



# BROTHERS OF HOLY CROSS

*Living the mission of Jesus.*

November, 2009

Dear Friend,

There is a beautiful old building on the University of Notre Dame campus that is not supported by the university. It is named Columba Hall after Brother Columba O'Neill, who was a shoemaker and a nurse/healer who was reputed to work real miracles for the sick.

Columba Hall has been a sacred community house for the Brothers of Holy Cross for over 100 years. They live here in simple rooms. In the mornings some leave to attend to their ministries in the South Bend community. Their salaries are always pooled to support each other and their home.

Living at Notre Dame the Brothers have made amazing contributions. They founded and staffed the original Manual Labor School that became the University of Notre Dame—a school for orphans and neglected young people. They established and helped staff three other schools in the area—Le Mans Academy, St. Joseph High School and Holy Cross College. They staff the Mission Center at Notre Dame, work in soup kitchens for Catholic Charities, and organize clothing and food drives for Africa. They have been teachers, administrators, coaches, counselors, farmers, cooks, and craftsmen.



**Columba Hall on the campus of Notre Dame.**

In short, the Brothers of Holy Cross who have lived at Columba Hall have done God's work—whatever was needed—at Notre Dame, Indiana, and surrounding communities. Brothers have done this work ever since six of them arrived from Le Mans, France, with Fr. Sorin, the founder of the University of Notre Dame.

But today, the Brothers are asking you to do a little of God's work for them.

Their home at Columba Hall needs serious updating to meet local building codes as the current situations are unsafe. Repairs are needed to the fire alarm wiring and the sprinkler systems. The walk-in freezer and refrigerator in the kitchen has its original wooden door and insulation, and the frost that builds up inside is causing rot, excessive energy use and safety issues.

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It is difficult for the Brothers themselves to keep up with all the repairs on this stately old building, especially since many of them are well past retirement age.

In addition to the required repair work, the Brothers also have plans to remodel six of their sleeping rooms for assisted living. Some of the Brothers are becoming unable to do everything for themselves, but they want to stay at Columba Hall for as long as possible. As you know, nursing homes cost thousands of dollars a month. The Brothers believe that remodeling these six rooms, by adding a toilet and a shower with safety bars will be a frugal investment. Currently the Brothers living in their rooms share a common toilet / bath facilities located at the end of long hallways.

Why should you care about the Brothers at Columba Hall? It is nice to know that here are still men who love God and His creation so deeply that they give up family and earthly rewards to work like apostles in community for the betterment of us all.

Columba Hall is a monument to this way of life. Notre Dame and St. Mary's students will remember it as the Victorian building on the wooded service road between the two schools. Many



**Columba Hall priests and brothers in 1918.**

a young couple in love took the evening stroll past Columba Hall to the Grotto. And many late nights, the Brothers were awakened by student revelers celebrating the latest school victory.

This land between the two lakes was chosen as the place for a community house because Fr. Sorin thought it was "the most beautiful place" and because it was far enough from the center of campus to support the peaceful reflection necessary for prayer and religious life. But today the Brothers' life here is threatened by the need for costly repairs and upgrades.

With your donation today I believe we can raise enough money to make the necessary repairs. It is not the size of the donation that is important, but rather that everyone who cares about the Brothers of Holy Cross chooses to participate. Whatever you can afford will contribute to helping the Brothers remain at Columba Hall for years to come, especially since gifts of first-time donors will be matched.

In addition to his nursing duties, Brother Columba O'Neill was a shoemaker who taught his trade to hundreds of young lads in the Manual Labor School. One of the most interesting stories told about Br. Columba is that he was said to have a "miraculous nudge" that got the attention of his listener and helped them remember whatever he was trying to teach them. (It seems he had a bit of the Fighting Irish in him, too.) !

I hope this letter and the one that follows from a former student will be the only "nudge" you need to remember the Brothers of Holy Cross this Christmas season. A donation to help many of them continue to live in Columba Hall will be accepted with deep gratitude and appreciation. Thank you for thinking of your CSC Brothers...and, from each of them, Merry Christmas!

May God Bless You,

*Brother Chester Freel, CSC*

Br. Chester Freel, CSC  
Provincial Superior

## Your Gift Will be Recognized

We invite you to help us refurbish Columba Hall. There will be opportunities for you to be recognized and honor family, deceased relatives or Brothers who have influenced your lives.

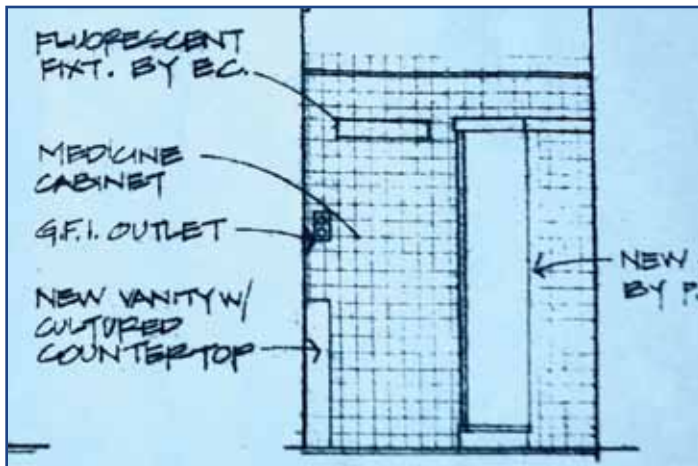
**Cross & Anchors Members** Gifts up to \$199 will have their names in a memory book in the Columba Hall chapel.

