Boston College

The Graduate School of Arts and Sciences

Department of History

“FOR FAITH AND FOR FREEDOM”:
AMERICAN CATHOLIC MANHOOD AND THE HOLY NAME SOCIETY
IN BOSTON, 1870-1960

a dissertation

by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation investigates the Holy Name Society, a Catholic men’s confraternity that thrived in early-to-mid twentieth-century America, aimed at addressing perceived problems of modernity by curbing blasphemous speech and bringing men back to the regular attendance to the sacraments of the faith. A dual focus on the local Holy Name movement in Boston and the national campaign uncovers the linkages within the organization as its numbers and purposes expanded. Blending the perspective of lived religion with the methods of social and cultural history, the study explores social relationships of Holy Name men pertaining to race, gender, family, and children, and it shows that the institution was the main lens through which its members translated their faith into their daily lives. Holy Name men, for example, entered into the era of Catholic Action long before historians understand that movement to have begun. The institution served as the Catholic counterpart to the predominantly Protestant push for muscular Christianity, combining corporate faith practice with publicly oriented events such as massive rallies and parades. As such, the society became a mouthpiece of the laity, lashing out against anti-Catholic bigotry, defining American Catholic patriotism anew, and offering a particularly strong anticommunist stance.

The study uncovers new dimensions in the relationships between the clergy and the laity, it shows that liberal concepts of racial equality came early and met with mixed success in the organization, and it reveals that Catholic laymen at midcentury bore a tremendous responsibility as defenders of their nation, church, wives, and children. The domestic role of Holy Name men, moreover, was much more engaged and leadership-
oriented than traditional “separate spheres” assumptions about gender and family relations might suggest. The overarching result is that the study conclusively shows that many of the dramatic changes commonly attributed to the reforms of the Second Vatican Council were in fact underway long before the 1960s. The distinctive era of Holy Name practice described here, however, had begun to decline by the late 1940s, a process accelerated the following decade by the relative decline of Catholic devotional life and larger social forces such as suburbanization.
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The process of researching and writing a dissertation is instructive in many ways. Not only does the student learn about the particulars of scholarly production, but he also learns about the accumulation of debt. These few lines will do little to repay the many who have aided and inspired this work, but I hope these people truly understand the depth of my gratitude. The funding (Boston College Graduate School of Arts & Sciences) and scholarly access (archivists and staff at the Dominican Province of St. Joseph, the Providence College Special and Archival Collections, the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston, and the Boston College Burns Library) provided by various institutions made this study possible. The members of my dissertation committee have profoundly impacted my thinking, teaching, and this work in more ways than they know. Thank you to Lynn Lyerly and Seth Jacobs.

The relationship of the doctoral candidate to the dissertation advisor is not entirely dissimilar from the lay-clerical structure. It is a strained metaphor to be sure, but this project has benefitted immensely from my experience with Professor James M. O’Toole, noted archivist, widely published historian of American religion, and the occupant of the Clough Chair in History at Boston College. When I first mentioned my interest in exploring the interaction of private faith and public life, Professor O’Toole turned to a file drawer, pulled out a copy of a paper he had once written on that general subject, and this project was born.† The considerate counsel he has since provided to a graduate

† James M. O’Toole, “The Church Takes to the Streets,” unpublished paper in author’s possession.
student of Protestant background has saved this project from many errors. Those that remain might best be regarded as acts of lay rebellion.

Countless scholars, friends, and family members – each of them teachers in their own ways – have contributed to this work with thoughtful comments and encouragement. Those of special note include Erik Seeman and Gail Radford at the State University of New York at Buffalo; Richard Dutson and the late Richard Doyle at the University of Mount Union (Alliance, Ohio); and Robert M. Frazier at Geneva College (Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania). My parents, David and Debra McCowin, have been a constant source of inspiration and support, as have my siblings – Amanda, Jarrod, and Rachel – and their families. If I can repay even a fraction of the support and love given by my wife, Peggy, I will have accomplished much. And for countless breaks from this work – to play ball, complete puzzles, paint, read books, and many other fun activities – and for the kind of faith, love, and inspiration that only they could provide, I am grateful to my children, Emmet and Hazel. Being a husband and becoming a father during the course of this project have, I think, afforded a degree of insight not otherwise possible in my effort to understand the hopes, fears, motivations, and actions of Holy Name men. The final thank you goes to those Holy Name men themselves. The humanity of these men – the good, the bad, and everything in between – has taught me far more than has reached these pages.
To the memory of Dr. Richard L. Doyle –

a “reader,” a teacher, a mentor,

a champion of the study of Dutch immigrants in Iowa,

and a friend.
The historian Jon Butler is correct. Contrary to the residual power of secularization models, religion is central to modern American history. While survey text narratives of early American history are deeply intertwined with religious history, Butler laments that they are much more sparing in their treatments of religion since the Civil War, often touching on only a few major highlights of American religious experience in the modern era—the Social Gospel (including, at times, Catholic Action), fundamentalism and the Scopes Trial, the Cold War era addition of “under God” to the Pledge of Allegiance, and the Reagan Revolution. To combat this “jack-in-the-box” phenomenon, as he terms it, in which religion springs into view only occasionally and most often randomly, Butler has called for deeper investigation of the meanings and importance of religion in the post-Civil War era.¹ Historians of religion (and Butler is among the greats) must do better at locating the connections between religious experience and public life, and the Holy Name Society offers for twentieth century America a quintessential example of such interactions.

The Holy Name Society was an organization for Catholic laymen, a confraternity, developed and encouraged most fervently by the Dominican priests in the late 1800s.

William Stang’s *Pastoral Theology* text (1897) advised that the Holy Name Society “appears best suited for the entire male portion of the congregation.” The aims of the society were purely devotional: first, to stop blasphemous speech, perceived to be a major problem amongst men; and second, to recruit men back to regular attendance at the sacraments. Through the strategy of corporate communion – Holy Name members attending the sacrament as a whole – the clergy effectively added a social element to a religious practice they believed was naturally unpalatable to men. With the expansion of the movement came not only the material trappings of membership (Holy Name pins and buttons to be prominently displayed, even at work, if possible) but also the expanded definitions of Catholic manhood, and by World War I, Catholic American patriotism. The Holy Name Society became a major force within and beyond Catholicism, claiming as its goal “a branch in every parish and every man a member,” and commanding an audience with three different sitting American presidents before World War II. Public processions to church for communion at the parish level grew into diocesan union gatherings. Eventually, periodic national conventions of the Holy Name Society produced record-setting numbers of parade marchers and observers, attracting national attention. By the late 1930s, the society had become a major Catholic voice against communism and anti-Catholicism. As such, the development of the Holy Name Society is representative in some ways of the broader era of religious reform known as the Social

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2 William Stang, *Pastoral Theology* (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1897), 262-3. Stang wrote his text for seminary students at the American College in Belgium. As they would be assigned to missions work in America, without extensive training in Stang’s view, Stang believed that a guidebook for missions and parish work would serve his students well. Later in his entry on the Holy Name Society, Stang offered instructions for society meetings, including theological instruction, membership manuals, time limits, and many other details.
Gospel Movement. The gendered aspects so central to Holy Name life clearly mirror the
decidedly Protestant push for masculinized faith detailed most famously by Clifford
Putney.³

Only marginally explored by historians to date, the Holy Name Society is thus an
example of religious interests at work in modern American society on a grand scale. This
study, then, aims to expand the assault on the notion that modern religion – outside of the
most notable jack-in-the-box examples – retreated to a strictly personalized and
privatized faith in the modern, industrial age. Holy Name men approached even the most
private aspects of their faith in group settings. Nearly every ritual in which their faith
engaged them was accomplished in a corporate or even semi-public context. Members
practiced their faith socially and purposefully carried it with them into their everyday
lives. Holy Name faith was the lens through which the rest of life was understood.

The study of what has been termed “lived religion,”⁴ more a function of an
historian’s perspective than a specific methodology, is therefore critical to this endeavor.
To answer Jon Butler’s call, historians must seek, to whatever extent is possible, to
comprehend the experiential nature of their subjects’ faith. To accomplish that, this study
relies on a healthy dose each of intellectual, cultural, and social history. Of paramount
importance here is the understanding of socio-political relationships within the context of

³ Putney, Muscular Christianity: Manhood and Sports in Protestant America, 1880-1920 (Cambridge:

⁴ See David D. Hall, ed., Lived Religion in America: Toward a History of Practice (Princeton, New Jersey:
Princeton University Press, 1997). Most notable amongst the contributors to Hall’s volume, Robert A. Orsi
has advanced an ethnographic perspective on the history of lived religion in works such as The Madonna of
115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem, 1880-1950 (Yale University Press, 1985), and Thank
a religious body: layman to priest; parish to diocese; diocese to diocese; and diocese to
the Holy Name national headquarters in New York City. Through the course of Holy
Name development, members were encouraged, in line with their heavily gendered
conception of faith, to think of themselves as soldiers in a vast national army for God and
country. Through interaction with other regions, reading the publications emanating
from headquarters, and attending national conventions, this “imagined community”
gradually became a reality for Holy Name men.5 The initial target was personal
improvement through corporate faith practice, which expanded to social improvement
through concerted public action, which expanded to a monumental struggle against the
forces of atheistic evil at work in the modern world. Only by living their faith in every
aspect of their existence, Holy Name men believed, could they hope to achieve victory in
any of those battles. For these reasons, this study alternates between the local and the
national movement. Boston, as one of the early and enduring strongholds of Holy Name
activity, was both typical and unique as a locus of Holy Name life. Frequently cited by
national leaders, both for the precise execution of Holy Name standard practices and for
the occasional fruit-bearing innovation, Boston offers the dual advantage of examining
Holy Name activity at the grassroots level and at a distance from the New York City
headquarters of the national movement.

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5 See Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism (London: Verso, 1983). It is a fundamental contention of this work that instances of what might be called religious nationalism, such as that of the American Holy Name Society, can and should be understood in terms of Anderson’s concept, as they exhibited the core characteristics identified by that author, including a reliance on print capitalism to convey a unifying message to members whose number and geographic dispersion otherwise precluded any real opportunity for face-to-face engagement.
This work follows a predominantly chronological format while alternating between national and local perspectives. Chapter One outlines the origins of the Holy Name Society in thirteenth-century Europe, tracing its development and transplantation to the nineteenth-century United States. The earliest history of the American movement is traced by examining the career of its primary advocate, Father Charles H. McKenna. Chapter Two moves to Boston for a localized study of the emergence of the movement in one of its early strongholds. McKenna appears as a vital leader here, but the impetus for expansion of the Holy Name Society throughout the Archdiocese of Boston was William Cardinal O’Connell’s militant and triumphant Catholicism, tightly administered from his office. Chapter Three moves through World War I and the 1920s, revisiting Boston but focusing mostly on the emergence of Holy Namers’ drive to change their world for the better based on their dedication to decency. At the same time, despite clerical claims to the contrary, the Holy Name Society developed a decidedly political edge, aiming to promote American patriotism at home and defend Catholic interests abroad. Here, Holy Name men were taking their first steps into the era of Catholic Action.

The last two chapters deviate in a sense from the otherwise chronological presentation. Each chapter retraces the trajectory of Holy Name development in the twentieth century (carrying the account forward into the early Cold War), but this is accomplished thematically, with focus on issues of race, gender, and youth (Chapter Four) and then communism (Chapter Five). The early contempt for African Americans, which dominated much of American society, was not foreign to early Holy Name life. Reflecting the pace of change in that larger American society, the Holy Name Society
moved glacially toward acceptance and real equality. Women were, it was believed, naturally more pious than men, and could best serve the society’s early aims as help-maidens of their men, guiding them too toward sincere religious practice. By the 1940s, though, the tables had turned, as Holy Name men were idealized as the leaders of domestic religious life, ready defenders against all unwanted influence. The development of Junior Holy Name branches was aimed at accomplishing a two-fold victory: saving young men from the corruptions of their world by instilling piety and forging paternal relationships, and sustaining the Holy Name movement with a steady flow of fresh membership.

The defining Holy Name theme of the 1930s and 1940s, of course, was the ardent anticommunism that gripped Catholicism as a whole. The global crisis of this age commanded the complete attention of the Holy Name Society, and Catholic patriotism reached a fever pitch during World War II; for Holy Name men, however, it was a cautious patriotism deeply suspicious of a wartime alliance with the communist Soviet Union. Either nominal Catholicism or blind rejection of communism, however, would lead to certain failure in the long-term struggle against global atheism. Laymen, clerics believed, required a formal education on both fronts – close study of both Catholic theology and communist philosophy – in order to serve as able defenders of faith and freedom. The organizational restructuring that accompanied this transformation, examined here at the national level and more thoroughly in Boston, combined with postwar social forces as large as Catholicism itself, ushered in an era of change after the dramatic national Holy Name convention in Boston in 1947. These concerns,
constituting the demise of the traditional Holy Name Society at mid-century, are addressed in the Epilogue.

In a study that purports to examine the lived religion of its subjects, the author must nonetheless lament a paucity of sources for that pursuit. If any modern American religion is assumed by the general public to be controlled tightly by its leaders, it is the Roman Catholic Church. To arrive at a reasonable understanding of the internalized faith of Catholic laymen is therefore a daunting task, given that the vast majority of sources available were produced by the Catholic hierarchy. Indeed, almost none of the lay voices contained herein have reached the modern historian without having first passed through contemporary clerical filters. The discovery of the Holy Name Journal collection, housed in the Archives of the Dominican Province of St. Joseph at Providence College, was an historiographical coup, in that these issues have apparently not been employed by historians to date. The Journal— the monthly produced by clerical editors at the movement’s national headquarters— also offers the careful reader occasional glimpses into Holy Name life from the perspective of the layman. Summaries of branch activities, letters to the editor, and occasional feature articles either focusing on or written by laymen are the invaluable aids in the effort to understand laymen here. Other snapshots of lay experience are revealed to a penetrating eye, as they are underwritten in the tone and content of priests’ words.

For the most part, Holy Name laymen did as they were told, but not always. The relative hegemony of priest over parishioner is evident in these pages, but just as critical are the varied nuances of lay internalization and practice of such a tightly proscribed
faith. This latter perspective can be gleaned not only from the painfully few examples of lay response available, but also indirectly from the subtly shifting approaches employed by clerics in their leadership efforts. Understanding the give-and-take nature of the cleric-parishioner relationship is a key component to grasping the experiential faith of the participants. For too long historians of religion focused almost exclusively on the grand institutions of faith, the high-minded theological debates within denominations, tending most often to produce hagiographical portrayals of the men occupying pulpits. Social history, in contrast, offered glimpses from below, often relying on quantitative methods to reconstruct the perspectives of those previously neglected by historians.

By focusing on institutions within institutions, such as the Holy Name Society as part of the American Roman Catholic Church, today’s scholars can produce a fusion of these earlier historiographical streams and begin to answer Jon Butler’s call for an appreciation of the relevance of modern religious experience. Some historians have broken new ground in this regard, as more recent studies have incorporated both the messages from the pulpit and the reception, internalization, and practice of proscribed faith in the pews. James O’Toole, for example, offers a new perspective by “reimagining the history of the Catholic Church in the United States as a story of its people . . . rather than its leaders and institutions.”6 The present study tweaks that aim slightly by revisiting the institution – an internal institution, where the laity are more visible – on a tighter scale. The Holy Name Society represents what the sociologist Robert Wuthnow

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has termed a “special purpose group” in modern American religion. “Alongside its numerous sects, churches, and denominations,” Wuthnow explains of American religion, “has functioned an impressive array of organizations devoted to the attainment of more focused objectives.”

In the twentieth century, Wuthnow notes, special purpose groups became increasingly dynamic, often producing much interfaith activity. The Holy Name Society, which enjoyed a golden age during the early-to-mid twentieth century, was decidedly Catholic and devoted to a core set of specific, if gradually expanding, objectives. Such special purpose groups offer perhaps the best opportunities to witness the interactions of the leaders and the led, each of whom contributed creatively to the attainment of specific goals in the context of lived religion.

What historian Christopher Kauffman has accomplished in his studies of another special purpose group, the Knights of Columbus, this study hopes to contribute for the Holy Name Society. Having discussed this project at conferences and in innumerable conversations with colleagues and non-historians, the author must note that questions most frequently emerge in regard to the Holy Name Society’s relationship to the Knights of Columbus. While the latter perhaps claims the more recognizable name, both organizations have operated as Catholic laymen’s institutions. Whereas the Knights of Columbus served a predominantly social function, the Holy Name Society operated primarily as a religious devotional group. Frequently, Catholic laymen belonged to

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multiple organizations at once, including but certainly not limited to these two. While the Knights became the most populous Catholic social group, by the 1920s, the Holy Name Society could make that claim amongst Catholic devotional societies.

Focused studies on religious special purpose groups are few but becoming more common, and the perspective of lived religion suggests the depth of new understanding that such investigations might deliver. Deep investigation of the development and activities of the Holy Name Society reveals at one level Catholic laymen’s understanding of themselves and their faith, but it uncovers as well the various means laymen employed in negotiating, interpreting, and practicing the essentials of their faith in a rapidly changing world. They acted time and again through their religious practice with the clear intent of engaging, changing, and even saving that world from complete moral collapse.
CHAPTER ONE
PIOUS DECENCY FIRST:
CREATING AMERICAN CATHOLIC MANHOOD

Already by August 16, 1903, Theodore Roosevelt was considered, not only by himself, but also by Americans generally, a model of masculinity. Preparing to enter the third full year of his presidency, he spent that summer at Sagamore Hill, his home in Oyster Bay, Long Island, roughly thirty miles outside of New York City. On this day, he would wage yet another battle—this one rhetorical—in his great war for civilization.¹ Fittingly, this particular oration was not staged nationally, but rather at the grassroots level, in his own town. His topic was “American manhood.” His audience was Catholic. The Diocesan Union of Brooklyn Holy Name Societies was holding its quarterly meeting.

Anticipation of this event had initiated a summer-long regional stir, which built steadily to a fever pitch as the day of the rally arrived. Originally scheduled for July 26, this gathering of Catholic laity had been postponed due to the death of Pope Leo XIII on July 20. Decidedly anxious to take part himself, Roosevelt had encouraged Reverend Walter Power, rector of St. Dominic’s in Oyster Bay, to reschedule the event and assured the cleric that he would still make an appearance. Not typically a tourist hub, Oyster Bay was deluged with Holy Name members from sixty-nine Brooklyn parish branches, with

¹ Roosevelt’s masculinity is hardly a matter of historiographical debate, but his perception of such qualities’ connections to civilization is most notably addressed by Gail Bederman, Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 170-215.
others coming from throughout Long Island, New York, and New Jersey. The Catholic News, gleefully reporting on this momentous occasion, boasted that the “limited accommodations of the hotels and the other houses were taxed to their utmost capacity, hundreds of would-be guests being turned away.” Even the more local crowds were frustrated, as ten thousand potential rally attendees failed to reach Oyster Bay due to the “Long Island Railroad’s refusal to guarantee the conveyance of more than fifteen hundred persons” on the day of the event. Brooklyn Diocesan Union meetings typically attracted large crowds, often from neighboring dioceses, but the promise of an address by the President of the United States created an atmosphere entirely new to even the seasoned Holy Name rallier. The faithful men of the Holy Name Society, so driven by their pursuit of upright and pious manliness, were eager to hear what Roosevelt would say about a topic so central to his and their sensibilities.²

Despite delays and other obstacles, the President would not disappoint on this occasion. Accompanied by Father Power, Roosevelt descended from Sagamore Hill on the two-and-a-half mile ride, around the Oyster Bay Cove of Long Island Sound, to St. Dominic’s church on Anstice Street. The “great crowds” lining the route culminated in a “dense throng” of several thousand Catholic men, along with more than a few curious Protestant onlookers, on the grounds and surrounding streets of St. Dominic’s. Holy Name men were proudly adorned in their Holy Name badges, waving their parochial branch banners, and “several bands belonging to various Catholic institutions throughout

² This event is recreated here using the coverage provided by Catholic News [New York], 23 August 1903. Clippings of that issue are included in the Holy Name Society cabinet, Province of St. Joseph Dominican Archives, Providence College.
Long Island” blared patriotic songs. As the presidential carriage stopped behind the
“flag-draped stand near the church” at 3:35 pm, the thirty-five members of the St. John’s
Orphanage band, having been afforded a seat of honor directly beside the stand, belted
out “America.” After an appropriate introduction, Roosevelt approached the mass of
listeners, the intensity of whose attentiveness to the president’s words on this afternoon
was matched only by the rabidity of their frequent, but well-timed, outbursts of cheering
and applause. Apparently, no spirits were dampened by the drizzling rain that persisted
throughout the ceremonies.  3

In a speech described as “emphatic throughout, and marked by frequent forcible
gesticulations,” suggesting that the Holy Name crowd observed the man in his typical
speech-giving demeanor, President Roosevelt laid out his personal vision of the desired
impact of the Holy Name Society. “I am particularly glad to see a society such as this
flourishing,” he began, “ because the future welfare of our nation depends upon the way
in which we can combine in our men—in our young men—decency and strength.” As a
head of state, Roosevelt perhaps naturally evaluated institutions such as the Holy Name
Society based on their potential impact on the strength of his nation, but this particular
head of state further brought to bear his characteristically strenuous style in making his
point. Recognizing, to an extent, that he was on this day preaching to the proverbial
choir, Roosevelt sought to motivate his audience toward maximum achievement. “I am
not addressing weaklings,” he announced, “or I should not take the trouble to come here.
I am addressing strong, vigorous men. . . I am speaking to men engaged in the hard,

3 Ibid.
active work of life, and therefore men who will count for good or for evil, and it is peculiarly incumbent upon you who have strength to set a right example to others.” To the men in the crowd, Roosevelt’s insistence on setting an example was certainly a familiar refrain, as Society membership had trained them toward consistently pious behavior in all areas of their lives.⁴

As the president thundered on, however, his words must have seemed, if not more foreign, certainly more foreboding, as Roosevelt’s reinterpretation of Christianity would leave no room for turning one’s other cheek or other such pacifism. Although he proclaimed equal importance for the qualities of piety and strength, Roosevelt clearly favored the latter: “I expect you to be strong. I would not respect you if you were not.” Perceiving that the strong men before him were the exception rather than the rule, Roosevelt continued, “I do not want to see Christianity professed only by weaklings; I want to see it a moving spirit among men of strength. I do not expect you to lose one particle of your strength or courage by being decent.” Decency, in the case of the men of the Holy Name Society, was to Roosevelt the most convenient means to the desired ends. Through active membership, the chief executive opined, “I should hope to see each man . . . become all the fitter to do the rough work of the world, all the fitter to work in time of peace; and if, which may Heaven forbid, war should come, all the fitter to fight in time of

⁴ The full text of Roosevelt’s address is included in Ibid.; it was also reprinted by the Holy Name Society at later times. See, for example, Holy Name Journal, May 1909, 4-5 (full address), and M.J. Ripple, ed., The Holy Name Society and its Great National Convention (New York: National Holy Name Headquarters, 1925), 34-5 (selections only).
war.” Few, if any, Holy Name Society gatherings to date had reached such an ominous conclusion, one which was perfectly natural and typical in Roosevelt’s train of thought.5

War-like meanderings aside, President Roosevelt did on this occasion give the Holy Name men almost exactly what they wanted to hear. As biographer Edmund Morris points out, speaking to Catholic gatherings was not new to Roosevelt, and neither was his tendency—intentionally or not, and entirely or not—to miss the point in such addresses. When, in 1895, Roosevelt had spoken to the Catholic Total Abstinence Union’s convention, as Morris notes, at “no point that evening did he espouse the doctrine of total abstinence; he made no specific condemnation of drink; yet somehow he managed to convince seven thousand diehard prohibitionists that he was wholly on their side.”6 Likewise, with the Holy Name Society, Roosevelt almost completely skirted the issues of faith and its implications for public life, the central concerns of the men before him. He nonetheless apparently peppered his words with enough passing references—such as “prove by your deeds that yours is not a lip loyalty merely; . . . show in actual practice that faith that is in you”—to satisfy the taste of the majority of his audience. Such statements, though, were far from central to his theme on this day.

For the men of the Holy Name Society in America, however, during the early organizational years of the institution, faith was the cornerstone of their membership, and no aspect of membership could be understood or practiced apart from it. It was in these early years that the clerics leading the movement were most justified in characterizing the

5 Ibid.

Holy Name Society—as they would continue to do well into the mid-twentieth century, despite increasingly clear evidence to the contrary—as a “strictly religious organization.”\(^7\) Most concerned with what was widely perceived to be unchecked blasphemous speech on the part of their male parishioners, reformer priests actively sought out the Holy Name Society as the institutional means by which to reconstruct men’s religious behavior. For their part, men of the Holy Name Society appreciated the corporate environment fostered by the organization in their re-entry to practical religion. In a particularly rich irony, methods and practices that were uniquely American developed within the Catholic Church, the most international of organizations in the United States. Roosevelt’s political bellicosity, despite the wild cheering and applause it garnered from the men at Oyster Bay, made little sense to the primarily religious aims of the Holy Name Society. The day for considering the political impact of a growing community of religious men was not far into the future. For now, though, American Catholic men, at the parish level, concentrated on creating their collective identity as practical men of faith in their communities. They cheered for Roosevelt, but their actions were informed by their priests. They learned to march before they learned to fight.

\(^7\) See, for example, *Holy Name Journal*, February 1909, 2, in which the admonition to keep the organization strictly religious was the first of fifteen points listed in an advice column intended for priests serving as spiritual directors for branch societies. All references in this study to the *Holy Name Journal* come from holdings in the Province of St. Joseph Dominican Archives, Providence College, where a nearly complete run of the magazine is available. Holdings elsewhere are few and limited.
“At the name of Jesus”: The Pre-American Holy Name movement

The Dominicans were responsible for establishing the modern Holy Name Society in the United States during the late nineteenth century, and under their guidance, the institution flourished into the twentieth century. Not until such prominence was achieved, however, roughly a generation after the American Dominicans’ labors had commenced, did the matter of the origins of the movement become relevant. With the success of the movement in the United States came the desire to fill in the back-story of the Holy Name Society, and Dominican priests scurried to complete the task. Reconstructing the story of those efforts, and the complications associated with them, is an important introduction to the development of the American version of the institution.

The standard version of the history of the Holy Name movement—first recounted in detail in 1910 by Clement M. Thuente, a Dominican preacher in New York City, and later, in a substantively similar account, in 1925 by Father Michael J. Ripple, then National Director of the confraternity
\(^8\)—traced its origins to the tumultuous thirteenth century. Amid the heresies of the Albigensians in southern France and countless other challenges to the authority of the church, Pope Gregory X acted on the resolve of the Council of Lyons, which had decreed that concerted efforts should be made to counteract the rampant evils threatening Catholicism. On September 20, 1274, the pontiff charged the Order of Preachers (less formally known as the Dominicans), with John of Vercelli at

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the helm, with the task to “revere in a particular manner that name which is above all names . . . the name of Jesus Christ, who has purchased his people from their sins.”

Recalling the Pauline admonition to the Philippians, Pope Gregory X continued, “And as it is written that every knee should bend at the name of Jesus, we have recommended to each one to fulfill this precept, and that, when they celebrate the sacred mysteries, they would give some honor to that glorious name by bending the knee of their hearts and by proving their devotion by the inclination of their heads.”

Having been challenged to defend the divinity of Jesus Christ in the face of commonplace blasphemy, the Dominicans responded with the vigorously confrontational Catholic spirit of their day, transforming the practice of the faith both within the church (newly constructed devotional shrines to the Holy Name were required in all Dominican churches) and without (public displays of faith in the divinity of Jesus, such as mass marches).

Twentieth century Dominicans such as Thuente and Ripple thus labeled John of Vercelli the “Father of the Holy Name movement” and celebrated his followers as Holy Name disciples operating amidst continuing strife. In 1432, for example, Andrew Diaz, the Bishop of Lisbon, utilized Holy Name devotion to combat a particularly devastating outbreak of the plague. Ripple, the priest-historian with an eye out for origins of twentieth-century Holy Name practices, reported that to challenge that fifteenth-century plague, large “public Rally parades were organized and in armies thousands strong the people sent up their great chorus of prayer in honor of the Holy Name.”

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10 Ibid., 20; Thuente, “Holy Name, Society of the.”
Ripple’s characterization, “the marvelous and unaccountable disappearance of the plague was accepted everywhere as a mark of the Divine bounty for devotion to the Holy Name.” In a slight contradiction of Ripple, on the point of parade origins, Thuente proclaimed that, out of “gratitude for their deliverance, the people of all classes in Lisbon held, on 1 Jan., 1433, what was probably the first procession in honour of the Holy Name of Jesus.” Early twentieth-century Dominican priest-historians, despite occasional discrepancies, generally agreed on the main points of Holy Name origins.11

Later students of Holy Name history, however, criticized such inconsistencies in the Dominicans’ account. Franciscan Peter Biasiotto, in the most complete theological study available on Holy Name devotion, specifically targeted Thuente’s argument as “hard to understand.”12 Biasiotto deduced that Thuente’s claims had been based largely on the work of an eighteenth century Dominican, Antonin Bremond13, with whom Biasiotto found further fault. Whereas Thuente relied on Bremond’s connection of a particular 1401 decree of Pope Boniface IX with Holy Name activity, Biasiotto countered that, upon examination, “there must be some misunderstanding, for . . . [t]he Bull has not the remotest connection with Holy Name devotion.” Upending the twentieth-century Dominicans’ insistence that the modern Holy Name Society could be traced in an

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11 Ripple, “The Story of the Holy Name Society,” 22; Thuente, “Holy Name, Society of the,” italics added. Whereas Ripple had credited John of Vercelli’s era with the first Holy Name rallies, Thuente seemingly disagreed—a minor point, perhaps, but not minor to all.

12 Peter R Biasiotto, “History of the Development of Devotion to the Holy Name” (Theology dissertation, St. Bonaventure College, St. Bonaventure, N.Y., 1943), 68. Biasiotto contended that “[Thuente] should know at the very least of the [earlier Holy Name parade] that was ordered in Rome in 1427 by Pope Martin V.”

13 Prior to becoming Master General of the Dominican order in 1748, Bremond had edited the eight-volume collection of Dominican works, Bullarium Ordinis Fratrum Praedicatorum, from 1729-1740.
unbroken line to the 1274 papal command issued to John of Vercelli, Biasiotto claimed to have exposed a “host of errors . . . circulating under the guise of truth.” In the end, for Biasiotto, the “Dominicans can point to no Society of the Holy Name before 1564 that can be authenticated by a document that will withstand the test of an investigation.” Despite advances in the rigors of scholarship, which clearly set Biasiotto’s study apart from the earlier Dominicans, the former’s version of truth did not gain traction in the 1940s.¹⁴

The net effect of this theological bickering was negligible and failed to derail the explanatory power of the Dominican account in the twentieth century. Even if Biasiotto was correct, his study in 1943 came well after the Holy Name Society had achieved national stature in the United States under the direction of the Dominicans. Furthermore, the more important matter of confraternal status for the Holy Name Society, granted by Pope Pius IV in that crucial year of 1564, as conceded by Biasiotto, established a link to the modern institution that was beyond question. Another dictum, coming from Pope Pius V in 1571, granted absolute authority over the society to the Dominican order. With the approval of Holy Roman Emperor and King of Spain Charles V and his son, Philip II, both of whom were eager to promote a particularly bold and public-oriented Catholicism in line with the conquering spirit they nourished at home and abroad, the Holy Name Society spread throughout Europe and even colonial Peru. To the east, Francis J.

¹⁴ Biasiotto, “History of the Development of Devotion to the Holy Name,” 118-22. Biasiotto fundamentally agreed with the Dominican version of the events of 1274 (see 61), but refused to recognize the modern Holy Name Society as a direct descendant.
Capillas and his small band of preachers established the Holy Name Society while on an ill-fated mission to China.\textsuperscript{15}

Despite its diffusion during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, however, the Holy Name Society did not flourish until the late nineteenth century in the United States. Indeed, the Dominicans leading the movement in the twentieth century could not convincingly argue for much continuity in its development since the days of Philip II. This lapse in Holy Name expansion was largely attributable to a 1604 bull of Pope Clement VIII which limited the society to a single branch within a single geographic region. When translated to late nineteenth-century America, for example, this meant that priests could legitimately establish only one Holy Name Society branch in a given city, even one as large as New York or Boston. Clement VIII’s effort had been aimed at establishing tighter control over confraternities, but it also significantly hindered their development for the next three hundred years, and was often at odds with the missionary impulse of the Order of Preachers operating in modernizing urban American environments. Overcoming this obstacle would be a major task for the American Dominicans of the late nineteenth century. That feat, and the subsequent explosion of Holy Name activity in the United States, has led historian Jay P. Dolan to comment that, “like so many confraternities, [the Holy Name Society] was resurrected from obscurity during the nineteenth century.”\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{15} Thuente, “Holy Name, Society of the”; Ripple, “The Story of the Holy Name Society,” 24-5. Capillas’ group, referred to as the “Martyrs of China,” were killed by suspicious Chinese authorities in 1648.

Dolan correctly contextualizes this resurrection in the responses of Catholic and Protestant leaders to the perceived feminization of religion in the American nineteenth-century. At a time when, as Dolan notes, “[m]utual-aid and charitable societies were clearly the domain of men, while devotional societies were overwhelmingly the sphere of women,” the Holy Name Society initiated a major shift not only in the devotional practices of men, but also in the public role of Catholicism more generally. Although commonly understood as an era characterized by an influx of working-class Catholics from central and eastern Europe, the late nineteenth-century also witnessed the expansion in the United States of many Catholics into the middle and upper classes, not to mention politics and professions. The meteoric rise of the Holy Name Society in the years surrounding the turn of the twentieth century, then, was part of a much larger readjustment of the dominant notions of gender and faith in the United States.

“Apostle of the Holy Name”: Charles H. McKenna and the early Holy Name Society in America

Early twentieth-century leaders of the Holy Name Society in the United States were at least equally as proud of the role of the Dominicans in the growth of the confraternity on American soil as they were of the role of the European Dominicans of the early modern period. With much justification and just a hint of romanticism, they

17 Ibid., 232-33.
pointed to the singular efforts of Reverend Charles Hyacinth McKenna, the “American Apostle of the Holy Name,” whose itinerant works from the 1870s until his death in 1917 were most responsible for the establishment of new branches of the Holy Name Society throughout the nation. The mission church of St. Vincent Ferrer’s in New York City, to which McKenna received his first notable appointment in 1870, was lauded as the home of the oldest Holy Name Society in America. Tying McKenna and St. Vincent Ferrer’s together as the initial footprints of the Holy Name Society in the United States became central to the pomp and circumstance of the widespread confraternity’s celebrations of its successes well into the twentieth century.

Nonetheless, on this point the inconvenient matter of truth caused some, but again only minimal, difficulty for the Dominican leaders. Here the standard American Dominican line begrudgingly admitted that the Holy Name Society had in fact appeared in Spanish and French strongholds such as San Francisco and New Orleans much earlier, during the colonial era. The existence of early nineteenth-century branches, much closer but still separate in time and space to McKenna’s sphere of influence, evoked a somewhat backhanded acknowledgement from the twentieth-century priest-historians seeking to establish the origins of the modern American movement. National Director Ripple, for example, dismissively referred to a “fairly well authenticated record” of a branch “established in Kentucky by the famous Missionary Father [Charles] Nerinx [more often spelled Nerinckx]” at some point in “the very early part” of the 1800s. Ripple insisted, however, that “for the real life of the Holy Name in America, i.e., the point from which we can definitely trace the movement of the Holy Name as we now
know it,” one need only look to the career of McKenna and the church of St. Vincent Ferrer’s.\textsuperscript{18}

Nonetheless, the personal correspondence in 1934 between two Holy Name leaders—National Director and \textit{Holy Name Journal} editor Thomas P. Conlon and Victor F. O’Daniel, the highly productive Dominican chronicler and McKenna biographer—suggests that the record of Nerinckx’s branch was definitive. O’Daniel professed “no doubt,” for example, that Reverends Edward D. Fenwick and Samuel T. Wilson, who had been key figures in the establishment of a Dominican presence in the regions of Ohio and Kentucky during the early nineteenth century, “had a Holy Name Society at Saint Rose’s [Kentucky] prior to that of Father Nerinckx, and that it was an inspiration to Nerinckx for founding his.” Lamenting the lack of foresight on the part of his order in tending not to preserve records, however, O’Daniel privately and sarcastically counseled that “we enjoy the satisfaction and humility of having to bow to Nerinckx for having the honor of establishing the first Holy Name Society in the United States . . . although that honor should by right belong to us Dominicans.”\textsuperscript{19} The simple solution to all this was

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\textsuperscript{19} O’Daniel to Conlon, 16 May 1934, Holy Name Society file, Archives of the Province of St. Joseph, Providence College. This reference to a branch predating those of both McKenna and Nerinckx is the only one I have located. O’Daniel, perhaps hoping to cut off any unethical solution to the matter, added that “Historical records cannot be manufactured. Try it, and you will soon be shown up to be a monumental liar and forger. . . . For God’s sake, let us learn a lesson of wisdom” from “this Nerinckx episode, and make and preserve records.” Regrettably for historians, that practice seems not to have taken hold to the extent O’Daniel desired, as the available archival material for these years is minimal.\
\end{flushright}
accomplished in the Dominicans’ decision, a Holy Name party line of sorts, to largely ignore any American Holy Name activity prior to that of McKenna.\textsuperscript{20}

McKenna’s heritage, that of an Irish emigrant, placed him within a clear majority of the American priesthood of his era, but his success as a missionary would set him apart. Hailing from Londonderry, where even his relatively well off family’s flax farm had been crippled by the famine, McKenna followed his mother and siblings to the United States in 1851 at the age of sixteen. Ordained in 1867, he began his missionary work at the newly established St. Vincent Ferrer’s church, which would serve as the hub of Dominican missions not only in metropolitan New York, but throughout the northeastern United States. Despite the travels attendant to his position, McKenna still served as director of the previously established Holy Name chapter at St. Vincent Ferrer’s. It was his appointment, however, as head of Dominican missions east of the Mississippi, an honor bestowed on him in 1880, which allowed McKenna to embark on the most productive era of his career relative to the Holy Name Society. Partially in response to McKenna’s diligent appeals, Pope Leo XIII’s 1896 Congregation of Indulgences loosened the outdated Clementine restrictions on the number of confraternal branches in a city, paving the way for the vast proliferation of new branches of the Holy Name Society. By 1900, McKenna was appointed provincial director of the Holy Name Society and the Rosary confraternity, which allowed him to devote his entire energy to

\textsuperscript{20} This is evident in Thuente’s account, noted above, which ascribes all credit for the American movement to McKenna.
their expansion.\(^{21}\) The effect of loosened restrictions and McKenna’s leadership were clearly illustrated in the Archdiocese of New York alone, as by 1902 there were 1,600 Holy Name members in a staggering seventy branches of the society.\(^{22}\) From 1901 to 1906, McKenna alone was responsible for the erection of 459 new branches of the Holy Name Society throughout the country, and his missionary efforts proved no less fruitful in the years that followed until his death.\(^{23}\) Regardless of the historiographical struggles of his Dominican brethren, the numbers indicated that McKenna was certainly worthy of their recognition and praise.

Obviously more difficult to quantify is the spiritual impact of McKenna’s earliest involvement with the Holy Name Society. The St. Vincent Ferrer’s Holy Name Society, established in 1868 by Reverend Stephen Byrne and assigned to McKenna in 1871, served as a testing ground for various Holy Name practices, both religious and secular.\(^{24}\) What little detailed information survives regarding those early years reads as a summary

\(^{21}\) The lone biography of McKenna is V.F. O’Daniel, *Very Rev. Charles Hyacinth McKenna, O.P., P.G.: Missionary and Apostle of the Holy Name Society* (New York: The Holy Name Bureau, 1917). See also, Thuente, “Holy Name, Society of the”; Ripple, “The Story of the Holy Name Society,” 26-7. The new protocol governing establishment of branches is addressed by an unidentified author in an undated note in the Holy Name Society file, Archives of the Province of St. Joseph, Providence College. The note reads: “Father [Clement] Thuente says: . . . Father McKenna secured [the authority, from Leo XIII, of] establishment [of new branches] without restriction, but subject to the approval of the [local] bishop. Then the Bishops of all dioceses in the U.S., except four, gave Father McKenna permission to establish the Holy Name Society in any parish.” While I have not found anything to corroborate the claim regarding the granting of permission by all but four American bishops, it does not seem an unreasonable possibility.


\(^{23}\) *Holy Name Journal*, May 1913, 4.

\(^{24}\) On the founding of the chapter at the church of St. Vincent Ferrer, see Ripple, “The Story of the Holy Name,” 26. For this and his later missionary work, Ripple credits Byrne as one of the “outstanding figures in the history of . . . the Holy Name movement in the United States.” For more general treatment of these early years at St. Vincent Ferrer’s, see O’Daniel, *Very Rev. Charles Hyacinth McKenna*, 87-8.
of business meeting minutes, offering only a fleeting glimpse of the actual religious practices of the men involved. Much of the activity of the St. Vincent Ferrer’s society during its first twenty years was focused on its own administrative and structural concerns.25

The Holy Name Society, later to be defined in strictly religious terms, was seemingly conceived at St. Vincent Ferrer’s as, at least in part, a mutual-aid organization. Prior to McKenna’s arrival, the society set up a sinking fund, charging each member one dollar, “to be used for the purpose of having a Requiem Mass celebrated on the death of each member.” By 1876, this practice was deemed a “hindrance to the obtaining of new members” and discontinued, as the one dollar collection “had the appearance of [an] initiation fee.” McKenna and the lay leadership council instead initiated a fund based on voluntary contributions aimed at aiding “sick or destitute” members. Monthly dues were set at twenty-five cents in 1871; however, with new membership numbers declining in later years, the council reduced the dues to ten cents per month and ceased the practice of assessing fines for absence at meetings. Other matters stipulated by the society’s leaders included restrictions on Holy Name library use for members in arrears and the establishment of various administrative offices (in addition to President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer) manned by the laity. The Corresponding Secretary, for example, was assigned to “collect fines and look after delinquent members”; once the

25 This conclusion, as stated, is based entirely on the nature of the sources available to reconstruct the organization’s early years at St. Vincent Ferrer’s. Specifically, what follows is based entirely on an unidentified author’s second-hand, handwritten, undated, nine-page account, housed in the Holy Name Society file, Archives of the Province of St. Joseph, Providence College. The document is a year-by-year summary, which the author claims is based on actual records maintained by the society (records which have since disappeared).
membership increased, however, this office was discontinued and replaced by a network of twenty prefects, each of whom was responsible to “note attendance & look after delinquents” in one of twenty geographical divisions of the society.

On the whole, the St. Vincent Ferrer’s Holy Name Society seems not to have achieved the instantaneous and edifying glory ascribed to it by later Dominicans. The extent to which the men of the parish bought into the society is a mystery, but judging by the fluctuations in dues and the proto-police duties deemed necessary in new offices, attendance was a real problem. The council voted in 1872, for example, to include music in the society’s mass; however, in January 1874, the council announced its humorously circuitous decision to “dispense with music at the Mass of the Society . . . as a consequence of the non attendance of the Choir, which at this time was composed of . . . members of the Society.” Likewise, the members voted in 1887 to discontinue meetings during July and August due to low attendance. Although new memberships increased during the mid-1870s (see Fig. 1 below), it is unclear whether this translated into increased attendance, and it is not possible to draw any conclusions regarding the possible transformations of the spiritual lives of the men.
Figure 1: New Memberships by Year for St. Vincent Ferrer’s Holy Name Society, 1873-1878
Source: Data taken from the anonymous hand-written source cited above [fn. #25]. Records were not kept prior to 1871. In that year, it was recorded that there were, in total, 29 members of the society. That number rose to 142 in 1872, but it is not clear how much of the increase was due to new memberships versus possible deaths or departures of previous members.

Placing those questions aside, however, what is clear is that many of the practices that would characterize subsequent Holy Name devotion nationwide were either standards among the men of St. Vincent Ferrer’s society during the 1870s and 1880s or emerged for the first time during those years. Most notably, upon being appointed to direct the society, McKenna immediately began work on the first edition of the Manual of the Holy Name. Appearing in 1871, the booklet served as a handbook for membership, including the oaths of the society and directives for its mass. In 1874, the sum of $210 purchased for the society its first banner for use in public marches. Badges (later replaced by medals and especially lapel pins) also adorned the members not only during Holy Name functions but also, ideally, in daily life. Several other nuances developed, all aimed at least in part at recruiting new members to the society: first, the society began, on occasion, to attend the 10:30 a.m. mass as a group, rather than only its own mass; second, the council decided that members of the parish boys’ sodalities would be eligible for Holy Name membership at age sixteen; third, one member suggested the
possibility of an annual convention to bring together the branches from New York, Brooklyn, and other surrounding areas for concerted public demonstrations; and finally, the society began hosting mission retreats in 1878, which met with immediate success in the addition of 149 new members at one time. These sources of new membership would each provide stability and growth to the thousands of new branches across the country in the coming years. And one final aspect of the St. Vincent Ferrer’s society—the authority of the priest/director—served to remind the lay members that although they were being asked to take an active role in their faith, they were expected to do so by willingly submitting to the absolute authority of the hierarchy’s representative in their midst. In 1888, McKenna’s successor as spiritual director of the Holy Name Society acted to enforce this dictum when, according to society records (which spared the victims of having their names referenced), “Mr. _____ & Mr. _____ [were] expelled from [the] society for disrespect & insubordination to [the] spiritual director.”

