

## How Can I Help?

Sycamore Trust is a totally volunteer organization that relies on its supporters to help accomplish its purpose. Because the forces of secularization will press ceaselessly on the University, Sycamore must continue to expand its base if alumni and others loyal to Notre Dame are to be aware of what is happening, exchange their views and express their concerns. The greater the resources available, the better we are able to serve these ends.

If you want to help preserve Notre Dame's Catholic identity, consider getting involved. There are many ways to help! From joining our prayer team to signing our petition, hosting a local event, or becoming an "Ambassador" for your class. It all starts by getting informed. So please visit our web site and join our mailing list at [www.SycamoreTrust.org](http://www.SycamoreTrust.org)

Project Sycamore is a 501(c)(3) organization. Your tax-deductible donation will help us continue our work to mend and maintain the distinctive Catholic character of Notre Dame.



*Ralph McNerny*  
1929-2010

Internationally acclaimed scholar and storied Notre Dame teacher

*"Sycamore Trust is a model of calm and reasonable yet unrelenting friendly questioning of recent events on the South Bend campus."*

## Our Name

Like ghosts of birds, the flocking flakes/ Amid the leafless branches fly.... (The Dome, V. 39.)

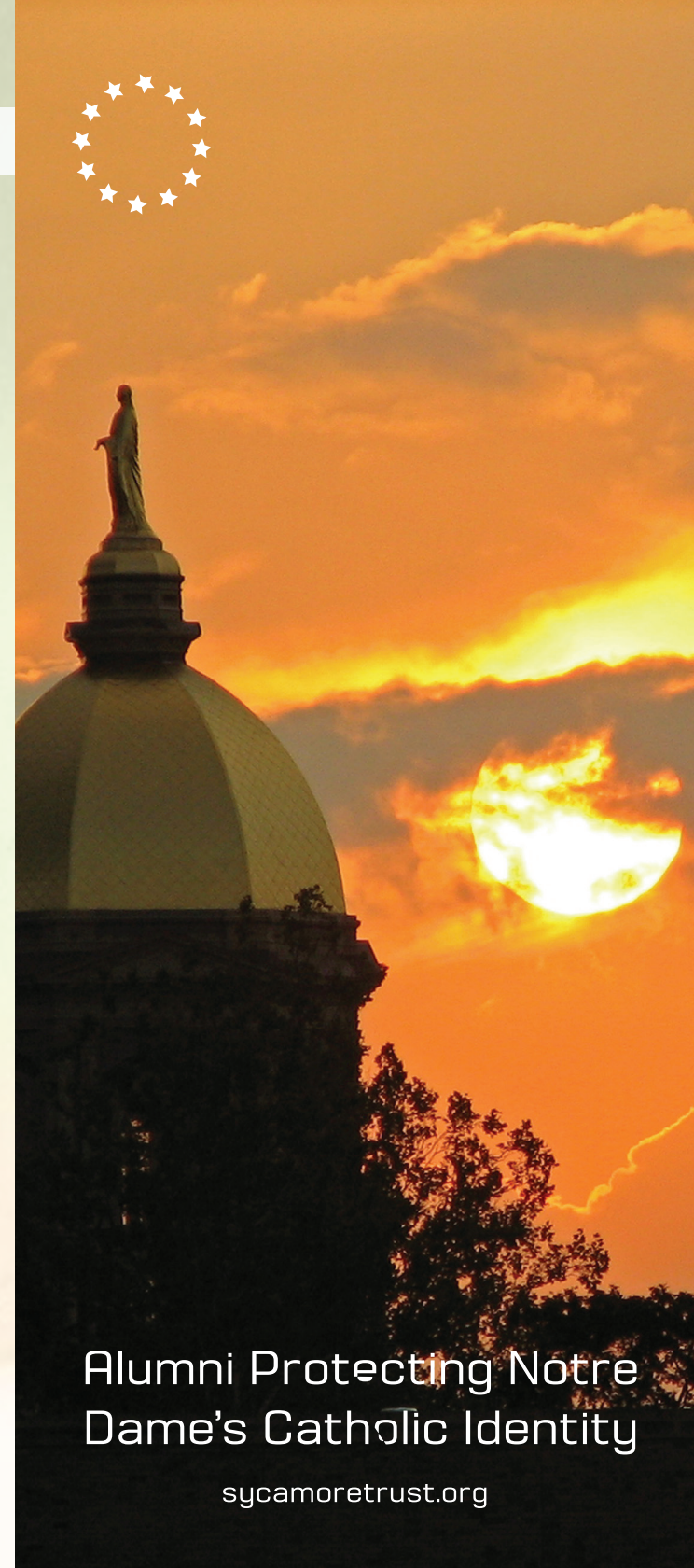
The Sycamore Trust takes its name from the "Guardian of the Grotto," the ancient tree standing watch over the Grotto that, according to legend, reaches with its gnarled branches toward God in prayerful memorial to the innocent Indian murdered where it took root.

