

THE BELLES OF ST. MARY'S

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The Financial Aspect — Isn't

By ELLEN SMITH
Treasurer — St. Mary's Vestry

There seems to be a misconception around campus that financial support of our school by the dioceses that "sponsor" us is dependent upon our having a compulsory chapel policy. This misconception can be attacked on its two premises:

- 1) that the dioceses' support is nominal enough to matter in our budget and
- 2) that a prerequisite for church support is compulsory chapel

The five dioceses pledged \$9599.98 to St. Mary's last year. That amount is an absurdly minimal percentage of our budget. (To add insult to injury, they only paid a bit over \$7000 of their pledge.) Secondly, diocesan support is not dependent upon our chapel policy whatever it may be. The decision of St. Mary's chapel policy rests with Mr. Pisani and the Board of Trustees.

Letters To The Editor

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Due to the feelings and events resulting from the letters in the last issue of THE BELLES, this space has been opened up to faculty, students, and administration, in order that they may express rational, constructive opinions on the subject of compulsory chapel. The impact of this situation has affected everyone at St. Mary's. It is the responsibility of this paper to the school and to the students to recognize the importance of this problem and to offer a channel for the expression of all sides of the question.

I would like to express my thoughts and beliefs regarding the current controversy over the compulsory chapel attendance.

First and foremost, I wish to state that I believe that compulsory chapel should NOT be done away with because non-compulsory chapel would eventually mean NO chapel at all. If chapel becomes optional, in time only a small handful of students (if any) would attend the services. Within two years, there would be no such thing as chapel because there would be a whole new group of girls at St. Mary's who would not be exposed to the chapel and would therefore not even bother to attend something that no one else attends. It is human nature for us to be lazy, and I am sure that if it came to be an option for the students to attend chapel, not many of us would go. (This point was proven last year with the 5:00 Sunday service. The attendance was so light that at times there were only 3 or 5 girls!) The point that I am trying to make is to BE REALISTIC! I don't see any way that a non-compulsory system could work. Most of the ideas that I have heard in favor of non-compulsory chapel have been idealistic. Too many people are hung up on the word COMPULSORY and the idea that they are being FORCED to go to chapel. There is no way that anyone will get anything out of chapel if they don't put anything into it! We are speaking of two hours a week. Two measly hours! Is it too much to ask for the students of St. Mary's to go to their God in a formal manner for two hours a week? I certainly hope not!

The question remains—What to do about the unrest this controversy has created? I believe that the best way to solve our problem is to work with the services themselves. Varied services would break the monotony and several new ideas could be used to make the services more meaningful. A suggestion that I believe would be beneficial (especially with the new dating hour changes), would be to move the Sunday chapel back to 11:00 instead of 9:30. I feel that this change (which should include the 8:00 service for those who prefer it) would definitely be appreciated and it may even change a few peoples' attitudes toward the chapel.

The important point to remember attributes to St. Mary's; however, it

can not remain as an important part of our community if it becomes non-compulsory. The objective should be to make the services more meaningful, therefore re-establishing the chapel in our hearts.

Laura Beckman

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I am opposed to compulsory chapel. I believe that church attendance should be an individual option. Religion is personal and should not be forced on anyone. In my opinion, required attendance creates a negative attitude toward the church.

One may argue that I have no right to complain about required chapel because when I decided to come to St. Mary's, I knew that I would have to go to church. But I chose St. Mary's because of the high academic standards, the location, and the chance to make many great friends. I also felt that I would benefit from the religious atmosphere. However, after being here almost two years, I realize that required chapel takes away from this atmosphere. I find that I fail to put anything into the services or to get anything out of them because of the fact that I have to be there.

I believe that the chapel is one of the attributes of St. Mary's. It should remain an important part of the campus community. The services should become more meaningful, and I sincerely believe that they can become more meaningful to the individual by doing away with required chapel attendance.

Helen Pruden

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There has been a cry from the student body which must be answered. On the surface, this cry appears to be concerned with doing away with compulsory chapel. I am of the opinion that this cry goes much deeper and is more urgent.

In a world of materialistic concerns and a fast pace of life for the young person of today, could the cry be one for meaning and depth in religion? A very heartfelt and sincere cry, to be sure, but one which has arisen here at St. Mary's under the cover of a current issue.

If this cry is to be answered, then there is a great responsibility for those who care enough about people to answer it. I believe the responsibility lies not in a selfish cry against compulsory chapel, but rather in seeking to reach people who have not yet found an answer in religion.

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Compulsory chapel is unchristian. I personally resent being forced to attend services. I do not agree that required chapel attendance should be abandoned at St. Mary's. Many girls are here because this is a church-oriented school with three mandatory services a week. I am among this number. I was trying to change my religious beliefs. I admit I didn't always attend when I was supposed to, but when I didn't go, I had the feeling that I was defeating my pur-

pose here. Religious training is the basis of St. Mary's and although I have found that compulsory chapel is not right for me, I do think it is right for SMJC. Those who are trying to change the system may be those who have found themselves and know what their beliefs are. It is fair to deprive others of this privilege?

Some possible suggestions are:

1. a voluntary weekday service for those who really want to attend, replacing the two separate services for the college and high school.
2. having an early service on communion Sundays so the service won't be so long.
3. moving the Sunday service up to a more convenient time based on a vote by the student body.

Julie Boatwright

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First of all, I want to say that Mr. Hobgood, Dr. Pisani, the faculty, trustees, and students all have very good ideas. We must realize that everyone should be able to express his own opinions and not be criticized for his personal beliefs. I hope that each individual connected with this difficult decision will open his heart and willingly listen to each other. Now, I would like to express my own personal feelings concerning this problem, and I do this in all honesty and sincerity. I may be totally wrong, and if I am I will be the first to admit it. I really feel as if I have been through this before. When I was a child, just as far back as I can remember, I was always expected to attend church every Sunday. But my parents didn't just send me, they took me with them. Of course, I resented having to go all the time, and many times I'd stay awake Saturday nights trying to think of a good excuse to get out of going to church. But with my rotten luck, most of my ingenious plans failed. As I grew older I was not made to go to church; I made my own decision whether to go or not. My parents faithfully continued to go every Sunday, and I found myself going with them of my own free will. I really felt a closeness to the members of the church and I felt good inside knowing that I was there, because I wanted to be there.

I now feel that we have reached a point in our lives where we're faced with such a decision and I feel that we're old enough and hopefully mature enough to make the right decision. I thank my parents now for guiding me as a child but knowing when to let go and trusting me enough to make my own decision whether to attend church or not. Now, I seriously hope that the students at St. Mary's will be given this important decision whether to go to church or not go. We've got to be put on our own someday, and I feel that now is as good a time as any. If we're given noncompulsory chapel, no one can really say that it will succeed or fail. All we can do is hope and pray together that it will work. I personally think it will succeed. And