As McKenna set out to establish new branches, the St. Vincent Ferrer’s society served as a deterministic model. McKenna knew what worked, what spurred men to membership, and he more than any other clergyman was responsible for spreading the society to all corners of the nation during the pre-World War I era.

Highlighting the impressive statistics associated with the expansion of the Holy Name Society were the initial difficulties that McKenna and other Holy Name advocates often faced in many areas. Behind the statistics lies the story of the planting, nurturing,

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26 Ibid. As for the Manual of the Holy Name, the earliest edition I have been able to locate is that from 1907, which, along with later editions, will be discussed at greater length below.
and eventual flowering of the religious male consciousness that the Holy Name Society, previously unknown in most of America, would come to represent. As biographer V.F. O’Daniel noted, McKenna sought always to advance the Rosary and the Holy Name Society in his travels, but initially “he did not always meet with the sympathetic response in regard to the latter for which he longed.” In early missions to Philadelphia, for example, the Rosary was wildly popular, but McKenna met resistance to the Holy Name Society as “the pastors seem to have been slow to realize the confraternity’s power for good among the men of their flocks.” The masculine piety so central to the Holy Name Society was new. By contrast, O’Daniel argued, the more established “Rosary was then in greater favor with both people and clergy—owing, perhaps, to the earnest appeals of Leo XIII, whose many encyclicals in behalf of this devotion to the Mother of God not only aided its propagation, but caused him to be called the ‘Pope of the Rosary.’” In order to spread the Holy Name in this slow-to-change Catholic culture, as of 1903 McKenna sent annual reports to clergy throughout America stressing the continued development of the society and its positive effects. Before pitching the Holy Name to laymen, who would be most directly affected by its devotions, McKenna had to sell local prelates on the usefulness of the society in maintaining and managing their flocks. His success may be measured in large part by the fact that within a decade, Philadelphia had joined New York, Boston, Newark, Pittsburgh, Milwaukee, Chicago, Buffalo and other cities as major strongholds of Holy Name activity, and McKenna had established new branches as far away as San Francisco. Summarizing the confraternity’s success in Baltimore (the site of the society’s first national convention in 1911) by comparing it to
the various “beneficial and literary societies” previously offered for men, historian Thomas Spalding concludes that the Holy Name blossomed “because it had none of their impedimenta, because it was more easily controlled by the pastor, and because it proved more congenial to men than the Sodality of the Blessed Virgin Mary, [and] it soon provided the readiest vehicle for organizing large numbers of males at the parish level.”

Such success, of course, was due not only to McKenna’s efforts, but also to the increased exposure it received throughout Catholicism, thanks to its many clerical and lay converts. By 1896, the American Ecclesiastical Review, in one of its typical articles suggesting the ways and means priests might adopt for running parish societies, included a detailed introduction of the Holy Name Society. The author suggested that a priest desiring a branch need only contact the Dominicans, and then make arrangements to get as many of the parish men as possible to the church on the designated date, but “Say nothing about organization.” The friar would arrive, assuming his travel expenses had been paid, and take care of everything else. At society meetings thereafter, to avoid chaos, reciprocal obligations of priest and laymen must hold, as “the priest [should] do all the talking . . . [but] no scolding and not a word about money.”


Laymen who had experienced the society also took their message to the hierarchy to encourage new branches. At the First American Catholic Missionary Congress, held in Chicago in 1908, the printed program did not mention an address from a Brooklyn layman on the Holy Name Society. When Arthur Colbourne was introduced, though, it was noted that his address had been specifically requested, apparently by an unnamed party, someone with enough influence to alter the program on short notice. Colbourne thundered through his presentation, surely piquing the curiosity of many clerics in attendance by referring to the society’s members as “a body-guard, a sacred militia, to defend their adorable King.” Then, focusing his remarks on his peers, he concluded: “And now, dear brothers of the laity, let us buckle on the armor of the Christian soldier, and fight this great evil” of obscenity.29 Such endorsements offered in various contexts of Catholicism did much to spread the word about the benefits of the confraternity.

Colbourne’s militant rhetoric sounded much more like President Roosevelt’s speech than most other Holy Name language of the day, but it underscored the extent to which the laity were attracted to the society by the masculinity that characterized its early twentieth century expansion. Constructing a widely understood sense of masculine religious practice took time (a process traced throughout this project, but most closely examined in Chapter Four), but in these earliest years of Holy Name development, clerical leaders actively began their pursuit of that goal. Men, clerics assumed, feared

nothing more than being characterized as unmanly in any way. This fear, coupled with the inherent carelessness of men, consistently kept men away from their religious duties.

To bring them back, via the Holy Name Society, clerics believed they must make men understand masculinity anew, with characteristics of honesty, piety, and charity, as well as the more traditional understanding of masculine strength. If men, for example, as it was assumed, had come to believe that piety was effeminate, they must be told in plain, confrontational language that “Only cowards and imbeciles fear that religion will make them unmanly.”

Holy Name men, by contrast, held the “truest and highest conception of manhood” in their pursuit of “manly, clean, noble and religious lives.” Clerics contrasted the Holy Name man against the blasphemer who “ridicules every expression of religion . . . [and] is in the community in which he lives a cowardly moral skunk.”

Expectations of Holy Name men were high. Such was the case in the wake of the Titanic disaster, as Holy Name men were told that the hierarchy would expect them, in such a situation to “prove that hero’s blood flows in your veins and prove that the supernatural motives of religion can make you the noblest kind of hero.” Absent such “extraordinary circumstances,” though, laymen were reminded, “you will be greater heroes by being faithful to your ordinary daily duties. . . . No duty is more important in the month than to go to Holy Communion.”

In the Holy Name Society, manliness was concerned with fulfillment of obligation and openness in faith. With a few notable exceptions discussed later, militant rhetoric played only a small role, at least until the World War I years.

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30 Holy Name Journal, April 1909, 15.
31 Holy Name Journal, September 1909, 8.
32 Holy Name Journal, May 1912, 2.
As lay and institutional support for the Holy Name Society increased, so too did its leadership’s interest in other institutional forms. With the achievement of a measure of legitimacy, McKenna and other Holy Name leaders sought to promote organizational unity through the establishment first of the *Holy Name Journal* in 1907, and two years later, a national headquarters office in New York, where over 21,000 men belonged to the various branches that formed the New York Archdiocesan Union of Holy Name Societies (an increase of 4,000 from the previous year). As of March 1909, the archdiocesan attendance at communion, which was the major obligation of Holy Name membership, had increased by almost 7,000 during the previous six months. Nationwide, the society could boast of 500,000 members. The growth, moreover, was not restricted to any particular location, as the sixty new branches (representing an additional 10,000 members) established during the first quarter of 1909 were spread over thirty-three dioceses. The following month witnessed the advent of an additional twenty branches in sixteen dioceses. The total membership of 600,000 reported for 1910 was dwarfed by the time McKenna died in 1917. Basking in such figures, Father J.T. McNicholas, who had completed his time as National Director that same year, beamed that the “Holy Name Society in the United States numbers almost 1,600,000 men, half of whom approach the Holy Table once a month. Moreover, in the space of eight years 3,000 confraternities have been erected.” By 1925, McNicholas would become Archbishop of Cincinnati, where the society had been flourishing for a full quarter-century.33 Similarly, the

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33 *Holy Name Journal*, April 1909, 12, 3; May 1909, 8; September 1910, 2; May 1918, 5. On similar Holy Name growth in Canada, see Mark G. McGowan, *The Waning of the Green: Catholics, The Irish, and Identity in Toronto, 1887-1922* (Montreal, Quebec: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1999), 158-65. On
historian Evelyn Savidge Sterne notes that the Providence union of society chapters claimed 30,000 members by 1919. While it was typical, she argues for most lay societies in the 1900s and 1910s to maintain “memberships of one to two hundred,” one Rhode Island Holy Name branch, that of St. Mary parish in Olneyville, “boasted a stunning one thousand” by 1918.34

Such figures, staggering as they were, represented neither the pinnacle of Holy Name growth in the twentieth century nor the true significance of lay membership. The transformation of American Catholic male piety was both a personal and a corporate experience for Holy Name men. Membership meant far more than simply becoming a number in a massive body. Rather, a new Holy Name man embarked on a new set of religious experiences that would alter his relationship to his God, his church, his friends, his family, and his work. A new Catholic man emerged from the Holy Name society, and the steps in that process of change are critical to this examination.

“*But to inflame, we must burn*”: Fanning the Flames of Faith through Practice

One of the notable additions Charles McKenna made in the 1907 edition of the Manual of the Holy Name was a statement outlining the justification for the Holy Name

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Society. In the midst of the greatest period of growth under his leadership, McKenna invoked fear of the worldwide “efforts of Masonry . . . to crush the power and influence of Christianity.” Within the Catholic church, he warned, more damning dangers loomed. Citing again the perceived decline in male piety, McKenna concluded that “we have much to lament; the cold indifference of so many sons of the Church; the countless thousands who never go to Mass or to the Sacraments.” The society would replace such apathy with action, but other sinister threats concerned McKenna equally: “worse still . . . [are] the multitude who join hands with the libertine, and Jew, and black-souled Infidel, in blaspheming the name of God who made them and of Jesus.” McKenna had thus touched on the major initiatives of the Holy Name Society, namely the elimination of blasphemy and the regular attendance to the sacraments, and he urged support for the confraternity as opposed to any of its frequently cited alternatives. He argued, for example, that “Temperance Societies proved a failure, and principally, I believe, because the members were not required to go frequently to Communion.”

During the pre-World War I era, the Holy Name Society, despite all its pageantry, boiled down to two essential elements: the identification of the principal illness of the day (blasphemy), and the resolution on the lone cure (regular engagement with the sacraments of the Catholic faith).

These two conclusions formed the basis of all other Holy Name activity, but equally critical to this analysis is the social prism through which these clerical doctors

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viewed their lay patients. That the poor immigrant church of nineteenth century America was still – albeit with a different collection of newcomers – a poor immigrant church in the twentieth century is well documented in American Catholic historiography. The critical distinction, of course, is that by the early twentieth century, the old immigrants (Irish and Germans, principally) had achieved some general improvement in social standing and enough political clout to elect many of their own to prominent positions. It was, nonetheless, the seemingly unanimous – and basically correct – view of turn-of-the-century Holy Name leaders that “the majority of the members of our Society are honest but poor, hard-working men.” Dispensations granted for “men of this class” offered leniency in Lenten dietary restrictions. Holy Name men were urged to follow the looser guidelines in exchange for “other little sacrifices,” which amounted often to restraining oneself from the type of behavior associated with the lower classes. Added to the primary concern of avoiding blasphemy was the admonition that “Holy Name men who run the least risk of excessive drinking are asked to keep away on Saturday afternoon and evening from all places where intoxicants are sold.” Such advice was repeated as a suggested New Year’s resolution for the Holy Name man, along with the personal commitment to “cut down on tobacco . . . to the extent that . . . I’ll subscribe 25 cents a year for the monthly **Holy Name Journal**.” In some cases, the initiative of branch leaders was quashed in the interest of retaining the poor Catholic man in the Holy Name fold. Many branches utilized dues as a means to employ musicians as accompaniment for Holy Name rally parades. The national office, however, counseled that a “heavy yearly tax put on members will prove detrimental . . . Keep finances out of the Society as far as
possible.” The hierarchy’s presumption of poverty was so complete that, by 1911, the office at national headquarters faced a new set of complaints from many branches: they were largely unable to recruit their middle-class and well-off parishioners to the society. The editors of the Holy Name Journal now sought to “break down the prejudice that [had] kept many out of the Society – namely, that the Holy Name Society was for poor men only.”

The perceived social status of the majority of Catholic men helped explain the men’s religious laxity in the minds of many clerics, and in turn, it dictated the nature of the reply. The sacraments were the antidote for passivity and careless blasphemy, but the manner of achieving adherence to the sacraments involved a strategic decision. On this point McKenna cited the words of Patrick John Ryan, Archbishop of Philadelphia, as he advised the clergy to commit to the Holy Name Society: “But to inflame, we must burn.” For McKenna, the only way to combat lethargy was with passion, nonchalance with intensity. “We must urge frequent Communion,” he continued, adding that in fact, “monthly Communion is not too frequent. Without [it] our societies will die.” O’Daniel, McKenna’s biographer, noted that this was no minor task because “it must be remembered that frequent communion was by no means so common in those days as it is now. . . This was particularly the case with the men.” With working-class men all the more, so the logic went, because such men tended to work longer and were more apt to

36 Holy Name Journal, February 1909, 10; December 1909, 4; November 1912, 6; January 1911, 2.
37 Manual of the Holy Name (1907), 193-194; O’Daniel, Very Rev. Charles Hyacinth McKenna, 179-80. O’Daniel attributed the communion problem to “Possibly a taint of Jansenism . . . brought to the United States from Continental Europe where the influence of that error was still felt, and this was visible in the rather general custom of receiving the sacraments only at long intervals.” Quote on 180.
associate with others who would not be primarily interested in their spiritual well-being.

In addition, then, to monthly Holy Name Society meetings, at which the members received practical instruction in their faith, societies generally designated monthly communion Sundays, on which the members would assemble as a group and take communion corporately.

The other characteristic practices of early Holy Name Society activity addressed here were aimed at either keeping communion fresh in the minds of members or attracting new members. The Manual of the Holy Name, for instance, was a critical element in a man’s membership since it included all the prayers, masses, pledges, indulgences, and other information pertinent to the society. Theorizing that, through the possession in his home of the Manual a man’s will toward piety would be reinforced, McKenna sought to make it both more accessible and more affordable. In 1909, a new “vest pocket edition” of the Manual hit the presses. Advertisements appeared in the Holy Name Journal four months in advance, detailing the 160 page guidebook that would sell for a mere twenty-five cents beginning in June. In order to ensure that those who had purchased the Manual would reap its benefits – and in order to sell even more – the Journal edition for August 1909 included a section dedicated to using the Manual. The editors outlined the efficient organization of the prayers into morning and evening sections, stressing the shortness of each prayer and its significance to a man’s life. In some cases, laymen were encouraged to enjoy a level of spiritual power they had not previously known: “When reciting these prayers for the dying and dead, you will breathe the spirit of the Church by saying the very words that the priest is commissioned to say.”
Without sales records to assist in such determinations, it is difficult to judge the success of the pocket-sized Manual on its own merits, given that it appeared during a period of dramatic increase in membership. It is worthy of note, however, that the pocket version reached its fourth edition within three years, and Father Anthony Base of Providence had even translated it into Italian for use by branches dominated by newer immigrants.38

The Manual of the Holy Name served a purpose specifically for members, but the Holy Name retreat and the Feast of the Holy Name provided instruction and spiritual engagement for both members and potential members. The success of the mission retreat as a membership drive at St. Vincent Ferrer’s has already been noted. The Holy Name retreat in the early twentieth century, however, served another primary purpose. The Feast of the Holy Name, celebrated in January, was the major annual celebration of the society. In most areas, either a triduum (three-day membership rally) or a one or two-week retreat, was hosted by the Holy Name Society in anticipation of the Feast. Sermons were delivered all day and into the evening throughout the retreat, and men were encouraged to attend as many of these functions, and especially the evening masses, as possible. Dominicans were typically requested to visit for these events, but their numbers so frequently failed to satisfy the demand that they soon recommended requests be made a full year in advance. The advanced concentration on devotion clearly produced dramatic results on Feast Sundays. In 1909, McKenna celebrated at St. Vincent Ferrer’s, where nearly 1,000 men took communion. In Boston, the line for communion spilled outside of the Cathedral. In Brooklyn, the 400 new members recruited during the retreat

38 Holy Name Journal, April 1909, 8, 16; August 1909, 5; September 1912, 11.
returned for communion on the Feast. Nationwide, the estimate was 40,000 men at the altar for the Feast of the Holy Name. The benefits of retreats were certain in the minds of the clergy, and those benefits were not restricted to men. “Where practically all the men of the parish make a [retreat,] a wonderful influence for the good of religion is exercised on the entire parish,” asserted the *Holy Name Journal* editors. “Sons and daughters are proud to see their fathers regular in the attendance of these devotional exercises. Wives and mothers,” they contended, “are urged to higher and nobler sacrifices when they see such evidences of religion, and they feel that more is expected of themselves.”

Seemingly, the only problem with the annual retreat and Feast was the weather. January weather was typically fairly brutal in most areas of Holy Name strength, which made the duration of the festivities taxing. National headquarters suggested a solution which was adopted during the 1910s by most branches. “The Feast of the Holy Name,” the leaders opined, “should continue to be celebrated with fitting solemnity, but the celebration might be restricted to the day itself. The retreats or triduums could be transferred to another time of the year” at the discretion of the local clergy. This change, in fact, proved fruitful for many societies, as they opted in the end to hold *more* retreats throughout the year, thereby rekindling the role of the retreat as a membership drive.39

Easily the most provocative aspect of Holy Name activity, and perhaps the most productive in terms of recruiting interest in membership, was the public rally. An open spectacle of course draws attention, but it was that attention which many Holy Name men so enjoyed. One clergyman remarked that although “these demonstrations are public

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39 *Holy Name Journal*, February 1910, 8; February 1909, 5, 8; October 1909, 15; July 1910, 3.
professions of faith . . . yet they are more. In a Catholic community they make our men better Catholics. They make a man proud of the fact that he is a Catholic; they awaken in him a desire and they demand a resolution to prove himself worthy of the name of Catholic.” The numbers supported the claim that many men sought to be identified as part of a larger whole through the rallies. Twenty thousand Holy Name men, representing every society branch in Rhode Island marched in October 1910. The previous year, a rally by a single parish, St. Michael’s in Westerly, Rhode Island, helped add eighty-six new members to the fold.²⁰ In time, as will be shown in later chapters, the Holy Name rally achieved remarkable fame, and the organizational obstacles required staffs in the hundreds.

The rally also provided an opportunity for yet another aspect of Holy Name life. Material goods such as banners and push-pin buttons yielded additional measures for identifying oneself as a Holy Name man. Some twenty versions of “unofficial” buttons had been circulating for years, but with the emergence of frequent public professions of Catholicism, the national headquarters now moved swiftly to correct that problem.Released in 1909, the official Holy Name button was advertised to “sell at the lowest figure,” this consideration due, once again, to the fact that the “rank and file of the members of the Holy Name Society are poor men.” The bronze and oxidized silver buttons sold for a dime, while the sterling silver and rolled gold versions could be had for a quarter. Businesses were eager to capitalize on the exclusive permission to produce these items. One of the two authorized dealers, the W.J. Feeley Company of Providence,

²⁰ Holy Name Journal, November 1910, 8, 14; March 1909, 12.
marketed not only to the individual but also to the entire branch, offering, at the rate of twenty-five dollars per hundred, a larger medal, hanging on a ribbon that could be personalized with the church’s name. Despite its claims to be nothing more than a coordination point and a sounding board for ideas, the national headquarters office had, by conceiving the official Holy Name pin, taken one of its many steps toward standardizing Holy Name practice. This was justified, according to the Holy Name Journal, by the papal declaration of March 18, 1909, which “authorized priests . . . to add to their list the faculty of blessing any medal bearing the image of the Christ child or the Infant Jesus.” The official emblem of the Holy Name Society, which appeared on all official merchandise, was a profile bust image of the childhood Jesus. The image was selected because it had been to the infant Jesus “that the sacred name was given.” Upon receiving a blessing by the sign of the cross from a confessor priest, the wearer was granted an indulgence, “applicable to the souls in purgatory,” of “50 days for each time one says contritely and devoutly the following ejaculation, ‘Bless us, oh, holy Child Jesus,’ at the same time kissing the sacred image.”

On November 4, 1909, Pope Pius X awarded further indulgences as requested by the Dominican hierarchy:

1st. A plenary indulgence for all members of the Holy Name Society whenever they receive the Sacraments and take part in the above-mentioned parades, wearing the society’s official button or badge, gold samples of which have been presented to your Holiness by the Very Reverend Master General of the Dominicans.

2d. An indulgence of 300 days may be gained once a day by all members of the HNS who regularly but visibly wear the official Holy Name

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41 Holy Name Journal, March 1909, 13; May 1909, 8; June 1909, 16 (the other authorized dealer was Schwartz, Kerwin & Fauss in New York); June 1917, 1; December 1909, 4.
Emblem while they are in any public place, provided they say once a day, ‘Blessed be the Name of the Lord.’

3d. The apostolic blessing for the Editors and Readers of the publication of the society, the title of which is “The Holy Name Journal,” as well as for all who in any way extend the propagation of the Holy Name Society.  

Far more important than mere identification with a larger whole, membership in the Holy Name Society and participation in its spiritual, physical, and material customs now entailed supernatural repercussions. Historians cannot fully appreciate the thoughts of laymen amidst these developments, but a safe conclusion might be that ten cents, even in 1910, would have been a small price to pay considering that matters more important even than life and death were at stake.

That Holy Name men were engaged with the practices of their society cannot be questioned. In fact, many members, perhaps fueled by newfound responsibility for their faith, showed persistent initiative in their efforts to improve the organization. Some, like John F. Doyle of New York, were also driven by their own financial interests. In the wake of several years of widely reported Holy Name rallies, Doyle’s company bought a half-page advertisement in the Holy Name Journal, hawking its “Holy Name and other Banners of the most artistic designs . . . at prices varying from $40.00 to $150.00 or more.” After tastefully mentioning that Doyle “has been for a great number of years a member of the Holy Name Society and for the past eight years President of . . . Branch 31 of the Church of the Holy Name, New York,” the copywriter sought to close the deal on the spot by dropping the name of the man most clearly responsible for the legitimacy of

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42 Holy Name Journal, January 1910, 5.
the national movement: “The Reverend Charles H. McKenna, O.P., has known [Doyle] for the past thirty-nine years and will cheerfully vouch for him.” Other ideas were more directly aimed at advancing the interests of the society. The Denver Diocesan Union of Holy Name Societies, with the approval of Colorado authorities, placed “Don’t Swear” placards in all Denver streetcars, barber shops, and saloons, happily reporting “a marked decrease in the use of profanity.” A Baltimore man identifying himself as “M.A.R.” and “a member of the Holy Name Society,” sent a check for five dollars to the Journal editors, offering to buy subscriptions for twenty of his associates “as a little almsgiving for Lent.” “If I can,” he added, “I’ll get a dozen men to do what I have done.” One last episode of lay initiative, representing the most dubious tendencies, serves to round out the full spectrum of this sampling. In response to the hierarchy’s appeal to Holy Name men, upon the start World War I, to come to the financial aid of the pope, a man from New York City suggested that the society follow the lead of a “German lad” in Springfield, Massachusetts, who had devised a seemingly clever device to raise funds to support Germany. The woman, he explained, “recently started a ‘chain letter’ for the aid of the fatherland.” Predictably for twenty-first century readers, “The method pursued was very simple,” and in the end, “All the ten-cent contributions were forwarded to the lady who started the chain. In a short space of time the sum of $1,000 was collected.” Returning to the point, and reaching his logical conclusion, the man surmised that with “approximately a million members of the Holy Name Society in the United States [their] contributions alone would amount to $100,000.”43 Nothing further was ever mentioned

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43 Holy Name Journal. May 1911, 15; September 1912, 11; March 1909, 13; April 1915, 7.
about this plan, but the fact that it was considered, however briefly, indicates at least a willingness on the part of the clergy to listen to lay ideas.

In these years before the term “Catholic Action” achieved common usage, Holy Name laymen already viewed their role as that of assistants to, or even partners with, the clergy in spiritual endeavors. The practices of the Holy Name Society entrusted and empowered members to be accountable not only for their own spiritual health, but also that of their families, their co-religionists, and ultimately their church. Later sections of this study will investigate the modifications of the formula outlined in this chapter, specifically in regard to the Catholic man’s responsibility to his country. For now, however, it is enough to note the transformation in Catholic manhood already underway as war in Europe loomed.

“Praise from Sir Hubert is Praise Indeed!”: Acceptance and Admiration

The change in American Catholic manhood did not go unnoticed prior to World War I. During that conflict, the American patriotism of all would be challenged, but on its eve, Catholicism had achieved, in the eyes of many old guard Protestants, legitimacy and permanence in the United States.

For its part, the Holy Name Society, which had initially struggled early in the twentieth century for acceptance within the American Catholic church, first sought out
the approval, acceptance, and support of other Catholics. The lukewarm response to McKenna’s efforts to launch new Holy Name branches quickly turned to widespread accolades for the society’s work. The National Hibernian praised the Holy Name Society, announcing that “We know of no stronger power against the rising tide of profanity, dishonesty and heartlessness... They [Holy Name men] do not go about with long, sanctimonious faces, vaingloriously asserting their piety... but by their own quiet manners and their general self-respecting ways they surround themselves with an atmosphere of decency which has a far-reaching effect as an example to those with whom they mingle.” The Dominican leaders had occasion as well to accept laudatory endorsements from the American Federation of Catholic Societies and several other orders with whom they now worked to expand the society. A strong assessment of Catholic manhood in Brooklyn’s Tablet stated the case most emphatically: “There is no mistake about the man who joins a Holy Name Society and participates in its annual rally, as well as in its monthly meetings and regular reception of the Sacraments. It is not necessary to know his age or to see the title Mr. before his name to realize that he has reached manhood’s estate. His is the kind that dares to do right and strives to do good. He is the pride of manhood and the defense of womanhood.” More tangible support came from prelates such as Newark Bishop John J. O’Connor, who became the first American bishop to require the erection of a Holy Name branch in every parish of his diocese.⁴⁴

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⁴⁴ National Hibernian, 15 February 1908; Holy Name Journal, September 1909, 15; May 1913, 4; Brooklyn Tablet, quoted in Holy Name Journal, April 1911, 7.
Equally satisfying were the praises from non Catholics. Outside Catholic circles, Dominican leaders claimed that, having “attracted the attention of the nation,” the “Holy Name Society has become the great defense of Christianity today.” Catholic editors gleefully reported on perceived imitators of the Holy Name Society in the Protestant ranks, such as the Pure Language League in Erie, Pennsylvania, which had been established by three laymen, apparently as a Protestant mirror image of the Holy Name Society. In response to a Holy Name rally in Philadelphia, a man named William Totten wrote to the Public Ledger: “As a Protestant, it [the rally] was a sermon to me—a moving picture of men who never speak of God but with that reverence due the Creator from the creature. May their number increase.” Even highly recognizable figures went out of their way to cite the Holy Name Society. After witnessing a Holy Name parade in Scranton, the Reverend Billy Sunday sent a telegram to the Scranton Times pointing out the “tremendous moral effect upon a community and the nation to see thousands of men marching the street as a protest against blaspheming God. . . I am glad the day has come when the attitude of the Catholics against Protestants and Protestants against Catholics is not ruled by a spirit of bigotry and revenge.” 45 Recounting a story about his travels to Boston, Philadelphian Dr. James J. Walsh argued that “the Holy Name has done more to make Catholicity respected in America than almost anything else during the past generation.” While riding a street-car in Boston, Walsh added, he was particularly struck by the cool demeanor of the conductor, who handled himself admirably despite “coming

45 Holy Name Journal, May 1911, 2; September 1912, 4; November 1909, 8; Public Ledger quoted in Holy Name Journal, November 1912, 16; Scranton Times quoted in Holy Name Journal, December 1914, 4.
in contact as he does many times a day with the icebergy native Bostonian.” Trouble
loomed as a coal wagon broke down, blocking the street-car in a narrow alley. As the
coal wagon driver lashed into the street-car driver with a barrage of profanity, the
amiable street-car driver simply responded, “Well! it is a mighty good thing for you that
I joined the Holy Name last month or I’d tell you where you got off.” Walsh was not the
only person to notice this admirable behavior, as his story concluded:

A well-dressed man standing beside me said: “Now, what do you think of that? I
wonder where . . . these priests get the influence they have over the men?” I said
gently in return: “In the olden days the good Protestant ministers used to say it
was priestcraft.” “Well,” he said, “I do not know what sort of craft it is, but I
wish that the ministers had some of the same sort of craft.” Then I suggested to
him that it was not the priest at all, but that it was the men themselves, organized
together with a beautiful idea to inspire them. “Well,” he said, “they are all
right”--and that from a Bostonian whom I judged to be of at least several
generations, and perhaps a half-dozen, of life near the hub of the universe! Praise
from Sir Hubert is praise indeed!”

The Holy Name Society had ushered in a transformation in American Catholic
manhood, along with, possibly, a new era of warm relations with American
Protestantism. In the next stage of the transformation, Catholics would answer again the
age-old questions about their loyalty to the United States. But first, a closer examination
of American Catholic manhood in action is warranted. Focusing specifically on pre-
World War I Boston, the following chapter will highlight the continuities and changes
that men could experience between their local Holy Name Society branch and the
emerging identity of the national movement, and it will attempt a closer look at the men
themselves.

46 Dr. Walsh’s story was originally published in Philadelphia’s Holy Name Advocate, but was reprinted in
Holy Name Journal, September 1918, 6. The “Sir Hubert” remark seemingly refers to a line from Thomas
Morton’s 1797 play, “A Cure for the Heartache,” in regard to Sir Hubert Spencer.
CHAPTER TWO

A HOLY NAME HUB:
LOCAL AND NATIONAL LINKAGES IN O’CONNELL’S BOSTON

On the occasion, in 1917, of the death of Father Charles McKenna, the “Apostle of the Holy Name,” who had personally done so much to establish branch societies throughout the United States, Cardinal William Henry O’Connell, archbishop of Boston, was one of many who paid homage to the Holy Name leader.

I remember well the first time I met Father McKenna. It was in 1888 at St. Joseph’s Church in the west end of Boston when I was a young curate. The Dominican Fathers were giving a mission to our people, and the wonderful zeal and eloquence of Father McKenna were the dominating spirit of the whole parish at the time. I frequently stood in the rear of the church lost amid the crowd of intent listeners who seemed to hang upon his words, and who were swayed by the fiery torrent of sublime religious sentiments which seemed to flow straight from the pure and consecrated heart of the holy man. As a preacher of the Word of God he had undoubtedly the highest qualifications—holiness of life and eloquence of speech. At home in the rectory he was simplicity itself. At table he was very agreeable, but nevertheless even then he seemed detached, recollected and amiably serious. He was a complete stranger to me, but before the mission was finished I had learned to revere and admire him both as priest and man. And as the years went by bringing us together in various relationships, that reverence and admiration constantly increased.¹

That O’Connell was genuinely impressed with McKenna is clear. Equally clear from this remembrance is that it highlights the importance, from McKenna’s perspective, of fostering positive working relationships with local hierarchical authorities—especially those as authoritative as O’Connell—as the missionary sought to spread the Holy Name Society. It was particularly true in the case of Boston that such relationships were most productive when mutually beneficial. From the beginning of the Holy Name movement,

long before O’Connell succeeded John J. Williams as Boston’s archbishop in 1907, McKenna had found fertile ground throughout New England. By the early 1920s, O’Connell’s see emerged as a leading center of Holy Name activity, a model frequently cited by the Dominicans as they sought still further expansion of the cause nationwide. For O’Connell’s part, he found that promotion of popular devotions such as the Holy Name Society, which in his hands both encouraged the active piety of Catholic laymen and reinforced notions of administrative structure, served only to augment the centralizing aspects of his hierarchical authority in Boston and beyond.

An examination of these developments reveals much about the nature of a national movement as it played out in a local setting. Local dramas added new flavor to the Holy Name practices established by itinerants such as McKenna. In turn, Holy Name headquarters seized upon emerging practices in specific locations such as Boston and urged their adoption nationwide. As international dramas—most notably the rise of the Soviet state and world war—materialized, Holy Name practice responded first at the local level, leading ultimately to major shifts in the national movement during the 1920s. The tag line for O’Connell’s Boston was “militant and triumphant” Catholicism—the Catholic supplanting the Puritan. Thus, in the context of the local, national, and global, the devotional nature of Holy Name practice took on a broader meaning, encompassing the social, political, and international ramifications of one’s identity as an American Catholic man. It was during these early years of the twentieth century, then, that Holy Name men gradually recognized the far-reaching implications of their masculinized faith

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as they applied it to real situations in their own lives. These lessons were learned, however, in a setting largely constructed by O’Connell himself.

A “most fruitful field”: *Early Holy Name activity in Massachusetts*

One of the tactics employed by Cardinal O’Connell, as he promoted the power of his church and indeed his own leadership thereof, was the production in three volumes of the *History of the Archdiocese of Boston*. While the chronicle provided readers with a detailed account of the proud history and remarkable development of the institutional frameworks of Boston Catholicism, it perhaps not surprisingly tended to portray O’Connell’s reign as the dawn of a new golden age. Recent triumphs were characterized not infrequently as corrections of previous oversights. In short, O’Connell’s official priest-historians openly celebrated O’Connell’s deeds, and more than occasionally did so at the expense of historical accuracy. This was true in reference to the sparing treatment of the Holy Name Society during the years prior to O’Connell’s tenure. In a single passing reference, O’Connell’s chroniclers mentioned that the “Holy Name Society for men, while still not common [during the 1880s], existed in not a few parishes.”³ While the authors’ intent was not a close examination of the Holy Name Society (or, indeed, any other laity-based activity), this lone and ambiguous mention constituted a disservice

to the pre-O’Connell movement, the roots of which lie in the organized evangelism of the previous century.

O’Connell was not the first to recognize the significance of Catholic prominence in New England. For mid-to-late nineteenth-century Dominicans, whose activity was based outside the region, much excitement had been generated by far less triumphant accomplishments than those claimed in Boston by O’Connell during the twentieth-century. The occasion in 1867 of two missions held “in the heart of Puritan Massachusetts,” one in Lawrence and another in Haverill, constituted a major coup for the Dominicans. Two of their number, Father James Taaffe of the Church of the Immaculate Conception in Lawrence and Father John McDonnell of the Saint Gregory parish in Haverhill, having heard of the success enjoyed by their fellow Dominicans the previous year in New York City, anxiously requested formal visits from their out-of-state brothers. Expectations of similar success in their Catholic-rich towns were decidedly met, as the Massachusetts missions, lasting from February 10 to March 3 in Lawrence and for an entire week of March in Haverhill, encouraged later missionaries with a broad range of devotional aims to cultivate the fertile ground not only of Massachusetts but New England generally.⁴

Father McKenna was particularly active throughout Massachusetts. As early as 1871, he conducted missions as far north as Salem’s Church of the Immaculate Conception. Within a few years, according to his biographer, “Massachusetts, although farther away from his home, began to vie with Long Island in honoring [McKenna], and

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was soon to become one of his most fruitful fields of labor.” When in 1881 McKenna was promoted to Preacher General (a rare honor bestowed on those whose training resulted in uncommon theological expertise and whose preaching was regarded as especially effective) in St. Joseph’s Province, the congratulatory message reached him in the midst of a mission he was conducting in Fitchburg. A year-in-the-life of missionary McKenna illustrates both his frenetic schedule and specific dedication to New England: in 1884-1885 alone, he made three separate trips to New England for missions offered in Lowell, Lynn, and Newburyport, all interspersed with trips to Memphis, Louisville, Zanesville (Ohio), and New York City. As of the mid-1880s, however, as biographer O’Daniel noted, it was the most populous urban center of New England that attracted most of McKenna’s attention, as the “cities of Boston and Brooklyn appear to have entered into something of a spiritual rivalry to profit by his ministrations.” The 1885 mission at Saint Augustine’s parish in South Boston was typical of McKenna’s Holy Name drives at that time. With the number of services doubled to meet the demands of the crowd, the statistics tell the tale: 185 prepared for confirmation, 13 converted, roughly 1,000 joined the Rosary Society, and a still modest but significant number in the hundreds flocked to membership in the Holy Name Society. As doubling the services became the norm, McKenna adopted the strategy of dividing the missions by gender. During the first week of his standard two-week missions, McKenna typically served first married and then unmarried women. The following week, presumably after the missionary buzz had permeated the parish (likely another strategic move aimed at recruiting greater numbers of initially reluctant men to the Holy Name Society),
McKenna addressed his sermons specifically to men. This change was evident in the 1886 missions at St. Patrick’s of Boston (at which an estimated five thousand people attended sermons each day) and parishes in outlying regions such as Fall River, Peabody, and Hyde Park.  

While McKenna’s devotion to missionary work in regions of working-class Catholic strength is easily comprehended, just as notable were his jaunts to traditional Protestant strongholds and his engagement of the upper classes. Immediately after the 1885 event in South Boston, for example, where the predominantly working-class crowd exemplified the typical target audience for the majority of contemporary Holy Name leaders, McKenna crossed the Charles River to Cambridge, long a hotbed of anti-Catholicism and the home of the archetypical Protestant intellectual establishment of Harvard University. McKenna engaged not only the rising Catholic population there but also, with a series of doctrinal lectures, O’Daniel claims, stirred up at least tacit interest among many of the otherwise suspicious non-Catholic natives. Likewise, in 1888 and on the heels of missions to working class populations in South Boston and Salem, McKenna transitioned seamlessly to Brookline, where, according to O’Daniel, the “elite of the fashionable suburb of Boston were brought no less under the spell of his eloquence than the laboring classes of the many cities and towns visited by him.” As O’Daniel’s profile of McKenna typifies the tendencies toward hagiographic biography so common in the era of its production – one defining characteristic of which being the relatively unsubstantiated claims of tremendous feats, such as McKenna’s alleged ability to engage

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Protestants as well as Catholics in Cambridge – a healthy dose of modern skepticism is recommended.

Nonetheless, what can be reliably gleaned from O’Daniel about McKenna’s theological training and oratorical skill is in line with more scholarly treatments of Catholic missionary work during this era. The historian Jay Dolan, most notably, has roughly equated much of the style and method of Catholic itinerants in this era to the earlier waves of Protestant revivalism in nineteenth-century America. Dolan argues that the tactics – from revival structure to division by gender to the fire-and-brimstone preaching style, designed to frighten an audience into active piety – were typical of centralized Catholic efforts to promote a “panoply of devotions” in a uniform manner. In the itinerant’s wake, it was the parish confraternities, serving as the “resource center of such piety,” that were entrusted to carry forward the momentum. For Dolan, the purpose of the revival, such as those conducted regularly and in a variety of settings by McKenna, was simply to instruct “the people in correct and accepted religious behavior. It spelled out a discipline of piety to which right living and correct praying Catholics should conform.”

A missionary to his core, evangelist McKenna pitched the abstract (salvation through the church) and the practical (devotion to the Holy Name) to whatever groups would listen, Catholic and non-Catholic, rich and poor alike. His greatest long-term success, however, came in situations in which he was able to establish the confraternity

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structure at the parish level. The itinerant planted seeds that could only be nurtured to fruition by continual maintenance from within the parish itself.

The Holy Name Society, by the twentieth-century, was a well-known entity in many parts of New England. Rare it would have been to find a Catholic man of Boston who, on the eve of O’Connell’s rise to power, had not at least heard about the Holy Name Society. By 1907, Holy Name activity was so rampant that McKenna was frequently directing missions that unified societies from several parishes in a given area. At a service held at the Church of the Sacred Heart in Newton Center on September 15 of that year, McKenna was assisted by Sacred Heart rector Father Denis J. Wholey, Father J.F. Kelly of the Church of Our Lady Help of Christians, and Father F.J. Allchin of St. Mary’s in Newton Upper Falls. McKenna’s address on that day recounted the standard Dominican version of the history of the Holy Name Society, dating back to its medieval origins with John of Vercelli in 1274. His understated point—that the Holy Name Society in the United States “enriches the Church”—was simple, but it revealed his tireless dedication to utilize the Holy Name Society as an auxiliary tool for the larger aims of the church. For thousands of Catholic men throughout New England, the society had largely accomplished that goal for nearly half a century. As the O’Connell era dawned in Boston, McKenna would seek to continue affecting the spiritual lives of men and aiding the church through the institution of the Holy Name. O’Connell, familiar through firsthand observation of the efforts and successes of McKenna, and seeking to capitalize on those decades of groundwork already completed, would elevate the Holy

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8 Holy Name Journal, October 1907, 2.
Name Society and appropriate it to the more lofty goals he envisioned for the archdiocese.

“A branch in every parish”: Archbishop O’Connell’s Holy Name Society

Considering the notoriously controlling administrative style that Archbishop O’Connell brought to Boston, the popularity of a mission-driven organization headquartered in New York City might have been perceived as a confrontation waiting to happen. Leading Catholics of the day diplomatically recognized O’Connell as “a man who, to religious zeal and splendid qualities of intellect, adds a forceful aggressiveness in the affairs of religion.”

Driven by his ultramontanism, focusing his ecclesiastical loyalty squarely on the increasingly restrictive dicta emanating from Rome, the conservative O’Connell made few friends among the many American prelates who sympathized with a more modernizing, if not overtly Americanizing, outlook on church affairs. Historian Gerald Fogarty, like many others, regards O’Connell as the vanguard of the “new style of American bishop who depended on Roman rather than American patronage for advancement, . . . ready to implement the policy of Romanization of the American Church which occurred in earnest after the death of Leo XIII in 1903.”

9 Holy Name Journal, January 1908, 4.
10 Fogarty, The Vatican and the American Hierarchy from 1870 to 1965 (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 1982). On O’Connell’s rise to power in Portland and later Boston (and the rise of Romanism), see 195-207; quotes from 196-7. Many other historians have detailed O’Connell’s overbearing administrative style. For example, on O’Connell’s tight control over the Boston chapter of the League of Catholic Women, see Deirdre M. Moloney, American Catholic Lay Groups and Transatlantic
Holy Name Society was surely Catholic, but despite the tacit support it had necessarily received from Rome, it had emerged thus far as a distinctively American Catholic phenomenon. The Holy Name Society utilized new organizational methods to attract men to conservative values of clean speech and adherence to the sacraments. Contemporaries might have wondered whether an institution that seemed more American than Roman would reignite the fires of the Americanist controversy in the early twentieth century. For O’Connell specifically, would the traditional values at the core of Holy Name action be enough to justify the predominantly American nature of the movement?

In the end, O’Connell’s Boston proved to be a nearly ideal setting for further Holy Name expansion for several reasons. First, the national headquarters of the society was far more interested in promoting growth in all regions of the country than in wrangling with local authorities over administrative minutiae. The Holy Name Journal routinely reminded its lay readers that ultimate authority over the organization resided with the parish priest and the appointed parish spiritual director. The national headquarters consistently promoted itself as a mere sounding board for questions and organizational ideas, as an administrative office in what it understood as a sort of loose confederacy of relatively autonomous parish-based branches. McKenna and other missionaries, serving

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11 See, for example, Holy Name Journal, November 1909, 3. “Great care must be taken by the layman,” the editors cautioned, “not to trespass on the province of either priest or bishop. We do urge every Holy Name man to be as active as possible, [but] . . . every layman of the Holy Name Society can go as far as the authority of the spiritual director or the bishop of his diocese authorizes him.”
as the field representatives of national headquarters, were equally accommodating to provincial variances.

Second, many of the practices peculiar to Holy Name activity—the missions, the rallies, the marches—offered a decidedly public display of faith, which meshed seamlessly with O’Connell’s aims for his see. For O’Connell, who sought foremost to celebrate the emergence of Catholicism as not only a legitimate but now a dominant religious, social, and political entity in and beyond Boston, the ever-increasing numbers of engaged parishioners supplied by the Holy Name Society represented the triumphant power of the church in Boston and the United States. O’Connell was quick to appreciate the undeniable statement made by great public displays of Catholics in action. Moreover, such dramatic public events would not only exhibit Catholic power to the populace and press of Boston. Indeed, as much as any other cleric, O’Connell promoted his own leadership abilities to the rest of the country and, more importantly in his view, to Rome through the employment of public religious ritual. In short, the public aspects of the Holy Name Society meshed well with O’Connell’s own stylistic preferences, and Holy Name leaders in New York were all too eager to accept further promotion of their cause. The nationwide explosion of the Holy Name Society in the midst of the American clerics’ modernist controversy suggests that, in at least some cases, all parties could still agree on certain fundamental values of faith, practice, and the promotion of Catholicism. That O’Connell’s Boston would become the center of a particularly flamboyant version of the Holy Name Society (see the next section on the 1908 parade as the chief example) suggests one major source of localized difference in practice.
Despite historiographical impulses to the contrary, leaders still meant something, and O’Connell, who surely appreciated the militant rhetoric of the Holy Name Society, enjoyed the luxury of droves of enthusiastic followers. The three-volume archdiocesan history sponsored by O’Connell, as previously noted, certainly promoted his own leadership, and it may have belittled the importance of earlier Holy Name activity. In O’Connell’s realm, however, his word was final on most subjects, and the sources produced during his reign indicate that all the credit for Boston’s Holy Name success rightly belonged to him. O’Connell’s open support of the Holy Name Society came quickly after he succeeded John Williams, and the rousing press coverage (much of which was supplied by O’Connell’s acquisition in 1908 of the Boston diocesan newspaper, the Pilot) served only to reinforce O’Connell’s aims. Parish priests such as Father George J. Patterson of St. Vincent’s in South Boston would soon realize that their own promotion of the Holy Name Society, in accordance with O’Connell’s wishes, could reap new benefits as well. O’Connell appointed Patterson in early 1908 to the position of Diocesan Director of the Holy Name Society. The move accomplished a two-fold goal: first, O’Connell rewarded Patterson (and thereby encouraged others through example) for

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12 O’Connell’s purchase of the Pilot—or more specifically his version of that story—provides another example of the prelate’s tendency toward self-promotion and dramatic flair. As he recounted in his memoirs, he was “instrumental in founding a good, readable Catholic paper.” This “idea, once conceived in my mind” was in fact the purchase of the Pilot, which had already operated in Boston for eighty years. O’Connell tacitly conceded the longevity of the paper, but insisted that, by 1908, the Pilot “had reached its lowest ebb, both in the matter of finance and in the character of its reading material. . . . Its influence . . . was almost nil and, indeed it was in the throes of death.” Only O’Connell’s intervention, in his telling, saved the paper, and “within a year [it] was a voice worth listening to.” See O’Connell, Recollections of Seventy Years, 295-6. It was this audacious style of promotion—of self, and of Catholicism generally—that united with the public elements of the Holy Name Society to create a particularly vibrant organization in early twentieth-century Archdiocese of Boston.

