



## Saints today. Saints for all eternity. From the desk of Dr. Marco Clark

Dear Holy Cross Family and Friends,

In this month of August as vacations are winding down, I wanted to reflect on my recent trip to Ireland with my wife and her siblings. Our 11-day excursion included trips to the major cities of Dublin, Cork, Galway, Derry, and Belfast, the small towns of Donegal and Kinsale, and the village of Adare. We visited several ancient cathedrals, churches and abbeys, and hiked the beautiful coastal sights at the Cliffs of Moher and the Giants Causeway. Of course, we also enjoyed the local fare in several pubs and restaurants. The trip was simply remarkable. Throughout it all, we learned so much about the proud (and often difficult) history and culture of this country, while meeting the beautiful people of Ireland.

One of the most impactful moments of our trip came during our tours of Derry and Belfast in Northern Ireland. As a high school student in the 1980s, I remember watching on the daily news the fighting, protests, car bombings, and riots in the streets of these cities largely stemming from Protestant vs. Catholic tensions that dated back to the early 1600s! I would watch in disbelief as extremists from each of these Christian sects would plan attacks on one another to strike fear and intimidation as demonstrations of power and control. While walking those same city streets today, it was evident that there is still a feeling of tension and distrust in the air. I also had to wonder, do they even know what they are fighting about and what they disagree on?

As the tour guide shared more insights with us about the turbulent times of the 1960s-1980s, he said something that resonated with me. He believed that the children, by living and playing together, going to the same schools and participating on the same sporting teams, will in time make for a more hopeful future. The problem remains, however, that these communities remain divided and segregated.

In much the same way in post-revolutionary France, Blessed Basil Moreau, founder of the Congregation of Holy Cross, saw a more hopeful future in the young people. It was his belief that if children from varying backgrounds, religions, socio-economic statuses, races, nationalities, and learning styles were placed together in a Christian educational setting, they would break down barriers and learn from one another. His vision was that by educating the hearts and minds of students they would be formed as scholars, virtuous leaders, ethical citizens focused on the common good, and disciples with hope to bring. He believed that through Christian education we could “sanctify the whole world.”

With another school year just a few short weeks away, our country (and world) continues to deal with division and polarization. Whether by race, political ideology, socio-economic status, religion, and even within the Catholic Church, it strikes me that the kind of education we provide at Holy Cross College is as needed and important as ever.

In January of 2022, Pope Francis published through the Congregation for Catholic Education at the Vatican a document titled, *The Identity of the Catholic School for a Culture of Dialogue*. This brief but powerful document echoes the same messages that Fr. Moreau spoke about nearly 200 years ago and that our tour guide repeated just a few weeks ago, that our schools be a reflection of “differences living together in harmony” and that together we are responsible for “ensuring respect for the life, dignity, and freedom” of all. Pope Francis goes on to challenge our Catholic schools, colleges, and universities to create cultures of encounter with one another and the living Christ while promoting a culture of dialogue that emphasizes listening for understanding, respect, love, and charity. He further states that “even in the most serious conflicts, the unity of lived faith, based on the Gospel, remains the guiding compass.”