**Columba Hall Society Members** Gifts from \$200 - \$4,999 will have their names inscribed on a memorial plaque in the lobby of Columba Hall.

**O'Neill Club Members** Gifts of \$5,000 or above will have their names on plaques outside the renovated rooms.

Our goal for the Annual Brothers' Appeal is \$122,000. This includes \$72,000 for remodeling six rooms, updating the fire alarm system at a cost of \$30,000 and re-insulation of walk-in freezer and refrigerator for \$20,000.

On the enclosed envelope giving suggestion levels are listed along with how your gift may be used in our efforts to remodel Columba Hall.



## Here's an Opportunity to Double Your Gift

A graduate of Hoban High School, who prefers to remain anonymous, shares his story below. He has been a friend and donor to the Brothers of Holy Cross for some time and has been very

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Dear Brothers of Holy Cross,

Throughout grade school the nuns had the unwelcome habit of drawing a red line on the report cards showing what letter grade level you should be able to attain based on the standardized tests. Unfortunately my red line was about A-. Most of my grades were C's and D's with an occasional B and very lonely A. So this was a constant source of friction (on my rear end) with my father. It hit a peak about fourth grade when I hid my report card in my book bag because my math grade was so bad that I knew my accountant father would go berserk. After a couple of weeks my mom called the teacher to find out when the cards might be coming out and found out that had happened two weeks earlier and I had forged her signature on mine and turned it back in. My world changed that day. That was back when "spare the rod and spoil the child" was the favorite saying of the nuns. This green-lighted my rear end.

So as I matriculated to Archbishop Hoban High School, Akron, Ohio, it would be an understatement to say I was not much of a student. Back in those days they divided the freshman class into thirds and I fell into the "dumb" third with the rest of my educational malingerers. Freshman year buzzed by and I did about as expected. The day was coming though when my life would change again. On the first day of sophomore year, I showed up and was surrounded in classes by "smart" kids...not just the middle third, but the truly gifted. OMG. I was petrified. After a couple of days, ("Ed" not his real name) showed up. Ed had always been very smart and a high achiever. Ed told me in homeroom (he sat in front of me as it was alphabetical) that his schedule had gotten mixed up with one of the "dumb" kids and it took a couple of days to straighten it out and get him back in with the "smart" kids. Then it clicked. I was the one in the wrong spot and I did not have a clue of what to do about it. So I studied my rear end off and made a decent showing. Fear can be a pretty good motivator.

The other great motivator at Hoban was Brother Carl Shonk. We had him both junior and senior year for English. Due to grade school achievements (or lack thereof), I did not have much of a foundation in vocabulary, spelling, composition or literature. My mother thought English was a second language for me. That did not deter Brother Carl. He rode herd on us like a

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## Double Your Gift, continued

generous. In one of our conversations he told me of the impact of the Brothers on his life. As it turned out I also had one of the same brothers as a teacher in Indianapolis. **Because of the influence of this teacher and others he is willing to give further support by matching first-time donors up to \$50,000.** In this time of economic recession, this doubles the value of your contribution.

If you have the same feelings of gratitude toward the Brothers, we hope you will consider a donation.

Please use the enclosed envelope to make your most welcome gift, or contact me, Br. Roy Smith, Director of Development, at (574) 631-2928; P.O. Box 460, Notre Dame, IN 46556; or – Rsmith@brothersofholycross.com

In the name of all the Brothers of Holy Cross, thank you for your generosity.

Sincerely,



Brother Roy Smith, CSC  
Director of Development

## That's my story continued

trail boss. Drill and test! Drill and test! He was unmerciful. I had that darn Barron's book memorized after the second time he took us through it. The summer between junior and senior year he made us read such thrillers as MOBY DICK, WUTHERING HEIGHTS, DORIAN GRAY and three other snorers. Thanks for Cliff Notes. After two years of his pounding English into us, I got 100 points higher in the verbal portion of the SAT than the math. It was a miracle. It allowed me to finally please the old man. He had made me the deal about college that I could go anywhere I wanted but if I wanted him to pay for it, it would be ND. Thanks to those 100 pts on the verbal part of the SAT and the schedule screw up sophomore year I got accepted. Frankly, I seldom worked as hard for a class at ND as I did for Brother Carl. After his drilling, college was a cake walk.

That is my story and I am sticking to it. I think to this day when Ed gives inspirational talks to his business associates he tells the story of the class schedule screw up and what happened to the "dumb" kid who was finally called on to make his best effort. It was transformational.

Signed, A grateful student!



Pictured are the brothers currently living at Columba Hall, Notre Dame, Indiana.