13 Holy Name Journal, January 1908, 4-5.
his notable development of the St. Vincent’s branch society into one of the most active in the archdiocese; and second, the archbishop set in place the administrative staff necessary to help oversee the implementation of his upcoming directives regarding the Holy Name Society in Boston. O’Connell was now prepared to firmly imbed his personal stamp on the movement in a step that would decidedly alter the goals and actions associated with the Holy Name Society.

April 1908 marked a watershed development in the history of the Holy Name Society not only in the Archdiocese of Boston, but throughout the United States. Several months short of O’Connell’s formal purchase of the *Pilot*, the news failed to make the front page, but the message was nonetheless sent and widely received:

The Most Rev. Archbishop O’Connell, of Boston, is deeply interested in the promotion of the Holy Name Society, and wishes a branch established in every parish of his great Archdiocese. This devotion . . . is of peculiar appeal to men, and the unfailing antidote to the vice of profanity. In every parish in which it has been diligently fostered, it has meant a wave of spiritual regeneration. In one case that may be cited [but was not] seventy-five percent of the men make the general quarterly Communion, to say nothing of their individual reception of the Sacraments.  

O’Connell’s charge was not so significant in what it demanded, but rather in that it served as a catalyst. Again, with Holy Name activity long since common throughout the archdiocese, this proclamation on its surface was akin to a military commander ordering a charge with his troops already fully engaged in the battle. Nonetheless, the long-term and widespread implications of O’Connell’s message marked the beginning of a new era of heightened and intensified Holy Name action. Furthermore, with the perception of rampant success that followed, other American prelates adopted the same tactic in areas

14 *Pilot*, 25 April 1908, 4.
less permeated by the Holy Name movement to date. O’Connell’s directive, held up by Holy Name Headquarters as a monumental feat, was echoed, for example, in the Diocese of Pittsburgh by Bishop J.F. Regis Canevin, and “a chapter in every parish and every man a member” became a familiar refrain in national Holy Name publications.15

In Boston, the order prompted immediate action from clergy and laity alike. Within a month the Pilot reported (this time on the front page) phenomenal progress toward the archbishop’s goal under the rambling headline, “Rapid Growth of Holy Name in Archdiocese of Boston: Institution of Societies in the Various Parishes is Meeting With Noteworthy Success—Movement Has Aroused Widespread Interest.” The article not only gushed about the importance of clean speech and adherence to the sacraments, but also offered a far more expansive interpretation of the society. Beyond the traditional objectives, the Holy Name Society encompassed “a much wider scope and becomes a great source of inspiration to men in their struggle to fulfil [sic] the essential duties of the Christian life.” The author explicitly called for laymen to join the “organized spiritual effort having for its rallying cry the Holy Name . . . to arouse their enthusiasm, to quicken their loyalty to [the] cause, to fuse many minds and wills into one supreme force.” The far-reaching implications crystallized quickly, as the author insisted that “the effect [will not] be confined wholly to the spiritual.” The new Holy Name Society, as it was being

15 In later years, O’Connell leadership in this instance was routinely praised by Holy Namers for reinvigorating the society. However, as the Holy Name Journal quietly admitted (as in November 1916, 4), “Bishop [John J.] O’Connor, of Newark, was the first bishop of the United States to command the establishment of the Holy Name Society in every parish of his diocese.” The tendency to instead credit O’Connell for his later feat was due not only to the prominence of Boston, but also to the fact that “O’Connell, with his great genius for organization, [fully achieved the goal] within the period of one month.”
conceived in Boston, would counteract the modernistic erosion of respect for authority in the family, the church, and the state. In conclusion, laymen read,

. . . if the cultivation of a greater veneration for God’s holy Name can by an extension of its power bring back to us the reverent regard for the old sanctities of family life; if by a further reach of its influence it can throw its protecting mantle over civil authority as well as ecclesiastical; if, in addition to this, it can put before the public the duties of citizenship in a more sacred aspect, then this movement in favor of an extensive organization of Catholic men under the standard of the Holy Name will mark the beginning of a great spiritual and social regenerative force in our midst the extent of whose influence is simply incalculable.  

Such words inspired the complete transformation of the Holy Name Society in Boston into an organization that would have gleefully welcomed the kind of militant sentiments previously offered by Theodore Roosevelt, whose words to a New York gathering of the society had seemed rather anachronistic only a few years earlier. More than a religious organization with merely circumstantial civic implications, the Holy Name Society’s new mantra focused intently on the transformation of the personal religious life into the public religious experience.

In earlier years, the Holy Name Society had principally fostered personal—albeit corporate—piety among men, but in the hands of new leadership and in the context of a changing world, the society too expanded its aims. On May 24, the 250 men who joined the Holy Name Society in Lynn’s Church of the Sacred Heart (with none other than septuagenarian Father McKenna delivering the sermon) united themselves to a cause in flux. They, like the thousands of other men of the Archdiocese of Boston who joined

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16 *Pilot*, 30 May 1908, 1.
17 *Pilot*, 30 May 1908, 8.
during the weeks and months following O’Connell’s call, responded with fresh energy and ready for action. The old practices would continue—the quiet group reflection at mass, the weekly or monthly meetings, the instructive sermons—but the more public elements of the society—the rallies, the marches—would be intensified and promoted in coming years as the Holy Name Society came to thrive as much on exhibition as piety. O’Connell’s historians would celebrate this transformation, and specifically the prelate’s role in fostering it, as “Boston soon became familiar with the impressive spectacle of tens of thousands of Holy Name men marching through the streets.”

Occasions for such pageantry were actively sought or, as circumstances allowed, created. Monthly communions, annual regional union meetings, and especially the Feast of the Holy Name celebration offered frequent opportunities for the Catholic men of Boston to display their faith in practice in ever more elaborate ways and in otherwise secular settings. O’Connell’s flair for the dramatic public event was well utilized, as the examination of Boston Catholics’ most celebratory occasion will show.

The “glorious army of the faith:” The Holy Name Society and the Centenary of the Diocese of Boston

Archbishop O’Connell’s desire to celebrate Catholic prominence dovetailed neatly with the fortuitous timing of the occasion, early in his reign, of the centennial of

the establishment of Boston as a Catholic diocese. Long a major American port of the immigrant church, Boston had been the site of some of the most notable instances of nativist and anti-Catholic oppression. In more recent years, however, the numerical preponderance of Catholics in the region, along with the political and social advances of Catholics generally, had ushered in a sense of American Catholic legitimacy. With one hundred years of such history in its past, Boston Catholicism was eager to celebrate its accomplishments and look to the future. The festivities commemorating this anniversary displayed Catholic pride for all to see in very public ways, and, only months after O’Connell’s proclamation commanding the establishment of a Holy Name branch in every archdiocesan parish, it was the Holy Name Society that provided the most dramatic spectacle. On Sunday 1 November 1908, the fifth and final day of the centennial celebration, Archbishop O’Connell celebrated mass at the cathedral, but according to the program for the week, he did not deliver a sermon, instead opting to cut the religious service short. O’Connell and his most honored guest on this occasion, Baltimore’s Cardinal James Gibbons, were short on “time to reach the reviewing stand, near the Archbishop’s house, to review the Holy Name Society parade, which start[ed] at 12.45 o’clock.”

With the seventy-four-year-old Gibbons in tow, Archbishop O’Connell scurried to the reviewing stand, where the dignitaries, according to Boston newsman William F. Kenney, “braved the penetrating wind and the raw atmosphere” into the early evening as

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they witnessed an event that was described in later days in glowing terms by all observers.\(^{20}\) The closing event of the five-day celebration, the Holy Name Society parade, was naturally hailed by the *Holy Name Journal* as “a fitting crown for the great celebration of which it was the concluding ceremony.”\(^ {21}\) Likewise, O’Connell’s in-house history of the archdiocese later called it “the largest host that had ever marched through the streets of Boston, and the greatest demonstration that any religious body had ever made here.”\(^ {22}\) The more secular press, too, supplied plenty of pro-Catholic accolades: from the *Boston Post*, it was “a spectacle which we believe surpassed anything of the sort ever before shown in this city”; and the *Boston Globe*, a bit more sure of the details, called it “one of the largest crowds which ever assembled to witness a parade in Boston, and a crowd which was the largest ever assembled in this city on a Sunday.”\(^ {23}\)

All sources generally agree on certain vital parade statistics: roughly 40,000 Holy Name Society men, representing every parish of the archdiocese, marched the parade route with the aid of an additional 5,000 musicians providing appropriate marching beats; there were most likely about 275,000 observers lining the route, which stretched roughly two-and-a-half miles through the heart of residential Boston; and from start to finish, the parade lasted just shy of five hours. As the *Post* noted, however, it was “not only the great number of paraders, but the excellence of the movements of the numerous

\(^{20}\) Kenney, *Centenary of the See of Boston*, 144. Kenney himself was a dignified local observer, serving as an editor at the *Boston Globe* and a trustee of the Boston Public Library.

\(^{21}\) *Holy Name Journal*, December 1908, 1.


\(^{23}\) *Boston Post*, 2 November 1908; *Boston Globe*, 2 November 1908.
divisions, which caused admiration.”24 The chief marshal, Major John J. Leonard, had in recent weeks organized the training of the various branch societies for the march, and on this day, it was clear to William Kenney that Major Leonard’s troops had, in their preparations, “managed to absorb a great deal of the external spirit of the military.” “As a rule,” Kenney added, “they marched well, and many of the files would have done credit to a thoroughly drilled militia company.”25 The marchers, assembled on a corner of Massachusetts Avenue, began the route heading west on Beacon Street, turning eventually onto Bay State Road, where the Archbishop’s residence was located, alongside which the largest reviewing stand had been erected. Via Ashby Street (which is now absorbed by the Boston University campus), the marching line turned back east for a lengthy stretch along Commonwealth Avenue, arriving finally at its point of dismissal at Arlington Street.

Noteworthy sights and sounds dominated the entire parade route. Kenney described the scene at the reviewing stand adjacent to O’Connell’s residence, on the corner of Bay State Road and Granby Street. Atop the large temporary structure, inside a “canopied apartment in the center with three high-backed chairs . . . Archbishop O’Connell sat, wearing a heavy fur coat, with Cardinal Gibbons at his left and [Boston] Mayor George A. Hibbard on his right.” The marching Holy Name men, led by the members from the Holy Cross cathedral parish, as they approached O’Connell’s stand,

24 *Boston Post*, 2 November 1908. By contrast, in Cincinnati, where the Holy Name movement was also strong, that city witnessed its first Holy Name parade one year earlier, but it included men from only four parishes. Eventually, the numbers for annual rallies and parades in Cincinnati would also reach the 40,000 plateau. See Fortin, *Faith and Action*, 235, 267.

“passed beneath the arch of evergreen, and each man [emerged] in giving a marching salute to the cardinal, the archbishop, and the mayor.” Moved by the spectacle, “and unmindful of the cold, Cardinal Gibbons removed his gloves that the marching phalanx might have audible proof of his gratification and admiration as he clapped his hands.” Among the eighty marching bands, a few passed the reviewing stand multiple times, as there was “so active a demand for bands, as every organization had its music, that a number of the musicians went over the route successively with several societies.”

Arranged in rows twelve abreast, the Holy Name marchers got their first taste of the true magnitude of the crowd of observers as they turned east onto Commonwealth Avenue. From that vantage point, “for as far as one could see toward the east there was nothing but people and more people and then people,” according to Kenney, who added that almost “ever window of every house framed from two to a dozen faces.” The Vendome hotel “windows were filled with guests, and about the outside . . . there were several thousands of spectators grouped.” Everywhere, “fire-escapes [were] being utilized as grandstands . . . [and] were simply loaded with men and boys.” An insufficient number of policemen were not able to chase down young men and boys who had climbed atop every “electric light pole, some of the monuments, and as many of the trees in the parkway as could be utilized . . . to get a good view of the paraders.”

Truly, Boston had never witnessed such a grand display of religious piety and discipline.

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26 Ibid, 148-9, 144-5.
27 Ibid, 140-1.
For Archbishop O’Connell’s purposes, it was precisely that discipline that was the most important aspect of the display. With this Holy Name parade, Catholics were celebrating in Boston, according to the official archdiocesan history penned under O’Connell’s guidance, the “vivid realization of the glories of their past, the prosperity of the present, and the duties as well as the brilliant possibilities of the future.” This moment, too, sent a message to Boston’s non-Catholic old guard as well, as it “had brought a fuller perception of the strength of the position which the [Catholic] Church had attained here.”

Religious identity was certainly on display here, but it was couched, for O’Connell and others, in the realization that the lower-class immigrant church-goers had now established themselves as the upwardly-mobile Boston mainstream. On a grand stage, the middle-class values of Boston Catholics were displayed and commanded the respect of all observers.

Pride in the working class history of Boston Catholics was evident, as the “toilers of the night” were grouped in line in a position of honor immediately after the Holy Name men of the cathedral parish. These were men who, despite the untimely demands of their laboring lives, still maintained their faith actively and with much discipline.

Against a century-long backdrop informed by stereotypes of working-class, immigrant, and Catholic behavior, the Boston Globe itself noted that the massive assembly of Catholics was a “crowd remarkable not alone for its immensity but

28 Lord, et al., History of the Archdiocese of Boston, 517.

29 On the construction of Catholic social identity in this era, see Paula M. Kane, Separatism and Subculture: Boston Catholicism, 1900-1920 (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1994). Discussion of the centenary celebration is on 22-3. The role of the Holy Name Society in molding men’s behavior and supporting middle class identity is on 100-1.

30 Kenney, Centenary of the See of Boston, 149.
for its appearance and its behavior.”\textsuperscript{31} Indeed, another reporter from the \textit{Globe} “who went over the line of march and mingled with the crowds, did not, in the whole afternoon, see one person who showed the slightest signs of having indulged in liquor.”\textsuperscript{32} Even the \textit{Holy Name Journal}, whose priest-reporters had always stressed the working class identity of Holy Name membership, now noted that in Boston, “[m]anufacturers and artisans, merchants and laborers, bankers, lawyers, clerks and doctors, walked shoulder to shoulder in that great brotherhood.”\textsuperscript{33} In William Kenney’s estimation, this crowd of “cleanly, well-dressed, earnest men” represented the power of Boston Catholicism’s militant discipline. As for the hundreds of thousands of observers, that largely Catholic “assembled multitude was prosperous in appearance and orderly in its demeanor.”\textsuperscript{34} Such descriptions of the Holy Name parade, emanating from the pen of a well-known Boston reporter surely indicated that no exposition could have better demonstrated the results of generations of hard work, fervent faith, and strict discipline. The civility, piety, and obedience of Boston Catholics were, in O’Connell’s orchestration, inseparable characteristics of the triumphant faithful.

If Boston Catholics generally were portrayed as pious and respectable parishioners, the additional identifications both of prominent citizens amongst them and their collective patriotic behavior underscored the emerging argument that the Holy

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\textsuperscript{31} \textit{Boston Globe}, 2 November 1908.

\textsuperscript{32} Kenney, \textit{Centenary of the See of Boston}, 137.

\textsuperscript{33} \textit{Holy Name Journal}, December 1908, 5.

\textsuperscript{34} Kenney, \textit{Centenary of the See of Boston}, 138, 137.
Name Society generated quality American citizenship as much as it reformed men’s blasphemous speech. Kenney noted, for instance, that “[m]en eminent in civil life took part in the procession. In the ranks were a candidate for governor, two candidates for congress, an ex-mayor, members of the board of aldermen, and others whose names have a high place in the business circles of Boston and vicinity.” Among those conspicuous Holy Name men, most of whom hailed from Dorchester parishes, were the following: former mayor of Boston John F. Fitzgerald, marching with St. Margaret’s (Dorchester); Republican School Board member James P. Magenis, marching with St. Leo’s (Dorchester); the Democratic gubernatorial candidate James H. Vahey; congressional candidates J. Mitchell Galvin with St. Matthew’s and Joseph F. O’Connell with St. Peter’s (both of Dorchester).35 These men, despite their positions of honor at the head of their respective branches, blended into the larger scene. “The parade looked what it was,” Kenney concluded, “a body of American citizens.” Had an observer not known the occasion, and had he not read the banners at the lead of each parish branch, he might have mistaken the event as a celebration of Americanism. “The stars and stripes were conspicuous throughout the line,” Kenney noted, “Beside the bearer of each parish society banner there walked a sturdy color-bearer holding aloft the American flag. Many of the societies . . . provided each man with a small American flag.” This additional layer of symbolism was not lost on observers such as Kenney, who noted, “Patriotism as well as allegiance to the church was [sic] expressed by these 39,000 men, with the insignia of

35 The quote is from Kenney, Centenary of the See of Boston, 145. For references to specific individuals, see Ibid, 151-2, and Holy Name Journal, December 1908, 5.
their society and the flag of their country in constant intimate association." 36 Despite the military feel of the march, and despite its historic claims that the Holy Name Society was a purely religious institution, the organization’s national headquarters echoed Kenney’s sentiments: “It was a parade of American citizens, not of soldiers, yet under each civilian garb beat a heart that was Catholic, a heart that was American and patriotic, a heart whose each manly impulse was true to the love and worship of the Holy Name of Jesus.” 37

With accolades for Boston’s Holy Name parade pouring in from far and wide, perhaps the most unique came from a local observer. Edward Fitzwilliam, of Allston, was a grocer in Watertown, a prominent activist for the cause of Irish nationalism, and the father of three American veterans of the Spanish-American War. In these ways, he represented precisely the kind of prideful achievement that O’Connell sought to highlight in his archdiocese. Fitzwilliam, also a noted lyricist, quickly produced a volume of poetry and song in honor of the centennial celebration, containing one song specifically dedicated to the Holy Name parade itself:

“THE HOLY NAME PARADE”

Fair-minded men of every creed  
Will rejoice with us to-day  
Misunderstandings now with speed  
Are vanishing away  
The fruit of Catholic Faith has been  
Triumphantly displayed

36 Kenney, Centenary of the See of Boston, 146-7.
37 Holy Name Journal, December 1908, 5.
By forty thousand Christian men
In the Holy Name parade.

CHORUS: Swell the ranks along
Many millions strong
To war against vice and shame
With power and might
To stand for the right
In our Saviour’s Holy Name!

When or where was there seen such an orderly corps
Of able-bodied Christian men?
Their like has never been seen before
Nor won’t be, till they march again:—
No civic parade, such a record ever made
Not seeking either wealth or fame
They marched with precision of the military trade
In honor of the Holy Name!

CHORUS

History records great feats of war
And of thousands maimed and slain!
By mighty large armies marshaled for
Earthly power and wealth to gain:
Archbishop O’Connell’s army of peace
Wasn’t bent upon any such raid
To halt profanity’s vile increase
Was his Holy Name parade.

CHORUS

Through a hundred years full many a cross
We Catholic poor people bore
All this but served to clear the dross
From the Faith’s pure golden ore:
Bishops, priests, and people, kept right on
Knowing God would bring us aid –
We have shown the peaceful vict’ry won
In our Holy Name parade!

CHORUS

They came from the South, they came from the West
From North-east, they in thousands came
All cleanly dressed in their neatest and best
In honor of the Holy Name!
We may well declare there was music in the air
A hundred bands their sweet notes played:--
    Our Savior was in the midst of us there
    In our Holy Name parade.

CHORUS

Fitzwilliam’s “The Holy Name Parade” gaily captured in song (to the tune of an “Old Irish Air,” of course) the adulatory tone of other observers. Here was an anthem that noted the piety, the politesse, the properness, and the power of the parade. One last characteristic—the patriotism—was delineated in another of Fitzwilliam’s offerings, a verse summarizing the entire centennial celebration, and especially its capstone event, the Holy Name parade: “And now, with kindly feeling, let us reach a friendly hand / To every honest patriot in this God-given land / Assuring them that those who serve their Savior and their God / Would die to serve this, freest land, that man has ever trod.”

The meaning of the 1908 Holy Name parade in Boston (and others the others it would inspire) must be correctly understood. Historians of the early modern era, for example, have noted the importance of seasonal parades and festivals, which often served as a kind of pressure-release valve for long-building social and political tensions. This historiography leads scholars to interpret other similar occasions in similar terms. The 1908 event in Boston, however, was understood by its participants and witnesses in a


40 See, for example, Richard Wunderli, Peasant Fires: The Drummer of Niklashausen (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1992), especially Chapter 2, “Carnival.”
drastically different way. This was not a one-day event that allowed for a topsy-turvy, world-upside-down-for-the-moment mentality. This was, rather, a proclamation of a new and permanent reality, a new local order in Boston (and soon a new national order throughout the United States), in which Catholicism had come of age and assumed a position of leadership. Contrary to the reports from the Ellis Island turnstiles and other similar locations, this was no longer merely a church of recently migrated foreigners. Not only had Catholics remained true to their faith, seemingly conquering the modern impulses to stray into blasphemous behavior, but they had also achieved positions of distinction in their communities, powerful political offices, and numbers significant to continue such trends. As constructed in Boston, Catholicism and American patriotism went hand-in-hand. Catholic men were coached aggressively to feel no shame in practicing their faith in groups and projecting that faith into civic action. American Catholicism was on the verge of that era known by historians as “Catholic Action,” a form of practice on par with the Protestant Social Gospel movement, in which the faith informed efforts to reform society. During this precedent stage of development, it was the Holy Name Society that led American Catholic men toward such a civic-minded piety. Not only were these men now claiming that their Catholic faith in fact promoted their American patriotism, but they now also could point to the Holy Name parade as tangible proof for all to see.
In the wake of O’Connell’s expansion of the Holy Name Society to every parish in his archdiocese, and on the heels of the wildly successful and widely reported Holy Name parade there, O’Connell’s Boston achieved vanguard status in the national Holy Name movement. Praise for O’Connell personally flowed regularly from national headquarters, as did praise for the organization, orchestration, and variety of Holy Name practices in that archdiocese, and the archbishop did all he could to capitalize on the publicity. The lyrical efforts of Edward Fitzwilliam were certainly appreciated, for example, as they gave voice to the spirit of the 1908 parade in Boston. Despite the national coverage, though, that was still a local event, and Fitzwilliam’s poetic volume was equally provincial. Typically, in Boston and beyond, the standard hymn adopted for use in Holy Name activities was the traditional “Holy God, We Praise Thy Name,” which was a nineteenth-century translation of the much older “Te Deum.” It was not long, however, before Cardinal O’Connell (he had been elevated to that status in 1911) placed his own musical fingerprint on the national Holy Name movement, with the help of the national headquarters. The authorship of both the words and music for the brand new “Hymn to the Holy Name” were attributed to Cardinal O’Connell as the song premiered nationwide in early 1913. Reflecting the new modern reality O’Connell sought to promote—the triumph of Catholicism in militant style—while avoiding the problem of

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41 See, for example, Holy Name Journal, February 1911, 6, in which “Holy God, We Praise Thy Name” is described as “the great Holy Name hymn.”
Fitzwilliam’s song, which was tied too directly to a singular local event, the Cardinal’s hymn immediately became the new standard for Holy Name activities nationwide.

“Hymn to the Holy Name”

O Holy Name of Majesty and Power  
O Sacred Name of God’s own Son  
In every joy and every weary hour  
Be Thou our strength until life’s war is won.

REFRAIN:   Fierce is the fight for God and the right  
Sweet Name of Jesus, in Thee is our might.

All o’er the earth the hearts of men are dying  
Chilled by the storms of greed and strife;  
All o’er the land rebellion’s flag is flying  
Threatening our Altars and the nation’s life.

REFRAIN

Ages ago our fathers firm and loyal  
Fought for the faith forever the same.  
We are their sons, our heritage is royal  
And we shall conquer in the Holy Name.

REFRAIN

Up, Christian Soldiers, Christ who goes before us  
Shows us His Cross and leads the way  
Pius, our Pontiff, guides and God is o’er us  
Victory is ours if we but watch and pray.

REFRAIN\(^{42}\)

Trumpeting all the key themes of the O’Connell era—concerns for the faith, concerns for the nation, concerns for a world in disarray—and calling militant Catholic Americans to arms, with steadfast loyalty to Rome, here was the Cardinal assuming his own leadership

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\(^{42}\) O’Connell’s hymn was widely circulated, but most enthusiastically promoted upon its first appearance (on the cover page) in the Holy Name Journal, February 1913, 1.
role for not only the national Holy Name movement, but also for American Catholicism more generally. In these lines was the world as O’Connell saw it, spiraling out of control with far too few solid-spined volunteers to save it. On the national level, praise for O’Connell’s initiative flowed unabated. “The demand has been made so frequently that we should have a National Anthem for the men of the Holy Name Society,” announced the national headquarters, only a month after its release of the Cardinal’s hymn. “We now have it,” they continued, “thanks to the genius of His Eminence [O’Connell] and to the profound paternal love that he bears the Holy Name Society.” In the eyes of the national movement, O’Connell could do absolutely no wrong.

Apart from the praise heaped on O’Connell for the Holy Name hymn, the Holy Name Journal persistently held up the Cardinal’s archdiocese as an instructive example for all other regions to follow. Overly effusive tributes rained down on the Cardinal, but tended to focus, at least in part, on those aspects of his leadership that might best serve clerics elsewhere. “The great archbishop,” ran one typical accolade, “who presides over the most Catholic city and diocese of the country is at once a churchman and leader whose life will be one long record of great achievements, and not least of these will be the perfection of organization which he is giving to the Holy Name Society of the archdiocese.” The national headquarters had long recommended the erection of regional administrative staff to oversee collections of branch societies, and so in addition to hyping the Cardinal, the Holy Name Journal also deluged his underlings with special

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43 Holy Name Journal, March 1913, 18.
44 Holy Name Journal, February 1911, 8.
attention. O’Connell had appointed Father Thomas R. McCoy the Archdiocesan Director of the Holy Name Society for Boston. It was McCoy and his staff, then, who made the necessary arrangements for all archdiocesan Holy Name affairs, including especially the annual Feast of the Holy Name celebrations, which typically occurred not only at the Boston cathedral, but at many other strategically selected locations throughout the archdiocese. McCoy’s tireless efforts were routinely cited by national headquarters, and feature articles on the man explained in no uncertain detail exactly why Boston had experienced such dramatic Holy Name expansion. McCoy’s “personal visitation of members of the Cathedral parish,” for example, had been necessary to bring “practically every man in the parish into the Society.”

To achieve similar results, other diocesan directors understood that no less effort would be involved.

The Holy Name Society’s national headquarters, in short, nearly ran out of adjectives to describe the “phenomenal” and “unprecedented” expansion of Holy Name activity in Boston, all of which was ultimately due, in their eyes, to that archdiocese’s “fearless leader and great churchman,” Cardinal O’Connell. Taking great pains to record the establishment of new Holy Name Society branches nationwide, the Journal editors paid especially acute attention, always with the didactic spotlight in focus, to such developments in Boston. In the first several years of O’Connell’s reign, for instance, the establishment of new branch societies was noted in each of the following parishes: St. Mary’s in Holliston, Our Lady of the Assumption in Boston, St. Stephen’s in Boston, St.

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45 Holy Name Journal, November 1911, 8.
46 Holy Name Journal, February 1909, 7.
Patrick’s in Cambridge, St. Rose of Lima in Chelsea, St. James in Boston, St. Angela’s in Mattapan, St. William’s in Boston, and Sacred Heart in Malden.\footnote{Holy Name Journal. April 1909, 14; October 1909, 2; November 1909, 11; December 1909, 15; February 1910, 15; March 1910, 14; March 1911, 15; August 1912, 9.} Equally significant as the number of new branches, though, were the number of new members being admitted to pre-O’Connell branches. Here again, a representative sample from O’Connell’s first few years in charge of the archdiocese establishes the point: 175 new members admitted to the Holy Name Society branch at Immaculate Conception in Everett, bringing that branch’s membership from less than 100 up to 600 in the space of one year; an additional 100 at Immaculate Conception in Everett a year later; 350 members initiated before a standing-room-only crowd at Sacred Heart in Boston, bringing that branch’s total membership to over one thousand; and the cathedral parish in Boston continually added new members, including 200 on one Holy Name Communion Sunday in Spring 1916, bringing its total membership, the highest in the archdiocese, to more than 1,200.\footnote{Holy Name Journal. March 1910, 5; January 1912, 9; May 1915, 10; June 1916, 11. As previously noted, the Journal offered a regular feature highlighting the erection of new branches and significant membership increases nationwide, but the greatest number of such reports often focused on Boston, highlighting the special position of that region in the eyes of the national headquarters.} By the end of his first decade in power, thanks to Cardinal O’Connell’s initiatives, and coupled with the diligent efforts of his nationally recognized support staff, the Archdiocese of Boston, throughout its roughly 250 parishes, boasted well over 100,000 lay members of the Holy Name Society, placing it firmly in the upper echelon of regional strongholds for the national movement.\footnote{Holy Name Journal. February 1917, 6; February 1919, 6.}
Musical creativity and impressive numbers were themes of 1908 that Boston continued to exhibit in the wake of its centenary celebration, but other characteristics also typified O’Connell’s Boston and increasingly, the national movement. A key aspect of the O’Connell notion of triumph was the socioeconomic ascension of Catholics generally, which represented a distinct break with the tendency of the national leaders of the Holy Name movement to characterize Holy Name men as predominantly poor or working class. Here again, though, after 1908, the Holy Name Journal jumped aboard O’Connell’s bandwagon, stressing (as previously noted) the middle class decorum of the enormous contingent at the Boston centenary celebration and arguing more generally for Catholic legitimacy and social mobility in America. Such coverage, however, unintentionally betrayed its aims by indirectly highlighting the variety that in fact persisted amongst Catholic parishes in Boston and nationwide.

Despite consistency in devotional practice, class differences between parishes were apparent in the diverse activities in which Holy Name branches engaged. The standards associated with Holy Name Society meetings during the 1910s reflected long-standing traditions (e.g., an instructive address from the spiritual advisor of the parish society, the recitation of the Holy Name Pledge as printed in the manual, and monthly communion typically entailing a public procession through the parish to the church) and new constructions (often reflecting the influence of Boston, as in the singing of O’Connell’s “Hymn to the Holy Name”). But with the groundswell of new membership in these years came a marked proclivity to expand Holy Name activity to include more social and entertaining aspects in branch meetings as well. The resources of a parish, and
more specifically of its Holy Name members, often dictated the range of possibilities available for such pursuits. A branch in working-class Dorchester, at the Church of St. Peter, was typical of many nationwide in that it suspended its meeting entirely during the summer, despite being “one of the largest and most flourishing” chapters in the archdiocese. Moreover, when the meetings resumed in the autumn, such modest affairs often included only a talk by the spiritual director and perhaps “musical selections by the choir of the organization.”

“Smoke talk” gatherings and even annual Holy Name banquets in many predominantly working-class parishes followed suit, most often dominated by addresses from clergy and only occasionally bringing in local officials representing respectable ideals of the middling classes. Judge Joseph Sheehan, for example, addressed a smoker gathering of the Holy Name Society at the Church of St. Ann in Neponset, and former mayor of Lowell, James B. Casey, was recruited to address the annual banquet of the society in that city’s Immaculate Conception Church. In Revere, the Church of St. Rose exhibited the increasing tendency of its members to aspire to social improvement, as it offered over several years a series of “classes in Civil Service, conducted under the auspices of the Holy Name Society,” and the entertainments offered by the branch at the Church of St. Mary’s in Collinsville took on such a secular

50 *Holy Name Journal*, November 1917, 11; only on very rare occasions did this branch bring in outside speakers, such as the well-known socialist-turned-Catholic, David Goldstein, as reported in *Holy Name Journal*, January 1916, 13.

51 *Holy Name Journal*, April 1915, 10; June 1915, 8. This was likely the same Joseph Sheehan who was a prominent member of the Cathedral branch in Boston, honored for his service to that branch by the first National Convention of the Holy Name Society, discussed in the final section of this chapter.
feel that “[m]any non-Catholics are seen in attendance.” Extra-religious activities characterized many Holy Name branches, as did the celebration of and yearning for the professional middle-class lifestyle that was seemingly now within reach for more American Catholics than ever.

In rare cases, though, the affluence of particular parishes was clearly evident in the activities of their Holy Name chapters. In the post-1908 years, the parish of St. Cecilia in Boston’s more prosperous Back Bay district was a shining example of this unique situation. Here, the Holy Name men were accustomed to hearing local officials on a much more regular basis, and their standard musical entertainments were far more upscale than a church choir, featuring instead violins, tenor soloists, and occasionally the sponsorship of large-scale concerts for the entire parish. The spiritual director, Rev. Joseph M. Fitzgibbons, credited the lay leaders (especially chapter president John S. Wilson, an attorney) with the resource development and new membership in the branch, and those laymen received national exposure for their efforts. Such credit was certainly due, considering the world-renowned names recruited by the laymen in 1915 alone to address Holy Name Society at the parish of St. Cecilia: Francis Ouimet, the Massachusetts native and recent winner of the U.S. Amateur Golf Championship (1914) and the even more prestigious U.S. Open (1913); and John Evers, who, recently acquired by the Boston Braves baseball franchise, had led that team out of last place halfway through the 1914 season to its first winning record in eleven years, the National League

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52 Holy Name Journal, December 1914, 10. The report on St. Mary’s in Collinsville likely referred to St. Mary of the Assumption parish in Dracut, Massachusetts. Likewise, a parish in Providence had initiated a “School for Social Studies,” through which lectures educated members on “social, industrial and economical” points of interest. See Sterne, Ballots and Bibles, 122.
pennant, and a four-game sweep of Philadelphia in the World Series. According to national headquarters, in the rare locations where Holy Name membership still lagged, it tended to be in such affluent locations. Indeed, the Boston Pilot theorized that some well-to-do men had thus far neglected to join the Holy Name Society, perhaps, because it was “not quite exclusive enough for them,” or “too plebian.” St. Cecilia parish in the Back Bay, however, through its well-funded and engaging programs, had managed to rise above such concerns, and it thus attracted the attention of the Holy Name headquarters, which sought to encourage similar actions elsewhere nationwide.

Class differences aside, Holy Name branches in Boston and nationwide were homogenous not only in their devotional uniformity but also in their American patriotism, which emerged during the early O’Connell era and accelerated into the World War I years. Here again, the magnitude of the Holy Name movement in Boston might suggest that the patriotic practices that developed in that archdiocese during the 1910s were original and followed by a nationwide diffusion; less so, however, in this case, as Catholics across the board were increasingly proclaiming not only the compatibility but more so the essential harmony of Catholicism and Americanism. Clerics, in some cases, stopped just short of outright fabrication in recasting American history with Catholicism at its center. A 1916 editorial, for example, noted that it had been a Catholic movement (prior to the English Reformation) that forced King John to sign the Magna Charta in


54 Quoted in Holy Name Journal, October 1914, 4. The Pilot article went on to suggest that such “snobbery,” while evident and to be expected on the part of women, should not factor into a man’s willingness to practice his faith.
1215. And it was that singular “event, long ante-dating the discovery of America, [that] was the trumpet call summoning our forefathers to proclaim America’s independence.” Historical exaggeration aside, the author’s two-fold point was not lost on readers: first, “Catholics must be loyal and patriotic if they are true Catholics,” and second, “Catholics, despite calumnious assertions to the contrary, have helped to shape the mightiness of this land. They cherish the memories of Washington and Lincoln.”

As the Holy Name national headquarters more regularly commented on American and international issues, a clear break with past practice, some Holy Name men wondered about the change in policy. “Will you tell me,” wrote a Holy Name Society member named James McCarthy to the *Holy Name Journal*, “by what right the Catholic Church speaks on . . . questions of the day? It seems to me,” he explained, “that her mission is a spiritual one and should be confined to spiritual things.” The editorial reply was couched in the argument that the Catholic Church was primarily concerned with “guard[ing] the salvation of each man’s soul,” revealing the far-reaching theological perspective that would help lead not only to Catholic American patriotism but also a particularly vociferous Catholic anticommunism in the coming years. “The Church, since it is the guardian of your soul, has the right to speak out against every system, opinion, or institution that may be for you an occasion wherein your soul’s welfare will be threatened. . . . For this same reason, too,” the editor concluded, “it has the right to speak

of those questions of the day intimately involved in the lives of the children for whom she is responsible.”

McCarthy’s questioning critique (or the fact that it was published) was exceedingly rare, but as war erupted abroad and the United States finally entered the conflict in April 1917, the *Holy Name Journal* attempted to bolster the Americanism of its members at this critical moment in which the clergy worried that lay patriotism might falter. If called upon to fight, national headquarters surmised, some Catholic men might think twice, “but patriotism,” Holy Name men were reminded, “demands the sacrifice. It is no disgrace,” the editors counseled, “not to be able to feel instinctively the thrill of patriotism or to perform instinctively the great sacrifices which patriotism demands. But it is the height of folly the depth of wickedness not to be willing to learn to meet the tests of patriotic duty.” All good Catholics must recognize that “the superior rights of patriotic loyalty will make us throttle our personal feelings and elevate ourselves to the standard of national welfare and world-wide liberty.” With a healthy measure of appreciation for any hesitation on the part of American Catholic men, but with a steely resolve to meet the national challenge, the editors admitted, “It is hard to understand in the beginning, but at least we can be willing to learn.”

Electrifying scenes throughout the country indicated the extent to which the overwhelming majority of Holy Name men were willing to answer the nation’s call to war. On June 2, at the Church of the Sacred Heart in Jersey City, New Jersey, Father

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56 *Holy Name Journal*, April 1916, 7.
57 *Holy Name Journal*, July 1917, 3.
Hubert Holsters offered a special mass honoring 250 members of his parish who had volunteered for duty and were about to report. Although religious ritual, as always, dominated the mass itself, the event as a whole was enveloped in patriotic displays. Roughly 600 of the branch’s Holy Name men, led by a fife and drum corps, with one large American flag in front and each member holding his own smaller American flag, escorted the 250 volunteers through the city en route to mass in a patriotic Holy Name march. Father Holsters encouraged these men to serve with honor, offered a blessing on the flag while after asking the entire crowd to “stand during the ceremony in loyal readiness for its defense,” and closed the mass with the American pledge of allegiance and Bellamy salute to the flag.\textsuperscript{58} Likewise, Catholicism in practice further enmeshed itself in the American war effort at the newly erected Fort Devens in central Massachusetts. One of the first organizations to emerge within the encampment, with its first formal meeting in October, was a brand new branch of the Holy Name Society.\textsuperscript{59} Traditional Holy Name activity suffered during the war – the cancellation of the annual October parade throughout New Jersey, due to lowered numbers of potential participants, was not uncommon\textsuperscript{60} – but in other ways, the war inspired Holy Name creativity, as evident at Fort Devens.

With American involvement in the war, the patriotic activities of the Holy Name Society, first evident in Boston a decade earlier, accelerated dramatically apace with

\textsuperscript{58} \textit{Holy Name Journal}, July 1917, 5.

\textsuperscript{59} \textit{Holy Name Journal}, November 1917, 11.

\textsuperscript{60} \textit{Holy Name Journal}, September 1917, 5.
American society as a whole. Within two months, the membership of the new Fort Devens Holy Name Society branch topped five hundred, but Holy Namers around the country who were not reporting for duty stepped up their support for the troops as well. Holy Name leaders, for example, urged active support for the American Liberty Bond movement, arguing that although Germany “may have a gun that can shoot a bullet more than seventy-five miles into Paris,. . . we here in the United States have pocketbooks that can shoot a few more billions across the ocean into the heart of German ambition. We ask our Holy Name men to do their share in making the Liberty Loan a success.” Branches of the society responded immediately, as in the case of the Holy Name men of South Boston’s Church of Saints Peter and Paul, who pooled their resources and ceremoniously donated “a $100 Liberty Bond as a gift to the parish.” Equally of note was a band of young men belonging to a Junior Holy Name Society branch in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, who took to the streets and sold over $41,000 worth of Liberty Bonds in their city. Such efforts certainly went a long way in displaying the American spirit of Catholics. Still other efforts did even more to support the war effort while also specifically honoring the sacrifice of Catholic Holy Name men.

Such was the case with the national trend of raising “war service flags” at Catholic churches throughout 1917 and 1918. At All Saints parish in Roxbury, Massachusetts, for instance, the Holy Name Society presented the church with a war

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61 Holy Name Journal, January 1918, 11.
62 Holy Name Journal, April 1918, 3.
63 Holy Name Journal, May 1918, 11; July 1918, 10.
service flag that was eight feet high by twelve feet wide, commemorating the 125 men of the parish serving in the military. Likewise, the Holy Name men of the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes in Revere honored thirty of their number, and a grand total of seventy throughout the parish in active duty, by unveiling a large war service flag adorned with seventy stars. After mass on Sunday morning, November 25, 1917, several thousand observers gathered on Winthrop Street in Charlestown for the ceremonial blessing and raising of a war service flag boasting 402 stars (322 of which represented Holy Name men from St. Mary’s parish). In line with traditional Holy Name spectacle, such events were often carefully orchestrated by individual branches so the patriotic faith of their members could not go unnoticed by the larger community. At Sacred Heart Church in East Boston, the war service flag was raised on Thanksgiving morning 1917, following addresses to the throng of over three thousand by Mayor James M. Curley and local Congressmen.64

As with other aspects of Holy Name life, the parish-to-parish details associated with war service flag ceremonies differed considerably, but they never challenged the overarching spirit of the movement. Typically, the service flag of a parish was decorated with white stars equal to the number of its sons fighting abroad, arranged in various patterns against a typically red, white, and blue background. Branches often elected to honor specific soldiers in different ways: perhaps, for example, larger stars to signify local citizens with higher rank, or gold stars to indicate status such as prisoner-of-war. At the St. Patrick’s Day 1918 unveiling at South Boston’s Church of Saints Peter and Paul,

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64 *Holy Name Journal*, January 1918, 5.
the 225 stars on the flag included one gold star honoring the memory of local Charles O’Connor, who had died aboard the destroyer U.S.S. Jacob Jones, which had been sunk by a German torpedo off the coast of France in December 1917.\textsuperscript{65}

Seeking to encourage the creativity of its branches, as long as the public display of Catholic patriotism was foremost, the National Headquarters acted quickly, posting large advertisements in its literature. “Ask yourself these questions,” ran one such promotion, “How can I let people know how many men have gone [to war] from my parish? How can I call this fact to the attention of every person who passes my church?” National Headquarters was eager to “supply these flags to you in any design you may wish, in three different grades of material . . . at prices that are most reasonable.” Urging society branches to act quickly, the advertisement concluded: “Don’t wait until you have your complete number. Additional stars can be filled in later.”\textsuperscript{66} The war profits, in this case, came in the form of Catholic public relations in an intensely patriotic America. Laymen, for their part, were all too eager to display their pride in each other for the sacrifices made for their nation. Their experiences, unlike those of their immigrant predecessors, had fostered an environment of intense honor in the dual identity of being Catholic and American.

\textsuperscript{65} \textit{Holy Name Journal}, May 1918, 6.

\textsuperscript{66} \textit{Holy Name Journal}, February 1918, 5. A considerable range of flags was offered here. The lower-end, for $0.65, was a two-feet by three-feet flag of “Sewed Cotton Bunting for Interior Use Only,” while the upper-tier flag, for $58.50, was fifteen-by-twenty-five feet, constructed of wool bunting and “Fully Guaranteed.” All flags came with as many as twelve stars. “Additional stars will be furnished, sewed on, at the rate of ten cents each.”
As the second decade of the twentieth century closed, it was becoming quite clear that the Holy Name Society, despite its continued focus on the spiritual welfare and reformed speech of its members, was certainly much more than a purely religious institution. The early reign of Cardinal O’Connell in the Archdiocese of Boston had done much to announce that expansion in and far beyond New England. The Catholic population in Boston had achieved significant upward mobility in political and social power. Under the direction of their new leader, Boston Catholics celebrating these new realities included Holy Name men who increasingly tied their piety to their class and national identities. What happened in Boston through the First World War must not be wholly understood as typical of the national Holy Name movement, largely because the intensively managed characteristics of O’Connell’s administration did not have many equals elsewhere. More clear, however, is the realization that the Holy Name Society in Boston both directed and reflected the national movement in these years. A much more pronounced public aspect of the society’s functions grew out of its celebration of respectability in 1908 Boston, as did the twin desires to expand the society to every parish and equate Catholic piety with American citizenship and patriotism. In the latter concern, of course, Boston Holy Name men, like their brethren nationwide, were swept into a nationalistic fervor by American entry into the war. In creating their own ways to express that pride, Holy Name men were not so quietly expanding the message of their organization. Pious men, they were realizing, acted piously both within and beyond their encounters with the sacraments. Holy Name men were carving out new ways of living their public lives based on their personal, if corporate, faith.
Taking cues from the success of the 1908 Centenary celebration and Holy Name parade in Boston, the national leadership of the Holy Name Society started to wonder about the possibility of hosting a similar event on a national scale. The discussions, however, did not get serious until Spring 1911. The idea was generally met with a warm response. For his part, Father McKenna wrote to headquarters, “May God bless the Holy Name Congress. May it be convened not because other congresses are held, but that it may result in infusing new life into every Holy Name Society throughout the country.”\(^1\)

Seemingly unsure of itself, however, the national headquarters proceeded slowly and haphazardly in the planning of the event, announcing as late as July that, although it had been decided that the conference would happen in October, neither the exact dates nor the precise location had as yet been determined. “We invite further suggestions,” national headquarters pleaded, “not only from priests but laymen.”\(^2\) As this was the first such national congress for the movement, perhaps the tentative nature of its planning was to be expected; the hesitant orchestration, though, resulted in a convention that was certainly modest in all regards.

