

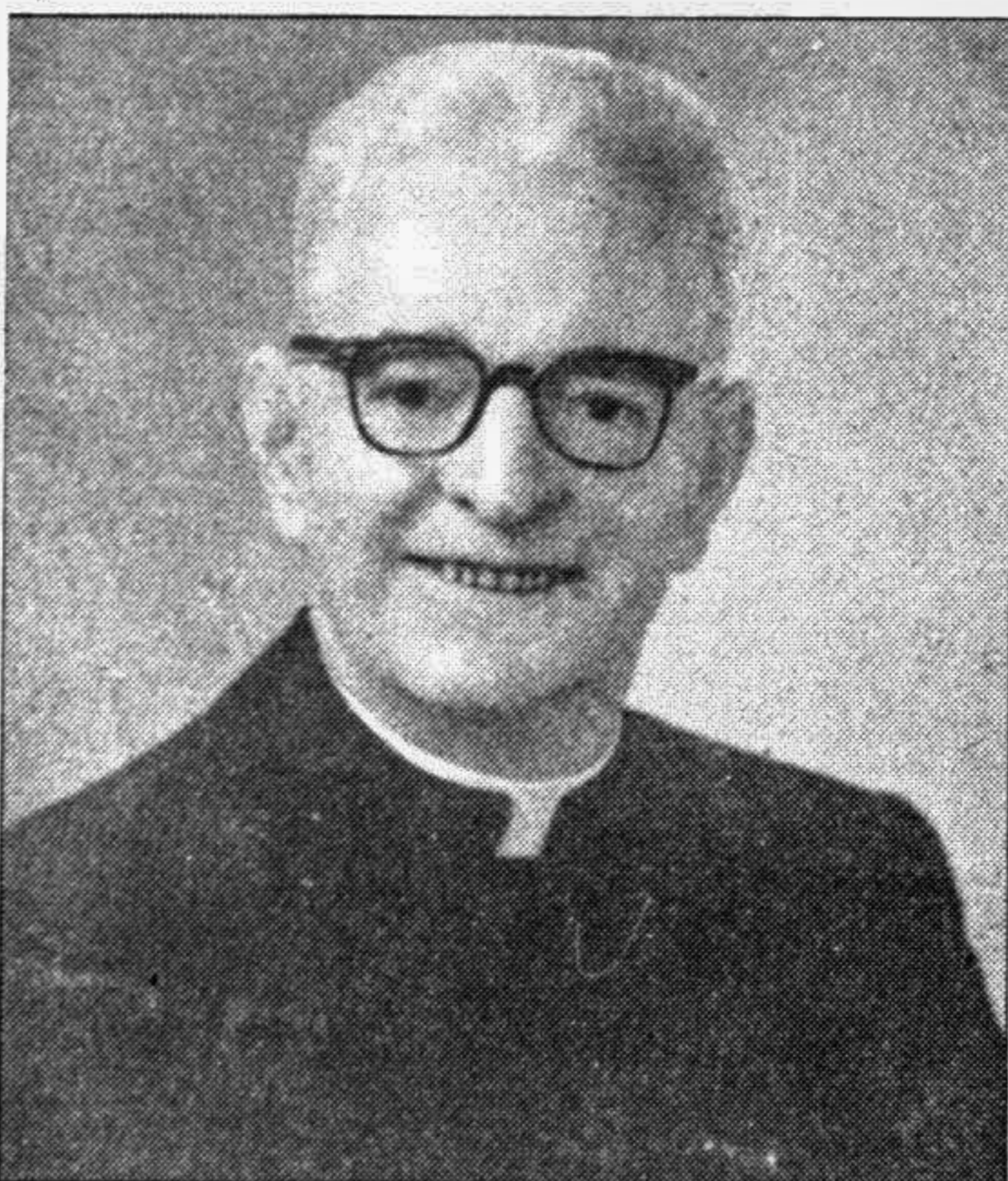
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GOLDEN JUBILEE OF Notre Dame College

AN INSTITUTION OF EXCELLENCE

Nurturing the Glorious Tradition of Good Education

by Fr Benjamin Costa, CSC



Reve Father John J Harrington, CSC
First Principal 1949-1954

A Glorious Institution to Belong to

by Mahfuz Anam

I have the most beautiful memories of my days at Notre Dame College (NDC). I felt greatly privileged when I got admission to NDC and was determined to make the best of the opportunity that going to such an institution provided. In our times Dhaka College and the NDC were the two most famous colleges with the former having a more formidable reputation in academic terms and NDC having a more all-round image. Many of my batch-mates went to Dhaka College and many of us went to the NDC.

where also the teachers were known for their dedication and excellence. There were no harts in those days though students' strikes were beginning to come. The anti-Ayub movements of the early sixties had passed and those of the late sixties were yet to come.

