tim about getting married. We met with Father Tim on the steps of the rectory in Bryan, and I will never forget the ten minutes we spent there.

Ring goes the door bell and Father Tim appears, “Hello Billy”--by the way I hadn't been Billy since I left St Joseph's School. Next he asked, “What can I do for you?”

“We want to see about getting married.”

“It is about time,” said Father Tim.

Then I introduced Estelle to him, and he came back with, “And how is you little girl?” Estelle had been married to Fritz, a classmate of mine from high school, who had died of Hodgkin's disease. Father Tim smiled, glad that Estelle had found another nice young and handsome man (!) and that I had the good sense to know a treasure when I saw her ☺, and then asked, “When?”

We hadn't even talked about a date, and I sprung with, “How about the day after Christmas?”

“Fine, that is a Saturday. Will two in the afternoon do?”

“Yes.” And away we went.

(OVER)

That was 1964. The Lord, through Father Tim, was there when we needed him. Since then I have become a deacon in the Church. When I was assigned to St. Mary's, one of my main jobs was helping students with marriage prep. The Church requires a more structured approach today to make sure couples truly understand their marriage vows and have the tools to live the sacrament in good and challenging circumstances. While the method of marriage prep is different, I always tried to emulate Father Tim's care with the students who came to me.

The Holy Spirit is active in Aggieland. As the "buildings" of St. Mary's grew so did the numbers of Catholics on campus. Today, there are approximately 11,500 Catholic students at A&M, about 25% of the student population. Aggies are a beacon of light in the Church's vocation crisis. To date, there are 114 Aggies who have been ordained or made their final vows in religious orders. And, the great news is that there are many other Ags in the "pipeline" in seminaries or in formation for religious orders.

St. Mary's provides a Catholic "home away from home" for the students, and the vocations come from the formation begun at home and finished off at St. Mary's. **With over 80 organizations, programs and activities for students to learn about their faith and serve others, St. Mary's forms the future leaders of the Church and society.** After graduation, the students take the leadership skills they learned at St. Mary's to their parishes, communities and chosen professions in Texas and beyond.

Will you join me in making sure that future generations of Aggies, our grandchildren and beyond, will also be blessed by the riches of the Catholic faith during their college years? The concept of class gifts started with the Class of 2005, which has committed more than \$52,000 to the St. Mary's permanent endowment. Individual students pledged at least \$1,000 to participate in this gift. Inspired by these young Ags, a member of the Classes of the 1940s helped develop the concept of decade class gifts. To date, the Classes of the 1940s have committed more than \$70,000.

Now it is our turn, the members of the Classes of the 1950s, to add our commitment to a permanent endowment fund, the proceeds of which will support Catholic campus ministry. We have been out a long time, and it is a fantastic gift to come back to St. Mary's and see Catholic students excited about their faith at seven weekend Masses.

Half a century ago we were students and now we are former students, older and wiser-- but not too old and hopefully wise enough to continue to make great contributions to our FAITH through prayer, service and our financial means. Thank you for considering supporting St. Mary's Catholic Center at Texas A&M through the Classes of the 1950s gift.

IN HIS SERVICE,



Bill Scott, Fightin' Texas Aggie Class of 1955

P.S. **Please save the date! The Classes of the 1950s Aggie Catholic Reunion will be the weekend of September 19-21.** An invitation will follow. Please join your classmates for dinner and fun on Friday night and a reserved seat at Mass on Sunday!