\(^1\) McKenna’s letter of 15 April 1911 was reprinted in *Holy Name Journal*, May 1911, 3.

\(^2\) *Holy Name Journal*, July 1911, 6.
The program for the convention, to be held (as it was finally resolved) in Baltimore on October 16-17, announced that the events of the first day would conclude with a Holy Name parade. Although it was an impressive gathering, the number of marchers for this national parade fell well short of the army of Catholic men produced by Boston alone three years prior.\(^3\) Seemingly, the planners’ expectations for the 1911 Baltimore event were that the parade ending the first day would in fact mark the end of the convention for the majority of visitors. The program for the convention announced well in advance that “Delegates wishing to return home on the evening of Monday, October 16\(^{th}\) [immediately after the parade], will be at liberty to do so, as the second day of the Congress will be devoted to spiritual directors . . . and committees appointed to prepare the reports of the Congress.”\(^4\) In reality, however, the first day too focused most intently on the clerical hierarchy and its leadership of the movement.

The laity played a minimal role in this first national convention, but here again, the Bostonians amongst them were prominently featured. Joseph A. Sheehan of Boston was one of nine laymen nationwide honored at the convention with the inaugural “Knight of the Holy Name” award. Limiting the nominations to one per diocese, the hierarchy stipulated one requirement: that the nominee must have achieved fifteen to twenty years of Holy Name service, “which will minimize the danger of awarding testimonials to those who may subsequently become even careless Catholics.”\(^5\) Father Thomas R. McCoy,

\(^3\) Holy Name Journal, November 1911, 11. The estimated total for Baltimore’s national Holy Name parade was 35,000 marchers, compared to the 40,000 that had turned out in Boston in 1908.

\(^4\) Holy Name Journal, October 1911, 2.

\(^5\) Holy Name Journal, November 1911, 5, 6.
serving as Cardinal O’Connell’s Archdiocesan Director of the Holy Name Society, was lauded for having brought Sheehan and seventy-four other lay Bostonians, “the most representative delegation at the Holy Name Congress,” to Baltimore. True to their reputation as marchers, the national headquarters noted that the “Boston delegation is deserving of first recognition not only for appearance, but more so for the respectful and even reverend demeanor during the marching.”[6] Bostonians, clearly, had been well trained in the public aspects of their faith, and events such as the Baltimore Congress of 1911 allowed for Holy Namers across the nation to hone their skills in public demonstrations.

The most notable aspects of the Baltimore Congress, however, were revealed in the resolutions produced by the lone joint session involving spiritual directors and lay delegates. Among the twelve major resolutions approved were several echoes of recurring Holy Name themes: the recognition, for instance, that Holy Name men must submit themselves and their branches to the localized authority of the priests and spiritual directors in their parishes. But two of the resolutions (#4 and #10, reproduced here) marked a definitive break with the oft-touted purely religious character of the movement.

4. Delegates respectfully submit the suggestion that a nation wide [sic] campaign, as approved by the authorities of each diocese, be carried on in promoting and defending belief in the divinity of Christ, the fundamental doctrine of their religion without which there can be no Christianity. As the name of God stands for Him who is the source of all authority, the Holy Name Congress wishes to protest against the growing irreligious spirit which would undermine civil and religious authority, against profanity, obscenity and every form of indecent speech; against false oaths in and out of our courts of justice.

Methods of protest may vary according to conditions and circumstances under the direction of proper ecclesiastical authorities.

10. The Holy Name Congress commends in particular as most consonant with the primary objects of the Holy Name Society a work which has been carried on for some time most successfully by some Diocesan Unions and local branches, namely, the protest through the press and public meetings against profanity and indecency on the stage, immoral and livid posters, suggestive postal cards and the appalling conditions existing in many moving picture theatres. The Holy Name Congress wishes to express their appreciation of the co-operation of other Catholic societies in this great work particularly during the past year.\(^7\)

These Catholic laymen in Baltimore were making two important declarations. First, their wordings indicated the extent to which men in one region of the country were well aware of the activities of Holy Name men elsewhere. Indeed, their wordings reflected a desire to incorporate the working practices of others into their own branch activities. More broadly and fundamentally, these men were arguing that it was time for all Holy Name men to consider very seriously the implications of their piety for public action.

Although historians generally assign the vague label “Catholic Action” to the 1930s\(^8\), that concerted Catholic effort to engage, change, and improve American cultural, social, and political life clearly began much earlier through organizations such as the Holy Name Society. Sensing the power of their growing numbers nationwide and the

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\(^7\) Holy Name Journal, November 1911, 7-8. *Italic* emphasis added.

\(^8\) See, for example, the loose affiliation of the term “Catholic Action” with the “period from the 1930s to the 1950s” in Charles Morris, *American Catholic: The Saints and Sinners Who Built America’s Most Powerful Church* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998), 163. Also see James Hennesey, *American Catholics: A History of the Roman Catholic Community in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981). Although Hennesey avoids using the general label “Catholic Action,” he notes the newly concerted emphasis on social activism in the 1930s through organizations such as the Summer Schools for Catholic Action and Dorothy Day’s Catholic Worker Movement in *American Catholics*, 258, 266-9. More recently, James O’Toole has clarified the term’s history, noting that the “phrase had been used in many contexts before, but it took on new life” in the 1930s, following specific and positive reference to it by Pope Pius XI. See O’Toole, *The Faithful*, Chapter 4. The quote is on 146.
morality of their perspective, Holy Name men as early as 1911 were eager to direct and if necessary alter public life to conform to their own religious standards. Here, what later became known as Catholic Action first stirred and drove religious men to understand the secular through the lens of Holy Name membership. Catholic men should not be passive consumers of mass culture, and they should not stand idly by as insults to their religious sensibilities were hurled in various political arena. With the increasingly public-oriented image of the Holy Name Society came an increasing willingness of its members to stand firm for Catholic positions in any number of public settings.

An End to “Pussy-Foot Editorials”: Clerical Support for Holy Name Catholic Action

By the second decade of the twentieth century, the parades and public rallies of Holy Name Society men had become commonplace in Boston and many other cities in the American Northeast, Mid-Atlantic, and Midwest. Scenes of Holy Name power like that in 1908 Boston were no longer reserved for events as unique as a milestone anniversary of a major religious district. The Holy Name Society itself now commanded such public attention, independent of other religious celebrations. While part of the historian’s job is to assign meaning to such developments, it is always most interesting to listen first to the historical participants themselves. What change did they perceive and how did they understand it? That a person witnessed or somehow played a role in events is a critical prerequisite for historical authority. But it is the stories participants tell -- to
others and to themselves -- about such events that constitute the first efforts to assign meaning. The rise of the Holy Name Society as a motivating force in the lives of Catholic men, and more recently as an institution of public importance, was clearly viewed positively, perhaps triumphantly, by Cardinal O’Connell and the Holy Name Headquarters. It seemed that not everyone, though, was comfortable with this development. Although WASP-ish anti-Catholicism persisted in a variety of forms, Holy Name leaders were perhaps more deeply disturbed by criticisms originating from within the Catholic fold itself. In full support of the action-oriented resolutions proposed by laymen at the 1911 Baltimore Congress, the Holy Name national headquarters now pushed harder than ever for exactly that style of public discourse.

In November 1915, the editors of the Holy Name Journal, ever eager to at least incidentally take credit as the recognized mouthpiece of the national movement while simultaneously deflecting praise, passed along a surprising account of their meeting with “a politician” whose identity was protected, except for the backhanded addition that “he [was] at least a nominal Catholic.” This politician had “recently sought an interview with the officials of the National Headquarters of the Holy Name Society” in order to warn them that (in the words attributed to the politician) “the Catholic Church . . . [is] making a great mistake in showing the strength of its Catholic men by the annual Holy Name rallies [and other public events].” Instead, the concerned Catholic public servant advised, “Let us keep quiet and let us not show our strength.”

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9 Holy Name Journal, November 1915, 3.
The obvious journalistic problems with the story raise questions as to whether the mysterious politician actually existed or the alleged meeting actually occurred. Such matters, however, were irrelevant to the Holy Name leaders at National Headquarters because the story, as a literary device, accomplished two important goals. First, the politician, being someone in the know when it came to accomplishing important and delicate objectives, knew that he would first need to convince the Holy Name Journal editors in order to secure any hope for change. Implicitly, Holy Name men who read the article were reminded of the importance of following the directives and adopting the perspectives emanating from National Headquarters. Following on that subtle nudge, the editors aggressively denounced the sentiments offered by this straw man. In so doing, Holy Name leaders proclaimed that the time had come for the Holy Name Society to expand its mission by purposefully engaging the secular world.

According to the Holy Name leadership, Catholics should stand strong in the face of any ignorant intolerance that might arise in response to public rallies; indeed, Holy Name men in particular should respond to such bigotry by redoubling their public-oriented efforts. The politician who had confronted the editors was the wrong kind of Catholic, one of the “weak-kneed apologists who [feared] that Holy Name parades were in a large measure the cause of so much recently expressed bigotry.” Shrinking to disguise one’s faith was equated to being a “religious or theological trimmer,” one who spinelessly vacillated to accommodate prevailing winds. “Every square and decent man,” the editors admonished, “despises a trimmer.” Moreover, in their view, the impetus to openly engage in public faith rituals would originate from within the true Catholic man.
himself, not from a priest urging him to stand up to bigotry. If a man routinely practiced his Catholicism by regularly attending mass and partaking in communion with his Holy Name brothers, the urge to publicly proclaim his faith would necessarily and naturally follow. This “virile religious emotion,” arising only from ardent faith practice, “demands an external expression.” Participation in public professions of faith was thus a practically involuntary ramification of genuine internal faith. Any Catholic man who failed to join the crowd, by implication, was neither truly Catholic nor truly a man.

The editors of the *Holy Name Journal* likewise bemoaned what they perceived to be Catholic paranoia about the character and goals of various strands of anti-Catholicism. They launched a verbal attack against editors of other Catholic journals who had dedicated too much ink to discussions of bigotry. When one Catholic paper ran a story, under the title “A Whispering Campaign,” alleging an anonymous effort to undermine the Catholic cause in America, the Holy Name leaders belittled the column as a “characteristic ‘pussy-foot’ editorial.” Legitimate instances of bigotry were bad enough; much worse was the Catholic whose fear of bigotry had falsely convinced him of the existence of much more widespread and nefarious opposition. “It is the nature of timid persons,” the Holy Name leaders explained, “to be constantly scared by ‘bugaboos.’” Moreover, “when there are no real ‘bugaboos’ to frighten them, they summon up imaginary ones.” American Catholics, though, need no longer subscribe to such a culture of fear, as the editors now assured them that “the sublime truths of the Catholic Church

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10 *Holy Name Journal*, November 1915, 3.
are today more widely recognized and more widely admired outside the Catholic Church than they have ever been before.”¹¹

By the end of the first third of the twentieth century, Catholicism had sprouted its roots in the American religious mainstream, and Catholics in all corners were exhibiting more of the assurance and confidence that comes with such establishment and security.¹² What remained of anti-Catholic bigotry was increasingly marginalized in American society as backwardness, the last dying gasps of an old age of injustice. This proud disposition emerged in a setting such as O’Connell’s Boston much earlier and in perhaps more confrontational fashion, but Catholics everywhere soon routinely claimed ownership not only of their faith practices, but also of their own vested interest in America. Slowly at first, and in a very limited way, Catholic men took their reinvigorated identities into the secular world. Gradually, Holy Name men learned to employ their faith in engaging public problems. Holy Name membership had created in them a more distinctive sense of right and wrong, and of masculine responsibility and leadership. Participation in public acts of faith had been essential to the development of that mindset. And the ramifications of faith in public soon followed. With all the encouragement they could muster, the clerical leaders of the Holy Name Society supported lay initiative to take the faith to the streets. One means to that end, for national headquarters, was to strive to inform laymen of the religious angles contained in the seemingly secular aspects of their lives. To make men see religious implications in all

¹¹ Holy Name Journal, January 1925, 4-5.

things (in mass popular culture no less than any other aspect of modern life) was the driving force behind many of the changes that came to Holy Name propaganda in these years.

To that end, the foray by the national Holy Name leadership into the world of motion pictures was a logical, and deliciously ironic, venture. Catholic critics had for several years launched tirades against what they regarded as the lascivious film industry, but Catholics’ efforts to claim the medium for their own purposes produced a series of notable films. During the summer of 1921, the national headquarters began hyping “the coming of a great propaganda picture for the Holy Name Society.” The film, *The Blasphemer*, premiered to a select New York City audience on October 30. Designed with branch viewings in mind, the silent film followed a simple plot: a prideful and corrupt self-made man denies the existence of God, suffers a terrific fall from power, and is eventually redeemed. The wealth and arrogance of John Harden, the main character, had transformed him into a cold father, an unfaithful husband, and a corrupt businessman.

In a crucial scene, at the height of his power, Harden offers a toast at a dinner party of his associates and in the process reveals many of the ills of society bemoaned by Catholics at the time: “Success is the fruit of a man’s energy and driving power. This is

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14 *Holy Name Journal*, June 1921, 3.
the age of Man’s triumph. He has conquered nature, is the Master of his fate and Captain of his soul. He answers to none but himself.” As another man rises to challenge Harden’s claims in the name of God, Harden swiftly rebukes him: “Nonsense! Superstition belonging to an ignorant and past age. . . . I am what I am because I am John Harden.” With fierce flashes of lightning outside the house, Harden throws down the supreme challenge to the God he denies: “You claim there is an all-powerful God! Rubbish! . . . Let Him strike me dead in two minutes if He can.” Despite the enormous eruption of thunder and lightning, the fear of the storm clearly visible in the eyes of the dinner guests, and a large tree falling through the roof, Harden announces “I’ve won!!” two minutes later at the stroke of midnight.15

Harden’s fall from power (clearly God’s own mysterious response to Harden’s challenge) and eventual redemption occupy the majority of the script. The victim of a confidence game in which he is ruined financially and tricked into believing that he shot a man to death, Harden quickly becomes homeless and starving. At his lowest point, Harden wanders into a crowd that is watching a Holy Name Society parade (here the film utilizes actual footage of a Holy Name parade in Newark). Prodded by these images, Harden enters a church (a scene filmed in the church of St. Vincent Ferrer’s, the home of the celebrated first Holy Name branch in the United States), where he recommits to his Catholic faith. Later, after narrowly escaping his doom at the hands of two Chinese men

15 The Blasphemer, directed by Otto E. Goebel, Religious Films Association, 1921, videocassette. Goebel received both directing and writing credits in the film. Interestingly, though, a decade later, after the demise of his National Diversified Corporation, Goebel faced federal mail fraud charges alleging that he had swindled a collection of Catholic priests out of millions of dollars. Upon conviction, Goebel received a sentence of five years in prison and a $41,000 fine. See, “Judiciary—109-Day Trial,” Time, 17 July 1933.
depicted in absurdly stereotypical fashion, Harding rescues a woman from the back room of the Chinese men’s laundry shop, only to learn later that the woman is actually his now-adult daughter. At the Harden family’s reunion, John announces, “Blessed be God’s Holy Name for He has been merciful to me a sinner.” The final scene shows John Harden, with hands folded together at his chest, proudly wearing a Holy Name badge on his lapel, and leading the march of men down the aisle toward communion.16

For all the pomp and circumstance surrounding the film, its impact is frustratingly difficult to measure. Naturally, upon the film’s release, the *Holy Name Journal* reported that “even our most sanguine expectations have been surpassed [by this] notable play.” And the great film critics of the day, again according to national headquarters, “have pronounced it one of the finest screen plays produced during recent years.” The plan was that the film’s plot points, “of vital interest to every Holy Name man, will grip the audiences.”17 Unfortunately, however, the editors mentioned very little about the film in later editions, other than the fact that it was available for order and that branch spiritual directors could contact national headquarters for more information. Likely, the cost of equipment, even on a rental basis, was prohibitively high for many branches to afford. In this case, as the effect of this cultural production cannot be tangibly quantified, historians must simply note the considerable effort made by the leaders of the Holy Name Society in producing the film. Clearly the national leaders were willing to adopt a broad range of means to tap into the mindset of modern Catholic men. Film, of course, was not the only

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16 Ibid.
17 *Holy Name Journal*, November 1921, 14-5.
cultural form explored by Holy Name leaders in the far-reaching effort to attract and maintain men’s attention.

“Holy Cow!”: Holy Namers Confront the National Pastime

Clifford Putney’s groundbreaking study, *Muscular Christianity: Manhood and Sports in Protestant America, 1880-1920*, clearly traces the turn-of-the-century emergence of a manly, athletic ideal in mainstream American religion. Putney is much less convincing, however, in his scattered and brief references to Catholicism during this era. The present study hopefully corrects, for example, the shortsightedness of Putney’s description of “Catholics’ complacent attitude toward Christian manliness.” To the contrary, the Holy Name Society, as has been shown, was characterized by a near obsession with masculinity. Additional scholarship is needed not only on the participation of Catholics in athletics but also, as this study aims to provide, on the groundswell of passion for sports on the part of religious Americans. Religious leaders, as Putney and others have noted, clearly encouraged laymen to enhance their manliness through athletics, but those laymen also had become fans of major sports. Holy Name leaders recognized this development and catered to sports fans in yet another attempt to creatively encourage men to exercise their piety beyond the pews.¹⁸

Baseball presented the Holy Name Society with countless opportunities to engage the secular world. American Catholic men obviously all shared the same religious identity, and the vast majority shared some semblance of a working class or middle class lifestyle. Catholics were already busy exploring the implications of their faith in the workplace. But with the meteoric rise of baseball’s popularity during the first third of the twentieth century came the new opportunity, across a broad social spectrum, to understand and practice one’s faith amidst the dramatic shifts of modern social and cultural life. If one’s Catholic faith was important enough to go beyond the pew, to affect one’s performance at work, it should certainly permeate one’s leisurely pursuits and interests as well. Baseball—whether one bought the then widely affordable ticket, listened on the radio, or merely followed the box scores in the newspaper—was so broadly consumed that it represented, amongst Catholic males, another common denominator of the American Catholic identity. How one followed the sport, though, and how one appreciated its stars, strategies, and subculture, was determined by one’s Catholic values. The members and leaders of the Holy Name Society scoured baseball’s rosters, holding up instructive examples of good Catholics, and on a few occasions even actively sought to change the performance of the national pastime to more closely adhere to Holy Name values. Holy Name men were encouraged to be anything but passive consumers of

popular culture. Baseball, like anything else, would have to be respectful in order to win and maintain the attentive support of a Catholic male audience.

During these first years of baseball’s commanding position in American society, the masculine-minded men of the Holy Name Society could not have found in the sport a more manly, tough, and gritty model than Hughie Jennings. During Jennings’ playing years—which spanned from 1891 to 1917, including stops in Louisville, Baltimore, Brooklyn, Philadelphia, and Detroit—the hard-hitting shortstop was far too reckless to avoid missing games due to injury, but Jennings was also eager to stay on the field when many others, even during his era, would have left the game. It is a rather dubious but certainly indicative statistic that Jennings was hit by a pitched ball 287 times in his career, including fifty-one times in the 1896 season alone. In an era in which ballplayers played through most injuries, Hughie Jennings carved out a reputation for particular roughness and durability, even commanding the respect of the irascible Ty Cobb, himself an elite player but one hated by many opponents for his spike-wielding slides. Cobb enjoyed telling the story about Jennings surviving a cracked skull, suffered upon a late-night (and unlit) dive into a swimming pool that had only recently been drained. On the field, others recalled the time that Jennings, after being hit in the head by a pitch, played

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19 The event occurred at Cornell University, where Jennings was coaching the baseball team in exchange for taking courses in law. It is recounted in New York Times, 1 February 1929, 1, 23, along with numerous other personal injuries (a cracked skull suffered in one of two major automobile accidents he endured) and dubious on-the-field accomplishments (such as being hit by a pitch three times in one game).
the remaining six innings of a game, only to collapse afterward and remain unconscious for three days.\textsuperscript{20}

Toughness, the archetypical manly characteristic of the day, may have been the most celebrated aspect of Jennings’ fame, but he was also a very skilled player, a committed Catholic, and well-known to Holy Name men. One of baseball’s first true stars, Jennings posted a .401 batting average during one season (a feat duplicated only a few times since) and was posthumously elected to the National Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York. Also a successful manager after his playing career, most notably during his thirteen year stint at the helm of the Detroit Tigers, Jennings was one of the best-known personalities of the game during the first quarter of the twentieth-century.\textsuperscript{21} Baseball surely made him relevant to many Holy Name men nationwide, but it was Jennings’ notoriety amongst other players, his dual reputation for hard-work and success, and even the longevity of his career that made him a shining public example of the sort of behavior that Holy Name men would have considered appropriate. Finally, Jennings was a Catholic and was very willing to address Catholic matters relative to his profession. The weight that Jennings’ words would carry with everyday Catholic men was surely not lost on the hierarchy, and Jennings was thus invited to address that body as constituted in the Holy Name Society.

Although the very presence in the \textit{Holy Name Journal} of a 1914 article by Hughie Jennings reinforced the confraternity’s historical interest in masculinity, Jennings’ words

\textsuperscript{20} Various versions of this story circulated. See, for example, Joe Falls, “Hughie Jennings: The Tigers’ ‘Eee-Yah’ Man,” \textit{The Detroit News}, 11 February 1996.

\textsuperscript{21} \textit{New York Times}, 1 February 1929, 1, 23.
downplayed that most obvious association. If readers expected a message from Jennings about rowdy tough guys who harbored a serene communion-taking side, they received something else. Repeating an increasingly common Holy Name refrain, Jennings announced that baseball players were no longer the rough-and-tumble hooligans suggested by old stereotypes. Instead, he claimed, echoing an increasingly common refrain for Holy Name men, baseball players were now focused on an idealized sense of middle class decorum both on and off the field. Jennings attacked the “mistaken idea in the minds of quite a number of people that baseball players are not proper persons with whom to associate.” Certainly, he admitted, ballplayers were a “happy-go-lucky, good-natured set,” but he insisted, “no fault can be found with the conduct and deportment of the players while off the field. As a class, they are now quiet and serious men.” Even in the midst of on-field competition, “there is a tendency on the part of the majority of players to get away from the ‘rough stuff’ bordering on rowdyism. As a consequence, the language of the men is cleaner.” In an instructive tone, Jennings continued: “Profanity is now a rare thing among the players. They realize that cursing and swearing do not improve their batting or fielding averages, and in no way help to win games.”

Even alcohol consumption, in Jennings’ estimation, had declined sharply amongst major leaguers. The lone bane in the game, in his view, remained cigarette smoking, and Jennings was hopeful that athletes in general would soon dispense with that “filthy weed.”

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22 Holy Name Journal, April 1914, 6.
Here was perhaps baseball’s most hard-nosed character employing literary tools with a subtlety not expected from his profession. As his *New York Times* obituary would note over a decade later, Jennings was partial to the aims of the Holy Name Society.\(^2^3\) In the gesture of writing an article for the confraternity’s journal, he had applauded Holy Name men for being leaders in the reform-minded changes sweeping the nation, and simultaneously, he had debunked any assumptions laymen might have harbored about the idealized life of a baseball player. Baseball players, in Jennings’ telling, were seemingly aspiring to be more like the common man, which surely came as a shock to the average Catholic lay reader. A decade earlier, Holy Name men had been accustomed to messages (such as that delivered by Theodore Roosevelt) about the values of manly power. By the mid-1910s, though, a professional athlete was reinforcing the newer ideal of manly reform and respectability. If even ballplayers, the new idols of the age for boys and men, had changed their ways, no obstacles remained to impede one’s full commitment to the Holy Name Society and the faithful life.

Holy Name leaders capitalized on the power of Jennings’ message and, more generally, the appeal of sports to Catholic laymen. Typical was the 1916 column on retiring Chicago White Sox catcher Billy Sullivan. While certainly less widely known than Hughie Jennings, Sullivan was lauded as a highly intelligent and responsible financial investor, and more to the point, a man who “has the distinction of never having used a profane word during his entire career.” Foreshadowing another Chicago baseball

\(^2^3\) *New York Times*, 1 February 1929, 1, 23.
legend, “Sullivan’s favorite expression when he was angered was ‘Holy Cow!’”

Indeed, such additions of sports-themed coverage in the Holy Name Journal tied the core aims of the society (reducing blasphemy and increasing attendance to the sacraments) to men’s affinity for sports. More generally, however, the Journal began offering features on manly interests far less directly tied to issues of piety. Increasingly, sections of issues were devoted to secular topics, often without offering a hint of spiritual didacticism. A full page devoted to “The World of Men” premiered in the February 1921 issue, featuring articles on sports, movies, science, and invention by notable writers in each field. Ray McCarthy of the New York Tribune recapped major events in the world of sports, a topic which soon demanded its own page entirely. Later in the decade, the expanded sports column was authored successively by Burt Whitman, the sports editor for the Boston Herald, and Jack Malaney of the Boston Post.

In some instances, as might be expected, the predisposition to highlight the interdependence of baseball and Catholicism obscured decidedly unsavory realities. This was true in the wake of the 1919 World Series, as Catholics joined all other American baseball fans in attempting to understand how the powerful and clearly superior Chicago White Sox could possibly have lost the championship to the Cincinnati Reds. Catholic laymen were reminded of the most recent World Series upset, in which the 1914 Boston Braves had defeated Philadelphia. Johnny Evers, the Boston manager in 1914, had claimed that faith had intervened, turned the tide of an awful season, and swept his team.


25 Holy Name Journal, February 1921, 8.
to ultimate victory. In desperation, he and several of the Catholic players on the team had started the ritual of taking communion every morning and attending church each night. The results in 1914, it seemed, had spoken for themselves. And so, if faith had determined the unlikely outcome in 1914, so too must it have factored into the far greater surprise victory of Cincinnati defeating Chicago in 1919. “We do not as yet know whether [Cincinnati manager] Pat Moran and his Catholic teammates made novenas for [their] success or sought intercession and guidance through a patron saint,” one columnist proffered, “but we do know that thousands of Catholic children of Ohio were offering their prayers for the success of Pat Moran’s team.” Little did this author know that Moran, despite being a “staunch Catholic,” was the beneficiary of the infamous “Black Sox Scandal,” in which gamblers and Chicago players had colluded to throw several games, and ultimately the entire World Series, to Cincinnati.26

Two years later, once the news of that scandal had broken, as he penned the first official sports page for the Holy Name Journal, Ray McCarthy lamented the Black Sox scandal but quickly shifted gears to erect Babe Ruth, who had just belted fifty-four homeruns in his first season with the New York Yankees, as the newest Catholic baseball hero.27 As the celebrity of Babe Ruth mounted, Catholic writers noted every occasion on which Ruth, a Holy Name member at St. Vincent’s in New York, took communion on the road with a Holy Name branch in a host city. “In his modest, unassuming way,” the Holy Name Journal announced, “Ruth told [a Catholic interviewer] that he scarcely ever

26 Holy Name Journal, November 1919, 14. On the 1914 Boston Braves, the article quotes a personal letter of 3 November 1914 from Johnny Evers to a Father Forrest in Cincinnati.

27 Holy Name Journal, February 1921, 8.
missed [taking communion every] second Sunday and that no matter where he was he always endeavored to receive Holy Communion with the Holy Name Society.”28 The characterization of Ruth as “modest” and “unassuming” is incongruous with the Ruth known to modern sportswriters and historians, and one wonders how Catholic writers and clerics might have felt about Ruth’s notorious (even at that time) penchant for the gluttonous lifestyle, which clearly contradicted the model status such Catholic editorials ascribed to him.29

Yet, this rose-colored interpretation of Babe Ruth was typical not only of the Holy Name Journal but also of the Catholic press generally during these years. The expansion to include sports and other topics in a religious journal, for example, was much more than an effort to merely cater to the interests of a perhaps lukewarm readership. The larger aim was to provide for lay Catholics a one-stop source for all information, including the secular as well as the religious. In this way, the Catholic hierarchy could maintain greater interpretive control over current events. Holy Name literature instructed laymen on the uniform practice of their faith, but it also simplified a complex modernizing world by fully elucidating the Catholic position on all matters of the day, ranging from baseball and other forms of entertainment to labor unions, socialism, and politics. In this way,


29 The best recent biography of Ruth is from well-known sportswriter Leigh Montville, The Big Bam: The Life and Times of Babe Ruth (New York: Doubleday, 2006). In light of modern steroid scandals in Major League Baseball, which have marred the otherwise noteworthy accomplishments of players who have surpassed Ruth’s great homerun records, Montville takes a sympathetic approach to Ruth’s personality traits and behavior. The book is filled, nonetheless, with references to Ruth’s drinking, eating, and womanizing exploits. The apologetic tone belying the reality is clear from one example (272): “The eating and drinking stories sometimes were overstated with the Babe—he’d usually have a normal breakfast, bacon and eggs, a large orange juice, and he wasn’t drinking alcohol every hour of every day.”
there were no exclusively secular topics. With religion at the core of a good Catholic man, all things would be viewed through the Catholic lens.

Thus, only a little more than a decade after Hughie Jennings had proclaimed the purity of baseball players, it was the Holy Name Society that took action to preserve and revive that purity when the ugliness of blasphemy reemerged. Following the 1919 Black Sox Scandal, baseball owners had created the office of Baseball Commissioner and hired Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis to clean up the mess. By 1927, though, with that gambling unpleasantness expunged, Patrick Scanlan, the notoriously sharp-tongued managing editor of the Catholic Brooklyn Tablet, felt compelled to write to Commissioner Landis to alert him to a deeper and abiding evil within the game. After the obligatory congratulations to Landis on a favorable resolution to the Black Sox matter, “due to your excellent supervision and judgment,” Scanlan blasted the commissioner for his apparent failure to address another problem. “There has been much ado,” Scanlan noted, “about a little betting on a ball game but there appears to be nothing but tolerant smiles over the . . . practise [sic] of profanity, blasphemy and abuse of the Most High God, and the Saviour of mankind on the ball grounds.” After admonishing the commissioner that the most challenging work of reform lay ahead of him, Scanlan threw the full weight of his faith into the fray: “I belong to an organization called the Holy Name Society which has over a million members in the United States and several hundred thousands in New York alone. We pledged ourselves not only to abstain from filthy language, from taking God’s name in vain, but to try to influence others from engaging in such an offensive habit. I hope this little message may be of some value in
helping to stamp out an evil, or at least to help to curtail it.” Catholics would support baseball, Scanlan’s underlying message suggested, if baseball reflected the values of Catholicism. The Holy Name men of America were increasingly committed not only to practicing and defending their faith, but also to improving the world around them in line with the values of their faith. Holy Name men thus came to regard themselves as the conscience of a corrupted world, as reflected in the most instructive note from Scanlan to Commissioner Landis: “What is a little betting compared with the perennial insults hurled at Heaven?” By characterizing the greatest scandal to hit the sport in the twentieth century as “a little betting,” Scanlan made clear the Catholic perspective on baseball. Blasphemy trumped integrity. Holy Name men placed conditions on their consumption and made it clear that certain insensitivities would be too severe for Catholics to support. The reply from Landis, characteristically brusque, acknowledged the problem while politely brushing off any effort by Scanlan to secure the commissioner’s clear commitment to act promptly. “Certainly the occasional [profane] outburst [by a player] does nobody any good, and, as you say, is exceedingly offensive,” Landis responded, “It is wholly idiotic, and, of course, there can be no letup in the effort to correct it. Good wishes.”30 Landis had promised no specific or immediate action from his office, but his empathetic praise of the Holy Name mission was sufficient to warrant publication of his letter.

Patrick Scanlan, editor of the Brooklyn Tablet, was the rare exception to a hard rule in Catholic America during the first half of the twentieth century. Prominent though he was, Scanlan was still only a layman. That he achieved the status of opinion-maker was unique in an era during which the hierarchy still constituted the principal inspiration of Catholic thought. The priest-journalists who ran the National Headquarters of the Holy Name Society, despite their encouragement of lay initiative, constantly reminded laymen of the obligation of obedience to the parish priest (or, as in some cases, the subordinate cleric serving as Holy Name director) in all affairs of the society. Also, they still consistently claimed, despite ample evidence to the contrary, that the society itself was strictly a religious institution, and so any effort to “make of the great organization a means of social reform . . . must be looked upon with suspicion.” Involving any sort of political viewpoints in Holy Name activities was “insidious and cowardly.”

There was therefore a two-fold irony in the Holy Name experience of the 1910s and 1920s. First, the Catholic hierarchy in fact did frequently throw the weight of the Holy Name Society into very public debates about secular matters; and second, the hierarchy often called Holy Name men to public action in specific situations.

Countless examples exhibit the range of lay agency and creativity in extrapolating Holy Name values to previously extra-religious settings, but a trend is clear in that early

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31 Holy Name Journal, July 1917, 4.
efforts in this regard focused almost exclusively on matters of piety at the local level.
The Holy Name Society fostered a decidedly publicly-oriented faith, but Holy Name men first applied their practical piety to their immediate surroundings before eventually engaging in public discourse on a much more grand scale. Anticipating the tactics of comedians to come much later in the century, for example, the men of the Newark union of Holy Name Societies combined their efforts to curb loose speech in the format of a sarcastic “top ten list.” Among their reasons why “[e]very respectable man should swear just as often and hard as he can,” as printed on widely distributed cards, were the following: “it is such an elegant way of expressing one’s thoughts,” “it is such a conclusive proof of good taste and breeding,” “it is a positive evidence of acquaintance with good literature,” “it is just what a man’s mother enjoys having him do,” “it looks so nice in print,” and, with tongue firmly lodged in cheek, “it is such an infallible way of improving one’s chances in the hereafter.” “But on the other hand,” the card concluded instructively, “it is written: ‘THOU SHALT NOT TAKE THE NAME OF THE LORD THY GOD IN VAIN.’”

Holy Name men were also encouraged by examples to take their piety to the streets in a direct and, if necessary, confrontational manner. Another layman wrote a letter to the Holy Name Journal editor recounting his confrontation with a newsstand owner whose merchandise displayed “objectionable illustrations.” “I removed the prominently displayed publication . . . by purchasing it,” he explained, and then “I destroyed it in his presence.” Upon detailing the nature of the offense, this Holy Name

32 Holy Name Journal, May 1910, 2.
man found that the “dealer took kindly . . . another point of view, [recognizing] that he
would lose the Catholic patronage of the neighborhood” unless he removed such material
from his stand. In a less direct but more far-reaching maneuver, the Holy Name men of
Denver, Colorado, followed several months later by those in Lawrence, Massachusetts,
proudly boasted of their success at posting anti-swearing notices in public settings such
as streetcars, stores, and barber shops. In Denver, the “Don’t Swear” placards from the
Holy Name Society carried additional weight in a reminder of both the city ordinance
against swearing and the highest applicable punishment. The men of St. Mary’s parish in
Lawrence adopted a less threatening but still thought-provoking approach with the bold-
type maxim: “Profanity is No Sign of Intelligence.” That the confraternity’s national
journal reported on the Denver movement in September 1912 and the strikingly similar
initiative in Lawrence seven months later in April 1913 does not conclusively prove a
copycat phenomenon. No evidence establishing the inspiration for the Lawrence men
exists, but such examples of coincidental timing of similar activities were common
enough to be regarded as more than mere coincidence.

Demonstrating their sense of and engagement with the nationwide Holy Name
mission (and their consumption of the national Holy Name Journal), lay leaders shared
what modern corporations call “best practices,” recounting stories of branch management

33 Holy Name Journal, August 1912, 6-7.
34 Holy Name Journal, September 1912, 11; April 1913, 4.
35 For another example of lay initiative, see Leslie Woodcock Tentler, Seasons of Grace: A History of the
Catholic Archdiocese of Detroit (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1990), 210. Tentler recounts the
efforts of the Holy Name laymen of two parishes, one in Detroit and another in Kalamazoo, who in 1916
“initiated campaigns to have neighborhood shops and businesses close during ‘Tre Ore’ services on Good
Friday.”
that were particularly effective in retaining, expanding, and motivating membership.

Running a Holy Name branch in one’s local parish, then, became an effort of national lay collaboration, effectively amplifying the significance of individual contributions within the movement. Parish-based action was understood as the building block of diocesan Holy Name strength, which served only to augment the power of the Catholic lay organization on a national level. Notably, as lay reports of parish-level success trickled in, the priest-editors of the *Holy Name Journal* jumped aboard in a stance uniquely responsive for them in this era so commonly understood as being characterized by clerical directives on one hand and unquestioning lay obedience on the other. When in August 1912, the editors reminded readers of a letter from a layman printed in the previous issue, they did so with the intention of capitalizing on other laymen’s experience in taking the Holy Name movement to the streets. That earlier letter had requested advice from other lay leaders of branch societies, and the priest-editors publicized and amplified that call. “The idea,” they explained, “is not to attract attention to him who does the good, but rather to let us know how he does it. . . . [L]et us know how Holy Name men have been successful in making a convert; in rebuking an obscene or profane man; in inducing a man to approach the sacraments.”

Recognizing the limitations of their own exhortations, here were priests seeking to employ perhaps the most effective inspiration for Holy Name men: other Holy Name men. The stories poured in, and the “Hints from Societies” page became a regular feature of the national monthly, which itself became an invaluable resource for lay leaders.

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36 *Holy Name Journal*, August 1912, 6-7.
throughout the country. With a developing sense of belonging to a nationwide community, one which willingly stepped out to influence its surroundings, Holy Name men adopted a mindset that allowed them to see even larger issues as calls for action.

One early illustrative example of this development was the April 1912 debacle of United States Senator John Sharp Williams, a Mississippi Democrat, in which the purportedly apolitical Holy Name Society leapt, along with various Protestants, to action in the nation’s most political arena. Embroiled in a heated Senate-floor argument sparked by former President Theodore Roosevelt’s flirtations with seeking an unprecedented third term (which would, in the end, involve a split with President William H. Taft’s Republicans and the formation of the Progressive Bull Moose Party), Senator Williams characterized Roosevelt as a “modern Caesar willing to seize power by any means.” Then, as the Washington Post reported, the “debate became almost ultrasensational” as Williams, presumably in an effort to rally support through sarcasm, read a parody of the Apostle’s Creed:

I believe in Theodore Roosevelt, maker of noise and strife, and in ambition, his only creed (my Lord). He was born of the love of power and suffered under William H. Taft; was crucified, dead, and buried. He descended into Africa. The third year he rose again from the jungle, and ascended into favor and sitteth on the right hand of his party, whence he shall come to scourge the licked and the dead. I believe in the holy Outlook, the big stick, the Annanias [sic] club, the forgiveness of political activities, the resurrection of presidential ambitions, and the third term everlasting, Amen, Amen, Amen.\(^{37}\)

Williams had not anticipated that his use of familiar Christian doctrine as the vehicle by which to launch an attack on Theodore Roosevelt would create a national stir, but it

\(^{37}\) Washington Post, 26 April 1912, 4.
accomplished exactly that. Many newspapers around the country reported on the
situation without reprinting the offending speech, but enough of them did reproduce the
parody that Williams was quickly assailed from all Christian corners. Reverend C.
Ernest Smith of Washington’s Episcopal St. Thomas’ Church protested Williams’
“blasphemous travesty” from his pulpit. Presbyterian minister Henry Irving Nicholas, of
Summit Hill, Pennsylvania, wrote an open letter to Williams, exhorting the Senator:
“You get on your knees and say the prayer your mother taught you, and ask God to blot
out the great sin of your lips.” A day after printing Nicholas’ letter, the Washington Post
reported that Williams had since “ordered that the parody be struck out of his speech in
the permanent copies of the Congressional Record . . . [and] expressed astonishment at
what he said he regarded as a misconstruction by many Christian people.”

Williams’ seemingly half-hearted and unapologetic retraction left the door open
for other pilers-on, such as the National Headquarters of the Holy Name Society. The
Holy Name leaders not only leveled sharp criticism at Williams, calling him a
“blasphemous buffoon,” but also blasted the other Senate members, regardless of party
affiliation, who “made no protest” to Williams’ address. Moreover, the hierarchy now
called on faithful Catholic laymen to respond forcefully, albeit with due process. “If it be
true [that Williams delivered such a parody],” National Holy Name Headquarters
charged, “. . . it is time for public opinion to rebuke those who sit in the highest counsel
of the nation. . . . Are the members of the Holy Name Society of Mississippi going to

38 For the criticisms of Williams’ parody, see Washington Post, 29 April 1912, 1. For the report on
Williams’ response, see Washington Post, 30 April 1912, 4.
allow the charge to pass uninvestigated? Should they find the credited author to be an
irreligious political circus clown, will they remain silent, and will they be satisfied to be
represented by such a man?“

Laymen were led to perceive Williams’ ill-advised
remarks as a challenge to their rights as citizens and, more importantly, a challenge to
their faith.

This, Catholic men were told, was precisely the kind of instance for which their
development of corporate faith and community action had prepared them. Political
action by the Holy Name Society was thus authorized in specific instances in which two
criteria were met: one, the impetus for action was at least tangentially religious; and two,
the Catholic power structure ordered the action. Catholic men, through the Holy Name
Society, had learned about a life-changing and life-directing faith. In the construction of
Holy Name piety, laymen’s faith would guide them to appropriate action both in and out
of the pew, effectively blurring borders of the secular and the religious. But, the faithful
were always reminded, there were boundaries, erected and monitored by the clergy.

Within acceptable limits, Catholic laymen were authorized to act on their own faith-
driven initiative, especially as members of the Holy Name Society.

Most often, however, the public actions of Holy Name men were born of mutual
creative initiative and efficient cooperation between the leaders and the led. No better

39 Holy Name Journal, June 1912, 6.

40 On rare occasions, this encouragement of lay initiative could backfire against the clergy. Evelyn Savidge
Sterne notes the example of Providence’s Church of the Holy Ghost, at which a bitter dispute between the
laity and the parish clergy had erupted. It was the parish Holy Name Society that took a leadership role in
calling for the priests’ removal, noting in a bitingly-toned letter, “No one would think that they are Priests .
. . everything in them gives unmistakable signs that their faith is lukewarm, if not entirely gone.” See
Ballots and Bibles, 195-201. Quote of Holy Name Society letter appears on 196.
example illustrates this point than the war within a war that nearly erupted between the Holy Name Society and the United States War Department during Summer 1917. In the July issue, the editors of the Holy Name Journal, under the headline “Catholic Chaplains: Holy Name Men Demand Your Rights,” called for a “storm of protest” to be directed against the War Department in response to that body’s recent ruling that would reduce by “almost one-half” the percentage of Catholic clergy amongst the body of American army and navy chaplains. This proposed reduction of Catholics to twenty-three percent of the collective American chaplains was particularly galling in light of statistics suggesting that Catholic soldiers accounted for roughly thirty-eight percent of the American fighting force. “Why,” the clerics wondered, “will [the War Department] not recognize the tremendous sacrifices that are being made by the Catholic manhood of the country? Why will it insist on injecting petty bigotry and persecution into a crisis like this, which at least we Catholics consider a time for the performance of a sacred and solemn duty?” The imposition was clear, as was the only possible course of action: “We ask the Holy Name men of the United States to stand up in united protest against this infringement upon their rights.”

The call to action produced immediate results, as the men of the Holy Name Society, in the estimation of their proud leaders, “responded nobly” with “a flood of telegrams” to the War Department. Happily, they announced, the “order discriminating against Catholic chaplains has been rescinded and we are now to have our quota.”

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41 Holy Name Journal, July 1917, 4.
42 Holy Name Journal, August 1917, 3.
span of less than one month, a timeframe assumed to be too short even for a government in peacetime to take corrective action, Holy Name men realized their power when arguing from a solid moral and rights-based foundation. This was a lesson well learned. With war-time rhetoric at fever pitch, in November 1917, the National Director of the Holy Name Society and chief editor of its paper, Father Ignatius Smith, characterized the American Catholic Church as being “on the firing line of life.” In the minds of Holy Name men, Smith’s words applied to everyday life as well as to the war itself.

Aggressive action rooted in religious fervor but carried out in decidedly secular arenas quickly became commonplace for Holy Name men nationwide. In Long Island, the union of Brooklyn and New York Holy Name branches celebrated their confrontations with the Ku Klux Klan, which the Catholics argued had for too long operated freely in the area. Quarterly meetings of these Holy Name unions were specifically scheduled in neighborhoods known to reflect Klan actions. With the strong Catholic presence in the streets, national headquarters noted, “Not a voice of a Klansman was raised. Not a protest uttered. The Holy Name lesson in American citizenship was too pronounced, too solemn, too unassailable.” Accompanying this account was a cartoon penned by layman Thomas J. Haugh, of Holy Name branch number 52 at the Church of Our Lady of Mercy, New York. Haugh, whose art graced several editions of the Holy Name Journal, titled this entry “The Modern St. George Killing the Dragon.” In it, a proud knight, with his chest labeled “Holy Name Society,” riding atop a white horse,

\[43\] Holy Name Journal, November 1917, 4-5.
buried his lance (labeled “Love of Country”) into the shoulder of a black dragon marked as “K.K.K. Bigotry.”