Political issues were beginning to touch us, especially the questions of regional autonomy and those of economic disparity between the two wings. I remember the many heated arguments we used to have in our cafeteria about them, especially with the many Urdu-speaking students who studied with us. We were the first batch to take up the issue of observing Ekushey February in the college in a big way. I was part of a group who were able to persuade the college authority to build a Shaheed Minar in the compound. The design was done by one of the students. We raised funds from outside and built it ourselves, to our great pride and satisfaction. This made us feel a part of the mainstream of the student community.

During my two years at Notre Dame College a most wonderful thing happened to me. Quite accidentally I did well in college debates which later had a most profound impact on my life. We had a teacher called Azhar Ali who was the Coordinator of the Debating Club. The practice was that every Friday in those days the weekly holiday was on Sunday — after classes the Debating Club would meet and hold an unprepared debate on a just given topic. All were welcome. The idea was to see how quickly one could grasp a subject, think logically, build arguments, and present them coherently before an audience. The scoring was individual. My friends laughed when on one of those Fridays I signed up. They chided me for wasting time.

The topic was selected by the Coordinator and written on the

what criterion to be used for this qualification. Various people would propose different criteria for measuring the successes or the failures of the college. Usually people judge the quality of an educational institution by the examination results, i.e., percentage of passes, distinctions, places of merit, etc. Others judge it by the quality of the products, i.e., how far in the social ladder its graduates have ascended, how many are in the top leadership positions in different fields, etc. Others again will judge by the number and quality of the professionals like engineers, doctors, scholars, professors produced by the institution who are considered 'successful' in life. It is needless to say that all these are not unimportant. But this type of evaluation gives an impression of commercialism, as if the goal of education is simply to prosper economically. But education is not a commercial commodity and it should not be considered as such. Many guardians are proud of having their sons study at Notre Dame and afterwards go abroad for higher studies. How should we then evaluate the success or failures of Notre Dame? How would those who went through Notre Dame want themselves to be evaluated?

The pioneers who started Notre Dame fifty years ago had a very definite goal in mind, a goal that was based on very specific and clear ideals or philosophy. The college was started by the Holy Cross Fathers who are members of an International Religious Order, viz., the Congregation of Holy Cross of the Catholic Church, dedicated to education and formation of young people. 'Teaching' is considered by the Catholic Church as a part of the mission given by Jesus to his disciples 'to teach all nations.' Ever since the beginning of the Church two thousand years ago, it has taken this command of Jesus almost literally. For teaching in the true sense of the term is a mission, a task to enlighten the minds and hearts of men and women so that they become open and receptive to the truth. In other words, the goal of education as understood by the Catholics is the development of the total human person: physical, moral, intellectual and spiritual development of the whole person. In the brochure that was prepared in

classroom board. We were asked to choose sides — For or Against the Motion. I don't remember much about that occasion except that the moment I finished speaking the Coordinator asked me to go back to the rostrum and speak from the opposite side, defending the very arguments that I had just opposed. I was given just a few minutes to gather my thoughts to counter the very arguments that I had made so energetically just moments before. From then on it became my regular practice to stay after classes on Friday and participate in the debates.

It was the first time in my life that I was participating regularly in this very exciting intellectual game. To understand, to search for facts, to build arguments in favour of one's position and then to try to persuade others to one's own points of view is what debating is all about. The other thing is to try and anticipate opponents' arguments and counter them effectively. For me it was like a whole new world opening up and I found myself getting increasingly attracted to it. For me it was a love affair that never died.

Debating taught me to see both sides of an argument and developed in me the capacity to weigh them and present my own thoughts in a very clear and forceful manner. The most important thing in debating is that it teaches one to think clearly, sequentially and pointedly. It is irrelevant whether one wins any debate or not. Learning how to debate teaches one to analyse issues in an objective and dispassionate manner and assists in reaching logical conclusions. Without realising, debating affects one's manner of talking and writing. I remain forever grateful to Notre Dame College for giving that opportunity to develop my debating skills which have served me in every field of my life.

the early 1950s, the aims and ideals of Notre Dame were stated as: 'The development of the whole man by an adequate training of the physical, moral and intellectual powers of the students is deemed a sacred trust at Notre Dame. Students are encouraged to participate in co-curricular activities such as debating, dramatics, sports, etc. special care is taken to form the character of the students, to inspire them with a love of God, country, and of fellowmen, to train them to gentlemanly manners and effective habits of study. The College thereby hopes to qualify its students for successful living.' By successful living here is meant a life that is meaningful, i.e., truly human. It refers to a life that is characterized by human values, a life which finds expression in an authentic and effective love for values like justice, truth and human dignity.