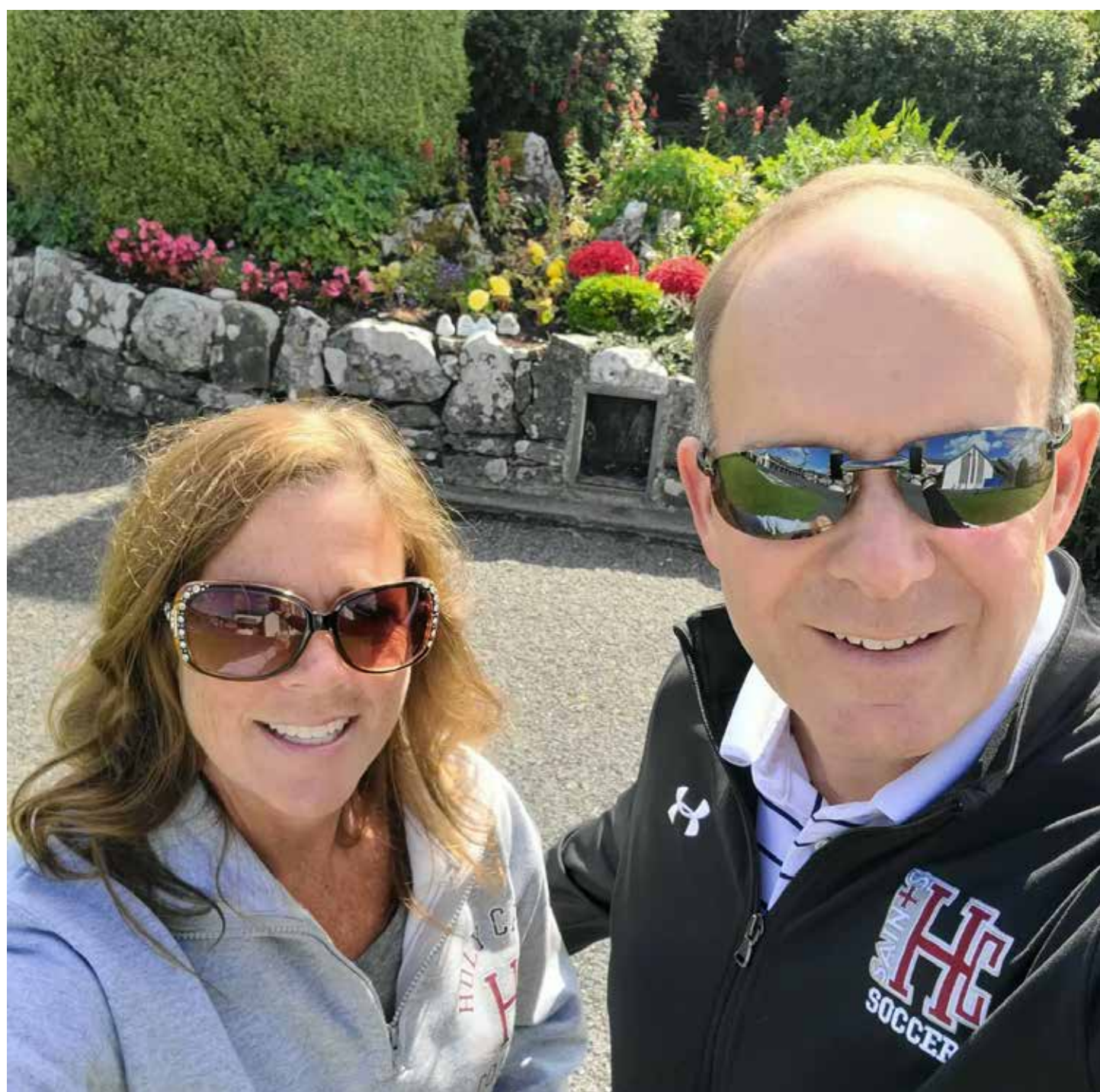
It is my belief that the work we are doing every day at Holy Cross is grounded in this “lived faith, based on the Gospel.” As we enter this new year, there will invariably be conflicts and differences, debates and disagreements. While I encourage vigorous dialogue, let us not be divided. Let us set the example for the world as the “guiding compass” of lived faith based on the Gospel. By encountering one another with generosity and engaging in dialogue with charity, pursuing honest scholarship, virtuous leadership, and ethical citizenship, you are witnessing to the Gospel call to make God known, loved, and served. We, YOU, are the hope for tomorrow. United in this mission, as disciples of hope, together we can indeed sanctify the whole world.

I can't wait to see you all on campus very soon. Enjoy the rest of your summer!

Saints today. Saints for all eternity.

Ave Crux, Spes Unica,

Marco J. Clark, Ed.D.



Pictured are Dr. and Mrs. Clark in Ireland.