From bigotry at home to oppression abroad, Holy Name men added their voices to the wave of critique aimed at the Mexican government of Plutarco Elías Calles. Holy Name leadership regarded the Mexican constitution as having been written by “a group of narrow-souled, religion-hating, Bolshevik atheists,” but they were particularly incensed by the government’s disposition to vigorously enforce the anticlerical elements of that document by the mid-1920s. In 1926, at a House of Representatives committee meeting deliberating on the Boylan resolution (a proposal which would have cut diplomatic ties with the Mexican government), the National Director of the Holy Name Society, Father Michael J. Ripple addressed the committee members while holding forty-nine telegrams representing the voices of 1,656,711 Holy Name men from 3,960 branches of the society. These men, Ripple advised the Congressmen, had “instructed me to register their protest against the laws of Mexico, . . . first on the grounds that the Constitution of Mexico denies that modicum of human liberty for which as American citizens we stand in the most fundamental way.” Having established the primary concern of American Catholics with American principles, Ripple then went on to cite additional complaints pertaining directly to anti-Catholicism in Mexico, such as the Calles government’s imposition of confiscatory laws and the denial of trial by jury.

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44 Holy Name Journal, August 1923. The quotes are on 4, and the cartoon appears on 3.
45 Holy Name Journal, September 1926, 3.
46 Holy Name Journal, June 1926, 13.
Holy Name men had long known of the evils of socialism, and they were learning now of the global infestation of communism. With a track record in defining and recognizing the greatest threats to religion, the Holy Name Society was approaching the dawn of its age of rabid anticommunism. By 1926, it had become clear that the Holy Name Society was the most active organization in expressing Catholic opinions. On this Mexican question, Baltimore’s Archbishop Curley had apparently hoped to hear from more organizations, such as the National Council of Catholic Men. But, as the historian Thomas Spalding has reported, “when the ‘voice of American Catholic manhood’ was needed, Curley complained, the NCCM was ‘silent as a sphinx.’ The Holy Name Society, on the other hand, responded within forty-eight hours.” By the mid-1930s, the era in which historians have noted far more broad Catholic willingness to engage in pursuits of social and political justice, the Holy Name Society would be one of many Catholic voices launching criticism at the renewed persecutions in Mexico. In the 1920s, however, it was often the loudest, if not only, Catholic voice of protest, placing the Holy Name Society at the vanguard of the “Catholic Action” movement that emerged later.

47 Spalding, The Premier See, 340. Spalding further notes, “In 1930, in fact, the Baltimore Catholic Review in praising the Holy Name Society belittled members of the Catholic Benevolent Legion, the AOH [Ancient Order of Hibernians], and other bodies for being found at banquet tables but not the communion rail.” (340-341). The Holy Name Society, amongst Catholic organizations, was the sole example, it seemed, of piety and purpose.

48 See, for example, Hennesey, American Catholics, 271. When, in 1934, an American diplomat spoke favorably in reference to former Mexican President Calles’ policies on rural education, he “came under a torrent of abuse . . . [from] Catholic newspapers, the Catholic Daughters of America, the Ancient Order of Hibernians, Holy Name Societies by the dozen, the National Council of Catholic Women, and others.”
The full flowering of the Holy Name movement, which had started as a purely devotional organization, into a political voice for American Catholic manhood was nearly complete. The Holy Name man was now, as Father J.T. Toomey so simply put it in 1927, “A Social Force.” The Holy Name rallies, too, had grown from modest, parish-based origins into archdiocesan and national pageants. Therein, for Toomey and others, lay the roots of modern Catholic Holy Name action. The rallies and parades had begun as local events, demonstrations of men returning to sacramental practice in their communities, but they had become much more when observed by non-Catholics in grander settings. They had become much more, too, for the Catholic men marching in those settings. In Toomey’s estimation, the evolved Holy Name rally was, for the individual Catholic man, the moment of “realization . . . of the power of the individual in contact with his fellow-men: the realization of the individual’s social value and importance in combination with others who cherish the same Faith in the Divinity of Jesus Christ, pursue the same ideals of Christian conduct in private and public life, and entertain the same noble ambitions for the moral and spiritual betterment of the world in which we live.” “The social power of the individual,” ever more important in the age of Catholic Action, Toomey implied, “is a gift of God, . . . a sacred trust which he must not neglect; a trust that is fulfilled, not by the mere possession, but by the use of the gift.” The evils of the modern age were many, and Toomey gave voice to the realization of many Holy Name men, that “We can cure [the world’s] maladies only by the injection of the antitoxins of religion, of high ideals and good example into the blood-stream of
Catholic Action flourished in the late 1920s and 1930s, but it was a culmination, for Holy Name men, of a long historical development of practical public faith. Along that trajectory, Holy Name men made it clear that all aspects of modern life – from cinema to baseball to international politics – would have to meet the Catholic standard, or else face a vigorous reform initiative.

“Not since the days of the Crusades”: Holy Name Action and the 1924 Washington, D.C. National Convention

Inspired by localized successes peppering its American landscape, such as those, previously discussed, in 1908 Boston, the Holy Name movement of the 1910s and 1920s coalesced with the leadership of its headquarters into a national phenomenon. While in-house reports of the first national convention in Baltimore in 1911 belied the haphazard nature of that event, Father Toomey’s celebration in 1927 of the power of the national movement had much more resonance. Toomey wrote with the fresh memory of a second national convention—held in the nation’s capital in 1924—that had exemplified more than any other event the evolution of the “purely religious” confraternity into a militantly triumphant, undeniably patriotic, and decidedly masculine voice for religiously-inspired social action. The 1924 convention in Washington, D.C., unlike its predecessor, was a meticulously orchestrated series of spectacles fraught with messages, all well received,
for its participants and observers alike. The occasion officially celebrated the 1274 commission from Pope Gregory X, ordering the Dominicans to preach devotion to the Holy Name of Jesus. This 650th anniversary was as convenient as any other cause in 1924, as the event itself had little to do with the distant past and everything to do with the expansion of the Holy Name movement in the American twentieth century.

The most obvious transformation between the first (Baltimore) and the second (Washington) conventions was the vastly improved capacity of the national headquarters in planning, organizing, and orchestrating a national event. Slating the opening of the convention for September 18, Holy Name leaders had planned, at least six months in advance, four full days of activities, ensuring that the down-to-the-minute details made the deadline for the April issue of the *Holy Name Journal*. The day-by-day convention schedule mirrored the strata, in order of declension, of the church’s hierarchical arrangement. On Day One (September 18), the bishops of the country held the convention floor, laying out for lay delegates their understanding of the role of branch societies in their dioceses and projecting the possible future endeavors of Holy Name men at the parish level. Spiritual Directors of branch societies led the proceedings on Day Two, openly discussing topics more germane to the actual experiences of men in the meetings and functions of the society. In that exchange of ideas, headquarters hoped, “Questions that perplex many spiritual directors will be answered by priests who have been especially successful in their work.”\(^{30}\) The third day, September 20, celebrated the exact anniversary of the original 1274 papal order for Holy Name adoration, and at the

\(^{30}\) *Holy Name Journal*, April 1924, 5.
convention in Washington the day was marked as “Delegates Day,” to be dedicated to honoring the efforts and inspiring the ambitions of the Holy Name laymen themselves.

If that enticement were not enough to encourage laymen to mark the convention dates and make travel plans, the rhetorical flourish introducing plans for the fourth and final convention day was designed with that purpose in mind. The hallmark event of any Holy Name gathering, the parade and rally, would occur on September 21, and national headquarters advance billed it as “the ‘Red-Letter’ event of American Holy Name history,” sure to “surpass any similar affairs in the annals of the country.” Evoking the militant mindset of Holy Name men, headquarters drove the point home with added emphasis. This convention would culminate in a “650th Anniversary parade [which] will be the highest expression of Holy Name loyalty ever seen in any city of the world in the whole history of the Holy Name Society. Not since the days of the Crusades,” the announcement concluded, “when hundreds of thousands of men, marching under the banner of Christ, moved towards the East for the re-conquest of the Holy Lands, has the Christian Catholic world had such a parade or rally as the Washington demonstration promises to be.”

The moment, in the minds of clerical leaders, had seemingly been perfectly scripted as an opening for Catholic manhood to rise not merely to a position of respectability in the United States, but now more profoundly to a position of outright moral and patriotic leadership. Catholic men of the Holy Name Society would serve as examples for all other American men, and it was a perfectly fitting and familiar role for

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51 Holy Name Journal, April 1924, 5-6.
Catholic men to assume. In a September *Holy Name Journal* editorial, which effectively served as a sort of pep talk for Catholic men preparing to embark on the march to Washington, Father Justin McManus eschewed discussions of the institution’s medieval origins ("Mere antiquity," his opening line remarked, "is a sorry recommendation."), opting rather to impress upon his lay readers the immediacy of this American moment.

To all the major moral crises of the day—he cited divorce, theaters, and literature, amongst others—the Holy Name Society, that great bastion of noble manhood, provided a single, immutable solution: "Moral stability is the Gibraltar of good citizenship." "The true Holy Name man leading a clean and upright life," McManus argued, "silently but surely is giving America the only type of citizenship on which she can endure." 52 Lest the Catholic man should meet with objections, McManus concluded by reminding his readers of the oft-cited record of American Catholicism in the recent world war, in which, despite constituting less than twenty percent of the American population, Catholic men comprised fully one-third of American forces. 53 A Holy Name man could "escape loyalty to his country, only when he can escape loyalty to his God." 54 Amidst moral crisis at home, no finer specimen could step to the fore than the Holy Name man.

From its inception, the mission of the Washington convention called on Catholic laymen to consider their participation as an act of moral and patriotic leadership, an

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53 As noted previously, the actual figure (Catholics in the military during World War I) was a bit higher, in the range of thirty-eight percent, as detailed in the debate with the War Department over the proposed number of Catholic chaplains. McManus’s reference, several years later, to one-third was most likely a safe estimate made without deep research.

instructive measure aimed at benefitting all Americans. If, in its Baltimore convention thirteen years prior, the Holy Name Society had returned to the geographic origins of American Catholicism, this second convention, in both its geography and the tenor of its rhetoric, sought to place Catholicism at the very core of 1920s Americanism. The patriotism of place was obvious in Washington, D.C., but the Holy Name leadership took additional measures to underscore the patriotism of its people. The most obvious step in that regard was a Holy Name field trip, during a break from convention speeches, to the Mount Vernon tomb of George Washington, an activity for which the “patriotic significance . . . cannot be overestimated.” “There is no safer, no sounder, no surer source of unadulterated patriotism,” clerical leaders announced, “than belief in Jesus Christ.” Celebrating that belief publicly and living clean and pious lives, Catholic men of the Holy Name Society had quietly embodied Americanism at its best. In a manner that would be anything but quiet, though, this Washington “National Convention will call all citizens to a reconsecration of their energies and their lives to the ideals of the founders of our government.”

For weeks in advance, the nation’s capital was abuzz as the Holy Name Society convention approached. Daily coverage from the Washington Post announced expected numbers of arrivals from various corners of the country and delineated the logistical histrionics necessary to accommodate the visitors. With 6,900 out-of-town laymen alone arriving for the duration of the conference (scores of thousands more would arrive on September 20, in time for the parade on the final day), dedicated Holy Name trains

55 Holy Name Journal, April 1924, 6.
operated throughout the convention.\textsuperscript{56} With some conventioneers driving from Detroit, Boston, Kansas City, and Zanesville, Ohio, by Saturday the 20\textsuperscript{th}, it was “extremely difficult to get a room in any hotel of the city.” The convention’s housing committee, though, was prepared, swiftly placing delegates in pre-arranged private homes and accounting for daily travel arrangements to and from convention activities. Before arriving at their housing destinations, though, train arrivals were met by a host of priests on hand outside Union Station, as arranged by former National Holy Name Director Father Ignatius Smith. Fresh from train travel, conventioneers could attend one of the many on-the-spot masses at Union Station, conducted every half hour between 5:30am and noon. Meanwhile, at Catholic University of America, the host institution for most convention activities, volunteers from the parish of St. Anthony (a short walk from the campus) had decorated the university gymnasium for the sessions. “To either side of the stage,” the \textit{Journal} reported, the decorating committee had “placed the national colors, in long festoons . . . [and all] rules governing the use of the American flag . . . were followed faithfully.” White and yellow streamers surrounded a sizeable oil painting of the institution’s founder, John of Vercelli, and “streamers in red and purple [were draped] in honor of the visiting members of the hierarchy.”\textsuperscript{57}

\textsuperscript{56} \textit{Washington Post} coverage of convention preparations began in early August. See, for example, 7 August 1924, 2; 10 August 1924, 12; 11 August 1924, 2. On transportation, see, for example, 29 August 1924, 1, in which it was announced that delegates from Wisconsin’s Holy Name union “will make their trip [to Washington] in a special all-Pullman train, it was learned here . . . when the schedule of the train was announced.” Also, on the eve of the convention (17 September 1924, 2), the paper noted that the “first of 100 special trains expected to bring delegates here . . . is due today.” The \textit{Post} coverage was glowing in its reviews of all Holy Name matters during this period, and a special “Holy Name Edition” of the paper was offered on 21 September. Booths around the convention grounds sold copies to delegates or arranged to mail them to their homes.

\textsuperscript{57} \textit{Holy Name Journal}, November 1924, 5-6.
With appropriate pomp and circumstance, the proceedings unfolded with much attention paid to the fundamentally religious purpose of the occasion, but with an eye also toward the patriotic symbolism of every action in the nation’s capital. Of the many masses celebrated on the Catholic University campus, two were worth of special note. First, at the university’s not-yetcompleted stadium, seating arrangements had been rushed to accommodate 30,000 for an open-air field mass, the first official use of the facility. Likewise, over two thousand Holy Namers gathered at the crypt of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception (which had hosted its first mass on Easter Sunday of that year) for a mass prior to the first sessions on day one of the convention. According to the Washington Post, this was only the first of 480 masses (120 per day) scheduled at that site during the convention.58 The spiritual high note of the convention, though, was sounded on the second day, with the reception of the Papal Legate, the personal representative of the Pope himself, assigned to attend, observe, and sanctify the proceedings of the convention. Cardinal O’Connell of Boston had been chosen by Pope Pius XI on this occasion, and organizers noted proudly that it was “the first time in Church history [that] an American prelate [had been] designated to exercise the offices of this exalted position.” O’Connell delivered a pontifical letter blessing the convention to Holy Name National Director, Father Michael J. Ripple, who in turn read it aloud – first in Latin, then in the authorized English translation – to the assembled delegates and members of the American hierarchy. Addressing the convention, Papal Legate

58 Holy Name Journal, November 1924, 8, 9; Washington Post, 6 August 1924, 2; 13 July 1924, 16.
O’Connell then, according to observers, “called for three American cheers for the Pope. The crowded convention hall responded with a gusto that shook the very rafters of the building.”

Expanding upon his duties as the representative of Rome, however, it was O’Connell who assumed leadership duties on two decidedly patriotic excursions during the convention. The Cardinal placed the wreath on Washington’s tomb at Mount Vernon, as part of the hour-long service in a “steady rain” attended by more than two thousand Holy Name men. Over five thousand convention-goers made the shorter trip to another service in Arlington, where O’Connell placed another wreath, this time at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. More than 800,000 American Catholics had served during World War I, and over 16,000 had died. Citing that record, again, as evidence of Catholic patriotism, Father Ignatius Smith, a former National Director of the Holy Name Society, opined: “It may be that the tomb of this Unknown Soldier encases the body of a Catholic chaplain who died with the Holy Name of Jesus on his lips and the cause of the Holy Name eternally fresh in his heart. With all of them patriotism and service became acts of religion.”

By the mid-1920s, no higher statement could be made of a Holy Name man than to call him a pious patriot.

As the convention concluded, the Holy Name parade, if anything, exceeded expectations. Adding to the drama of the moment, paraders were forced to deal with a “cold, steady, sullen rain,” but in a five-hour span, roughly 106,000 of them managed to

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59 Holy Name Journal, November 1924, 11, 13.

60 Holy Name Journal, November 1924, 25, 18, 19.
traverse the line of march, which covered fifteen blocks of Pennsylvania Avenue, from the Capitol grounds to the Treasury Building near the White House. The New York City and Philadelphia delegations were unique in that they travelled with their own marching bands, but additional stationary bands were posted on the cross-street corners of each block. The U.S. War Department and Red Cross furnished medical personnel, who by day’s end had dealt with “Not more than 100 cases, mainly heart attacks and collapses from strain and suchlike.” As preventative maintenance in that regard, the planning committee had arranged for a dozen ice-water trucks to circulate along the parade route. When the lead car, carrying the Papal Legate reached Fifteenth Street, Cardinal O’Connell disembarked in order to join Father Ripple, Secretary of the Navy Curtis Wilbur (representing the president) and other dignitaries atop the 650-person reviewing stand erected beside the Treasury grounds. Four hours and fifteen minutes later, the last of the branches from nearby Baltimore, the caboose on the train of Holy Name humanity that had preceded it, passed the reviewing stand and joined the throng at the base of the Washington Monument. As *Time* glowingly reported, at the conclusion of the “monster parade to the Washington Monument . . . at a specially erected altar, the vigorous young Archbishop [Michael J. Curley of Baltimore] was to celebrate a pontifical mass.”

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63 *Holy Name Journal*, November 1924, 7, 27.

64 “Religion: Holy Name,” *Time*, 22 September 1924.
The closing scenes to this “rather magnificent climax to the Holy Name Convention,” as the Holy Name Journal termed it, were dramatic indeed. One hundred thousand Catholic men recited in unison the Holy Name Pledge and followed it with the singing of “Holy God We Praise Thy Name” and the national anthem. Cardinal O’Connell, completing his charge as Papal Legate, then delivered the penultimate speech of the convention, only to be outdone by the man who followed him, President of the United States Calvin Coolidge. In an appearance that was fortuitous for both sides – the Holy Name Society was attracting the attention of yet another American president, and Coolidge was seeking exposure amongst Catholics on the eve of an election in which the bigotry of the Ku Klux Klan was a central issue – Coolidge was anything but silent on the issues of religious freedom and moral citizenship. National press coverage of the convention as a whole tended to focus on this most political aspect of the weekend. Time, for instance, noted simply that Coolidge had addressed the Holy Name Society crowd of over 100,000 marchers at the Washington Monument.

Elocuently recounting the origins of the Holy Name Society, Coolidge praised his audience for its recognition that “reverence . . . is the beginning of a proper conception of

65 Holy Name Journal, November 1924, 27.

66 “The Presidency: Mr. Coolidge’s Week,” Time, 29 September 1924. Although brief, the story effectively identified Coolidge, late in the campaign, as a supporter of Catholicism’s most vibrant confraternity. From the Catholic perspective, it was perhaps an indirect compliment that such coverage, by the 1920s, required only the mention of the Holy Name Society by name, rather than the additional explanation of its aims and activities that had typically accompanied such mentions a decade earlier. Coolidge was, then, identifying himself with a source of Catholic male piety that was broadly known by the general public.
ourselves, of our relationship to each other, and our relationship to our Creator.” 67 Only through adherence to the ideals of discipline and authority, prized characteristics for Holy Name men, could the modern United States have achieved degrees of individual liberty “higher than that ever before attained anywhere else on earth.” Individual liberties and religious freedoms, though, meant little without the actual freedom of practice championed by Holy Name activities. As Coolidge put it, Americans “estimate the correctness of the principle by the success which they find in their own experience.”

Playing directly to his Catholic audience, he restated in conclusion that Americans “have faith, but they want works.” Echoing the theme of this convention, namely the notion of Catholic leadership in a troubled America, Coolidge made many friends by describing the mission of the Holy Name Society as one “which makes a universal appeal, an effort in which all may unite.” 68 Over two decades, Catholic laymen had gradually defined the cultural, social, and political implications of their personal faith, and now, in the finale of their grand convention, Holy Name men listened attentively as the American president encouraged exactly that kind of citizen initiative.

Convention feedback was voluminous and universally positive. In early October, National Director Ripple received a telegram from Pietro Gasparri, the Cardinal Secretary of State under Pope Pius XI. The cable glowed with praise, as Gasparri related that Pius XI was “rejoicing that the traditional piety of American men toward the Holy Name,

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67 This was perhaps the most frequently cited quotation from Coolidge’s address. It was, for example, the one quote included (in extended form) in the Time coverage noted above.

68 Coolidge’s address was printed in multiple sources, but it is most readily available at John T. Woolley and Gerhard Peters, The American Presidency Project (Santa Barbara: University of California at Santa Barbara), http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=24183 (accessed 3 March 2006).
which is the health and life of the people, was solemnly affirmed in national demonstration and worthily eulogized by the President of the United States.” Through Gasparri, the Pope “wishe[d] ever increasing prosperity to the grand Republic of America.” In its coverage, *Time* seemed to miss the central thesis of the convention that Catholics and other observers well understood. Anonymously quoting a member of the hierarchy, the journal described to its national audience the point of the society: “It gives its members,” noted the bishop, “just that amount of moral suasion to keep them loyal to the regular reception of the sacraments.” The closest *Time* came to acknowledging the outright political and patriotic intents of this convention was in its notation that the Holy Name Society also “serves to organize laymen for the general welfare of the Church.” While the patriotic point was apparently lost on *Time*, Holy Name leaders surely cherished the fact that the local press in Washington, the President of the United States, and the Vatican had characterized the convention as a national American affair, and Holy Name men doubtlessly felt assured in perceiving their pious obligations in a public way.

Much had changed for the Holy Name Society during the first decades of the twentieth century: explosion in numbers, expansion in purpose, and extrapolation of the pious into the public. If the Baltimore convention of 1911 had indicated to Holy Name men that there was a possibility of establishing the society as a national presence, the Washington convention was an exercise in institutional self-actualization. Aiming for a

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69 *Holy Name Journal*, November 1924, 20.

more far-reaching impact, Holy Name men of the 1920s sought not only to inspire themselves, but also by their example to “recharge the souls of millions of Americans with that spirit and that faith which marked the lives of the Founders of the Republic.”

This sort of positive, optimistic sentiment on the part of American Catholics during the interwar years has appropriately been cited as unique by the historian William Halsey. The differences between Baltimore in 1911 and Washington in 1924 were substantial, to be sure. Equally profound was the new set of real-life implications that Holy Name membership carried. Through the combination of creative efforts of the clerical leaders to reach men through their interests and the creative means with which laymen responded and developed their own pious worldviews, it was clear that Holy Name men of the latter period were spiritual activists, understanding and molding their surroundings through the lens of their faith.

71 Holy Name Journal. April 1924, 6.
72 Halsey. The Survival of American Innocence. For Halsey, American Catholics of this era stood as a shining example of rationalism and continued faith in human progress against sin and corruption.
Amidst the trials of World War I, a Holy Name man serving in the American military recounted a story about his confrontation with one of his fellow soldiers. In a group of encamped soldiers exchanging tall tales about their previous deeds and conquests, one soldier captured the crowd’s attention with his claims that he had once passed his time by, as he put it, “killing niggers with machine guns.” To the Holy Name man in the audience, what was objectionable about this tale was not the blatant racial slur, but rather the profanity-laced manner in which this soldier told the remainder of the story. In his retelling the Holy Name man claimed he had immediately but cordially interjected and corrected the storyteller for his distasteful language. Thereafter, amongst the group of soldiers, “nothing was said that they would not have been willing to have their mothers and sisters hear.” With obvious pride in his reformist accomplishment, but apparently no reservations about his own racist attitudes, the Holy Name man summarized the conclusion of the other soldier’s fantastic yarn: “A great many more niggers were executed, but they must have gone to heaven for they died in clean language.”¹

That American soldiers, Catholics among them, subscribed to racist views during the years of World War I should not surprise modern sensibilities. In its long history in

¹ Holy Name Journal, September 1918, 10. The author was identified only as “T.A.T.”
America, the Catholic Church, like many other American religious groups, had not generally been known as a sanctuary or friend to African-Americans. Historian James O’Toole’s analysis of the biracial Healy family, for example, indicates that even well into the twentieth century, the path of least resistance for African-Americans within the Catholic fold remained the ability of some to secretly suppress their racial identities. While shifts were underway, widespread change in American racial attitudes remained at least a generation away. In context, then, the apparent imbalance of this Catholic soldier’s abhorrence of profanity (the calling card of the Holy Name Society) and relative numbness to and even approval of violent racism can at least be understood.

Much less comprehensible, though, is the fact that the cleric-editors of the Holy Name Journal did not reject the publication of this soldier’s letter. That such rabid racism passed through the clerical filter, apparently unscathed, is more surprising. High-level clerical complicity in such bigotry, in this particular instance at least, calls to attention a series of questions about the relationship of the Holy Name Society to those who typically fell outside the ranks of its membership. Indeed, categorical differences of all kinds, even within the Holy Name Society’s membership, must be addressed in light of that institution’s clearly stated aim to foster an idealized American Catholic manhood. In those first “post-puritan” decades, a designation applied most insistently by Catholics

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2 There is a general scholarly consensus that this observation should be extended well beyond the World War I years into at least the 1950s. Painting with perhaps too broad a brush, Charles Morris blames Irish Catholic priests, “notorious for racial bigotry,” for the “limited penetration in the black community” even at mid-century; see American Catholic, 131. James Hennesey has also noted continuing and pervasive segregation and racism in the Catholic Church well into the 1950s; see American Catholics, 304.

themselves, how did Catholics, through organizations such as the Holy Name Society, come to define themselves as part of the American mainstream? How did the new mainstreamers come to understand those social characteristics—race, gender, and age, amongst others—that marked deviation from their own idealized norms? To what degree, most generally, did the Holy Name Society exemplify the open-armed, all-inclusive love that its leaders celebrated as a defining characteristic of Jesus, the theological starting point of the institution?

The answers to questions of inclusiveness (examined in this chapter and the next), account for the clearest examples of historical change within the Holy Name Society and its evolving conception of American Catholic manhood. Spanning the first half of the twentieth century, this chapter considers the Holy Name Society through the social lenses of race, gender, and age. While this analysis conforms largely to current historiographical observations on such topics, it also offers, as will be shown in each of the three following sections, subtle but important wrinkles to such inherited wisdom. First, while the Holy Name Society certainly exhibited the same deeply entrenched racism that characterized much of American society in the early decades of the century, it also celebrated its limited integration and made significant strides toward equality much earlier than might be expected. Second, Holy Name leaders, who had devoted the earliest years of the institution to incorporating piety as an acceptable characteristic of manhood (a process described in earlier chapters), now significantly broadened that masculine ideal. The Holy Name man’s roles as father, husband, protector, and head-of-household were defined anew, in accordance with and in opposition to more passive and
domesticated ideals increasingly restricting concepts of mid-century American womanhood. Finally, this study aims to plant seeds in the freshly tilled soil of the study of childhood experiences in American Catholicism. Initially in an effort to rescue boys and young men from the corruptions of modernity, clerics launched junior branches of the Holy Name Society. Here again, the expansion of the concept of manhood to include roles such as involved parent, guide, and religious leader were paramount. The analysis of these transformations reveals much about the maturation and increased responsibilities of Holy Name men at midcentury.

No singular driving force was responsible for such shifts, of course, but one is worthy of special consideration in this case. Historical change, especially as it pertains to complex social categories such as race, gender, and age, must not be oversimplified by the desire to compartmentalize understanding into a simple cause-and-effect relationship. Nonetheless, the increasingly deterministic role of anticommunism, as it gradually came to dominate Catholic rhetoric on most subjects approaching midcentury, becomes clear in this chapter. Although anticommunism is explored in much more depth in the following chapter, its significance relative to shifts in social attitudes here must be noted. Historiographical argument on this point is much more fully developed as it pertains to race than either gender or age. For example, focusing on northern cities, the loci of greatest Holy Name strength, the historian John McGreevy has noted that “Fervent anticommunism . . . undermined traditional Catholic thinking on racial matters . . . [as some] used the communist threat as a wedge with which to open the door to a more interracial church.” In many circles, the desire to address in a positive way the long-
standing racial issues at home was clearly tied to American hopes of erecting a stronger global stance against communism. The same impulse that urged Holy Name men to open their minds about racial issues also contributed to the expansion of the man’s role in the defense and morality of his home and the recruitment of youth into the men’s movement.

“Our Ebony Brother”: Race and the Holy Name Society

On a national level, the most noteworthy post-Civil War consideration of Catholic efforts to work amongst African Americans came with the Second (1866) and Third (1884) Plenary Councils of Baltimore. General scholarly consensus points out that neither gathering of American bishops produced groundbreaking change in support of blacks. Although some of the language from the 1866 council recognized a need and opportunity for proselytizing amongst African Americans, James O'Toole has noted that there was “no specific program in place” for doing so, meaning that the council overall boiled down to a failure “to take any significant steps for black Americans with the coming of freedom.” In subsequent years, James Hennesey adds, such “exhortation to black evangelization had little lasting effect.” More concerted action was ordered with the Third Plenary Council – such as an annual collection to benefit missions amongst

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both blacks and native Americans – but since missions tended to focus on urban settings in an era prior to the great migration of blacks to such regions, only a very small percentage of African Americans had joined the still segregated Catholic fold by the turn of the twentieth century.⁵ An instructive counterexample is the Josephites, an initially small branch of the English Foreign Missions Society of Saint Joseph that devoted its missionary efforts exclusively to freed American slaves during the Reconstruction era, eventually organizing its American offices as Saint Joseph’s Society of the Sacred Heart in Baltimore in 1893. Limited by their paucity of priests and the institutional backlash to such controversial policies as training blacks for the priesthood, the Josephites brought small but significant change to Catholic racial relations by the early twentieth century. Additional formalized efforts slowly followed, such as the 1906 establishment of the Catholic Board for Mission Work among the Colored People, dedicated specifically to erecting missions throughout the American South.⁶ In short, little was done into the early twentieth century by the American hierarchy to welcome or address the spiritual needs of the African American population, and pervasive racism stood in the way of any dramatic change. Even to midcentury, clerics such as Philadelphia’s Cardinal Dennis

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⁵ The quotes are O’Toole, Passing for White, 114 and Hennesey, American Catholics, 162. On the councils generally, see O’Toole, Passing for White, 114-5, 137-8; Hennesey, American Catholics, 181-2. On the failure, by 1900, to either recruit significant numbers of blacks or meaningfully cut back segregated practice, see Hennesey, American Catholics, pp. 191-3. The standard overview of African American Catholicism is Cyprian Davis, The History of Black Catholics in the United States (New York: Crossroad, 1990).

Dougherty, who aggressively struggled against the racism and segregation of his church, were clearly the exception rather than the rule.\(^7\)

The tepid positioning on racial matters by Holy Name leaders in the early years of the century holds true to that form, as the *Holy Name Journal* on one hand boasted of its organization’s small and scattered black membership but continually denigrated their humanity on the other. The *Holy Name Journal* was not alone in that latter transgression, though, as many Catholic papers regularly provided racist entertainment with a religious moral. Both the *Holy Name Journal* and the *Catholic Telegraph* of Cincinnati, for instance, reproduced a racist feature from *Our Colored Missions*, the journal of the very society erected to attract blacks to Catholicism, the Board for Mission Work among the Colored People. Standard fare from *Our Colored Missions* included “clever negro dialect sketches” that purported to reveal the inner workings of the African-American mind with vaudevillian hilarity. One such entry lampooned two black female characters’ discussion of the importance of the Holy Name Society for black men, even those with already reformed vocabularies:

Malinda Wickes: “Ah wisht mah George would join the Holy Name ‘Ciety wif your Evaritus, Marthy.”
Marthy Brown: “What fur do yo’ wan’ him to jine the Holy Name ‘Ciety? Ah didn’t think yore George was sech a bad swearin’ man that yo’ would wish sech restrictions es the Holy Name ‘Ciety a holdin’ him down.”
Malinda: “Oh! ‘Tain’t jes the swearin’ ah’m thinkin’ uv. George don’t swear very bad at all, but why ah wanted he should jine was fur the good ‘zample uv a body uv men receivin’ Holy Communion together like them, shoulder to shoulder, the good one carryin’ the wo’se ones along like they say to the Lord, ‘Take us in a bunch thout pickin’ us apart,’ and they all git through together. It

seems sech a powe’ful boost tu a man wat hasn’t any too much ‘ligion uv his own.”8

By passing this piece along to their lay readership, the Holy Name Journal editors also tacitly approved the racial attitudes therein. From standard objections to membership commitment (as Marthy balks at too many restrictions) to an apparent inability to grasp Catholic theology beyond a rudimentary level (Malinda believes that a group of men could force God’s hand into admitting them to Heaven collectively), this brief dialogue effectively characterized blacks as lazy in spirit and simple of mind, even as the Catholic lay reader was led to a sense of satisfaction in that his great society had been introduced to these people who so clearly required its help.

Catholic writers just as frequently drew attention to the smattering of black faces that adorned the landscape of the Holy Name movement, but again, such references were typically fleeting and superficial. Tucked deep within the lengthy coverage of President Roosevelt’s 1903 address to the gathering of Holy Name Societies on Long Island, for instance, was the notation that the “gathering also included the Holy Name Society attached to the colored Catholic Church of St. Benedict the Moor in New York.”

Likewise, among the many pages devoted to the 1908 centenary celebration of the founding of the Diocese of Boston is the matter of fact statement that “St. Philip’s Church of Boston had a colored company in line” during the Holy Name parade that concluded the festivities. Along with the mention of nearly every other (white) individual society branch came a detailed description of that group’s chosen wardrobe, colors, banner,

8 Reprinted in Holy Name Journal, June 1918, 10. The authorship of such sketches for Our Colored Missions is attributed to Nora Desmond.
marching ability, and myriad other characteristics. For the black Holy Name men, though, the simple facts of their race and presence sufficed in such descriptions, as if those factors alone somehow proved Catholic dedication to racial inclusivity. In Cincinnati, where Holy Name marches were already routine by 1911, amongst the twelve thousand parading men were one hundred black men from St. Ann parish, who according to the Catholic Telegraph, “attracted considerable attention.” Another mention, part of the coverage of the New York Diocesan Centenary Parade, seemingly indicated that there was some special significance to black presence, as the “Catholics of New York were surprised to see such a large number of Catholic colored men.” Readers, though, were left to draw their own conclusions about the real meaning of such references.

Latent racism in print was frequently punctuated with blatant racism in print, all of which mirrored the racism in practice that permeated black-white relations in the Holy Name Society. St. Augustine’s predominantly black parish in Washington, D.C. established its own society branch in 1911, boasting a membership of four hundred men within two years (to which were added roughly two hundred boys in the junior branch). When taking part in diocesan Holy Name functions, however, the men of St. Augustine’s branch routinely faced discrimination. At a 1915 diocesan gathering hosted by Baltimore’s Corpus Christi parish, for example, the white Holy Name branches enjoyed their typical reserved seats at the front of the church while the men of St. Augustine’s were pointed to a far corner. Likewise, the local Catholic press, covering a diocesan

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9 Catholic News (New York), 23 August 1903; Holy Name Journal, December 1908, 5; the Catholic Telegraph quote is from Fortin, Faith and Action, 235; Holy Name Journal, September 1908, 7.
Holy Name parade, referred to members of the St. Augustine’s parish branch as pickaninnies. Occasionally, as noted by Leslie Woodcock Tentler in her treatment of Detroit, African-American Catholics were a bit more than token black faces in a white Holy Name crowd. The St. Peter Claver’s parish for blacks, Tentler notes, for the first time in 1916 sent eight of its Holy Namers to a diocesan union meeting, at which they were “tendered a cordial welcome.” When, several months later, the next quarterly diocesan meeting was hosted by St. Peter Claver’s, it was, “[f]or a good many [white] delegates, . . . surely the first visit in years to what had become a heavily black section of the city.” Such exchanges, though exceedingly rare, “contributed to the slow process of delegitimizing racial . . . prejudice in the American Church.”

Only on rare occasions did Catholic authors openly consider racial matters beyond the level of mere tolerance of a small black presence, and on those occasions, deeply rooted prejudices were typically revealed. Perhaps due to the recent creation of new organizations such as the Catholic Board for Mission Work among the Colored People, the year 1908 produced more discussion of “our ebony brother” by the Holy Name Society than ever before. Nationally, the approach of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the first branch society in America for blacks (established by McKenna in 1884 near Springfield, Kentucky) afforded the opportunity for Holy Name

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10 Ochs, Desegregating the Altar, 222-3. For a more detailed account of such incidents, see Morris J. MacGregor, The Emergence of a Black Catholic Community: St. Augustine’s in Washington (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1999), 209-11. Similarly, a black Holy Name branch in Newark struggled into the 1930s to secure venues at which to host their communion breakfasts, as noted in Mary A. Ward, A Mission for Justice: The History of the First African American Catholic Church in Newark, New Jersey (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2002), 55.

11 Tentler, Seasons of Grace, 211.
leaders to opine on the significance of the society for African-Americans. In apologist fashion, the Holy Name Journal editors brushed over the reality that segregationist bias had led to the special creation of this black society when another branch (for whites only) already existed in the parish. Rather than including black parishioners in the main parish branch, a separate branch was initiated for these “sons of Ham.” This move had been “rendered advisable” by the rampant racism of the South and the Catholic clerics’ belief that “ministers of religion, whether they like it or not, cannot blot it [racist segregation] out, or even overlook it, if they wish to accomplish the greater good for either race.”

With that explanation provided, the discussion shifted to the “matter of common knowledge [that] the colored man loves societies. He must have them.” While the Holy Name Society could do wonders for white men, “for our black brother [it is] simply a necessity if we are to keep him in the true fold of Christ.”12 The New York national headquarters of the Holy Name Society thus boasted with pride that this black chapter at St. Rose parish in Kentucky now included roughly one hundred members, nearly every black Catholic man in that district. At the same time, national headquarters also glossed over the fact that this branch remained, nearly twenty-five years after its founding, the second Holy Name chapter in St. Rose’s parish, a development that outside of such segregationist context would have violated the “one branch per parish” norm that dominated Holy Name Society development elsewhere.

Holding American Catholics alone to account for a generally American failure to end racial segregation sooner, however, is of course unfair, and it overlooks the

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12 Holy Name Journal, September 1908, 7.
significant progress made in that vein by Catholics. By the second third of the twentieth century, the American Catholic church, like other churches, was lurching toward a post-Jim Crow era, and the Holy Name Society was the locus of small but important steps toward racial equality in religion. As early as January 1929, for instance, black Catholics were honored in Boston with a select invitation to send their Holy Name men to the annual archdiocesan union meetings at the cathedral. If mere inclusion in the broad fold of the Holy Name Society could sometimes seem only a token gesture, this special summons to an annual event meant much more. Braving “unfavorable weather conditions,” black Holy Name men from the mission church on Northampton Street in Boston’s South End were among the three thousand participants at those services, where they received an empowering message from future Archbishop and Cardinal Richard J. Cushing, then the Archdiocesan Director of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith. “Be strong. Fear no one but God,” Cushing told these men he regarded as the “true soldiers of the faith.” The self-congratulatory tone that often characterized coverage of such mixed-race events was noticeably absent in this instance, as matters of faith instead dominated in the Holy Name Journal summary.\(^{13}\) Such isolated examples of the apparent normalization of race relations within the Catholic fold were perhaps insignificant, but larger changes were unfolding as such instances became more commonplace.

By the late 1930s, the pages of the Holy Name Journal, which had only a generation earlier routinely satirized African-American speech, temperament, and intelligence, now offered scathing indictments of those Catholics who still hesitated to

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\(^{13}\) Holy Name Journal, February 1929, 6-7.
adjust their own personal racial attitudes. One author noted the “absurd” reality that many Catholics “denounce Hitler for his Nordic nonsense while holding equally unfounded opinions of the American Negro.” Citing statistical shortcomings based on the U.S. Census—specifically that out of more than 12 million African-Americans, only 250,000 had been identified as Catholics—this author argued that the Holy Name Society was particularly well situated amongst Catholic organizations to take on the serious work of evangelizing black communities. Warning potential lay catechists that “mere piety will not suffice” in such efforts, the author urged serious schoolroom-style instruction in matters of faith and a stifling of any patronizing attitudes towards African Americans. “Not only will he [a black man] resent” such condescension, but a more dramatic admission of racial equality now entered the equation: blacks “must be met on an equal footing in all matters spiritual.” The “prejudices” of the past, he argued, “cannot be reconciled either with scientific facts or the truths of the Catholic religion.” With the call thus issued for all Holy Name men to become more truly “catholic Catholics,” the author added one additional powerful motivating factor. “We scorn the Negro at our peril,” he admonished, for the “foes of the Church, the Radicals and the Reds, are welcoming him with open arms.” For those Catholics who continued to subscribe to the “theory that a ‘nigger ain’t fit to bother about,’” this writer offered a final insulting rebuke: “The Communist is wiser.”14 The anticommunist impulse was increasingly dominating Holy Name rhetoric in general by the late 1930s, but also clearly evident in discussions of

black Catholicism were some rather liberalized assumptions about the very meaning of race.

*The “pride of manhood and the defense of womanhood”: the Holy Name Man at Home*

From the first decade of the century, when the push for universal American Catholic male membership in the Holy Name Society began, Holy Name leaders focused their attention on what they perceived to be the greatest obstacle to that goal: the presumption that American Catholic men regarded piety and the routine practice of their faith as effeminate and therefore would balk at the idea of the Holy Name Society. Amongst themselves, Catholic clerics believed that it was “an easy matter to fill our churches with women, who are by nature more religiously inclined.” “The healthy state of religion in a parish,” they agreed, could only truly be “judged from the practice of religion by men.” Early Holy Name leaders believed they had hit on a new idea – that practicing faith “is not something for women and children, but something for men, for strong men” – and they strove at every opportunity to spread this concept amongst the laity.¹⁵ The Holy Name Society, in defining the implications of religious practice for a newly conceptualized manhood, was responding to what both contemporaries and historians have understood as the nineteenth-century feminization of American religion. By constructing a decidedly masculinized faith for the twentieth century, much like the

¹⁵Holy Name Journal, April 1909, 15.
muscular Christianity typically described in relation to their Protestant counterparts, Holy
Namers implicitly adopted and reinforced dominant gender assumptions about the
separate spheres for the sexes and refined emerging modern ideals about the nature of
domestic relationships. Holy Name life added a religious public sphere for men without
significantly altering the religious pursuits of women. Over time, however, the domestic
authority traditionally reserved for women (including duties such as running the home
and raising the children) was challenged by the emergence of new ideals of domestic

In the effort to bring droves of men to church, and specifically to active
membership in the society, early Holy Name writers attacked directly that which they
believed to be the prevalent assumption of Catholic men, namely that piety equated to
femininity. In advising parish priests on starting new branches of the society, Holy Name
leaders warned that “Men, even in their devotions and religious exercises, should not be
and must not be treated like a Young Ladies’ Sodality.” What was required, rather, was a
new ritual, a “strong, manly expression of devotion. This is what men want and what they will have or nothing.”\textsuperscript{17}

When appealing directly to laymen, though, Holy Name writers confronted head-on the perceived gender and class prejudices of their audience. “Holy Name men,” began one typical appeal, “we know you do not regard religion as something effeminate, as a religious duty for weak, or foolish, or sentimental women. We know, too, that you do not want any apron strings, or fringe, or lace on when discharging your religious duty.” Laymen were assured that only “the manly strength that God has given you” was required of Holy Namers, without “disguising yourself in feminate [sic] charm which does not belong to your sex.” If the idea of men adorned in the trappings of women was too much of an exaggeration, Holy Name leaders sought to get at the heart of the issue by identifying the real cause of men’s fears. Working men were supposed to be tough and rugged, but behaving as a devoted Catholic could too easily be perceived by other men as being “goody good.” Men, after all, “hate to be regarded as belonging to the ‘too good class.’” Those men, clerics concluded, who were openly pious and exhibited a set of refined characteristics, were those who “would seem more at ease in dresses rather than in trousers.” Thus, piety and even secular gentility could be situated on a spectrum of femininity by the Catholic laymen of the early twentieth century, according to their clerics. To counter that, clerics routinely exaggerated the manliness of faith practice in the Holy Name Society, even employing the strategy of collective practice in order to ease individual men’s anxieties. “However good you may become,” Holy Name writers

\textsuperscript{17} \textit{Holy Name Journal}, April 1910, 3.
promised, “you need never fear that the Holy Name Society will ever appeal to you for anything but a manly expression of your religion.” And if a man was still anxious about being identified as “goody good,” he would be reassured in his faith practice and could avoid being singled out by taking part in the corporate practices of the Holy Name Society. Within this collective atmosphere, the practice of Catholicism was definitively understood to be a masculine endeavor.\textsuperscript{18}

A motivational force even more powerful than clerical promises surely drove many men’s participation in the Holy Name Society, as many observers of the organization noted a supposed attraction of women to Holy Name men. During the 1908 centenary parade, Boston newsman William Kenney was clearly impressed both by the number and the behavior of girls and women who lined up to watch the thousands of Holy Name marchers. Especially struck by the women who filed out onto fire escapes overlooking Commonwealth Avenue simply to catch a glimpse of the men below, Kenney also described as “most remarkable” the “number of fresh, healthy and extraordinarily pretty girls who were grouped the entire length of the parade and who admired and cheered the marchers.” In fact, Kenney concluded, since “a good many hundreds, not to say thousands, of the pretty girls looked so animated and interested . . . it is no wonder that the young men stepped proudly along before such charming spectators.”\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{18} Holy Name Journal. April 1910, 3-4.