It was with this vision and sense of mission that the Holy Cross Priests set out to establish Notre Dame College in the Luxembourg area of Dhaka the capital of what was East Pakistan in 1949, shortly after the Independence from British rule. They were motivated by a special zeal to help the new country by making a contribution in one of the most important fields of the society, viz., education. The main reason for this special motivation was that they had committed their whole life to the ministry of teaching and formation of young people under the vow of religious obedience. All the successive heads of the institution as well as the other members of the order relentlessly pursued those ideals. Moreover they were able to inspire all the others who joined them, both the teaching and the non-teaching staff of the college, to live up to those same ideals. Some of the graduates of Notre Dame who are recognized as outstanding citizens and good leaders in their respective fields take great pride in saying that they were students of this college. Most of the members of the Catholic Hierarchy as well as practically all the local priests, male religious, teachers and social leaders were students of Notre Dame and are now making valuable contributions in the education and formation of the children and the youth in their respective dioceses, parishes, high schools and primary schools

around the country. Therefore, we can safely say that the success of Notre Dame College, if there is any, lies in the dedicated loving service of the people in the administration, in the teaching and the office staff. However, it cannot be attributed simply to their professional efficiency and hard work. Their success was due to personal interest in and commitment to the cause of education and formation of the young people, a commitment which enabled them to give their best to their students. It has been a tradition to call Notre Dame a 'family' where each one plays his or her role with due respect to the role of others. There is a real team spirit, a recognition of each one's uniqueness, their individual gifts and charisms, and their sense of responsibility. It is this family spirit that has helped the college most in overcoming the many obstacles and difficulties that she had to face along the way.

Another secret behind the success of Notre Dame College is its emphasis on the extra or co-curricular activities, through which the students have a golden opportunity to develop their talents. Almost since the beginning of the college, many co-curricular activities such as debating, sports, scouting, quiz competitions, etc. were carried out by what we call clubs, e.g., Science Club, Debating Club, Nature Study Club, Rotaract Club, etc. Each Club has a moderator who is a teacher. Under his/her supervision and guidance students are able to do many creative things. It also gives the students and opportunity to develop their leadership skill and associate closely with their class companions and their moderating teacher. Thanks to these Club activities, over the years many of our students won championships and prizes at the national level in TV debates, Science Fairs, Quiz competitions, etc.

Ever since its beginning, Notre Dame has been known as outstanding for its academic performance. But besides the academic excellence and outstanding performance in co-curricular activities, the college rightly deserves recognition for its social concern in the context of the country, although many may not agree. It is through the involvement of the students along with the administrative personnel and the teaching

staff in the social projects such as helping the victims of natural calamities like floods, cyclones, tornados, etc., and other projects like literacy programme for the slum children, technical training for the street children, health care for the poor, etc. that Notre Dame has created a model of patriotism, social concern, active involvement, true spirit of service and dedicated leadership. Notre Dame students are taught to realize that it is far more important to do good to people than to talk about good. Hopefully this social concern instilled among the Notre Dame students will find an effective expression when they exercise leadership in different fields of the society.

Another reason behind the success of Notre Dame is the co-operation that has existed among the administration, teachers and guardians of our students. Occasionally the college has organized meetings with guardians and they responded very positively. During these meetings the guardians expressed their concern, their hopes and aspirations from the college, and the authorities in turn spelled out their expectations from the students and their guardians. Through this dialogue a spirit of mutual understanding grew up between the college authority and the guardians. The fact that there exists no student union or politics at Notre Dame speaks much about the relationship between the guardians and the college. No parent in his/her right mind would want his/her son to get involved in activities that could ruin their future and are disruptive to the academic environment. We are fortunate that during these long 50 years, a peaceful atmosphere has generally prevailed at Notre Dame College. Sometimes it is deeply edifying to hear comments expressing that the Notredamians are easily recognized by their gentlemanly conduct, etiquette, politeness, good behaviour and other human and moral values. Many national leaders of good reputation pride themselves on having been students of Notre Dame College.

Having inherited a rich and glorious tradition of good education and formation of the students by the highly motivated, inspired, dedicated and responsible stakeholders of Notre Dame for the past fifty years and considering the spirit, quality and motivation of those who are involved in the College at present, we may hope that the future of the college is bright. Where there is good will, many good things can happen.

On this great occasion of the Golden Jubilee of the College we the administrative, teaching, office and maintenance staff would like to vow again to continue to strive together as a team or a family to make a meaningful contribution to the building up of the nation by maintaining high academic standards and promoting human, ethical and social value formation of the future generation of our country. Together we wish to build a happy and prosperous Bangladesh, a nation where there is true human development, justice, peace and harmony among all citizens.

Fr. Benjamin Costa, CSC

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The author is the Principal of Notre Dame College.

