Brandon Nunn

As I walked through the campus to Father Kuzniewski’s lecture, the only thoughts that were meandering through my mind were those of escaping the treacherous hills and taking a seat in a nice chair. After hearing his story, however, I now hold a new and deeper appreciation for the hills that I now call home. His insight into the history of the College of the Holy Cross was very informative and he presented the information in an interesting approach. From listening to Father Kuzniewski, I can now form my own ideas about the construction of the campus and how it connects with the world around us. Transformed from a prominent, healthy farm into the college as we know it today, the beauty and lore of the property, along with the connection to the Church has remained unchanged.

Father Fitton knew that this property was special. Just as St. Ignatius of Loyola laid down his weapons on top of Montserrat in Spain to devote his life to service, faith, and study, Father Fitton knew that this hill was where he could fabricate his institution devoted to those same three ideals. It is very symbolic that the journey made by St. Ignatius of Loyola is the same journey that each student makes here at Holy Cross. We gather at the top of the hill for four years of service, faith, and study in order to gain a greater understanding of who we truly are. Our education is based on Jesuit values, so there is no doubt that there is special meaning for our institution to be constructed on top of a hill. While the college and the students have experienced much growth, these three principles that St. Ignatius of Loyola dedicated his life to have remained constant throughout.

The hill was not the only thing that attracted Father Fitton to purchase the farm. The pure beauty and surrounding environment was second to none. This atmosphere and location provided for an ideal place to create this institution. It was part of the natural world; life on earth, the universal ecosystem. However, as the college grew, the hill presented problems for construction of buildings and facilities. How could we build on the hills without ruining the natural space and elegance of the land? The solution was to build the buildings into the hill, connecting the campus with the natural world which surrounds it. The character and grandeur of buildings such as Fenwick and O’Kane started this tradition which has continued. Today, you can visually see how the buildings are connected with the natural world by noticing the ivy which envelops these stunning structures. The ivy symbolizes the bond between the campus and the splendor of the world that surrounds us.

Although many things have changed over time, as was extremely noticeable from early pictures of the campus at Father Kuzniewski’s lecture, much has remained the same. Father Fitton’s guiding vision of a college upon a hill to symbolize the Jesuit values established by St. Ignatius of Loyola has not only succeeded, but also thrived. Growing and connecting to the natural world surrounding us, Holy Cross has remained a staple for Jesuit tradition, while maintaining its character and natural beauty.

*Brandon,*

*This is a good, well-written essay reflecting much of what Father Kuzniewski presented in his talk. There is another aspect to think about, though. You say the campus is “connected to” the natural world, which I would agree with. But what are the similarities and differences? Is the campus “natural” in the same sense that a forest is? Both have trees, for instance. But the campus arboretum trees are carefully tended and placed to memorialize people with connections to the college. Forest trees are just “there for themselves.”*