\textsuperscript{19} Kenney, Centenary of the See of Boston, 141-2.
Likewise, even in the cold of Boston in January 1913, the annual Holy Name feast celebration services at the cathedral were so well attended that an estimated two thousand people, “including many women, stood patiently at the doors, vainly hoping to gain admission.”

Similar in some ways to the more secular press, Holy Name writers noted the attraction of women to the Holy Name scene, but these leaders more specifically focused on the “deeper meaning” of such parades and rallies for “Catholic womanhood” by arguing for the impact on the Catholic family. Pushing the value of the Holy Name parades and rallies, one *Holy Name Journal* author insisted, “Wives and mothers feel proud of the faith of their husbands and sons. Daughters, sisters, friends all take great consolation and encouragement that in their loved ones of the Holy Name army they can admire men who have pledged themselves to clean speech and to the virtues of a practical Catholic gentleman. The honor of Christian womanhood,” he concluded, “can be guarded by no more consecrated sword.” In the constant effort to equate regular sacramental attendance with domestic tranquility, another admonishment rang out: “If you want . . . to make the good women in your house Feel happy . . . You will be there at the altar rail.” Not only would Holy Name participation transform a man into a better Catholic man, but it would also make him more attractive to the opposite sex and, for those men already attached to families, more revered by the women and girls already sharing his home. In the face of such explanations, Holy Name leaders saw no room for

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20 *Holy Name Journal*, February 1913, 4-5.
resistance to the Holy Name movement, as one writer succinctly stated, “Only cowards and imbeciles [can now] fear that religion will make them unmanly.”

Holy Name leaders thus entered the battle for men’s souls, identified their principal enemy as a collection of dominant gender conceptions, and armed with their own set of gendered ideals, aimed to fight fire with fire by redefining the meaning of manhood in the Catholic context. Seemingly, to clerics, women were inherently religious, and as a result, the meaning of practicing one’s faith had taken on over time a decidedly feminine connotation. To counter such perceptions, Holy Namers charged themselves with the task of re-educating Catholic men on the meaning and importance of religion. That decision was itself based on assumptions about the nature of the male gender. Men could be taught about the historical circumstances that had led to the modern correlation of femininity and piety. Men were, after all, the more rational sex, as the logic went. The problem with men was not an inability to comprehend, or even an inherent badness (in opposition to the perceived innate feminine quality of goodness), but rather a general lack of focus, a shortcoming in the ability to apply and maintain priorities in modern life. “It is a strange fact,” one Holy Name writer reasoned, “but none the less true because strange, that the majority of men must be urged continually to be faithful to their religious duties. It is not that men are maliciously bad, but they are habitually careless.” In advising parish-level spiritual directors, Holy Name leaders assured them, “You can keep men faithful to their religious duties, but you must do two things. First,
you must put the case up to them good and strong, and this at least four or five times a
year; secondly, you must treat them in a manly way.”

Women, clerics believed, adhered more naturally to the ritualistic and sacramental
aspects of faith practice, whereas men, while entirely capable of the same, needed to be
routinely confronted by clerics with such obligations in a direct and forceful fashion, lest
the men too easily fall away. Nothing less than monthly group participation in the
sacraments and constant bombardment with masculine rhetoric would accomplish the
task. Although men were regarded as more likely than women to be persuaded through
logical argument to active faith practice, Holy Name leaders employed special provisions
and the “power of numbers” as psychological tools to bolster men’s confidence in faith
practice. A former National Director of the Holy Name Society, Rev. John T.
McNicholas, who by 1918 was an Assistant General in Rome, penned an article for
Rome’s Dominican Analecta to explain this strategy’s success in the American context.
Among the more benign suggestions was the warning to keep Holy Name meetings under
an hour in length because “Americans do not like protracted meetings, and frankly admit
that long-drawn-out devotional exercises are not agreeable to them.” Securing the
cooperation of women and children was essential too, as “they, in a kindly way and with
gentle solicitude, may urge their [men] to frequent the sacraments.” Under his guidance,
McNicholas recounted, “we made it a point to visit the parish school on the Friday
afternoon preceding the general [Holy Name] Communion Sunday” to recruit the
children to “promise publicly that they would strive earnestly to induce their fathers and

22 Holy Name Journal, April 1910, 3.
brothers to receive the sacraments on the following days.” With appropriate warnings to
the children “not to provoke their fathers and older brothers to wrath by too great
insistence,” this creative missionary work accounted for, in McNicholas’s estimation, an
increase in Holy Name communion attendance of “about twenty per cent,” a calculation
that was neither explained nor substantiated, but surely rhetorically poignant
nonetheless.  

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With women and children prodding men “with much delicacy” toward the church,
McNicholas outlined the measures taken by clerics to make men more comfortable upon
their arrival. Men were believed to be particularly averse to the confessional because, as
clerics understood it, they “experience a certain fear and shame when they have to go.”
Society membership, though, did much to diminish such apprehensions, as men found
“their neighbors and friends approaching the same sacred tribunal of penance.” In
addition, as the second Sunday of each month was designated as Holy Name Communion
Sunday, the Saturday preceding it was appointed as Holy Name Confession Saturday in
many places. Thus, many American Holy Name men came to regard the second weekend
of each month as Holy Name weekend, a time in which they could consolidate their pious
obligations and carry them out in the comfort of a group setting. Naturally, according to
McNicholas’s subjective observations, “men frequenting the sacraments gain courage . . .
to profess their faith fearlessly.” Less frequent were the public rallies of the Holy Name
Society, McNicholas explained to his international audience, but these were the essential
outgrowths of the more routine sacramental practices, offering the opportunity for Holy

23 An English translation of the McNicholas article appeared in Holy Name Journal, March 1918, 4-5.
Name men to collectively “derive a greater vigor to profess their faith and greater strength to defend it” in the public realm.\textsuperscript{24}

With all these accommodations made for the particular traits of the American Catholic man, leading to the very public presence and success of the Holy Name Society, a more careful consideration of the input and impact of women on the movement is necessary.\textsuperscript{25} What role would women serve as the Holy Name movement expanded: the passive yet delighted on-lookers at massive demonstrations of Catholic masculinity; or the unsung behind-the-scenes heroes of the movement, cautiously shepherding their men toward active membership? Responding to a call initially sounded from the Catholic newspaper of Chicago, the \textit{New World}, the national Holy Name leadership seemed to welcome an even more active part for women in 1919. Women were, clerics recognized, “as much interested in seeing that their fathers, husbands, and brothers are in the Holy Name Society as the men are themselves. They are as interested in clean speech and decency,” and so “the Catholic women should be at the [monthly Holy Name branch] meetings, and they will be there if they are invited. In order to give all Catholic people an opportunity of taking an interest in the Holy Name Society . . . more of the meetings

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid. On the linkage of confession and communion, see James M. O’Toole, “In the Court of Conscience: American Catholics and Confession, 1900-1975,” in James M. O’Toole, ed., \textit{Habits of Devotion: Catholic Religious Practice in Twentieth-Century America} (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 180-2. The Holy Name Society’s practice of tying the sacraments together was typical of this period, but O’Toole notes that the relative importance of communion was supplanting that of confession for many Catholics.

\textsuperscript{25} A small but growing number of studies have focused on Catholic women, the majority of which consider the topic of women religious. See, for example, Carol K. Coburn and Martha Smith, \textit{Spirited Lives: How Nuns Shaped Catholic Culture and American Life, 1836-1920} (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1999). Apart from those studies noted at the beginning of this section, others covering laywomen include Paula Kane, James Kenneally, and Karen Kennelly, eds., \textit{Gender Identities in American Catholicism} (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2001) and James Kenneally, \textit{The History of American Catholic Women} (New York: Crossroad, 1990).
should be open.”26 Despite the force and apparent sincerity of such language, though, this appeal now seems to have been the lone clarion call for mixed-gender meetings in the broader scope of the early twentieth century Holy Name Society.

Much more common were the commentaries that aligned with dominant gender ideologies about the place of women in modern life. The traditional organization of society into gendered separate spheres was necessarily disrupted during World War I, as women entered the workforce in larger numbers. While this certainly represented an advance for women, it was only temporary in the view of many male contemporaries. One wartime example from 1918 specifically fretted about the double-edged sword that would be the end of the war. “Peace-times,” the author lamented, “will mean merely the beginning of our internal troubles . . . [especially] in the labor world and the re-tightening of social lines . . . [as] war has opened to womanhood avenues in our industrial life that were closed to her before.” Wondering whether “women [will] voluntarily relinquish” such roles, the author concluded that it “would not be surprising if the Government would enter into this field of life also.” Increasingly, laymen were instructed that women’s participation in any aspect of the public realm was abnormal and that women’s authority even in the domestic sphere should never infringe upon the power that men should rightly exert. At the close of a March 1920 Holy Name retreat at Boston’s Cathedral, Cardinal O’Connell sent his troops back to the battlefields of their daily lives, but not before taking aim at “the sinister feminism of which we read so much and see quite enough.” The Holy Name men were reminded that “one of the chief causes” of this “unnatural” rise of

26 Holy Name Journal, August 1919, 3.
female authority was “a growing weakness on the part of the manhood of the nation.”

“The very fact that women are so often clamoring to take all power and authority into their hands,” he continued, “is certainly no compliment to the manhood of the nation.” Feminism would bring “moral disorder” and other “disastrous results for humanity,” and so, the Cardinal concluded, the “remedy is the proper exercise of authority by man in his own place, and especially as the father of a family. . . My dear, good Catholic men, you have no right to abdicate the position you occupy by the grace of God as the Christian heads of households.”

If women had, in recent years, been regarded, even in a generally informal way, as the spiritual heads of their families—those most qualified to ensure the religious adherence of the family and those most able to effect the religious education of the children—the Holy Name Society did its part to initiate change on this front. Cardinal O’Connell’s blasts were the amplified echoes of years of Holy Name rhetoric urging men to take more definitive control of their domestic situations. Holy Name literature routinely criticized those Catholic men who “think they have discharged their duties when they have provided for the material wants of the family” and those emotionally detached men who “are policemen in their homes whom every one fears and for whom there is little respect and even less love.” The traditional understanding of man as “head of the family” was being transformed into man as the “head of a great divine institution,” and to the masculine roles of provider and policeman were added those of caretaker, friend, and religious leader. Fathers who, for example, learned to be more engaged and

27 Holy Name Journal, February 1918, 3, Holy Name Journal, April 1920, 4.
companionable with their children would be rewarded with a remarkable transformation in which their “children are even jealous of one another in devising means to make their home and parents happy.” Most important, though, was the realization that the man’s domestic “authority and good influence extends principally to matters spiritual. The mother is responsible, too, but the greatest responsibility rests with the father.” Practical suggestions were frequently offered to aid in establishing a more pervasive and masculine Catholic presence in the home: “Provide Catholic books for your home,” “Ask your children when you are tired at night to read a Catholic paper for you,” and “After dinner or supper in the evening, why not gather your family about you and say the [Rosary] beads?”

Some women, historian Leslie Woodcock Tentler has argued, likely became frustrated with the “sex-segregated worship” entailed by Holy Name membership, and thus might have appreciated the augmented religious role of men within the home. The Holy Name Society’s expansion of masculine authority over the home, however, necessarily infringed upon the authority previously reserved for women.

The surest path to a Holy Name man’s domestic happiness--and the happiness of all those in his home--was to grasp firmly the reins of leadership in all areas of life. The Holy Name man was thus, as the Brooklyn Tablet put it, “the pride of manhood and the defense of womanhood.” With femininity stylized as passive, frilly, and demure, to be a Catholic man meant the assumption of all other critical family roles. Not only could women remain women with a strong Holy Name man in the home, but laymen were

28 Holy Name Journal, April 1911, 2-4.
29 Tentler, Seasons of Grace, 429.
reminded, too, “that mothers and wives and children are not only edified, but become faithful themselves in receiving the Sacraments when their fathers and husbands are unfailing in the discharge of their duties as Holy Name men.”

Just as the Holy Name man was increasingly understood to be the leader and defender of his family, so too, as the Catholic Bulletin dubbed it, was the Holy Name Society increasingly regarded as the “bulwark of the parish.” A hierarchical structure of Holy Name defense was emerging, beginning with men at the ground level of individual homes, continuing with the branch societies at the parish level and unions at the diocesan and archdiocesan levels, and culminating in the national headquarters and national conventions of the Holy Name Society.

During the first half of the twentieth century, amidst world wars and the rising global threat of communism, Holy Name men were taught that their personal piety (practiced corporately) was the fundamental building block of their authority in all aspects of their lives. Such lessons were well learned, as the pages of the Holy Name Journal clearly showed. The Archdiocesan Union of Holy Name Societies in Baltimore offered a contest to its laymen, a challenge to create a slogan for the regional body. The winner, Joseph M. Nolan from the parish of St. Thomas, was rewarded for appropriating a recurring clerical theme in his vision for the archdiocesan slogan: “The Bulwark of Home Defense—The Holy Name Man.” The additional step of illustrating Nolan’s slogan was accomplished by employing the skills of Jack Lambert, a sculptor from Brooklyn Tablet, quoted in Holy Name Journal, April 1911, 7, 1.

Baltimore. On the inside cover of the national magazine, a full-page picture of Lambert’s creation offered a crisp interpretation of mid-century Catholic manhood. With Nolan’s words boldly posted above (“The Holy Name Man”) and below (“The Bulwark of Home Defense”), the foreground was dominated by a well-dressed Holy Name man (with shirt and tie visible beneath a topcoat, the man reverently held his hat across his left breast with his right hand) standing proudly and defensively before his soft-featured wife, who was holding an infant. Husband and wife gazed upward toward the cross atop a Catholic church in the background, with light emanating from above.\(^{32}\)

The message was clear, and it served as a succinct illustration of Holy Name gender ideals at midcentury. Respectable Catholic men must ground themselves in their faith in order to effectively serve as the first line of defense for their families against the myriad threats emerging in the world. If, as the sculpture suggested, women were still entrusted with domestic tasks such as childcare, their gender was also, as Paula Kane has noted, “defined . . . relationally, that is, as responsible to and for others, rather than as autonomous individuals.”\(^{33}\) Men dominated the public sphere and now, ideally, assumed a more interactive and supervisory role over all domestic situations as well. Hierarchical masculine authority—from priest to layman and layman to family—was paramount. Establishing a *perpetual* American Catholic male defense became the long-term goal. To do that, clerics focused on expanding the Holy Name movement by generations through organizations such as the Junior Holy Name Society.

\(^{32}\) *Holy Name Journal*, March 1941, inside cover, caption opposite on 1.

\(^{33}\) Kane, *Separatism and Subculture*, 147.
“The boy problem always with us”: Saving the Present, Securing the Future through the Junior Holy Name Society

Historians of religion have largely neglected the experiences of children. The most notable exceptions have tended to focus on Protestant efforts at the turn of the twentieth century to rescue children from the perils of an industrializing modern world. Psychology, sociology, and theology dominate most efforts to address the spirituality of the current and more recent generations of children. Focusing on twentieth-century Catholicism with an interdisciplinary approach, Robert Orsi has produced a useful model to understand children’s religious lives in the Catholic context. Orsi explains that twentieth century Catholic leaders made conscious efforts to construct “concrete experiences” of the sacred for children. Whereas Protestants typically “kept their children out of sacred space . . . Catholic boys and girls played special roles in the church’s liturgical life.” Roles such as altar boy entailed “substantial religious responsibilities and duties,” Orsi argues, making children “essential to the church’s

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sacramental life.” Experiences with sacred time and material also extended beyond the Mass. As this section illustrates, the original intent of the Junior Holy Name Society was to insulate Catholic boys from the many untoward influences in their lives, providing a bridge to guide the Catholic-educated schoolboy into responsible Catholic adulthood. As the adult movement expanded its mission, the junior branches provided an opportunity to introduce young men into the organization.

Modernity brought with it many challenges that the Holy Name Society, first at the parish level and later at an impressively organized national level, sought to address directly. Holy Name clerical leaders recognized early that a critical step in developing the organization’s influence along such lines was not only the expansion of its numbers – with the familiar “a branch in every parish, and every man a member” slogan – but also with the attraction of Catholic boys, as they matured, to society membership. Once the society grew to include a majority of Catholic parishes, the steadiest source of new membership would naturally become successive generations.

Early efforts to attract Catholic youth focused on developing new streams of membership for the adult society, but also on the various and vague collection of complaints about youth enveloped by that favorite terminology of clerics, namely “the boy problem.” Addressing its concerns in this vein first to young men, rather than boys, the national headquarters announced in 1909 that it had sent “letters to the presidents of our Catholic colleges throughout the United States.” The letters encouraged the

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development of society branches for students, to be administered by on-campus clergy as spiritual directors, because “many of our boys and young men have become addicted to the use of profane and indecent language.” Because the misguided delusions of gender identity had led astray so many men, it made perfect sense that boys too had developed the false sensibility to “think it manly to hear themselves swear.” What the Holy Name Society had provided for men – a sense of corporate faith practice, making personal transformations easier – college branches could help provide for Catholic youth. The aim was the formation of “a public spirit among the students, so that a boy will be looked down upon [by his peers] who attempts to contract the habit of swearing.” With peer pressure enforcing pious guidelines on youth conduct, national headquarters concluded that it could then logically “rely on a zealous, enthusiastic spirit among young men that pass from the college to the parochial branch of the Society.”

The parish, however, rather than the campus, would prove to be the most fertile ground for youth ministry by the Holy Name Society. It was Father McKenna, the American “apostle of the Holy Name,” who provided the earliest vision and framework for the parish-based Junior Holy Name Society. As noted previously, throughout his life’s work – the attempt to erect Holy Name parish branches by inspiring men who were not always eager or willing to participate in a new organization – McKenna employed many strategies to spur growth. Particularly frustrating, McKenna related to other clerics, were “parishes where the Society exists, but in a moribund condition. . . Here the

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37 Holy Name Journal, October 1909, 4. College Holy Name Societies eventually arose at non-Catholic universities as well. See, for example, Tentler, Seasons of Grace, 463. Tentler notes that the society at the University of Michigan was formed in 1920 with 300 of the roughly 500 on-campus Catholics as members.
‘compelli intrare’ must obtain,” he noted. “If they do not come to us, we must go after them.” By the introduction of a Junior Holy Name Society in such cases, McKenna found a two-fold benefit: men were more inspired to dedicate themselves to the adult branch, and that adult branch, over time, enjoyed the steady addition of new graduate members from the youth group.\(^\text{38}\) Priests, however, had developed a general distaste for that most thankless of tasks, working with older boys. Surely stating an opinion held by many in his position, Father Frank O’Brien (St. Augustine’s parish in Kalamazoo, Michigan), writing for the American Ecclesiastical Review, had wryly noted that the “priest who can build up successfully a Young Men’s Sodality, or Society, is gifted beyond the ordinary.”\(^\text{39}\)

Because potential spiritual directors were often as tentative about suggesting the formation of Holy Name branches in those early years as laymen were in sacrificing their time as members, McKenna laid out a point-by-point handbook for the creation of Junior branches.

First: As soon as the boys of a parish make their First Communion, say to them: “Boys, no more Sunday-school. We are going to make little men of you. You must all join the Holy Name Society, which means that you will be members of a society pledged not to say bad or profane words, and that you will not go with boys who curse or use unbecoming language. So many boys think it manly to swear. You are to prove that it is not so. You are going to show every boy in the parish who wants to curse that he will have to find other companions beside the good manly boys.\(^\text{40}\)

Such was the “example of some zealous [Spiritual] Directors” McKenna had known, whose work “furnishes proof of what can be done with a Junior Branch.” Placing such

\(^{38}\) Holy Name Journal, November 1910, 2.


\(^{40}\) Holy Name Journal, November 1910, 2-3.
introductory words in the mouths of parish priests was designed to overcome any objections or hesitations on the part of the latter, but McKenna continued in laying out the particulars of the Junior society in action. Junior meetings, for instance, should be “not once every month, but every week. . . [perhaps] at the same hour that the Sunday school is held.” Roughly twenty-five minutes should be planned for the Litany of the Holy Name of Jesus, “followed by the discussion of the little business affairs of the Society, which the boys enjoy.” A “short instruction in Christian Doctrine” might then be followed by open discussion of the “[d]ifficulties against religion such as boys and young men are apt to hear in their own locality.” Gradually, such a society “will foster a spirit among [the boys] which will cause profanity and unbecoming language to be regarded as unmanly.” Of equal importance in those early Holy Name days, it would also “bring boys to the Sacraments regularly from the day of their First Communion,” which generally occurred between the ages of twelve and fourteen. Knowing the difficulties of reforming men who had fallen from the practice of their faith and into the loose-tongued abyss of modernity, McKenna’s chief aim with the Junior branch was to prevent that fall with the erection of a direct bridge ushering the young teen toward the adult society.41 Maintaining the consistency of “concrete experiences of the sacred”42 for teenage Catholic boys would help usher them through their most impressionable years and into pious adulthood.

41 Holy Name Journal, November 1910, 2-3.

42 This phrase, again, is borrowed from Orsi, Between Heaven and Earth, Chapter Three, “Material Children: Making God’s Presence Real for Catholic Boys and Girls and for the Adults in Relation to Them,” 73-109.
Within a year, as the first national convention of the society approached (Baltimore, 1911), it was apparent that the Junior society had become McKenna’s personal pet project and that his efforts had inspired several other clerics similarly. Opening the conference by addressing the various bishops and diocesan directors of the society who had travelled to Baltimore, McKenna briefly laid out the history of the organization but then moved directly into his push for Junior societies. “You are aware of a new organization, the ‘Boy Scouts,’” he began, charging that its chapters were “feeders for masonry and kindred organizations.” Such “unhallowed leagues” as the Boy Scouts were surely considering “means of increasing their membership,” and the Holy Name Society, McKenna argued, must do likewise by recognizing the “necessity of organizing our boys who will be the feeders of the Holy Name Society.” To avoid the “irreparable” damage sure to result if Catholic boys were to fall from the “influence of the Church during the trying years of early manhood,” he concluded, “the Holy Name begs that you aid” in the Junior society’s broad development.\footnote{\textit{Holy Name Journal}, November 1911, 10. The Catholic suspicions of Protestant influence in organizations such as the Y.M.C.A. and Boy Scouts is treated by MacLeod, \textit{Building Character in the American Boy}. He argues, for example, that the “militant Protestantism” of leaders in such organizations “kept Catholics away, even though Catholic youth work was fragmented and insubstantial until well after 1920.” Quote is on 3, but see also 193-4, 197-8. Putney also references an example of Catholic resentment of Y.M.C.A. access to non-Protestant soldiers during wartime. See \textit{Muscular Christianity}, 187.} McKenna’s warnings surely had the effect of opening conventioneers’ ears to the additional pitches for Junior societies which followed. On the next day, designated “Spiritual Directors Day,” following the two welcoming and introductory addresses, one of the two main speeches that followed was titled “Save the Boy by Junior Holy Name Societies.” The presenter, Father Francis J. Sullivan, was the Chaplain of the New York City Police Department,
who had already erected an adult branch for his policemen but was also “greatly interested in the welfare of boys.” Likewise, of the fourteen pre-circulated papers at the 1911 Baltimore convention, two dealt specifically with the organization and methods of Junior Holy Name branches.\footnote{Holy Name Journal, October 1911, 3. The two papers were: Father J.R. Meagher, “The Appointment of a Diocesan Director for Junior Holy Name Branches” and Father Peter L. Ireton (from Baltimore), “How to Conduct Junior Holy Name Meetings.”}

The net result of McKenna’s effort to place this issue at the core of the Baltimore convention was the adoption of firmly stated resolutions supporting his initiative. The upper echelons of the hierarchy resolved in their first-day session to “recommend the establishment of Junior Holy Name Societies as one of the great means of preventing profanity and preparing our youths for membership in a great religious organization of the Senior Holy Name Society.”\footnote{Holy Name Journal, November 1911, 10.} It was then left to the second-day session of Spiritual Directors, those who directly oversaw the affairs of the parish branches, to take more concerted action in the trenches. To that end, Father Sullivan of New York was appointed the chair of a newly created national committee, the purpose of which was to encourage diocesan gatherings of Junior society spiritual directors. “Each diocese has the problem of the boy to solve,” the committee reasoned, “and the spiritual directors of Junior branches can solve it by their united counsel and action.”\footnote{Holy Name Journal, November 1911, 12.} Clearly taking his charge seriously, Father Sullivan conducted his investigation and produced a thorough report in just over six months.
Sullivan’s state of the Junior society address, published for the review of the nation of Holy Name clerics and lay leaders in the June 1912 issue of the society’s journal, was an exercise in Catholic social psychology. Surface observation, Sullivan admitted, would lead many to conclude the modern boy was a “restless, thoughtless, ungrateful creature,” and such prejudices, he believed, were largely correct.

Contextualizing the experience of twentieth-century American teenagers, though, revealed the inherent vulnerability of the boy’s position. “Up to this he has been his mother’s boy,” Sullivan noted, “and as the apron-string of his mother loosen,” the modern boy finds “the world is very bright and alluring,” unsuspecting that the temptations of his surroundings are constructed to enliven “the lowest in his nature. . . . [I]f ever a boy needed a friend . . . it is in this crisis of his life.” The “triple foe – the world, the flesh and the devil” was cunning and subtle, especially in the nature of “Protestant influence” that confronted Catholic boys, resulting over time in a “harvest of indifferent Catholics and mixed marriages.” Sullivan offered, to underscore his point, that he had “the testimony of a prominent man in the Y.M.C.A., who assured me that culture, sports, and social gatherings were but secondary in that organization, the main object being to lead the members to the chapel, and to this were devoted all the efforts of workers and even instructors.” The answers to such horrors were clear. Only the “strong, manly cords of a father’s love,” the “strong, manly, clean hand of an elder brother” could help the boy’s soul “find its satisfaction amid surroundings in harmony with his faith and conducive of what is best in him.” The institutional answer – the erection of Junior Holy Name Societies in all parishes – would require spiritual directors
“inflamed with genuine zeal for the boys’ salvation, aided and abetted by laymen willing to spend and be spent in the work.” Sullivan sought laymen willing to commit to “[p]atience, long suffering, perseverance and self-sacrifice,” men “whose example of right living and self-sacrifice will impress the boy and teach him to do the same.”

Efforts to unify junior branch practices under a nationwide program naturally followed. By the early 1940s, for example, due to “so many requests” from Junior society directors, seeking a standard format for meetings and other general advice, national headquarters issued a brief pamphlet, which included guidelines for selecting a layman to serve as junior branch “Youth Leader.” It was “of prime importance that the leaders be first of all men of virtuous life,” the brief missal noted. Because the Youth Leader’s “own life is open to close scrutiny,” for example, “[d]rinking to excess is of course out.” Boys required, more than anything else, the discipline of fatherly love, a message that remained constant from the Sullivan report in 1912 through the 1940s. Holy Name men were thus first encouraged to transform their domestic relationships with their sons, and later, more broadly, to assume direct spiritual leadership of their entire families. Where this family transformation fell short, the parish-wide leadership of the manly Holy Name Society could step in as that fatherly source of friendship and guidance.


48 Holy Name Society, The Junior Holy Name Society (New York: The National Headquarters of the Holy Name Society, 1942), 5, 42.
In short order, junior societies arose nationwide to broad acclaim, accompanied by the emergence of a collection of methodologies that proved quite successful in attracting and reforming wayward behaviors. Father Sullivan’s initial report had characterized the modern Catholic boy as “athletic-mad.”49 This realization, along with (or perhaps prompted by) the alarming success of the Boy Scouts and Y.M.C.A., encouraged the incorporation of physical activity into the functions of Junior Holy Name branches. Father Peter Ireton of Baltimore (one of the presenters at the convention in that city on the topic of Junior branches), announced that the “experimental stage is passed; the [Junior society] movement is a success,” and he particularly lauded the practice of athletic activity in society meetings. “After three or four years boys are apt to grow tired and the Society may lose its attractiveness,” he reasoned, so “[w]hy not make use of [athletics] for a sacred purpose to hold our boys together, to increase their love of and strengthen their allegiance to God and Church?”50 The Brooklyn Tablet echoed such sentiments, stressing athletics were a means to an end: “The wise priest emphasizes the need of physical exercise. He preaches and teaches religion without appearing to do so.”51 A paper read to a Eucharistic Congress meeting in San Francisco extolled the virtues of the Junior societies, shamelessly acknowledging that “youthful requirements of athletics, camps and games may well be incidental features,” but indispensable as tools

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50 Holy Name Journal, July 1912, 2-4.

51 Brooklyn Tablet editorial on the success of the Junior Holy Name Society, reprinted in Holy Name Journal, May 1915, 8.
used to “save the rising generation.” This interplay of sport and faith remained a consistent theme in junior societies.

A 1942 pamphlet produced by the society’s national headquarters, essentially a handbook for spiritual advisors of Junior branches, insisted that religious instruction of juniors “cannot strike their lives at a tangent. It must be woven into the things they ordinarily do.” Religion “must be offered not as something remote from workaday or playaday life [but rather] . . . be adapted to the sports-loving, hobby-loving, gang-member of today’s youth.” This pamphlet, though, also reflected the awareness, developed over three decades, of problems with the entertainments attached to junior meetings. Physical activity was fine, for example, “if this does not exclude the inept.” An alternative, such as a “prepared one act play” could work, “if this does not employ the same people every time.” Fomenting sensitivity to a range of abilities in youth, national headquarters concluded by making the case plainly: “The point to be remembered is that the recreation is for all the members.” Holy Name leaders, throughout the first half of the century, continually echoed the value of athletics in attracting boys to pious pursuits.

52 Holy Name Journal, January 1921, 13.

53 Holy Name Society, The Junior Holy Name Society, 13, 48. On the Catholic adoption of athletics, see the discussion of the limited historiography in Putney, Muscular Christianity, 9. One scholar has claimed that the Catholic Church, in Putney’s paraphrase, did not adopt athletics until the “latter part of the twentieth century, when it finally saw the religious value of sports.” Another scholar noted the advent of athletic programs in Catholic boys’ schools during the 1890s. The former study is Patrick Kelly, “The Sacramental Imagination, Culture, and Play” (Licentiate’s thesis, Weston Jesuit School of Theology, 1999). The latter is Christa Klein, “The Jesuits and Catholic Boyhood in Nineteenth-Century New York City: A Study of St. John’s College and the College of St. Francis Xavier, 1846-1912” (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1976). In the limited extent to which he discusses Catholicism, Putney adopts Klein’s perspective on “Muscular Catholicism,” in that he believes gender orientation (that is, masculine dominance) did not play an important role in comparison to Protestant versions of muscular Christianity. The present study refuted Putney on that point earlier; moreover, the evidence presented in this section lends additional weight to the claim that masculinity was in fact central to Catholic practice.
Recognizing the advantages of clerical and parental intellectual maturity over the inherently rebellious and easily stimulated minds of youth, familiarity with basic child psychology principles was widely encouraged in dealing with Junior society members. The Tablet, for instance, warned fathers not to be domineering with their sons. Rather, the “mild assertion of authority” by a father could make it “easy for the boy to do that which, to his mind, will be a capitulation.” The boy’s attendance to the sacraments was mandatory; however, “too great insistence for the time being should not be made on the practice of other pious works that are not so necessary. An overdose of religion may be as nauseating as a large dose of medicine.”

Sophisticated parenting – knowing how and when to choose one’s battles – was therefore also characteristic of Holy Name manhood. Father Ireton offered other subtle inducements to excite the interests and encourage the commitments of the younger generation. Boys looked up to and imitated their fathers, he reasoned, especially when their fathers were doing good things. Whenever possible, then, the most solemn practices of the Junior and Senior branches should be conducted in concert. “Greater interest is elicited among the boys if the [Litany of the Holy Name] ceremony coincides with the profession of the Senior Society. . . . On such and similar occasions, the boys should alternate with the men in the recitation of the Office and the singing of the hymns. This union,” Ireton concluded, “of the two Societies is a mutual stimulant.”

Even with the explosion of membership in the adult society during these years, laymen were reminded of “the boy problem always with us.” It was incumbent

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54 Brooklyn Tablet editorial on the success of the Junior Holy Name Society, reprinted in Holy Name Journal, May 1915, 8.

55 Holy Name Journal, July 1912, 3.
upon members to relentlessly pursue their own salvation with the by-product of inspiring youth in mind. Wherever men of a parish were not active members of the society, the youth would suffer. “Urge them,” demanded the New World, “to come into the Society to help save the boys.”

The creation of a parish environment in which men, and now boys, were engaged at the church on multiple occasions throughout the week would help unify the parish as a whole, insulating it from corruptive influences from beyond its borders.

As Junior societies multiplied, just as had been the case with adult societies, they developed their own provincial plans for society business and activities. A sampling confined to Massachusetts illustrates this point. The branch at St. Angela parish in Mattapan hosted games for boys every Tuesday and Friday night, with society meetings and services conducted (along with the adult group) on Wednesdays prior to the second Sunday of each month. When Father Walter Lambert started a junior branch at South Boston’s Gate of Heaven, he decided to hold regular meetings every Thursday. At Malden’s Church of the Sacred Heart, over one hundred boys were members in the branch, whose meetings typically involved one hour of instruction followed by one hour of basketball. Father Francis Quinn, of the church of St. Lawrence in Lowell, enjoyed tremendous success in 1911-12 as the director of the only junior branch in his vicinity at

56 New World editorial on the benefits of Holy Name membership, reprinted in Holy Name Journal, September 1920, 4.

57 Holy Name Journal, April 1909, 6.

58 Holy Name Journal, April 1915, 10.

59 Holy Name Journal, October 1912, 12.
that time, building his junior branch membership to 200 in less than a year. Apart from weekly meetings and monthly corporate communion, Father Quinn attributed his success to the use of a “Question Box” during meetings, by which members could anonymously ask questions to be answered as part of the weekly instruction.\textsuperscript{60} Cambridge was the site, in January 1916, of a remarkable feat accomplished by the junior branch of St. Mary’s parish. After appropriate ceremony, including the singing of Cardinal O’Connell’s “Hymn to the Holy Name,” 206 boys received induction into the society, bringing the staggering membership total to 415 in this single parish.\textsuperscript{61}

Core rituals – such as the Litany of the Holy Name, hymns, the Holy Name pledge, and religious instruction – dominated all Holy Name meetings, but throughout the nation variety characterized junior branch functions. At one college society, the young men developed a system of code words, used in mixed company by one member to alert another “when in danger of failing” in speech or other behavior.\textsuperscript{62} Junior Holy Name Society baseball and basketball diocesan leagues emerged.\textsuperscript{63} The branch at St. Patrick’s parish in Newburgh, New York was renowned for its fife, bugle, and drum corps, demonstrating the range of potential pursuits to which a junior branch might dedicate its active energies.\textsuperscript{64} In Chicago, laymen led the movement to engage Catholic youth through the development of the “Chicago Big Brothers” program, pairing parish adults

\textsuperscript{60} Holy Name Journal. April 1912, 10.
\textsuperscript{61} Holy Name Journal. February 1916, 13.
\textsuperscript{62} Holy Name Journal. August 1912, 7-8.
\textsuperscript{63} Holy Name Journal. June 1912, 6-7.
\textsuperscript{64} Holy Name Journal. September 1912, 3.
with wayward parish boys in pursuits beyond the confines of Holy Name meetings. The
success of this initiative was celebrated nationally and praised in particular at the 1924
convention in Washington, D.C., at which the Chicago delegation offered a booth exhibit
explaining the program.\footnote{Holy Name Journal, November 1924, 7. The success of the Chicago movement, which focused on
working with youth offenders in Chicago, in addition to Junior society members, preceded the 1924
Washington convention, as it spread to other locations such as Detroit. See Tentler, Seasons of Grace, 429.}

Similarly, laymen in a Wisconsin parish, through their
engagement with the junior branch there, launched a “Father and Son Movement.” As
part of one day-long event, over six hundred fathers and their sons jointly took
communion. An eighth-grade boy, twelve-year-old James Fitzpatrick, then addressed the
gathering of proud fathers in words perhaps not entirely his own:

> You have long been an inspiration to us, as we have watched you in large numbers
> approach the holy table. Perhaps you have imagined that we did not notice because we
> are only boys, but we saw and were thoughtful, and the thoughts of youth are long, long
> thoughts. We should consider it a grand privilege to be allowed to become members of
> such a noble Society. Our greatest boast would be that we were little crusaders and
defenders of the Holy Name of Jesus.\footnote{Holy Name Journal, February 1921, 6. The parish name (St. Thomas Aquinas) was provided, but the
specific location in Wisconsin was not.}

Variety existed, too, in the sense that the Junior Holy Name Society did not enliven parishes in all
locations. Leslie Woodcock Tentler has noted, for example, that in Detroit, the adult Holy
Name Society was generally less than its lay leaders hoped it would be, and that “[y]oung
men were apparently hard to recruit to the group, although a diocesan organization of
Junior Holy Name Societies was formed in 1921.”\footnote{Tentler, Seasons of Grace, 429.}

The overall success of the junior society extended its influence even into arena
not formally tied to the parish lifestyle, but typically not with the variety evident in parish
settings. By 1916, for instance, forty-five native American boys constituted the “Indian Junior Society” at the government-run school in Flandreau, South Dakota.  

Similarly, utilitarian aims were likely behind the establishment of a branch at the Lyman School for Boys in Westborough, Massachusetts, where ideals of discipline and respect for authority reigned supreme.  

Very quickly, then, following the 1911 Baltimore convention, at which the prospects of junior branches were boosted, the Junior Holy Name Society too became a national Catholic institution.

Eager to capitalize on the groundswell, national headquarters adapted the *Holy Name Journal* to accommodate the interests of its newest and youngest readers with the additional feature of a “With Our Juniors” section. With more direct language and occasional illustrations, “With Our Juniors” often adopted a light-hearted approach. “Don’ts for Boys,” for example, gave pointed directions on living a good life, mixing fatherly advice on respectability (pertaining to matters of personal demeanor, hygiene, and wardrobe maintenance) with priestly mandates on the nature of Holy Name

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69 *Holy Name Journal*, June 1912, 9. The report on this branch insisted, of course, that the boys exhibited “sincerity and enthusiasm” at the ceremony launching their society, and that they “respond very well to the interest taken in their spiritual welfare.”

70 Holy Name literature routinely offered news on the establishment of new adult branches, but overall statistics on numbers of branches and members were not reported, outside of the very general estimations typically offered on the occasion of national conventions. Overall statistics on junior branch formation and membership are even more problematic. While reports of new junior branches were occasionally mentioned in Holy Name reports, such notices did not appear with regularity and seem to have been rather randomly reported, which negates their usefulness in quantification. In reading the full run of *Holy Name Journal* issues through the 1960s, however, I have concluded that the number of junior society branches probably never came close to approaching the numbers of adult branches established throughout many dioceses. Steven M. Avella, for instance, has noted that it was not uncommon, as early as the 1920s in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, for Junior Holy Name Society branches to be transformed into or replaced by chapters of the Catholic Youth Organization. See *In the Richness of the Earth: A History of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, 1843-1958* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2002), 510.
manhood: “Don’t think it is ‘girlish’ to be gentle. . . Don’t forget to blacken the heels of your shoes. . . Don’t stay out all night to be up with the lark. . . Don’t stop washing your hands at the lower end of the wrists. . . Don’t get the idea into your head that cigarette smoke makes men. . . Don’t think acquiring bad habits makes you more of a man. . . Don’t forget that many of the little tasks you overlook about the house must be done by your tired mother.” 71 On other occasions, the message took the form of a pep talk, aiming to instill Catholic confidence. One such article implored readers to “never forget for a single moment that you are Holy Name boys,. . . that you are being watched every moment, especially by your Protestant friends. Whether they admit it or not, they expect you to set an example.” 72

A typical feature article in the juniors’ section amounted to a miniature sermon that young men might hear in their normal society meetings. One didactic anecdote was a tale of a priest’s encounters, on separate occasions, with two newspaper-selling Holy Name boys. When the first did not have the specific paper the priest wanted, he pointed down the street, saying, “Father, you can get a paper at the barber shop.” Only after inquiring did the priest learn that this boy belonged to the Junior Holy Name Society. A month later, however, the second boy, who was proudly wearing his Holy Name lapel pin for all to see, when he did not have the paper the priest wanted, immediately darted down the street to another newsstand, bought a copy of the paper, and brought it back to the priest. “I could not help contrasting these two Holy Name boys,” wrote the priest to his

71 **Holy Name Journal**, September 1914, 11.

pupils, “The one will go through life doing only what he must do, complaining, probably, at doing that. . . The other boy will do the most that he can and in the best way that he knows. He simply can’t avoid success.” Ending the lesson, the priest asked, “Holy Name boys, are you doing now just what you must do and nothing more? If so, wake up. Failure is mostly the result of doing nothing more than you must do. Success is ensured by doing the most that you can do.”73

As with the adult males, despite overall success, clerics sometimes floundered in their efforts to engage Catholic boys. Certainly, to an extent, the older generation of clerics felt out of their depth in attempting to rally boys to the cause, as evident in one plainly and somewhat desperately worded plea to adult readers: “We are trying to interest our Juniors. . .Send in suggestions. . . We ask Holy Name men to send us prizes for Juniors.”74 Prizes in gold were typically offered for individual or parish-based competitions. One such contest was billed at “$100 or $200 in gold to the Junior Holy Name Society which will enroll the greatest number of new members from September 1st, 1912, to June 30th, 1913.”75 Another custom aimed at reinforcing education amongst the youth was the essay contest. Originating in Junior Holy Name practice in 1912, boys did not generally respond as expected, and as late as 1930, it was occasionally a young girl who took the prize. Such was the case with Kathleen Curley of St. Raphael’s School in Hyde Park, Massachusetts, who that year won first prize in the fifth-grade-level

73 Holy Name Journal, April 1913, 21.
74 Holy Name Journal, April 1913, 6.
75 Holy Name Journal, June 1912, 6.
competition for her essay on “Why Every Boy Should Belong to the Holy Name Society.” On another occasion, a prize was given to a boy for a very well written essay, only to be followed a month later by an apology once it was discovered that they boy had plagiarized the entire paper from a popular boys’ book. Perhaps soured by that embarrassment, several months later the Journal editors lashed out at their boy readers. In a new contest with the essay topic of “My Vacation,” the submissions were “by no means as numerous or as varied as we could wish.” Very few addressed the topic of vacation at all, and so, they announced, “no prize will be given.” Seemingly exasperated, this priest-author did note that with “scarcely an exception, the boys have turned to things military, and every paper deals with some phase of war or of war’s consequences.”

Judging that soldiers and sports, rather than writing, were the topics most naturally interesting to junior society members, the Journal editors provided much of each, but in intentionally instructive ways, remaining consistent in the effort to transform the secular interests of boys into sacred experiences to whatever extent possible. A feature article penned by a guest author tackled the boys’ interest in football. Villanova University’s head football coach, Harry Stuhldreher, had been, as a quarterback at Notre Dame, a member of one of the all-time great backfields, collectively nicknamed the “Four Horsemen.” His additional success as a coach at Villanova only augmented his fame amongst football fans. His message to Holy Name boys and men, though, focused

Holy Name Journal, September 1912, 6; Holy Name Journal, September 1930, 15.

Holy Name Journal, April 1912, 14.

Holy Name Journal, November 1914, 11.
not on winning at all costs but rather winning in the right way. “It is true that often times football games can be won by employing some illegal tactics, such as holding, tripping, or even slugging,” he admitted, “But good sportsmanship, proper representation, self-restraint, and quick thinking are the factors that we want to see in our boys.”  

It was, however, the story of a young soldier, Joseph Desmond McKinney of Newark, New Jersey, that most dramatically illustrated to Holy Name boys the critical importance of living a pious, honest, and honorable life. McKinney was a member of the St. Columba’s Junior Holy Name Society when, on the eve of his eighteenth birthday, he volunteered for navy service in World War I. An able gunman, he volunteered and was accepted to the crew of the S.S. Antilles, a passenger cargo vessel being used to deliver troops to France. As the Journal reported to its young readers, McKinney had “made two trips across in safety, and was on his way home from the third when the vessel was sunk by a German submarine.” McKinney died, becoming “as far as we know, the first member of the Holy Name Society to make the supreme sacrifice for his country.”

Parish-level directors and lay volunteers did much to ensure that boys enjoyed the experience of the Junior Holy Name Society. The development of faith and practice, though, were the core purposes, and as the case of Joseph McKinney illustrated, practical faith was the paramount duty of any young Catholic man’s life. The very adult concerns of the Holy Name Society (preparing ground level defenses of family, church, and nation

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79 Holy Name Journal, April 1935, 13.

80 Holy Name Journal, December 1917, 9.
in a world going mad with war and communism) were thus introduced to young men in junior branches with increasing regularity.

