

Update! Do you think that students are any different today than they were when you started as a Chaplain, or even when you started as President?

Choate: Yes and no. The no part is that I've always found the students here to be substantial people and decent human beings. The trick is to get beyond the "student" definition. The word "student" describes what somebody does, it doesn't describe what they are. They are people. If you get to know students you'll find out they are wonderful people. On the other hand, this campus has changed a lot. This University has become rather prestigious and attracts a lot of high achievers. The co-op program attracts people with very specific goals and, quite frankly, I am not always thrilled by that. One of the things that I've so enjoyed in the past is watching the marginal student come in here, catch on, and blossom. They learn and they like learning.

The other part that doesn't change is that the people at St. Jerome's still know how to have a good time. They enjoy each other. There was a really moving experience last weekend. We had a student death last week as you know, so the students wanted to do something themselves. It was especially important to them because we are between terms, they were caught, they were alone. They arranged a memorial service here at the College. It is very moving for me that when they want to be with somebody, they want to be with their schoolmates. They want to be with the people in this community. So some things have changed and others have not.

"The visibility of this College has increased enormously in the last ten years."

Update! You always have been very supportive of the Graduates' Association. Could we talk about how you see the role of graduates in the life of the College?

Choate: We talk endlessly around here about community and I believe it. It's a high value and it exists, but I think it's hard for students a lot of the time when they leave because they are suddenly uprooted. Happily, most of them have made good friendships as students. Here they were guys and girls together, now they are young families together. The Graduates' Association is a support for that sense of community. Obviously when you start a Graduates' Association one of the reasons you do so is because you need their financial support. This has been forthcoming and has been a lot more easily achieved than I ever thought it would.

We also need their moral support; we need people to support the concept of Catholic education, and the concept of federated colleges. I've about given up on the Provincial Government. I don't think we are going to get any help from them. They're hell-bent for mediocrity, and this College has got to do

everything in its power to resist that. The Graduates' Association, in my estimation, is one of the keys. For this President, the Graduates' Association has been a source of enormous personal support. One of the hardest things for me as President has been the endless receptions and dinners. I'm not a very public person. But to go to the Grads' Association events and to see that group doing so well makes me very proud of them.

Update! The College's Catholic identity has been an important concern to you as President. Could you highlight some of the ways you think the Catholic identity of the College is manifested?

Choate: Certainly the most visible sign of our Catholic identity is the rather large and active Campus Ministry programme. We have a worshipping community here of about twelve hundred people. I used to think that we were rather shy and apologetic about our Catholicism, and I don't think that's true anymore. We have active debates in the classrooms, the hallways and in the cafeteria about how this Catholicism gets expressed, but I no longer hear people shying away from it. I think that people who are not Catholics in the College have learned that the Roman Catholicism of St. Jerome's College is open enough and confident enough. I'm not threatened by the presence of people at the College who are not Catholics or indeed not believers, because we are confident in who we are. Our Catholicism is also expressed in our curriculum and in our extracurricular activities. We have always had courses in religious studies, we have courses in Church history, in the social teachings of the Church, so that idea has intruded into the curriculum in a valid way. Other obvious examples are the Centre, *Grail*, the summer institutes all of which have been, I think, quite successful and which operate on a relatively small amount of money and largely volunteer help. So that means that the people here are committed to those initiatives most of which have the word religion, "Catholicism," kind of written all over them.

Update! I would like to conclude by talking a little bit about plans for your sabbatical.

Choate: My plans for my sabbatical right now are to go to England for a couple of weeks in early June, right after the Graduates' weekend. I'm just going to sit down for a couple of weeks because I'm so preoccupied with the business of leaving here that I can't think much about the future. Then I'll make my way down to Rome to my Community's house where I'll be in a renewal program in the month of July. I intend to wander around Europe during August and September, return here in October, at which time I hope to make a long retreat. I want to do some workshops and upgrade myself in theology and spirituality. And in the midst of all of this I have to find a job and I have to find a place to live.

Reunion '89 - Grad

It was everything organizers had hoped for - a large and enthusiastic turnout and a splendid tribute to Fr. Norm Choate by the Graduates' Association.

In Fr. Norm's final public act as President, the Graduates' Association honoured him with a moving testimonial dinner held in Siegfried Hall, because the cafeteria could not accommodate the 300 graduates who came to pay tribute to a dear friend.

"The reason we are here," announced MC Terry Downey (BA '66), "is to honour a loyal and thoughtful friend, an exemplary priest, a wise and compassionate counsellor, and an inspirational role model who has left his mark on all of us."

"But we have also left our mark on him," Downey cautioned humorously. "We nearly ruined his health, frayed his nerves, caused his hairline to recede, and inflated his blood pressure!"



Terry Downey (BA '66) did a superb job as Master of Ceremonies at the Grads' Association's Testimonial Dinner.

The dinner also provided an opportunity for incoming President Dr. Doug Letson to be introduced formally to the community of graduates. In his remarks, Letson said that "Fr. Norm was the right person in the right place at the right time in our history. He gave us a sense of the possibilities of St. Jerome's and encouraged us to seize the future."

"The College changed dramatically under Fr. Norm," added Letson. "He instilled in us a sense of confidence that we do well what we do at St. Jerome's."

Following a sumptuous buffet dinner of chicken cordon bleu and hip of beef, complemented by specially-labelled 125th anniversary wines, three graduates paid formal tribute to Fr. Norm.

Marc Kealey (BA '83) called him "a friend, spiritual model, and advisor," while Paul Rucurean (BMath '79), a student in residence during Fr. Norm's chaplaincy, shared his admiration for him through a humorous anecdote of how