



COLLEGE OF
MOUNT SAINT VINCENT

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

June 12, 2020

Students, Faculty, Staff, Alumni, Friends:

As promised, I am writing to you again as part of what must be a continuing and expanding campus-wide conversation.

This and every time, we should begin by reaffirming that human rights and dignity must be respected at our College and should be respected everywhere: an understanding of our common humanity, a commitment to human dignity, and a full appreciation of our obligations to each other.

Our students, faculty, staff, and alumni are passionately engaged and committed to the values we share. I think that says something very right about our College. There is no passivity or indifference. And I think we should all take heart from the students, faculty, staff, and alumni who have articulately expressed their shock at the post that brought the George Floyd murder to campus. As one alumna from the Class of 2015 wrote: “As a proud alum of CMSV, I’m disgusted at this current student’s ideology...which does not support the environment of the College that I came to love during my years there.”

The reactions of hundreds of our current students and alumni and faculty and staff are evidence of how much unites us and how authentically we try to live the College’s mission. We recognize bigotry and we are appalled by injustice. We are united in our commitment to make more of the world more like the College.

The Instagram messages rightly precipitated outrage and elicited many thoughtful responses. The post was offensively bigoted. It violated College policy. Admittedly, also, some reactions were threatening and violent in themselves. Many, many alumni and students demanded immediate disciplinary action. In this case as in every case our processes are being followed. They are underway. In this case as in every case, individuals are held accountable for their actions.


I was surprised when several students contended that the College ignores offenses. At my request, two students provided me lists of offenses that the College had allegedly ignored. The two lists I received were virtually identical and short—5 items each—including events many years ago. Perhaps our rules about confidentiality feed the notion that the College does not act, but indeed, the College had acted promptly in the three cases we’d heard about. As for the two reports we had not heard about (both from years past) we are pursuing them now.

Cases of individual discipline are one matter, but another thing is dramatically clear. We need to expand the campus conversation about bigotry, justice, and change. We have had some excellent forums and vigorous discussions on these topics. We need to have a lot more. We need to learn through dialogue.

SGA has announced a forum. I am grateful for that start, but as a community, we also need to expand that exchange. I am reaching out to SGA and other members of our community to find together an array of settings and programs for the coming year. Two major topics: individual justice and communal justice. They are related but distinct.

The Sisters of Charity founded this College with the hope and promise of Redemption: the transformation of evil into good, pettiness into greatness, selfishness into compassion. As individuals, we are all obliged to look into our hearts and find a path to virtue. As a community, we are also called to pursue justice in action. The common good therefore requires another, equally important conversation. What can and should we do to remove the stain of bigotry from our communal lives?

We will keep you posted.



Charles L. Flynn, Jr.
President