In addressing the “boy problem,” as with racial and domestic relations, the Holy Name Society’s evolution mirrored that of American society during the first half of the twentieth century. While racial integration of the Holy Name Society came early – and in the very limited context of diocesan union functions, since individual parishes remained segregated – the glacially slow emergence of deeper interracial respect likely frustrated many contemporaries. Likewise, women and children in the first quarter of the century were expected to serve as Holy Name cheerleaders, softly nudging their men to the society and applauding their participation. The development, by the mid-1920s, of a militant and triumphant publicly-oriented practice, however, meant that men no longer required such encouragements. By this time, men were expected to act in all facets of their lives like the clean, pious Catholics that society meetings idealized. Public Catholic action was one ramification, but another was the assumption of a leadership role in child-rearing, discipline, and religious pursuits at home. Teenage Catholic boys, through the Junior Holy Name Society, received concerted training in these finer points of Catholic manhood, creating a steady flow of new membership and vibrant energy to the adult society. The development of Holy Name Catholic action during the 1920s (Chapter Three) taught men to serve as examples of piety and patriotism for their Protestant counterparts. Holy Name encounters with race, gender, and youth challenged men to open their minds, develop new relationship structures, and assume leadership in all facets of their lives.
There are many fruits of this social analysis. Holy Name men were challenged to reject their inherited racism, assume a more pious and powerful position within their homes, and project their Holy Name realities on their youth in an effort to ensure the generational expansion of their movement. The more overarching observation to be made here, in light of these transformations that had taken place by mid-century, complicates our understanding of twentieth-century Catholicism as a whole. The challenges to Holy Name men described in this chapter amounted to a dramatic increase in expectations of maturity and responsibility associated with manhood. This pre-Vatican II era, however, has been described both by contemporaries and historians as one of metaphorical lay childhood, characterized by a heavily proscribed faith and little lay agency. The changes ushered in by the Second Vatican Council, the interpretation follows, are thus indicative of the maturation of the laity into adulthood, a new era in which the laity assumed significant autonomy and took more active roles in the affairs of the church.81 While contemporaries clearly perceived Vatican II as an entirely new era in their religious lives, scholars would do well to appreciate that many of the changes commonly identified with the 1960s were not entirely new. As the final chapter illustrates, fears of communist influences at home and abroad, more so than other factors, were driving most of the fundamental changes in the Holy Name Society as early as the 1930s. Such changes were part of the early stages of more major Catholic transformations that became clearly visible in the wake of the Second Vatican Council.

81 Robert Orsi, for example, employs phrases such as “age of childhood” and “cult of childhood” to describe the early twentieth-century passivity and deference of the laity. See Between Heaven and Earth, 81. For discussion of the figurative maturation of the laity, as landmarked by the Second Vatican Council, see O’Toole, The Faithful, 210-1, 251-2.
CHAPTER FIVE

“THAT HIDEOUS MONSTER BORN OF HELL ITSELF”: THE HOLY NAME SOCIETY RESPONDS TO COMMUNISM

In early 1916, a Holy Name layman named James McCarthy wrote to the editors of the *Holy Name Journal*, asking them to “tell me by what right the Catholic Church speaks on questions like Socialism and other questions of the day? It seems to me that her mission is a spiritual one and should be confined to spiritual things.” The editorial reply was direct, forceful, and quite revealing:

The mission . . . of the Catholic Church is to guard the salvation of each man’s soul. The soul is not something that you bring to church on Sunday and leave there for the rest of the week. It is the living principle at the source of every act that you perform, whether you be walking or working, talking or chirping, or listening to the eloquence of a Socialistic orator. The Church, since it is the guardian of your soul, has the right to speak out against every system, opinion or institution that may be for you an occasion wherein your soul’s welfare will be threatened. The Church sees in Socialism, not merely an economic reform, but a combination of dangerous philosophic and anti-religious opinions. If you got under the influence of them the welfare of your soul would be threatened. For this reason the Church has the right to speak out against Socialism.¹

That Mr. McCarthy asked his question in the way that he did is indicative of the response many laymen likely had to the increased frequency of discussions of socialism in the Holy Name Society. The response from the clerical editors was perhaps an explanation perhaps overdue.

The present study has thus far largely neglected the topics of socialism and communism, an intentional omission which affords a more focused treatment of the

¹ April 1916, 7. This lay-clerical exchange was referenced earlier in this work (see Chapter 2, 86-7, fn. 56), but in a more general manner. That the conversation focused on socialism was not mentioned in the earlier treatment.
development and impact of socialism and communism on the society throughout the twentieth century. One could justifiably argue, for example, that American Catholics entered into the Cold War at least a generation prior to the post-World War II partition of Germany. The above exchange, however, suggests that while some American Catholics (clergy) may have done so, others (many laymen) did not and were in fact confused by the anticommmunist rhetoric that grew to dominate their religious lives.\(^2\) While socialism was certainly a known quantity by the time Mr. McCarthy wrote his letter, its characterization as a scourge on humanity, as it more frequently was depicted in the context of American Holy Name practice, was much less clear. Clerical familiarity with the history and power of socialism in Europe was doubtlessly more fully developed than that of the average American Holy Name man in the early twentieth century. The lay learning curve, though, was short, thanks both to the nearly constant repetition by the clergy and the course of world events.

By the 1950s, Holy Name men were not only well versed in the philosophies attendant to communism and its implementation in various parts of the world, but they had also developed their own philosophical anticommmunist stance and a broad range of Holy Name practices designed to strengthen their homes, communities, and nation against such dangerous (as communism was universally depicted in Holy Name rhetoric) influences. Holy Name men, especially after the 1917 revolution in Russia, learned much

\(^2\) This is a central point in Donald Crosby, *God, Church, and Flag: Senator Joseph R. McCarthy and the Catholic Church, 1950-1957* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978). Catholic anticommmunism was certainly widespread, but examples throughout this chapter will illustrate Crosby’s point (which he makes in reference to support [or lack thereof] of McCarthyism), that laymen frequently were either not in total agreement with their clerics or did not fully understand the issues at hand.
from their clerics about socialism and its newest incantation as Soviet communism. The
global awareness of Holy Name men, whose understanding of Catholic Action led them
to act in both domestic and international situations, caused them to understand
communism as a threat at home just as it was a threat abroad. Their understandings of
American patriotism led them to accentuate that aspect of their practice as a primary
counterpoint to communism. And their perception of the man’s role in the home, as the
leader of the family’s religion as well as its politics, helped create a sense that individual
Holy Name men, now more than ever, must be bound to their faith in order to defend
their own against communist influences lurking around every corner. Such transitions,
though, also marked a major shift in the organizational structure of the national
movement. That change was evident by the time of the fourth national convention,
hosted by Boston in 1947, but its implications were as yet unclear.

“We Must Efficiently Organize Our Forces”: Teaching Holy Name Men About
Communism

In the earliest years of the American twentieth century, socialism was a known
quantity for leaders of the Holy Name Society, but it was far from a primary concern.
Most important in those years, as argued previously, was the push to establish the parish
presence of the society and convince laymen that it was not unmanly to attend the
sacraments and reform one’s speech patterns. As the society expanded, however, leaders
at national headquarters pushed parish spiritual directors to consider not only theological
instruction for society meetings, but also more worldly topics with implications for religion. The international nature of Roman Catholicism, the knowledge of socialism’s expansion in certain European contexts, made American clerics especially wary of such philosophical influences on the western shores of the Atlantic. Despite the working-class identity that Holy Name leaders fostered in these years, many were recognizing the potential political implications of its expansion. Already by 1909, the Holy Name Journal editorialized that “If France and the European countries had the strong bulwark of a Holy Name Society, such as the United States has, instead of many secret societies having for their object an attack on religion and the Church, the anti-religious legislation of these countries would not be to-day what it is.”

Initially, socialism was frequently lumped in with Masonic and other influences, one of “many secret societies,” but leaders increasingly focused more attention to its philosophy specifically.

The effort to instruct working class Holy Name men on the finer points of socialism was well underway by the end of the first decade of the century. In its earliest years of publication, the Holy Name Journal was geared most directly at the society’s spiritual directors, so its first appeals to thwart socialism offered suggestions on how to address the subject amongst laymen. “We suggest to Spiritual Directors,” began one typical notice, “that short, practical instructions be given to Holy Name men on Socialism.” Lest parish administrators think the topic irrelevant to their circumstances, the editors warned that many parish priests “have gone along unsuspectingly of the socialistic influences brought to bear on the poor men of their parishes, until great harm

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3 Holy Name Journal, September 1909, 9.
was wrought. Many are the dangers, especially in our large cities.\textsuperscript{4} Perhaps suspecting that the average parish priest was himself a bit less educated on the matter than national headquarters would hope, the \textit{Journal} offered suggestions for further reading, such as William Stephens Kress’s \textit{Questions of Socialists and Their Answers}, available at the affordable cost of twenty-five cents. Kress offered “ordinary laboring men a good notion of Socialism. The answers,” the \textit{Journal} assured spiritual directors, “are popular and suited to the intelligence of the public.”\textsuperscript{5} Such material was ideal for parish priests who needed to refine their own understandings before introducing the topic at Holy Name meetings.

In short order, Holy Name leaders accelerated their anti-socialist rhetoric and formalized a counter program. In the view of Father McKenna, the “Apostle of the Holy Name” in America, the proposed first national Holy Name convention in 1911 offered exactly that opportunity. “May it be a call to arms in which all the Catholic men of America will enlist under the standard of the Holy Name to fight the irreligious spirit of our day,” he wrote, “to destroy the revolt of Socialism against authority.”\textsuperscript{6} When McKenna spoke with such vigor, results generally followed. In this case, the Baltimore convention resolved on a concerted effort to “caution Holy Name men against those forms of Socialism and irreligious societies that would rob Him of His Divinity, whose

\textsuperscript{4} \textit{Holy Name Journal}, May 1909, 9.
\textsuperscript{5} \textit{Holy Name Journal}, May 1909, 15.
\textsuperscript{6} \textit{Holy Name Journal}, May 1911, 3.
Name they honor.” As the Holy Name Society gained notoriety, it became clear that at least some laymen were recognizing the socialist threat and envisioning the confraternity as an appropriate line of defense.

Layman Edward Sibley of Ashburnham, Massachusetts, for instance, wrote in response to a story on the Holy Name Society in the Catholic News. The article had cited the society as a means of unifying and educating Catholic men, and Sibley agreed. “The idea should be pushed,” he argued. “The great mass of Catholics in our country are not reached by the fraternal orders . . . [and many] end their school days as soon as the law permits them to do so. Hence their lives are lived individually,” and therefore, he implied, vulnerably. The unifying force of the Holy Name Society, though, was “laden with golden opportunities.” “In one field of endeavor alone,” he added, it might prove most beneficial. “I believe it offers the surest, most easy, and least expensive means of opposing Socialism.” Himself a local politician who had recently competed against a socialist candidate, Sibley argued that the “very class of people who are susceptible to the proselytizing influences of the Socialists can be reached” through Holy Name work. Failure to do so would be disastrous, as Sibley warned from the grass roots level that the “cancer of Socialism is fast eating into the vitals of our Catholic laborers, even more than we realize.”

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7 Holy Name Journal, November 1911, 10.

8 Sibley’s letter to Catholic News was reprinted in Holy Name Journal, September 1912, 7. Sibley, a Democrat, lost a state senate election to a Republican in 1910, but a Socialist Party candidate was also in the election. See election results reported in Office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Massachusetts Public Document No. 43, “Number of Assessed Polls, Registered Voters, and Persons who Voted in Each Voting Precinct at the State, City, and Town Elections, 1910” (Boston: Wright & Potter Printing Co., 1911), lxxi.
Within a few years, as the national Holy Name Society established its public identity in the context of emerging Catholic Action, the *Holy Name Journal* pronounced the society as “indeed the Church’s answer to Socialism.”\(^9\) From the perspective of the national headquarters, then, there was a firm commitment to aggressive antisocialist propaganda; at a lower level, however, where action was frequently driven by the particularities and personalities of local circumstances, the vigor of the push might have fluctuated widely.

Not so, of course, in O’Connell’s Boston, as the Cardinal made education about socialism a priority for all in his charge and maintained a steady rumble of his own thundering anti-socialist rhetoric at most speaking engagements. As early as 1913, O’Connell (taking a cue, perhaps, from the resolutions of the Baltimore convention) ordered the Holy Name spiritual directors throughout the archdiocese to begin, if they had not yet, formal introductions to socialist philosophy at regular intervals in Holy Name meetings. Father John O’Brien was held up as an example, as he had already begun delivering lectures on the topic to the Holy Name men at the Church of St. Aidan in Brookline.\(^10\) By the 1920s, O’Connell routinely devoted his addresses to Holy Name men to railing both against communism and the lethargy with which the world was responding to its threat.

As part of his 1920 address on the occasion of the Feast of the Holy Name, the Cardinal cautioned his cathedral audience not to assume that America was safe from

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\(^9\) *Holy Name Journal*, March 1921, 3.

\(^10\) *Holy Name Journal*, January 1913, 8-9, 16.
harmful events in Europe. World War I, he reminded them, had been fought to end autocracy; but the job was not complete. “Just as a few centuries ago the hosts of Mohammed were battling at the gates of Vienna and threatening the downfall of Christianity, and Poland came to the rescue,” he intoned, “so today, literally, another host of infidelity, yea, the very enemies of Christianity itself, the enemies of God and Christian civilization, are at the gates of Poland.” Soviet “anarchy,” he continued, “has taken possession of tens of millions of people throughout Eastern Europe.” And what change had come for the Russian people? Merely that the “autocracy of the Czar” had been replaced by the “tyranny of Bolshevism” with its “gospel of . . . hatred and pride.”

Moreover, as he noted in another Holy Name Feast address, the nations of the world had failed to prepare their defenses against the subtle and cunning communist infestation. “How much respect for God’s law still remains among the so-called civilized countries?,” he asked, “We behold great avarice, price, conceit, and a stupid and false nationalism. . . . Under this leadership, not only Russia, but the whole world seems to be rushing to destruction.” Only the American Holy Name man, who vigorously protected the centrality of Jesus Christ in his life, could withstand communism. For so many others, “since Christ is no longer a reality, He must be a mockery!”

At the Feast mass in 1929, it was O’Connell’s young assistant, the man he had appointed as Diocesan Director of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, Father Richard Cushing, who in his sermon delivered a glimpse of the intense anticommunism that would also characterize his later

11 Holy Name Journal, February 1920, 4, 15.

12 Holy Name Journal, March 1923, 6.
reign as Boston’s Archbishop. Cushing’s focus was the blasphemous atheisms at work in both Mexico and Russia as he urged his Holy Name audience to continue the fight as “alert, true soldiers of the faith.”13 All themes of Holy Name development to date – vigorous masculinity, strength in numbers, defense of religion, and social respectability and justice through action – were being marshaled to the fight against communism, the emerging cause within the cause.

The education and motivation of the laity continued through the 1930s, and Holy Name men became increasingly willing to show how much they had learned. Political cartoons in the Holy Name Journal routinely targeted the Soviet Union, but the most incisive illustrations reminded Catholic laymen that the responsibility to stop communism began with them, as few others were taking up the fight. “What Will Be the Outcome?” was the title of one such cartoon, in which three lions—labeled “socialism,” “bigotry,” and “divorce”—stood menacingly over the devoured corpse of Russia but had turned their gazes on Uncle Sam, who looked on helplessly, his hands fixed behind him with red tape.14 As the rhetoric intensified, one clerical writer characterized the situation comparatively: “Our war [against communism] is a sacred war, more sacred than the Crusades.” While the Crusaders had fought to regain mere land, he reasoned, Holy Name men were fighting for the very idea of Jesus Christ, and they were fighting against an

13 Holy Name Journal, February 1929, 6-7.
14 Holy Name Journal, February 1924, 3.
enemy in communism that “does not stop at showing disrespect to Christ’s Divinity, it seeks to annihilate Him.”

No fight, it seemed, could ever be as important, and Holy Name men showed that they understood the magnitude of the situation. Layman and former president of the Philadelphia Archdiocesan Union, James Murray, wrote a feature article for the Journal rhetorically asking what group of Americans might be better equipped to combat communist influences at home. Whereas “others may reject the Socialistic and Communistic program because they doubt its political wisdom,” Murray argued, “the Holy Name man rejects it because of his faith and his loyalty.” Doubly committed to the “cause of Almighty God and of the Republic of the United States” through their membership, he concluded, Holy Name men must now “advance this cause so zealously, so intrepidly, and so irresistibly, that the whole world may see in the Holy Name Society the very apotheosis of loyalty to Christ, the Saviour of the World, and to this our beloved country.”

The occasion of the third national Holy Name Society convention – this one descending upon the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York City – was the setting for a creative push to respond to the persistent threat in newly constructive ways, “to develop and effect a definite program to combat Communism.” There was, of course, a dramatic closing scene as Holy Name marchers, along with their Honorary National

15 Holy Name Journal, July-August 1936, 8.
16 Holy Name Journal, February 1934, 7-8.
17 Holy Name Journal, September 1936, 31-32.
Chairman Alfred E. Smith, flooded into the stadium on Randall’s Island; but the key moments of the convention, for many, had already occurred. New York’s Patrick Cardinal Hayes, launched the convention on a focused course of anticommunism in his opening address at St. Patrick’s Cathedral on Thursday, September 17, 1936. Noting that, in recent years, he had more frequently heard of communist philosophy discussions in American schools and colleges than discussion of American patriotism, he argued that “Today we are a world in battle: a battle against Atheism in Russia; sacrilege in Spain, a Catholic country; the Apostasy in Mexico, another Catholic country.” “It is a serious situation,” he remarked, one which highlighted for Holy Name men “the importance of your mission to save not only your own soul but to save the souls of others.”  

The context and timing of the ongoing Spanish Civil War was critical to this 1936 convention, and the focus on communism was no coincidence. The historian Patrick Allitt notes that through the 1930s and early 1940s – although Catholic school teachings against communism continued, and Catholics protested the opening of diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union – Catholic views on Joseph Stalin and the Soviets softened a bit overall. It was, in the 1930s, the Spanish Civil War, not Soviet aggression, that “intensified Communist-Catholic antagonism.” Although, as Donald Crosby has cited, there was some American Catholic division over the fascist General Francisco Franco, “with large minorities either opposing Franco or remaining neutral,” Allitt argues that a vast majority viewed Franco as the “George Washington of Spain” and the “savior

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18 Holy Name Journal, October 1936, 6.
of the Catholic church” in that nation.19 The historian Richard Powers characterizes the Catholic response to the Spanish Civil War from Pope Pius XI as the declaration of a concerted “worldwide anticommunist campaign,” which led “in vain” to American Catholic efforts “to persuade the rest of the country that communism, not fascism, was the real issue in Spain.”20 Cardinal Hayes’s opening address in 1936 thus set a tone not only for the convention but for Holy Name action going forward, and it was a tone largely consistent with the global Catholic perspective.

Not surprisingly, when Monsignor Michael O’Gorman of Los Angeles delivered an address entitled, “The Holy Name Society—A Bulwark Against Communism,” the convention crowd was particularly “aroused.”21 The historian Steven Rosswurm has noted the frequency with which key American anticommunists – chief among them in his analysis were Holy Name leaders and Federal Bureau of Investigation Director J. Edgar Hoover – employed the bulwark metaphor. He identifies a clear pattern in which perceived threats to security and religion were cast in feminine language and often associated with water (“tidal waves” and “floods” were persistent themes), whereas the required solutions and defenses against such runaway water were various strong, solid, and masculine means of water control (“dikes,” “bastions,” and most often “bulwarks,”

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the latter of course being the preferred metaphor for Holy Name action). On the third day of the convention, Hoover himself addressed the crowd as a special guest speaker in a speech that cited soft parenting as a major source of crime, calling for decidedly more strict discipline and reverence for authority in the home and throughout society. Domestic discipline could only lead to strength against international threats in the shared perspective of both Hoover and his Catholic audience.

Likewise, with the committee deliberations complete on day three of the convention, the “Resolution which attracted the most attention was the one which condemned Communism:”

Whereas, the dignity of man as a human person is established by the spiritual element of his nature . . . and . . . whereas, Communism as a philosophy of life ignores . . . this, and subordinates the mind and will to the acquisition of the goods that serve the needs of man’s lower or physical or material nature thus ignoring the requirements of his higher or spiritual nature . . . and, Whereas, Communism erects as a necessary means to the attainment of its own end a pedagogical technique ordained to secure and to diffuse its philosophy where it may, and, Whereas, the members of the HNS, as true and loyal American citizens, recognize that these stated policies continue a perversion of the true order that should exist between God and man, and man and man, and, Whereas, the members of the Holy Name Society . . . further recognize that these aforementioned pernicious tenets . . . are being actively and persistently fostered and propagated with great diligence in our very midst,

Be it resolved . . . that, FIRSTLY, Communism as a way of life is essentially and intrinsically vicious and subversive of all order and entirely prejudicial to the good of Society . . . and that secondly, the pedagogical technique or educational system that diffuses it be condemned as striking at the very roots of good order . . . and, be it further resolved, that every effort be made by Holy Name men, individually and collectively, to acquaint all officials upon whom rests directly or indirectly the responsibility for

22 Rossrwurm, The FBI and the Catholic Church, 1935-1962 (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2009), 20-2. A central premise of Rosswurm’s study is to explain the tendency of many contemporaries in assuming that Hoover was a Catholic. Not only were many of his key agents Catholic, but also “The Director” fostered strong working relationships with many Catholic leaders, with whom he shared basic assumptions about the meaning and importance of masculinity in American society. On Hoover’s 1936 Holy Name Convention address, see 106. On later correspondence between Hoover and prominent Catholics (such as Archbishops John O’Hara and Michael Curley) regarding the 1936 speech, see 54, 57. Hoover’s speech was also covered in Holy Name Journal, October 1936, 12.
education of youth of this terrible menace to the individual and to the sacred institutions which we hold dear and that they be urged to use every effective means to expurgate from institutions of education the teaching of any form of Communism and that effective measures be taken to remove from the faculty of any such institution any teacher or instructor who advocates or imparts directly or indirectly any such teaching or similar philosophy.23

Amidst all the rhetoric of previous decades, here was the most complete indictment of philosophical communism yet presented by the Holy Name movement, and here was the most direct charge to its members to take concerted action against it.

Increasingly, during the late 1930s, Catholic leaders not only blasted communism as an atheistic philosophy but most often also cited its evident influence in the context of everyday American life. Father Harry C. Graham, in his first address to a Holy Name gathering after assuming the National Director post, focused his debut remarks squarely on ―that hideous monster born of hell itself, Communism,‖ and its local presence. “This materialistic philosophy,” he thundered, “would tear God from the Heavens, take Jesus Christ from the hearts of men and in place of St. Peter’s of Rome give us the Kremlin of Moscow.” The litany of communist sins went on to include a complete absence of morality (the equivalent of “licensed sensuality”), birth control, free love, and divorce (the latter because, for communists, “marriage hinders or limits one’s self expression”). Countering the hypothetical charge that he was simply being an “alarmist,” Graham insisted that the familiar refrain, “It cannot happen here,” should be replaced with “It is happening here.” He cited a recent New York City election in which “day after day there flew an airplane with a trailer pennant . . . [reading] ‘Vote for Communism.’”24

23 Holy Name Journal, October 1936, 12-3.

24 Holy Name Journal, February 1939, 14-5, 32.
Graham was further saddened during a trip to a Broadway movie house, at which was shown newsreel footage of Spain’s General Franco during the ongoing civil war there. “Almost instantly,” he lamented, “the crowded theatre was filled with hisses, jeers, and catcalls.” When the loyalist government was shown, however, “instantly the crowd stood and wildly cheered and applauded.” For Catholic anticommunists, the sins of Franco’s regime were at the time the lesser of two evils, and if anything was known of Franco, it was his own anticommunism. Taking these examples as signs of a certain communist infiltration of New York City, Graham urged his charges, “If we are to fight a winning battle, if we are to drive from our land Communism and its vicious propagators, if we are to preserve our religion, our Church and our Country then we must organize our forces.” Graham’s suggested first step in such organization was for laymen to write letters to Congress protesting a proposed removal of the embargo against loyalist Spain. He had, he claimed, “just last week . . . received a communication asking that the Holy Name Societies of the United States do everything in their power” to that end.\(^{25}\)

Holy Name men and Catholics generally, however, responded more directly to an anticommunist letter originating in Rome. In his \textit{Divini Redemptoris} encyclical, Pope Pius XI blasted communism and offered as a counterstrategy more intensive study of Catholic doctrine by the laity. As the \textit{Holy Name Journal} explained, this “call should be a challenge” to all Holy Name men. The encyclical, the editors suggested, should be required reading for Holy Name meetings. The negative strategy of assailing

\(^{25}\) \textit{Ibid.}
communism would henceforth be coupled with the positive strategy of formulating a “well-planned social order” so that Holy Name men “will know the Christian position and make it known to their fellowmen.”

On the eve of the Pearl Harbor attack, the letter to the editor from Harry Heelon of Lowell, Massachusetts appeared as something of an anachronism. A positive review of the *Holy Name Journal* overall – “I like particularly the articles describing Holy Name activities,” he wrote, “also articles describing subversive activities against Holy Mother Church and the means adopted to combat these activities” – its conclusion suggested that perhaps Mr. Heelon was either a recent subscriber or not quite as familiar with the magazine as he indicated. “I hope to see in the not too distant future,” he remarked, “a double-barrelled article refuting the claim of religious freedom in Soviet Russia.”

Indeed, the Holy Name Society had discharged and reloaded its barrels many times in recent decades with communism in its crosshairs. While that assault would continue, though, a more focused effort ensued in which laymen were encouraged not only to despise communism, but also to comprehend the particulars of their own faith anew.

*Holy Name Men Re-Learn Their Faith and Create New Practices*

During World War II and the early Cold War, the Holy Name Society adopted the strategy that the best defense against communism was a vibrant and diverse offense. This

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26 *Holy Name Journal*, April 1937, 3-4.

27 *Holy Name Journal*, November 1941, 36.
would require new avenues to expand the power of the Holy Name message, but initially and more fundamentally in the view of clerics, it necessitated a more thorough lay understanding of the philosophies (especially Catholicism) at work in the world. The Holy Name Journal did its part, offering thematic presentations in question-and-answer format, designed specifically for lay group consumption. Under the headline of “Fascism Communism Democracy: A Discussion for the Monthly Meeting,” a typical three-page feature offered frequently asked questions (along with clerical answers) about major government forms and how they related to religious practice.\(^{28}\)

A more ambitious project of National Director Graham was the publication, beginning in 1941, of the Theology for the Layman pamphlet series. Based on the Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas, these pamphlets tackled individual points of Catholic thought, as the introductory issue explained, “from the point of view of the layman.” Countering the objection that “Holy Name men have traditionally worn badges, not caps and gowns,” the series was aimed not at converting laymen into scholars but rather at the fundamental and “systematic education of beginners” in theological study. In issues typically of about thirty pages, the series authors discussed theological points in short, digestible paragraphs, and an end section “Study Club Outline” provided summary and questions designed to test comprehension and promote discussion. Some of the discussion questions, such as the following, likely produced uncomfortable silences in the context of Holy Name gatherings for men not accustomed to academic pursuits: “With the world collapsing because of bad economic theories, selfish fanatics and a bewildered

\(^{28}\) Holy Name Journal, April 1938, 5-6, 27.
educational system, wouldn’t it be wiser to concentrate on particular problems than to spend so much time on the entire relationship between man and God?” Subsequent pamphlets in the series were, if anything, even more abstract and philosophical.

It was perhaps such efforts, in a classic case of the student becoming the teacher, that layman Louis C. Fink had in mind as he cautioned clerics against too lofty language and too heady topics for Holy Name meetings. Picking up on the practices outlined by noted readability experts such as Rudolph Flesh, the author in 1946 of The Art of Plain Talk, Fink advised clerics to use compact and simple sentences: “Our next meeting will be Tuesday night. We meet at seven P.M. John Doe will speak about the Vatican.” Too much Holy Name material, even in Fink’s decidedly educated view, was too complex, and he provided a paper tiger example. “‘The introduction of polysyllabic words coincidentally with grandiose stimulation of extracurricular cranial activities . . . ‘ — Well,” Fink informed clerics, “you lost your reader way back. If you find yourself using long words, try it again.” Writing in 1960, Fink echoed the complaints offered in several letters to the editor featured in the Journal, such as that from James Crowley of Cambridge, Massachusetts. “Your magazine is very dull,” Crowley remarked, “What do you think we are? A bunch of college professors? Would you kindly discuss the problems of the day in a language we can understand?” It was not, apparently, the frequently politicized content that bothered him but rather the manner in which it was

29 Holy Name Society, Theology for the Layman—No. 1: The High Quest [this number authored by Walter Farrell] (New York: National Headquarters of the Holy Name Society, 1941), quotes on 3, 4, 21, 23.


31 Holy Name Journal, January 1946, 36.
offered. Crowley likely appreciated much more the simply worded pledge added to the inside of the back cover of the most recent version of the *Official Holy Name Manual*, one which actually mentioned communism by name and clearly stated the members’ dedication to America:

My Loyalties As A Holy Name Man

BECAUSE
There is a land which gives me my freedom and liberty;
There is a church which comforts and consoles me;
There is a God who gives me life and preserves it;

AND BECAUSE
The forces of communism would despoil me of my constitutional rights;
The powers of irreligion and impiety would destroy my church;
The principles of atheistic philosophies would rob me of my God;

I PROMISE AND PLEDGE AS A HOLY NAME MAN
To uphold the CONSTITUTION of the United States;
To defend the RIGHTS of the Roman Catholic Church;
To dedicate my LIFE to the service of my God.

These pledges and promises, if need be, I will seal with life’s blood.
Blessed be the name of the Lord.32

Other attempts to immerse Holy Name men deeply in the particulars of their faith were tied to larger Catholic movements and decidedly more approachable in language. In 1941, with the release of the long-awaited “Confraternity Bible,” national headquarters offered the services of the Holy Name Society branches as local distributors of the New Testament to each Catholic family in their parishes on May 18, designated in Holy Name circles as “Bible Sunday.” National Director Graham, in creating this event, aimed to

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counter the perception that “Catholics do not read the Bible,” and Holy Name men, fittingly, should take charge of such important deliveries. Graham even arranged for a personal presentation of the revised New Testament to President Franklin Roosevelt. He was sure that Roosevelt would appreciate this product of Catholic scholars, whose several years of hard work in this effort Graham characterized as a most “unusual type of national defense.” The more reader-friendly version, President Roosevelt was told, was produced in the hope that “if the story of the life, principles, and teachings of Jesus Christ are made more readable, they will be more widely read.”  

Bible reading was far from the only devotional practice to which Holy Name men committed renewed emphasis. By 1947, it had “become the practice in many Holy Name Societies throughout the country to conduct an all night vigil from approximately 9:00 P.M. on Holy Thursday to 7:00 A.M. on Good Friday [with a] separate group of Holy Name men . . . present for adoration each hour.” Layman Edward Conway, a lieutenant in the Marines, in writing to Boston Holy Name Union Director Father Francis McElroy, advised that he missed the Holy Name life of his Quincy parish of St. Joseph. But in particular, he informed McElroy, “if anyone should ask what a Catholic man in my position misses most,” tell them that “next to the reception of the Sacraments, the

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33 *Holy Name Journal*, April 1941, 4-5; June 1941, 12-3. The revision, commonly referenced as the “Confraternity Bible,” was the fruit of the labor of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (C.C.D.) to provide a version with more contemporary sensibilities in language and presentation. Prior to that, Richard Challoner’s mid-1700s revision of the Douay-Rheims Bible had been the Catholic standard for nearly two hundred years. On the 1941 Bible Sunday, see Joseph P. Chinnici, “The Catholic Community at Prayer, 1926-1976” in O’Toole, ed., *Habits of Devotion*, 34-5, which also mentions similar efforts in 1950, as the “Holy Name Society distributed a large picture of Jesus holding a book with the caption, ‘A New Testament in Every Home.’”

34 *Holy Name Journal*, February 1947, 33. For a summary of this practice in Boston that year, see *Holy Name Journal*, May 1947, 20-1.
Nocturnal Adoration has been the most fruitful and soul-satisfying experience of my life.”\textsuperscript{35} The Holy Name Society offered its own twist, as well, on the mid-century push for Rosary devotion. Unveiled for sale in 1952 was the Vercilli Rosary, featuring a “new centerpiece of Blessed John of Vercelli,” the society’s 1274 founder, and a “new crucifix embodying the indulgenced emblem of the Holy Name Society.” In a range of styles – simple black beads with silver-plated mounting, all the way up to sterling silver beads and mounting with a “hand engraved crucifix” – this piece was available for between eighty cents and $7.50.\textsuperscript{36} Miniature statues of Blessed John, “in three sizes – all naturally colored,” were also offered for $1.50 (six inches in height), $2.25 (nine inches), and $3.25 (twelve inches).\textsuperscript{37} While the first generation of American Holy Name life had produced faith-based (and indulgenced) material items such as the Holy Name pocket manual and Holy Name pins, buttons, and badges, the mid-century generation was offered the opportunity to advertise its faith with Holy Name auto plaques and key rings.

Community action still included of attacks on blasphemous speech during these years, but it expanded to include a range of public service messages. The American Heritage Foundation, for example, honored the national headquarters of the Holy Name Society in 1953 for its non-partisan efforts in encouraging Americans to vote in the previous national election.\textsuperscript{38} In 1954, in cooperation with the National Safety Council

\textsuperscript{35} Conway’s letter quoted in \textit{Holy Name Journal}, February 1951, 17.

\textsuperscript{36} \textit{Holy Name Journal}, September 1952, back cover. For another description of the product, see \textit{Holy Name Journal}, November 1952, 32.

\textsuperscript{37} \textit{Holy Name Journal}, September 1952, 7.

\textsuperscript{38} \textit{Holy Name Journal}, May 1953, 16.
and featuring that organization’s “Green Cross for Safety” logo, the *Journal* carried graphic advertisements warning about the dangers of aggressive driving by many men. A child’s drawing of a horrified mother’s face, with a sad-faced child in the background, offered the following message in child-like script: “Mommy’s nervous when Daddy drives. Me too. He races all the time. We might get killed. He doesn’t seem to care.”

In another product of the highway culture of the 1950s, the society also took to billboard advertising. In Summit County, Ohio, the Akron branches filled nineteen billboards with a special Christmas message: “Remember December 25th. Christ’s Birthday.” Proudly calculating the evangelical impact of such efforts, the *Journal* noted that, since ten of those billboards were lighted for nighttime vision, an estimated 210,000 people saw them each day. And as the rhetoric against communism escalated, a more constructive means of combat was advertised to Holy Name men willing to donate cash. “Through Radio Free Europe,” ran one such *Journal* advertisement, “each dollar from you will fire 100 words of Truth right through the Iron Curtain.”

Although impossible to quantify, despite the best tabulating efforts of Holy Name leaders, such efforts were likely more effective overall in expanding the influence of the society than, for example, the 1920s foray into motion pictures (*The Blasphemer*) had been. In both cases, the men of the Holy Name Society – the leaders and the led – were creatively engaging the modern world’s technological realities to spread a very traditional

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message beyond their parish and even their own particular faith. In so doing, Catholic laymen approached a deeper understanding of their own faith through study and creative practice, which was, in the eyes of clerics, the best defense against communism. One emergent custom, however, was most commonly identified with the Holy Name Society of the early Cold War era.

The monthly Holy Name Sunday, that morning on which parish men typically marched a short public distance to their church for corporate communion, had become in many locales the occasion for a corporate breakfast as well. It was common enough in Buffalo by 1936 that the Diocesan Director, Father Joseph Maguire, presented a paper at the New York convention titled simply, “Holy Name Society – Communion Breakfasts.”42 The Church of St. Anne was credited with having first introduced the breakfast custom in the Fall River, Massachusetts region, immediately after which three other parishes adopted it. The idea was simple enough – a breakfast, typically hosted typically inside the church, immediately following the corporate Holy Name communion service – that it proved to be quite flexible in practice, either with or without an additional special occasion attached, and with or without a special speaker.43 In the context of membership drives and the erection of junior societies, branches often arranged for a breakfast to take part on the day of such inductions.44

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42 *Holy Name Journal*, October 1936, 7. On the common practice of communion breakfasts in Milwaukee, see Avella, *In the Richness of the Earth*, 505.

43 *Holy Name Journal*, February 1941, 31. This story noted, for example, that “at their last Communion Breakfast, [the branch at St. Anne’s] had as their honored guests all their living past presidents, and the branch was founded in 1888.”

44 For an example of this suggestion, see *Holy Name Journal*, February 1947, 32-3.
During the early Cold War, though, the Communion Breakfast took on something of a life of its own, becoming an institution that, for some, grew to overshadow the communion from which it had originated. Commenting on mid-century developments in Catholicism, Edward Wakin and Father Joseph F. Scheuer noted that “besides the laudable purposes of encouraging the reception of the eucharist and creating a sense of community, the Holy Name communion breakfast has become a stronghold of political conservatism, reflecting the attitudes of the older generation of clergy.” True enough, as the New York Police Department branch of the Holy Name Society, for instance, invited Joseph McCarthy to speak at a 1954 breakfast and William F. Buckley, Jr. in 1965. As John Cogley noted in Catholic America, McCarthy was, amongst Catholics, perhaps most popular in urban centers such as Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Chicago, all of which were traditional strongholds of the Holy Name Society. McCarthy, Cogley notes, “was cheered at Holy Name Society Communion breakfasts, and in some parochial schools the children added his name to those for whom they prayed regularly.”

The myth, however, of a “Catholic bloc” aligned in full support of McCarthy and McCarthyism has been convincingly debunked. It is clear, for example, that not all Catholics were enthused by the senator’s presence at the 1954 New York Police

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Department Holy Name Communion Breakfast. More generally, as the historian of conservatism Patrick Allitt has noted, “the major divide in the Catholic population was between anti-Communists who supported McCarthy and anti-Communists who criticized him.” Scholarship on this point owes much to the historical opinion analysis offered by Donald Crosby, whose corrective study noted that in fact “Catholics divided on McCarthy fully as much as the rest of the country.” Conservative Catholic elites – especially “editors, politicians, educators, business leaders, and leading clergymen” – were the most strident McCarthy supporters, while the laity were generally cooler in their support. The Holy Name Society of the late 1940s and early 1950s nonetheless clearly reflected the conservative viewpoint on communism and McCarthy in that he and his supporters were routinely discussed and occasionally featured guests at Holy Name functions. Wakin and Scheuer, recounting the anticommunist fever pitch of the 1950s, described the ritual of the Holy Name communion breakfast in particular as “a fixed menu of soggy rolls, tepid coffee, and a Communist-turned-Catholic as guest speaker.” Catholic writers, in Allitt’s view, flocked to such “reformed” communists and “treated [them] as heroes.”

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48 Allitt, Catholic Intellectuals and Conservative Politics in America, 23. American Catholicism was, Allitt argues, nearly universally anticommunist during the late 1940s and early 1950s. The disagreement surfaced over the means of confronting communism at home and abroad. See also 25-6.

49 Donald F. Crosby, God, Church, and Flag, quotes on 242-3.

50 Wakin and Scheuer, The De-Romanization of the American Catholic Church, 218. Even into the 1960s, the authors continued, the “echo of McCarthyism and the voice of the extreme right wing are still heard at Holy Name communion breakfasts.”

Louis Francis Budenz was one such speaker. A ten-year veteran of both the Communist Party in America and several of the newspapers that supported its program—including a five-year stint as the managing editor of Chicago’s Daily Worker—Budenz abruptly recanted in 1945. Working closely with Father Fulton Sheen, who was already well known as the radio host of “The Catholic Hour,” Budenz flatly rejected communism and rejoined the Roman Catholic Church. Budenz quickly produced This is My Story (1946), an account of his time spent as a communist, and several other exposés soon followed, most notably Men Without Faces (1950) and The Techniques of Communism (1953). Brief teaching posts at Notre Dame University, Seton Hall University, and Providence College bookended his tenure at Fordham University from 1946 to 1956. Placing Budenz into a particular faculty department must have been challenging, but his courses on communism tended to appear with the economics offerings. One of his course proposals suggests the tenacity with which he delivered his material: “Purpose: To analyze Communism as a scientist would analyze a poison, in order to offset its evil effects.”

His greatest fame, though, came as a McCarthy witness in communist conspiracy trials, most notably before the Tydings Committee in 1950.

To supplement his teaching income, Budenz capitalized on his fame during the 1950s. For roughly $600 plus travel expenses, he offered community organizations a

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52 Louis F. Budenz papers, Special and Archival Collections, Providence College, Phillips Memorial Library.

53 On Budenz’s post-reconciliation generally, see Hennessey, American Catholics, 290-2; Allitt, Catholic Intellectuals and Conservative Politics in America, 26-8; Crosby, God, Church, and Flag, 58-62. For a more detailed account of his career as a witness, see Robert P. Newman, Owen Lattimore and the ”Loss” of China (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), especially 265-86, http://ark.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/tf296nb15t/ (accessed 7 January 2009).
multi-week crash course on communism. One potential customer, seeking to finalize the terms of Budenz’s course, was “confident that we can get at least 100 enrollments.” She was confident enough that she asked the instructor to name a price for one hundred copies of the course textbook, Budenz’s own Techniques of Communism. In corresponding with potential clients, Budenz sold them on the widespread appeal his courses had garnered in a short period of time. “Twenty-six courses of this type for community leaders have been held in various localities,” he told an interested party in Michigan, “including New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Wilmington, Delaware, Jersey City, Baltimore and many places on Long Island.” Seeking to strike while the McCarthy iron was still smoldering, he urged those on the fence to commit to his quickly filling schedule: “New classes are about to open in Hartford, Connecticut and Washington, D.C. And in the fall, [more courses] will be inaugurated again in Boston and will be opened in Providence, R.I., Newark, N.J., and probably Cleveland.” Budenz was nothing if not flexible, even offering to further condense the course into a weekend seminar in more remote settings with smaller crowds.

If Senator McCarthy was atop the wish lists of Holy Name communion breakfast organizers, Louis Budenz was surely a more affordable, and yet still noteworthy, second-tier speaker. Thanks to the Holy Name branch in the parish of St. Luke (Schenectady, New York), one dollar gained admission to Union College’s Memorial Chapel on

54 Francis J. Hamill to Louis F. Budenz, 1 July 1955, Louis F. Budenz papers, Special and Archival Collections, Providence College, Phillips Memorial Library.

55 Louis F. Budenz to Thomas M. Reid, 2 March 1956, Budenz papers, Special and Archival Collections, Providence College, Phillips Memorial Library.
January 25, 1948 (before Budenz’s fame had reached its peak) to hear the professional anticommmunist rail against “The Communist Conspiracy.”\textsuperscript{56} With Cold War anxieties at an all-time high in April 1950, in a speech at the Astor Hotel before the New York Post Office Holy Name Society, Budenz warned of the dangers of extending formal diplomatic recognition to newly communist China.\textsuperscript{57} Well conditioned to respond to current events, in 1954 Budenz also acknowledged before a crowd of three hundred (brought together by a collection of Monmouth County, New Jersey Holy Name branches) that “Sen. McCarthy has his weaknesses, as we all do.” But, he warned, McCarthy “deserves the help and applause of all the American people.”\textsuperscript{58} As his fame and fortunes were intertwined with the ongoing fever of anticommmunism, it of course made perfect sense that Budenz would come to the aid of McCarthy.

As early as 1951, it seemed that the luster of Budenz’s carefully constructed image was dulling too, at least among some observers. William Burden of The Harvard Crimson attended another Holy Name event – this one orchestrated by the branch of St. Gregory parish – at Woodrow Wilson High School in Dorchester. The event was a hypocritical charade, in Burden’s view, as Budenz was met on stage by Boston’s Mayor John B. Hynes and presented with keys to the city. What followed, in Budenz’s address, was a repeated “technique of allegation instead of accusation,” as the speaker repeatedly

\textsuperscript{56} “‘The Communist Conspiracy’ to be revealed by Prof. Louis F. Budenz,” Schenectady Gazette, 10 January 1948, 18, accessed through http://fultonhistory.com (16 February 2011).

\textsuperscript{57} Newman, Owen Lattimore and the "Loss" of China, 290-1.

\textsuperscript{58} Budenz quoted in “Budenz Urges All to Back McCarthy,” Red Bank Register (New Jersey), 25 March 1954, section 2, 9.
cast speculations only to then apologize for not being able to elaborate with details, apparently in order to protect against libel claims. “It was impossible not to laugh at this,” noted Burden, who attended with at least one other party. “When we inadvertently laughed at [one] remark [by Budenz],” he continued, “a well-dressed neighbor shot a hostile glance at my notes and threatened to kick me ‘in the teeth.’ This stalwart shuffled his feet like a prize fighter and kept ramming his elbow into my companion for the rest of the meeting.”\(^5^9\) Holy Name gatherings could certainly be inhospitable locales for those who harbored a hint of skepticism.

Budenz’s popularity amongst Catholics was closely, but not exclusively, tied to the trajectory of McCarthy’s career. He was, by comparison, not a charismatic individual, such as Tom Dooley, the man known by many as “Dr. America.” Dooley, from his experience with refugees in southeast Asia, related tales about the humanitarian impact of communism that inspired not only American Catholics but American policymakers as well. Tied closely to Dooley in both time and space was the groundswell of support in favor of another Catholic anticommunist hero of the late 1950s, South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem. American support for Diem was constructed by a powerful propaganda effort that benefitted from the firm foundations of early 1950s anticommunism.\(^6^0\) For his part, Budenz never enjoyed the near-universal


\(^6^0\) Outstanding studies of Catholic celebrity and American diplomacy in these cases are James T. Fisher, Dr. America: The Lives of Thomas A. Dooley, 1927-1961 (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997) and Seth Jacobs, America’s Miracle Man in Vietnam: Ngo Dinh Diem, Religion, Race, and U.S.
adulation of American Catholics, as many disliked or distrusted him.\textsuperscript{61} An attack against Budenz by New Mexico Senator (and Catholic) Dennis Chavez, in which Chavez charged that Budenz had “used the Cross as a club,” did some damage to Budenz’s credibility, but mostly amongst the liberals who were inclined to be suspicious of McCarthyism anyway.\textsuperscript{62} The Holy Name Society nonetheless had accepted Budenz at face value throughout the early 1950s, incorporating his insider perspective on the communist threat into its range of evolving practices as the focus on anticommunism came to dominate the institution’s functions.

