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Cover Photo: 1907 - College of the Holy Cross Commencement Parade

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Cover Art

1907 - College of the Holy Cross Commencement Parade

Artist Unknown: College of the Holy Cross Archives and Special Collections

Brett A. Cotter '19

On the front cover of this issue is an image of Cardinal James Gibbons from June 1907 on his way to Holy Cross from Union Station, flanked by the crowds of cheering spectators. Having arrived in Worcester to speak at Holy Cross that year, Gibbons was perhaps the most famous commencement speaker that the College had invited after President Theodore Roosevelt two years earlier. Comparing the two figures, the late Father Anthony J. Kuzniewski, S.J., historian and former Holy Cross professor, said, "What Theodore Roosevelt represented in the political life of the United States, Cardinal Gibbons, Archbishop of Baltimore, represented in the ecclesiastical life of American Catholicism." Born in Baltimore to Irish immigrant parents in 1834, Gibbons returned to Ireland with his family when he was three years old, where he witnessed firsthand the Great Irish Famine. He finally returned to the United States in 1850. After his ordination in 1861 Gibbons rose rapidly through the Church ranks and was at the First Vatican Council in 1868—the youngest bishop in attendance. In 1876 he published a bestselling introduction to Catholicism, *The Faith of Our Fathers*.

The crowd that gathered to welcome Cardinal Gibbons that day in 1907 included exalted guests, as well as representatives of Irish, Italian, Polish, Lithuanian, Syrian, and French-Canadian Catholic communities in Worcester. There was a small number of non-Catholic spectators in the crowd, who reportedly doffed their hats in respect when the cardinal raised his hand in blessing. At commencement the next day, Cardinal Gibbons urged the graduating class to stay committed to their conscience in the face of the world's uncertainty, to avoid the temptation of expediency that might arise in opposition to what was right. Gibbons, addressing the all-male class, added, "What the times call for is men, sturdy men, endowed with the courage of their convictions... who are guided by principles rather than popularity."

When Gibbons delivered his commencement speech at Holy Cross, it was already an uncertain time both domestically and internationally. At home, labor strikes and political protests disrupted social cohesion. On the international stage, imperial rivalries and rising tensions were pushing the world closer to a global conflict. Gibbons was quite cognizant of these developments and sought to reassure his audience that day to abide by their principles, and he encouraged them to do what is right. Though Holy Cross and the world have changed much since 1907, we find ourselves in a yet another uncertain time. It has been a challenging year for our community, nation, and the world. But in the midst of the uncertainties around us, it might be comforting to remember Gibbons's inspiring words and draw strength from them in caring about our fellow human beings and the environment. As people of different faiths came together that day to welcome Cardinal Gibbons, might we still find the strength and the same solidarity to do what is right and good.

Especial thanks to *College of the Holy Cross Archives and Special Collections* for letting us access and publish the picture as our journal cover.

Brett A. Cotter is a senior History and Music double major from Sterling, Massachusetts, whose History thematic concentration is Resistance, Revolution, and Reaction. In addition to conducting historical research as part of the Charles Weiss Summer Research Program in 2017, he has also been a cellist in the Holy Cross Chamber Orchestra for his entire college career and has participated in numerous chamber music ensembles. An avid history lover from a young age, Brett studies history in the belief that through a thorough analysis of the past we can come to a better understanding of our place in the present.