Priceless Contribution to Education

by JS Peixotto, CSC

consult reference books, to make extensive notes. There was a determined effort to excel.

Then came troubled times. You 1965-74 students know the role of the college union. Despite positive merits of student involvement in government much of the time we found the activity of the union to work in opposition to the goals of the college administration. It was a time of great tension. At the same time the country suffered civil disturbances as it moved toward the struggle for independence. The college is proud to have been able to contribute significantly to the struggle which brought about our independence, and is proud of those of you who sacrificed so greatly for this cause.

We had great hopes that the sacrifice would bring a new spirit and excellence to our new country. But in the field of education the new reality was not up to the expectations. No longer was it possible for the college to give the same highly intellectual and personal guidance to the few students who managed to enroll. The national priority was more for quantity than quality. The need of the time was to offer opportunities to the many thousands of students who desired to study in college.

In response this college began its period of expanding enrollment. At the same time the college did its best to maintain the same academic requirements and discipline, regular quizzes, exams, labs, compulsory class attendance. Many bright students those days preferred to study at other colleges where there were fewer demands. Those of you who enrolled in Notre Dame have been able to reap the results of your hard work and intellectual inquiry.

Beginning from 1969 the college began major efforts to contribute toward social needs of our people. My trips to villages with students bearing relief and rehabilitation materials were among my most enlightening and cherished experiences. I am sure that most students who were involved would make the same comment. At the same time the social projects on campus blossomed and gave an added social aspect to the college. I hope that many of you

have learned to share in our concern for the poor and needy and are influenced by that spirit as you carry on your present responsibilities.

In the early years of the college the Holy Cross fathers were most prominent in the teaching and administration. But in the post-independence years the fathers were few in number while the enrollment and programmes grew in number and size. Our teachers and office, lab and maintenance staff came to the rescue taking over almost full responsibility for conduct of the college clubs, exams, studies, guidance, discipline and the office, labs and maintenance. With gratitude we warmly welcome to this jubilee those of you who rescued the college during those years and set the course for the following years.

Finally we have come to a period of physical growth. After so many years of expansion of programmes we finally expanded our building space 70 per cent with the construction of our new building.

One might consider what makes Notre Dame special today. The beginning of that answer lies in consideration of its history. It was founded by a group of dedicated and highly competent fathers from the USA. They were joined by many very competent teachers and staff who came to share in this dedication on behalf of the college and students. Through their efforts it came to be considered to be an excellent college.

Politics before and after the war of independence entered the college and almost destroyed it, but a group of fathers, teachers and staff with great personal sacrifice carried the college through the crisis and guided it through the many adjustments made since independence of the country. Today the college attempts to give students a very fine preparation for higher studies and life based on definite ideals of education, character and social involvement. The present faculty, administration and staff work very much as a team or family united in their tireless effort to prepare suitable citizens for society and the country.

For the future the college will continue to offer this same priceless contribution to its students and the country, as long as it keeps foremost in mind its ideals, maintains its determination to excel, treats with respect and dignity all persons who it deals with, and resists all pressures to give up its special identity.

On behalf of the principal, Fr. Benjamin Costa, and all the college administration, faculty and staff our jubilee committee invites you join us in fiftieth year celebration. Your presence is a sign of your love for the college and confidence in its role in our society. We urgently request your help and support in our present and future efforts.



Fr. JS Peixotto, CSC

The author is the Convenor of the Jubilee Celebration.

Co-curricular Activities of Notre Dame College

Notre Dame Debating Club
Estd. 1953

Notre Dame Science Club
Estd. 18 Sept. 1955

Notre Dame Adventure Club
Estd. 11 Oct. 1966

Notre Dame Rover Dal
Estd. 1972

Notre Dame Business Club
Estd. 1973

Notre Dame Chess Club
Estd. 29 August 1984

Notre Dame Manobik Sangha
Estd. 29 August 1984

Notre Dame Nature Study Club
Estd. 29 August 1984

Notre Dame Degree Club
Estd. 20 April 1986

Jubo Red Crescent, Notre Dame College
Estd. 26 November 1986

Notre Dame Computer Club
Estd. February, 1987

Rotaract Club of Notre Dame College
Estd. 14 March, 1990

Notre Dame Natya Dal
Estd. 1991

Notre Dame Abritti Dal
Estd. 18 August 1992

Notre Dame History Club
Estd. 26 Aug. 1992

Association for Medical Help and
Environmental Health Promotion
Estd. 28 October 1992

International Understanding and Relation
Club
Estd. 20 February 1993

Notre Dame Sanskrit Gosthi
Estd. Dec. 4, 1996

College Publications

'Blue & Gold' is the annual publication of the college.
'Dhak-Dhol' (Bangla) & Chit-Chat (English) are the
monthly publications.