As this sentinel is perpetually protective of the Grotto, so, too, have Notre Dame alumni been protective of the school's formative heritage as it is adapted to the challenges of each age. At the heart of that heritage are Notre Dame's Catholic identity and its sustaining relationship with the Church, even as institutional links have been dissolved.



47 West Division Street  
PMB 512  
Chicago, IL 60610

(888) 844-1390  
[office@sycamoretrust.org](mailto:office@sycamoretrust.org)



Alumni Protecting Notre  
Dame's Catholic Identity

[sycamoretrust.org](http://sycamoretrust.org)



## Sycamore Trust

Sycamore Trust is a tax-exempt organization established by Notre Dame alumni to protect their Alma Mater's Catholic identity. Beginning in 2005 with an alumni-only membership, the organization has expanded steadily and now includes a broad representation of the Notre Dame family and a growing number of committed Christians troubled by the secularization of higher education in general.

## Signs of Secularization

With events such as the Vagina Monologues and Queer Film Festival gaining notoriety for Notre Dame, it appeared to many that the University was silently slipping toward the ranks of other formerly religious institutions such as Harvard, Princeton, Yale, and Duke.

That concern became widespread when in 2009 Notre Dame conferred an honorary degree on President Obama, the Church's most formidable adversary on abortion and embryonic stem cell research. This act contravened the unanimously adopted policy of the country's bishops but, despite the strong objections of 83 Cardinals, archbishops, and bishops, the University was undeterred. Clearly something had changed at Notre Dame.

Looking beyond those events to their cause, Sycamore organizers found that the underlying problem was a crippling decline in Catholic representation on the faculty. Those startling episodes were simply symptoms of that phenomenon.

## Notre Dame's Drifting Mission

For several decades the University, in a drive to raise its academic ranking, had chipped away at its mission by hiring proportionately fewer and fewer practicing Catholics. By the time Sycamore was established, Catholic representation had fallen from 85% in the 1970s to barely over 50%, where it stays today. Moreover, that includes all who checked the "Catholic" box, many of whom are merely nominal or dissenting Catholics.

Thus, the University no longer meets its own test of Catholic identity: "The Catholic identity of the University depends upon...the continuing presence of a predominant number of Catholic intellectuals." (Mission Statement)

More than 150 years after Father Sorin assembled his celebrated class of two in Father Badin's old log chapel, the voice he sought to raise is being drowned out by a faculty whose representatives unabashedly declare, "The University should not compromise its academic aspirations in its efforts to maintain its Catholic identity." (Notre Dame Faculty Senate) If they have their way, Notre Dame will soon be no different from secular institutions except for a thin Catholic veneer. "Priests in the Dome and in the dorms," as the saying goes.

*"At its highest levels, the Holy Cross Fathers and the Board, the University must decide before it is too late whether it wants to be a Catholic university or merely another secular university. There are many of the latter, but few, if any, that have the resources to be the former."*

— Jude P. Dougherty, Dean Emeritus, School of Philosophy, The Catholic University of America

## Is It Too Late?

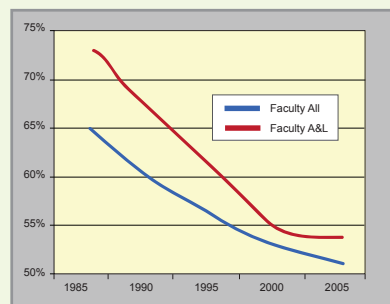
The only way to stop the momentum is for the President, supported by the Board, to take whatever steps are necessary to insure the hiring of many more qualified Catholics to the faculty. Although hiring has largely devolved to the faculty, the President retains ultimate authority. And he is not without resources. There remain a solid core of splendid Catholic scholars, a number of non-Catholics committed to the school's mission, a largely Catholic student body, several vibrant Catholic centers and programs, as well as Sycamore Trust with its rapidly growing membership. Notre Dame can be pulled back.

## The Stakes

Notre Dames is matchless in Catholic higher education in reputation and resources. It holds a unique place in the worlds of academia and ecclesia. If it loses its Catholic identity, Catholic perspectives will fade within academic, research and civic circles; the Church and the Catholic community will lose a precious and irreplaceable asset; and future generations will be robbed of the opportunity for a truly Catholic education at a university of the first rank.

### Fading Catholic Identity

"The University should not compromise its academic aspirations in its efforts to maintain its Catholic identity." (Notre Dame Faculty Senate)



History demonstrates that the secularization of a religious college or university is the product of the secularization of its faculty. While the outward signs of religious practice typically continue well after the faculty has been transformed, giving the impression that nothing has changed, in the end only traces of that religious identity remain.



William H. Dempsey, '52

Sycamore Trust  
Founding President

*"Alumni at other Catholic schools didn't realize that their schools were losing their Catholic hearts and minds until it was too late to stop it. That shouldn't happen at Notre Dame."*