\textit{Course Evaluations: The Holy Name Students Respond}

There is no evidence to suggest that Louis Budenz, either as community course instructor or Holy Name breakfast speaker, ever elicited or received constructive feedback on his content and delivery from Holy Name men. Exposure to Budenz, though, was but a small segment of the overall Holy Name curriculum during the interwar and early Cold War years. Holy Name men had been on the receiving end of a renewed emphasis on the subject matter and practices of their Catholic faith, and their clerics had further instructed them (with the help of guest lecturers such as Budenz) on

\textsuperscript{61} Hennesey, \textit{American Catholics}, 291.

\textsuperscript{62} Crosby, \textit{God, Church, and Flag}, 60-3; Allitt, \textit{Catholic Intellectuals and Conservative Politics in America}, 28.
the particulars of global communism. From the clerical perspective, the ideal situation would be one in which the world became a living classroom for Holy Name men, with nocturnal adoration vigils and labor union meetings serving as field trips and laboratory-style assessments of applied knowledge. But to what extent were Holy Name men engaged in this curriculum?

An elemental inquiry of social history typically involves the effort to understand social relationships (in this case, clergy-to-laity) from the perspective of each side; for historians of religion, then, the fundamental question is: “how was the projection from the pulpit perceived from the pew?” The religious instruction of Holy Name men, of course, extended far beyond the pew, and the statistical figures presented throughout this study indicate the overwhelming appeal of Holy Name life to an ever-increasing number of Catholic laymen. Examples of laymen’s words have been offered to illustrate the interaction of the leaders and the led in the creative process of Holy Name life. Specific to the renewed education campaign that began in the mid-1930s, however, a more concentrated exposure to lay responses is in order.

Since clerics were so serious about anticommunism, it is surprising that they occasionally revealed a sense of humor on the subject, but laymen responded favorably. “McGlinchey’s Fourth Reader” was a recurring Holy Name Journal satire column in which the author chose a topic and ridiculed it in nursery-rhyme-style syllablized prose. “Lesson Fourteen” criticized the infamous Soviet-German pact during the earliest days of World War II and revisited the atheism theme:

Be-cause God would-n’t join the part-y, they ex-iled Him, and sent His friends up to see Him. Oth-ers got long va-ca-tions in Si-ber-i-a . . . In-cid-ent-al-ly God is
all out of Rus-si-a and we must-n’t men-tion re-lig-ion when we make deals with them be-cause it might of-fend their sen-si-tive feel-ings. 63

Probably few Catholic children learned to read by following that column in their fathers’ magazines, but it was yet another source to reinforce their fathers’ dedication to the expanding Holy Name rhetoric. By 1945, the serial column was reaching its fiftieth installment, or so it seemed. “I was about to congratulate McGlinchey on completing fifty lessons in his incredible Fourth Reader,” wrote one Holy Name man, “when something prompted me to go back through my old copies [of the Journal].” Upon further review, he reported, “I find that he began with ‘Lesson Nine.’ Where,” he wondered, “are the other eight, or is this deliberate deception?” 64 Such was the curse of an editor, but having such clearly engaged followers, they would likely have argued, was a good problem to have.

The majority of laymen’s letters reflected such absorption of clerical offerings, and many offered creative plans for applying the Holy Name perspective on a larger scale. One Holy Name man suggested a pan-American alliance of Holy Name men, or at least “some relationship . . . between the Catholic men of [Latin America] and those of


64 Letter to the editor from Arthur Craig (Worcester, Massachusetts), Holy Name Journal, March 1945, 36. A second layman, William Lane (Dedham, Massachusetts), wrote with the same observation. See Holy Name Journal, October 1945, 36. Other lay writers bypassed the humor offered by McGlinchey, opting instead for a direct assault against communism. In 1943, for example, one writer suggested that the Soviet Union’s “bad faith [is] surpassed by no one and equaled only by Germany and Japan.” “Our so-called ally,” he continued, “is a more dangerous enemy than even Nazi Germany, and even quite proximately more formidable.” On the home front, labor issues sparked responses from readers with fears of “out and out . . . obvious red domination” of American unions. For both of these letters, see Holy Name Journal, September 1943, 34-5.
the United States for their mutual benefit.” Another, advocating the vigorous lifestyle, suggested (ironically) a rather socialistic plan for American soldier preparation: “All boys from 8 to 30 years of age should have Compulsory Physical Training by competent physical directors” in government-erected training facilities in each community; at nineteen years of age, men should then serve a mandatory four-year term in the National Guard with optional officer training at newly erected branches of West Point. A Kansas man was alarmed at his discovery of the unpatriotic “symbol of the pyramid with the truncated all-seeing eye at the top” on the back of the one dollar bill. This must, he believed, be the work of an international conspiracy. “Is this true?,” he asked the editors, “If so . . . I think the Holy Name Society should lead a movement to have this ‘foreign insignia’ supplanted by something that is American.” In a sign that the original aims of the society still mattered at midcentury, another man offered a novel “means of arresting profanity.” His collection of friends had developed the practice, when talking as a group, of appointing one of their number “who is in charge of conversation.” As the supervisor, this man would determine “whether the topic . . . should or should not be discussed once it is proposed” and was fully authorized to “rule out anything that might be

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65 Letter to the editor from Timothy Deasy (Webster, Massachusetts), *Holy Name Journal*, October 1944, 36. The editorial reply ran as follows: “A plan is under discussion between National Headquarters and the *Caballeros Catolicos* in the case of Cuba. We welcome further suggestions from those informed about other Latin American countries.” There was, however, no follow-up on this matter in later issues.


67 Letter to the editor from John P. Kiddling (Paola, Kansas), *Holy Name Journal*, December 1945, 36.
objectionable.”68 Surely most Holy Name men were a bit more fun-loving than this gentleman, but these examples nonetheless illustrate general adherence to clerical guidelines, the internalization and application of midcentury Holy Name curriculum.

Cases of criticism were more surprising, not in the fact that such examples of dissent existed but rather in their frequent inclusion amongst the published letters to the editor. Layman George Tobin’s criticism of the Catholic press generally, for its resumption of “isolationist” tendencies in the immediate postwar period, was tempered by his implicit praise for the Holy Name Journal in its persistence with politicized themes.69 Others, though, took aim at Holy Name leaders. In response to a Journal article imploring Holy Name men to support the Catholic press, layman E.R. Burns fired back: “Aren’t you a bit rough on us in that . . . editorial?” Burns was not moved by such “high pressure pulpit appeals and over paid solicitors.” As soon as the Catholic press fixed its problems – such as “namby-pamby sentimental drivel” and a lack of a “reasonably uniform editorial policy on issues of moment” – and perhaps if the editors would “risk giving people a smile,” only then could they “beef about non support.”70

Other critical responses were less angry in tone, seemingly intended as either genuinely constructive criticism or tongue-in-cheek sarcasm. Sylvester Gaynor suggested, for example, that the Holy Name Journal might do well to employ an on-the-

68 Letter to the editor from Crosby Tufts (Falmouth, Massachusetts), Holy Name Journal, September 1945, 36.

69 Letter to the editor from George Tobin (Charlestown, Massachusetts), Holy Name Journal, September 1946, 36.

70 Letter to the editor from E.R. Burns (Boston, Massachusetts), Holy Name Journal, March 1942, 36.
scenes international correspondent. He seemingly had no issue with the editors’ expertise in theological concerns, but “judging from your comments on world affairs, particularly those in Europe, I suspect that none of you have ever been in Europe.” In response to a perceived secularization of Holy Name activity, another layman wondered whether the society was becoming just another social club. “If it is,” ran the summary of this lay letter, “why do we duplicate the Men’s Club, the Knights of Columbus, and all the rest?” Still other lay writers cut through the Cold War mania with knife-like precision: “Since reading your fine magazine, I look for Communists under my bed every night before I go to sleep, then I dream about Stalin, Marx and Lenin. I’d much sooner dream about a nice capitalist.”

Perhaps in an effort to counter the occasional negativity, the Journal editors routinely invited reputable Holy Name branch officers to contribute pieces. Such instances neatly reiterated clerical dicta and provided strong positive examples to which other Holy Name might aspire. Layman Francis J. Ranieri, who in the early 1950s served as the treasurer of the Boston Archdiocesan Union of Holy Name Societies, was the best example of this practice. Writing of his desire, as treasurer, to “leave no stone

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71 Letter to the editor from Sylvester Gaynor (Lawrence, Massachusetts), *Holy Name Journal*, January 1946, 36.

72 Letter of John Moriarty (Easthampton, Massachusetts), paraphrased in Louis C. Fink, “Holy Name Ideas at Work,” *Holy Name Journal*, December 1955, 5. Fink, a layman whose criticism of clerical writing styles was noted above, responded to Mr. Moriarty’s concerns: “For an answer, I go back to my original premise that the Holy Name Society exists to help us save our souls. . . . Now the social side of Holy Name life may or may not be necessary; it depends on what else your parish life has to offer. The spiritual side . . . is what really counts.”

73 Letter to the editor from Esther Smith (Newton, Massachusetts), *Holy Name Journal*, December 1945, 36.
untouched” in order to stay afloat financially, Ranieri eloquently drew comparisons to the indulgences available to Holy Name men who wore the society badge or pin:

Well, the other day, I got thinking we—all Holy Name men—have an eternal ledger in Heaven and, as I understand my religion, there can be on the debit side of that ledger what the catechism calls the temporal punishment due to sin. The purpose of indulgences is to remove this temporal punishment, so the more indulgences we gain, the more we reduce the debit side, and the more we build up the credit side. . . . There is, for example, a plenary indulgence for those who wear the Holy Name button and take part in the Holy Name Procession on Communion Sunday. There is a Partial Indulgence of 300 days for wearing the Holy Name Button publicly and saying once a day, “Blessed Be The Name of the Lord.” I hope that many of my fellow laymen in the Holy Name Society are convinced of the spiritual value of wearing their button. If not, may this passing thought, from a layman’s point of view, be the means of reminding them.74

Ranieri’s ascent within the society was meteoric. By the end of the decade, the navy veteran of World War II and longtime instructor at Derby Academy in Hingham had also served as the President of the Archdiocesan Union. Named the District Man of the Year on the South Shore in 1962, he was also cited in that year as one of four men to have delivered over one hundred speeches in his Holy Name career at various branch functions.75

This survey of lay contributions to the Holy Name Journal—in letters to the editor and occasional feature articles during the 1940s and 1950s—reveals many trends: a remarkable comprehension of Catholic theology on one hand, and clear frustration with that process on the other; a sophisticated understanding of the Catholic position on communism and willingness to commit time and effort to the struggle against it; the


75 Holy Name Journal, December 1959, 30; April 1962, 16; June 1962, 15. The Holy Name speakers’ bureau was established in many regions. For Milwaukee, for example, see Avella, In the Richness of the Earth, 506.
emergence of a tendency to see conspiracy in all things, creative solutions offered for American foreign and military policy, and the development of anticommunist weariness. In short, the Holy Name classroom was very much like an actual classroom: the instructors presented material in a manner meant to engage the students, and the students variously and somewhat unpredictably offered a range of responses, sometimes thoughtful and pertinent, sometimes sarcastic or tangential. Not every student achieved in the manner of Francis Ranieri, but what is clear overall is that the Holy Namers featured here were in fact engaged – that is, even the negative feedback was still rooted in student interest in the course material. Because all but one of the lay contributions explored in this section came from Massachusetts, though, perhaps such conclusions should be tempered a bit until a closer examination of Cold War Holy Name life in the Archdiocese of Boston is considered.

“For Faith and for Freedom”: Reform, Cushing’s Boston, and the 1947 National Convention

Over one thousand men from Brooklyn collectively decided not to travel to the Bronx to watch their hometown Dodgers avoid elimination by beating the Yankees 8-6 in Game Six of the 1947 World Series. That number included the Dodgers’ team pastor,

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76 Again, the variety of lay responses to the clerical effort at anticommunist instruction lends additional weight to the fundamental argument presented originally by Crosby, God, Church, and Flag. Catholicism (and Catholics) was not a monolithic entity. As intensively as conservative clerics pushed their curriculum, the students absorbed and accepted it in many variant degrees.
who, given his position, certainly would have been able to gain admission to Yankee Stadium.\(^77\) The Brooklyn men missed one of the greatest defensive plays in baseball lore: Al Gionfriddo’s twisting, flailing, game-saving catch of Joe DiMaggio’s 400-plus-foot shot with two men on base in the sixth inning. Instead, these men spent the day in Boston, Massachusetts, where the drama was, if anything, even more intense. During the first five days of that October, the Archdiocese of Boston, led by Archbishop Richard Cushing, hosted the fourth national convention of the Holy Name Society. The convention closed on Sunday, October 5 (the day of Game Six in the Bronx) with exactly the kind of culmination contemporaries had been conditioned to expect from such a function: a massive Holy Name Society parade through the streets of downtown Boston. Archbishop Cushing walked the route more than once. For a while, he marched amongst the men from Brooklyn. Always one to appreciate the many interests of everyday Catholics, Cushing recognized the sacrifice made by these Dodgers fans, and he stopped occasionally to ask on-lookers holding radios for a World Series scoring update. “Well,” he said as he received word of the final score, “I guess we pulled Brooklyn through today.”\(^78\)

Had baseball been a higher priority for those Brooklynites, their absence in Boston might have gone unnoticed. Over 100,000 men, mostly from the United States

\(^77\) *Holy Name Journal*, November 1947, 27-8. “Monsignor Connolly,” ran this notice, “sacrificed so much . . . when he could have been in a box at Ebbets Field.” The game, though, as noted, was played at the Yankee’s stadium rather than the Dodgers’ home park.

and Canada, converged on Boston for the convention, the culmination of which was termed the “largest civilian parade in New England’s history” to date. A crowd estimated at 3.5 million turned out to watch the eight-hour parade of 106 marching bands, 70 floats, and 130,000 Catholic male marchers (roughly 80,000 of whom were from parishes in the home archdiocese).⁷⁹ Indeed, the numbers associated with early Cold War Holy Name power at the national level were likewise impressive. By 1947, nearly four million American Catholic men had joined the Holy Name Society. Grass roots activity had established charters in 10,000 of the church’s 14,000 parishes in the United States.⁸⁰

Statistically and otherwise, though, the 1947 convention in Boston represented the pinnacle of the American Holy Name half century. All the major themes in the institution’s development were revisited here: the celebration of the Dominican version of Holy Name history; the primary dedications to sacramental devotion and pure speech; the vigor of masculine piety; the grand spectacle of a parade and rally, serving the double purposes of reinforcing the individual’s participation in corporate faith practice and projecting important messages – Catholic patriotism and power in numbers – to a larger public. To these traditional Holy Name storylines, though, was now added the society’s post-New York convention (since 1936) dedication to re-educating Catholics on both their faith and communism. The creative energies of that process, this chapter has argued, transformed the society and its practices during the late 1930s and early 1940s.

An examination of how that process specifically occurred in one place, Boston, confirms

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⁷⁹ *Pilot*, 10 October 1947, 1. It was not until the Boston Red Sox World Series championship parade in 2004 that such an event attracted throngs eclipsing that of the 1947 Holy Name parade in the city.

the historical understanding of the 1947 Boston convention as a culmination of change rather than, as contemporaries hopefully viewed it, a new beginning. This analysis, though, also reveals fissures in the Holy Name movement during the immediate postwar years, a plateau that preceded the first major ebb in the tidal wave of Holy Name expansion.

The death of Cardinal O’Connell in 1944 marked a curious transition in the fortunes of the Holy Name Society in the Archdiocese of Boston. O’Connell’s administration had remained to his death one of the most stringently anticommunist sectors in Catholic America. The Pilot, reporting on Holy Name marches to communion, characterized the proceedings as a “public manifestation” of faith, but also a “manly public rejection of all those poisonous ‘isms, . . . which flower with an evil strength in any society which rejects God.”81 Father Robert Lord of St. John’s Seminary in Brighton added to the chorus with a typical radio address in March 1944 titled “Communism as False Solution of World Problems.”82 When O’Connell died one month later, Holy Name national headquarters paid him a measure of the same respect and praise it had always heaped upon him, noting that the “Dean of the American Hierarchy has died, and both the Church and the State have sustained a distinct loss, as has the Holy Name Society in America.”83

81 Pilot, 1 January 1944, 4.
82 Pilot, 11 March 1944, 1, 3. Such addresses were, as elsewhere, commonly more sophisticated than the simple charge of communist atheism. Lord, among others, attacked the philosophy on economic and social grounds as well.
83 Holy Name Journal, May 1944, 32-3.
One year later, though, in announcing new Archbishop Cushing’s plans for a “comprehensive reorganization” of the society, the Journal indirectly suggested significant reduction in the power of the movement during O’Connell’s last years. This reorganization, for which Cushing was being praised, was deemed necessary to “strengthen the Society in parishes where it is now functioning and to revive the Society where it has become nominal.”84 The formal charge that something had gone wrong on O’Connell’s watch never reached the printed page, but the implication was clear, especially at the 1947 convention. Convention arrivals in 1947 were greeted with local and national Catholic literature that lauded Cushing for having revitalized the Boston Holy Name Society. The society here, the Pilot advised, had been “completely reorganized” since Cushing’s ascension to Archbishop. He had established and staffed a central archdiocesan office for the society, set up a speakers’ bureau for Society events, supported a Holy Name Choral group of fifty members, and organized many additional joint meetings of the parish chapters.85 The souvenir program for the convention, published by national headquarters, boasted that under Cushing’s leadership, the Boston societies had “in two years . . . grown by the proverbial ‘leaps and bounds.’”86

84 Holy Name Journal, June 1945, 33.
85 Pilot, “Holy Name Supplement,” 03 October 1947, 2.
86 Holy Name Society, Welcome to Boston: Holy Name Edition (New York: National Headquarters of the Holy Name Society, 1947), 32; Holy Name Society, Fourth National Holy Name Convention, October 1-5, 1947, Boston, Massachusetts: Official Souvenir Program (New York: National Headquarters of the Holy Name Society, 1947), 26, Liturgy and Life Collection, Burns Library, Boston College, Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts. Such favorable coverage was in fact not limited to Catholic sources. See, for example, convention coverage from the Boston Globe between 1 October and 6 October 1947.
The validity of such claims is disputable. National headquarters itself claimed, for instance, that reorganizations such as that in Boston were directed from its own offices. The entire program followed by Cushing’s administration, the Journal noted on one occasion only, had been presented to Cushing by Father Thomas F. Carey, a member of the national headquarters staff. After the success of the Boston convention (and by extension, the perceived success of the Boston reorganization), the Journal noted that it was now aiding other dioceses in similar efforts. Such editorial comments, though, were curiously rare and understated, likely to have been missed by a general reader. Educated speculation might suggest that national headquarters had perhaps failed in an effort to convince Cardinal O’Connell that such an effort had been necessary earlier. Regardless, that the national director’s office had constructed a plan for reform of the various diocesan Holy Name structures was in line with the other re-education efforts initiated by headquarters since the 1936 New York convention. That headquarters, though, was attempting to push this program in major centers such as Boston, was uncharacteristically not well advertised. In effect, Archbishop Cushing was being praised for having followed orders, but that latter qualifier was largely unknown to those converging on Boston in 1947. The imposition of reorganization at the very least suggests that national headquarters was genuinely concerned about the structural efficiency of parish and diocesan Holy Name life. Coupled with the increased frequency of lay criticisms from within the movement, as described previously, the main office

87 Holy Name Journal, June 1945, 33.
88 Holy Name Journal, January 1948, 11. Other reorganizations included St. Augustine, Florida.
likely perceived that it was the right time to reinforce the movement with a more overtly centralized administration. Doing so without appearing to be that domineering center was apparently part of the strategy as well.

The reforms of the early Cushing era, as prescribed from New York, constituted significant structural and practical changes in the Holy Name program. The creation of a bureaucracy of diocesan committees was supported by specialized leadership training, offering lay leaders “basic principles of good organization, the essentials of good leadership, and the duties of their respective offices.” The initial wave of the Officers’ Training School, conducted in October 1945, focused on the following Holy Name positions: “president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, marshal, program committee, sick and vigil committee, press (Stage, Screen, Radio) committee, military committee, publicity committee, and youth committee.”

To provide variety to the standard Holy Name meeting, Cushing launched an archdiocesan speakers’ bureau, eventually consisting of dozens of itinerant lay and clerical orators.

The most notable reform, though, a practice that had seemingly worked well in New York, Chicago, and Toronto, was the Holy Name Holy Hour. A ritual-laden evening rally that included both sacred and patriotic music during the first hour and a second hour “devoted to the Holy Hour proper,” this cultural form commandeered a professional baseball stadium – in Boston, either Fenway Park or Braves Field – and filled it to capacity with candle-wielding Holy Name men. The Holy Hour reflected the long-standing traditions of public practice and

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89 Holy Name Journal, June 1945, 33; September 1945, 16-7.

90 Holy Name Journal, September 1945, 16-7.
the conversion of secular space into a sacred setting. The program itself combined Americanism and Catholicism in a new way, perhaps in response to the latest reincarnation of anti-Catholic expression. 91 Although Fenway Park, it was advertised, could hold 50,000 for the first Holy Hour in 1945, a crowd of only 32,000 was on hand. Later events, however, routinely claimed full capacity attendance. 92

These postwar changes in Boston reflect Archbishop Cushing’s willingness to adopt rituals developed elsewhere, but he certainly placed his own stamp on the local movement as well. Typical of many postwar clerics, Cushing was, in biographer Joseph Dever’s telling, a “flaming and awesome crusader against Communism at home and abroad.” In early Cold War Boston, Dever added, “Cushing’s anti-Communist crusade was on.” 93 Cushing’s habitual focus on communism in speaking engagements thus provided continuity from the O’Connell era, and he too frequently used his powerful position to advocate for political ends. Challenging American foreign policy in 1951, for example, he complained that while the United States had both formally recognized and supplied Yugoslavia, it had adopted a policy of attempted starvation with regard to


92 Holy Name Journal, June 1945, 33; September 1945, 16-7; November 1947, 27-8; April 1951, 16; October 1953, 17. Holy Hour rallies were becoming common in other locales as well, such as Milwaukee. See Avella, In the Richness of the Earth, 506.

Catholic Spain.\textsuperscript{94} In overseeing the Holy Name Society, the impact of Cushing’s engaging personality was clear. In a move that would never have occurred under the previous administration, Cushing invited Holy Name men to share with him the duties of the “nightly Rosary recited by the Archbishop,” which was broadcast over the radio. Reporting on this most unique practice, the \textit{Holy Name Journal} noted in March 1952 that “Boston Holy Name men since the middle of January have been making their way each evening to the Archbishop’s House in Brighton [for this event]. . . . Holy Name men from the various parishes in the Archdiocese take their turn” in performing this sacred service with Cushing.\textsuperscript{95}

Though national headquarters was dictating much of the Holy Name reform from afar, that office had surely made the calculated decision of doing this work with Cushing. Success in Boston could (and did) lead to more reorganization elsewhere, and the combination of Cushing’s charisma, people skills, and fervent anticommunism would provide the best chance for that success. Thus, when the first new Holy Name men were inducted to the society in Boston – a product of new membership drives, yet another item in the reorganization protocol from New York – the \textit{Holy Name Journal} was on the spot for a carefully orchestrated photo opportunity: a smiling Archbishop warmly shaking the hand of a new Holy Name man.\textsuperscript{96} Additional praise for Cushing’s administration

\textsuperscript{94} \textit{Holy Name Journal}, January 1951, 17. This coverage of Cushing’s challenge noted that he had also “mentioned the fact that Spain of all the nations of the world was the first to recognize and fight the danger of Communism.”

\textsuperscript{95} \textit{Holy Name Journal}, March 1952, 17.

\textsuperscript{96} The picture was featured prominently in the regional news section of \textit{Holy Name Journal}, December 1945, 25.
followed, first in granting the hosting duties for the fourth national convention to Boston, and later in honoring Frederic Allchin – who had been Cushing’s Archdiocesan Holy Name Director during the 1945 reorganization, and the executive chairman of the 1947 convention planning committee – as the inaugural recipient of the newly created Father Charles H. McKenna Award in 1950.  

For most of its history, the national headquarters office had carefully cultivated its image as merely a help-servant in the real Holy Name work being done at the parish level. No overarching mandates, but rather mere suggestions had emanated from New York. But, after the New York convention of 1936, that policy had changed. Tighter administration, better lay officer training, standardized study curriculum, and nationally shared practices and structures were now – albeit somewhat behind the scenes – mandated, as the peculiarities of regional difference (once cited as the best argument for decentralized authority) were overshadowed. If some at the national level perceived a slowdown in the long and steady advance of the American Holy Name Society, such measures could be better understood. Always eager to push forward with a steady stream of accomplishments and accolades, though, national headquarters kept a tight lid on any such speculation. Convention delegates in Boston, if they read the souvenir programs and marched in the colossal parade, surely believed that the Holy Name Society was on the cusp of even greater expansion.

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Change from within was more evident in the structure and content of the business sessions of the 1947 convention. At past conventions – 1911 in Baltimore, 1924 in Washington, and 1936 in New York – delegates had been exposed to long lists of speeches and pre-circulated papers dealing with a broad range of Holy Name practices and ideas, representing the parish-based creativity and uniqueness of the movement in its rise. In Boston, though, the direction of change was reversed. There were fewer sessions, with fewer speeches, and the format seemed to have practically shifted to a top-down lecture setting. The archdiocesan reorganization in Boston, considered a success by national headquarters, clearly inspired the set-up of convention sessions in 1947. The uninspired sterility of the session titles – “Holy Name Organization in a Diocese” and “Holy Name Organization in a Parish” on one day, “Diocesan Programming” and “Departmental Programming” on the next – were aimed at duplicating the diocesan reform process throughout the nation. Whereas previous conventions had offered delegates from many parts of the country the chance to discuss their own ideas and practices, their successes, failures, and overall expansion of the movement, this convention invited delegates to Boston for a three-day seminar on institutional organization.

In short, the Holy Name movement was in transition: it had once been an exciting phenomenon on the rise, eagerly exploring in its conventions many different paths to a unified goal, but it was becoming by 1947 a corporate entity in which branch offices were

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98 Holy Name Society, Fourth National Holy Name Convention, October 1-5, 1947, Boston, Massachusetts: Official Souvenir Program, 22-3.
expected to adhere to memoranda emanating from the administrative core. The parish based organization that prized the variety of local circumstance was becoming the nationalized corporation that insisted on uniformity. Doubtlessly, the transformation sucked some of the excitement of membership away from the experience of many laymen.

In 1947, though, this process was only beginning, and the Boston convention otherwise reflected much of the creative energy that had characterized earlier versions. Father F. Borgias Leht led Holy Name men from several branches in Covington, Kentucky (along with a smaller contingent from Columbus, Ohio) on a pilgrimage to Boston that took them first to Niagara Falls and New York City. A similarly ranging trip was planned by the Archdiocesan Union in Milwaukee. Travelling “in an official Wisconsin train,” the men made stops en route to the convention at destinations such as Chicago. Other creative contributions to the Boston festivities came from trade based chapters of the society. The branches of the New York Police Department and Fire Department pledged to send, respectively, one thousand and five hundred of their numbers, in full uniform, to march in the parade.99 The use of floats in the parade was entirely new, and it inspired a range of representations of Catholic faith practice, from themes on particular saints to particular parishes to particular themes such as Catholic education. The most frequently repeated theme, not surprisingly, was that of patriotism. Constructing a float on the concept of anticommunism was apparently too great a

99 Holy Name Journal, September 1947, 10-1. National Director Graham later reported that there were actually 1,800 NYPD marchers and 700 from NYFD. See Holy Name Journal, November 1947, 28.
challenge, but several parishes underscored the Cold War theme of faith and patriotism as the best line of defense: “100 Years of Service for God and Country” was the float theme for the North End church of St. Mary; “God and Country” again by Immaculate Conception in Revere; “Mass on the Battlefield” by Blessed Sacrament in Saugus; and St. Margaret parish in Dorchester offered “The Cross and the Flag.” Each local parish and visiting diocesan union carried before it a banner of identification. A portion of the Friday night Holy Hour at Braves Field (attended by 60,000) had been dedicated to blessing these banners in anticipation of the Sunday parade.

The slogan for the convention, “For Faith and For Freedom,” was widely applicable to a range of Holy Name contexts. Clearly it served as inspiration for several of the floats, but more broadly, it described the Holy Name man’s aspirations as the bulwark against communism. Archbishop Cushing employed the slogan as the title of his main address at the convention. In his speech, Cushing took aim at a recent wave of anti-Catholic bigotry which claimed Catholicism and American patriotism were mutually exclusive. The *Holy Name Journal* had taken up this fight throughout the decade with attacks against one of the most vociferous perpetrators, Kenneth Leslie’s journal, *Protestant Digest.* Anachronistically – since Catholics believed they had already proven themselves through two world wars, and Holy Name men could additionally point to ultrapatriotic events such as the Washington convention of 1924 – Catholics were now

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100 *Pilot*, “Holy Name Supplement,” 3 October 1947, 6-7.

101 See, for example, Francis J. Heltshe, “Behind the Mask of Kenneth Leslie,” *Holy Name Journal*, December 1943, 20-3. And again, for a more general overview of mid-century anti-Catholicism and the responses it elicited, see McGreevy, “Thinking on One’s Own.”
confronted with another roadblock to legitimacy. Cushing was clearly annoyed that he found himself responding to such criticisms, but he did acknowledge that the latest attacks were at least novel in some ways: “The new bigotry takes a surprising form. While professing to find no fault with the Faith, the prophets of the new anti-Catholicism assert that they oppose us only because of a defect in our idea of Freedom.” Leslie and others admitted, in Cushing’s view, that “Catholics are undoubtedly loyal enough to their Faith [but] they do not mean what other Americans mean when they talk of Freedom.” Cushing took it as his “patriotic privilege, as well as a religious duty” to counter such attacks on behalf of “perhaps 25,000,000 Catholics who live their lives completely confident of the perfect harmony between their duties as Catholics and their duties as Americans.”

As always, praise for the Holy Name Society flowed in for months following the convention, and predictably, many focused on its most public aspect, the parade. Protestant organizations expressed their support for the spirit of the parade, and U.S. Attorney General Thomas Clark told the Boston Chamber of Commerce that it had been an honor “to witness a great demonstration of faith.” The Boston Traveler made the particularly striking observation that, given the authoritarian and militant nature of an increasing number of world governments, the Holy Name parade was even more significant than it otherwise might have been. Here was an army, the story went, “made even stronger by the fact that not one man in the day-long column was present under

102 Holy Name Journal, November 1947, 4-7.
103 Holy Name Journal, January 1948, 11.
dictatorial command or against his own free will – that nobody needed to wave a sword as proof of that army’s strength.”

On the surface, then, the 1947 national convention of the Holy Name Society seemed much like its predecessors, but in its dedication to nationwide restructuring, it represented something new as well. From the perspective of national headquarters, widespread reorganization would catapult the society into the postwar world with incredible efficiency. For many parish leaders and laymen, though, the longstanding convention tradition of contributing meaningfully and creatively had now been restricted to making floats for a parade. National headquarters was attempting an overhaul that, in fact, would not materialize at all how it had been envisioned.

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“Like all great enthusiasms it could not be maintained perpetually.”
William Cardinal O’Connell, Archbishop, Archdiocese of Boston

The larger than life William Cardinal O’Connell of Boston, knew much about the creation of atmosphere. Taking charge of the archdiocese, he set in motion a series of administrative reforms that placed himself squarely at the center of the heavily orchestrated militant triumphalism of Boston Catholicism during the first half of the twentieth century. His heavy-handed approach with the Holy Name Society – the best example of which being his early mandate to erect a branch in every parish – was no exception to his reign in general. Yet, as the above quote from his Recollections of Seventy Years indicates, he did recognize the inevitability of change. The Holy Name Society, for example, exists in the twenty-first century, but there are now few alive who have witnessed anything approaching the Holy Name parade that closed the 1947 Boston convention. Although O’Connell, in this quote, was not describing the fate of the Holy Name Society, one might think that he was.

In considering what happened to the Holy Name Society, O’Connell’s quote is a useful lens. The Holy Name Society, for example, was for millions much more than merely a “great enthusiasm.” That it exhibited enthusiasm was, even for many Catholic observers, the defining characteristic of its existence. But this study has made plain that for the men who participated in the early movement, the Holy Name Society gave

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1 O’Connell, Recollections of Seventy Years (Boston, New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1934), 293. O’Connell was referencing the fate of the Federation of Catholic Societies in this quote.
purpose and meaning to their religious lives. From the clerical standpoint, it achieved the devotional purpose – and could there be a higher one? – for which it was intended. Especially for Catholic men who had fallen from the active practice of their faith, the Holy Name Society was an open invitation to return in the most comfortable circumstances possible. The devotional nature of the organization, from its inception, was the core experience that allowed for the variety of meanings attached to the more public and peripheral aspects of membership. Returning (or committing anew) to pious practice was made much easier by the corporate nature of the Holy Name Society. The attendance at Mass and the engagement with the sacrament of Eucharist became social, rather than purely personal acts. Religion was something that Holy Name men did together, making it thereby a much easier set of practices for many of the men in the group. As a devotional confraternity, this was the fundamental contribution of the early Holy Name Society to Catholicism; it brought men into religious practice in great numbers through corporate ritual.

Neither was the Holy Name Society – considering now the second half of O’Connell’s quote – “maintained perpetually,” as it was instead an organization in constant flux. While devotional life remained the core, the earliest evolutions in the organization were the incorporation of themes of masculinity and patriotism. Once such social and cultural meanings were attached to corporate male piety, new cultural productions such as the march through the parish (to the church for communion) were initiated. Material artifacts in the forms of buttons, pins, and badges, were produced to represent commitment to these nascent meanings and practices. Rehearsing the real-
world implications of their faith for their own benefit, proving to themselves and their parish the seriousness of their religious commitment, Holy Name men soon took to the extra-parochial streets with larger parades and rallies. Such forms served to convince both the marchers and non-Catholic observers of the power in numbers and respectability attained by American Catholics, effectively carving room in the secular mainstream world for the permanent presence of Catholics. Exaggerated expressions of patriotism answered the ongoing critiques of those who were not yet willing to grant the respect that many Catholics knew they deserved.

Men of faith lived their faith, employing it in their everyday lives. As such, they not surprisingly came into conflict with many aspects of modern life. This placed the Holy Name Society, chronologically at least, at the vanguard of the larger movement known as Catholic Action. With clearly defined ideals for Catholic piety, American manhood, and dedication to decency amidst modernity, Holy Name men eagerly confronted opposing viewpoints in secular settings. Even in engaging differences within their own circles – such as race, gender, and youth – Holy Name men acted aggressively in their redefinitions of those relationships. Engaged fathers and authoritatively pious husbands, Holy Name men had passed the orientation stage of practicing their faith and now became focused leaders, ready to defend the honor of their Lord, their nation, and their families.

Throughout these developments, Holy Name men were instructed, prodded, and guided by the clerical leaders of their movement. Typically, laymen dutifully followed orders, but in a variety of contexts, they also creatively negotiated, occasionally
challenged, and often acted independently of their collared leaders. More so than perhaps expected, the emergence, development, and successes of the Holy Name Society into the 1930s was a story of the cooperative efforts of the national headquarters, diocesan clerics, parish priests, spiritual directors, lay officers, and many, many more lay members of the confraternity.

Only the centralization that came with the diocesan reorganization and re-education movements of the World War II era changed this cooperative dynamic. The all-encompassing preoccupation with communism was the driving force behind such shifts, and it led to a decidedly more top-down orientation of what once had been a decentralized, but cooperative, parish-based Holy Name Society. The staggeringly immense public processions continued, as evident in the 1947 Boston parade, and multiplied with the advent of Holy Name Holy Hour services in America’s open-air sporting venues. But the movement was changing again.

What happened to the Holy Name Society?

The Holy Name Society of the twenty-first century is not known as the early-to-mid-twentieth century version was by its contemporaries. Apart from the continuity in its emblem (a profile of the childhood Jesus) and the devotional nature of its practice, it is far from the same organization. Accounts of men practicing their faith do not make the cut for national or even local news, which suggests one of the many explanations for the
mid-century downturn in what had been for fifty years a vibrant, expanding, and publicly vocal organization.

The possible causes of the collapsed enthusiasm of Holy Name life are many. The Second Vatican Council is generally cited as a primary explanation for any change in twentieth century Catholicism, and its broad liturgical and ecumenical reforms certainly had an impact.² The suggestion, though, that the increased involvement of the laity in the construction of the Mass made devotional confraternities (and sodalities) obsolete is a too easily accepted and outdated theory. That the capitalist world, after the terrifying Cold War events of the early 1960s, suddenly backed off the intensity of its anticommunism is another common explanation. The historian Richard Powers has argued that, by the 1960s, rabid anticommunism was considered the domain of the “lunatic fringe,” and was certainly dangerous for a Catholic population that had finally achieved respectability as the largest American religious denomination.³ If the public aspects of Holy Name life had been intended, in part, to establish Catholic patriotism as unquestioned reality and to intimately tie Catholic belief to American values, the need to continue in such enthusiastic pursuits would reasonably have waned once such aims had been accomplished. But to tie the moment of this shift arbitrarily to the year 1960 lacks explanatory power and neglects the realities of change in earlier years.

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³ Powers, Not Without Honor, 303. Catholic anticommunism prior to the 1960s, Powers argues, served as “something of a status symbol, a mark of social respectability that demonstrated their superior patriotism in their competition with Jews and old-stock Protestants.”
Surely, one factor was suburbanization, the death knell for generations of parochial life in many places. One of the aims of the early Holy Name Society, especially evident in the rhetoric supporting the development of junior branches, was the insulation of the ideally self-sufficient parish against the outside influences of both time (modernity) and space (Protestants). As larger social forces eroded those barriers, parish-based practices generally suffered. Using this logic, Timothy Kelly has offered the most thorough explanation of Holy Name decline, placing its beginnings in the early 1950s. Noting the disappointing turnout for the fifth national Holy Name convention in 1955 in Pittsburgh, especially in comparison to the record-setting throng in Boston’s 1947 parade, Kelly rightly argues that the traditional appeal of the parade had waned considerably. Catholic laymen, “even in the years before the Second Vatican Council reforms . . . no longer responded to traditional Catholic messages. They no longer found comfort in the Catholic ghetto, but rather sought a new kind of religious experience which addressed the world in which they lived, or in which they aspired to live.”

The present study largely conforms to the spirit of Kelly’s conclusions. The Catholic population in America doubled between 1940 and 1960, but the population of Holy Name members increased only sluggishly in comparison. The membership, which

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5 Hennesey, American Catholics, 283.
stood at 3.5 million in 1947, grew to only 5 million by the 1960s. The driving slogan of the society had once been “a branch in every parish, and every man a member,” and the explosive success of recruitment efforts produced consistently impressive numbers for the first several decades of the twentieth century. By the Cold War era, even with the pipeline provided by the Junior Holy Name Society, membership growth was down considerably, even in longtime strongholds such as Boston. Statistics produced by the society in 1956 and again in 1959 showed that far less than half of the men in the archdiocese were members of the Holy Name Society; moreover, amongst the members, only half were regularly attending the monthly Communion Sunday functions. While the hierarchy noted there was an “increasing number of young married men who have joined, particularly in the new suburban parishes” and that “the average age of parish officers has come tumbling down to around 37,” such statistical spins revealed troubling realities for the desired continuity of the old movement. By 1960, the Holy Name Society was increasingly operated by lay leaders who were more interested in protecting new housing investments than warding off communist infiltrations. They were younger, perhaps, but therefore also less likely to have experienced the Holy Name lifestyle in its most active

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6 The total of 3.5 million was the most consistently cited in 1947. Five million was the figure cited in Wakin and Scheuer, The De-Romanization of the American Catholic Church, 217.

7 *Holy Name Journal*, June 1956, 17; December 1959, 30. Quotes are from the latter.

8 Back in the cities, one Chicago parish branch, faced with the settlement within its boundaries of an increasing number of African Americans, formed a credit union to help white homeowners retain housing values. See Eileen McMahon, *What Parish Are You From?: A Chicago Irish Community and Race Relations* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1995), 136. By the 1970s, African Americans became Catholics and Holy Name members in significant numbers, but “were not accustomed to the devotional forms of worship and the confraternities” of this Catholic neighborhood. At Holy Name gatherings, as “blacks started attending, meetings had to have readers and commentators in order to accommodate them. Today the Holy Name Society is called the Men’s Club.” Latter quotes on 173.
years. They could not relate to the desires of clerical leaders who hoped that diocesan reorganizations would rejuvenate an institution swept up by social change.

The 1960s represented not the origins but rather the continuation and acceleration of the fall from traditional Holy Name practice. By the end of that decade, the parish-based Holy Name parade had ceased entirely in Cincinnati. In response to the cancellation of the 1965 parade in Paterson, New Jersey, two laymen (each branch presidents) offered blunt summaries of the disappointing turn of events. “I think the people are just not interested in a show of strength anymore,” noted one. “The parade,” added the second, “had become too expensive for the small parish societies, and frankly, there was too much competition from the World Series.” Holy Name efforts turned more than ever to social gatherings and fundraising efforts. South Boston’s Gate of Heaven branch was typical in that regard. The men there, in a three year period, “renovated much of the parish property . . . The work, which would have cost $150,000, was accomplished by the members at a cost of $35,000, all of which they raised themselves.” Far more unique was the decision in 1964 of the St. Louis Archdiocesan Holy Name Union, which “voted to admit non-Catholics to membership.” This “unprecedented” move was “approved by a seven-member committee after a two-year

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9 Fortin, Faith And Action, 267. Fortin’s explanation for the sharp decline in rally attendance is stated simply: “As more and more Catholics became involved with various social issues in the sixties, they lost interest in the Holy Name processions.”

10 Quoted in Wakin and Scheuer, The De-Romanization of the American Catholic Church, 218-9.

11 Holy Name Journal, January 1962, 15. “In addition to this,” the blurb concluded, “they have raised funds to provide a station wagon for the sisters and are now at work renovating the 24 room school.”
study of proposals. “This last example, clearly ecumenical in nature, represents the impact of the Second Vatican Council more so than the many examples of decline noted from the 1950s and earlier.

To be sure, flashes of traditional Holy Name action still sparkled into later decades. Among the several short notices of regional Holy Name activity listed in the September 1963 issue of the Holy Name Journal was one that likely did not generate as much interest in that year as it would have a generation earlier. The Holy Name men of three Massachusetts communities – Littleton, Tewksbury, and Acton – banded together for a “concerted protest against an indecent movie.” The fruit of their labor was the local drive-in theater’s decision to stop showing the film. The Holy Name Society remained then, and by all accounts is still in the twenty-first century, focused on devotional piety. An example from the 1960s, however, of engaging the public sphere to promote decency on a larger scale seems anachronistic. Colossal parades and rallies, by then, were the stuff of Holy Name legend.

Recasting the American Catholic twentieth century aids the explanation of Holy Name decline. The devotional Catholicism described by eminent Catholic historian Jay Dolan, with its origins in the nineteenth century, dominated the landscape of parish-based Catholic life and provided fertile soil for the emergence and incredible expansion of the devotional Holy Name Society. By midcentury, however, myriad social and political

12 Quotes come from an uncredited newspaper clipping, dated 9 January 1964, in the Correspondence File, Archives of St. Joseph Province, Providence College.

13 Holy Name Journal, September 1963, 7.

forces were changing the parochial landscape, a situation not lost on contemporaries. Historian Timothy Kelly references a “materialist crisis” at 1950 perceived by Catholic clerics; communism, but also material capitalism and suburbanization were threatening old social networks and devotional practices. The clerical answer, for Kelly, was more devotion, in the form of events described in this study, such as Holy Hours in open-air arenas. From an administrative perspective, the diocesan reorganization of institutions such as the Holy Name Society also fits under this umbrella effort by midcentury clerics to fortify devotional practice. This worked, as Kelly notes, for a few years until “by the middle of the decade laymen and laywomen began to chart a different course.” Lay participation in devotional practices that had dominated parish life for a century declined sharply during the 1950s. Thus, the ideological changes of 1960s Catholicism were necessitated by earlier social shifts. As Kelly puts it, “contemporary Catholics did not perceive the [Second Vatican] Council’s changes to be so much a shock to the unchanging Church that they had inherited from their parents, but rather as official recognition of the currents of change already under way.”

In the lives of the faithful, religion matters, as it always has. This study’s contribution to the ongoing effort to correct an historiographical blind-spot is clear. For too long scholars neglected the importance of religion in the modern world. The men of the Holy Name Society knew otherwise. For many, their faith was the most important organizing principle in their lives. When matters of salvation are at stake, scholars will

do well to remember, understanding faith as the critical lens through which life is lived is paramount. But religion, like everything else, does not happen in a vacuum. In part, the American Holy Name Society was born of social and industrial problems that required answers. Answers came in the form of parades, material trappings, pledges, renegotiated relationships, and political action, and men responded favorably. Once new social forces (such as postwar economic expansion) emerged to drive new changes (such as suburbanization and calls for racial and gender equality), the old answers made less sense.
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