

The Mendelson Fund

Furthering Formation

Fifteen years ago, Joe Mendelson was faced with an interesting decision.

Joe's father, Herbert Mendelson, made a significant gift to the University of Notre Dame in 1951 as a loan fund for Notre Dame students in the business school who needed financial support. The fund served Notre Dame students quite well through the 1950s, but was no longer necessary following the advent of the Federal Student Loan Program.

In 1997, Joe received a call from the Notre Dame Development Department informing him that the fund was in suspense and its value had increased significantly. An alternative use for the funds was necessary.

An idea came to Joe while he was running on the beach near his Southern California home. According to Joe, it was divine intervention.

Joe recalled the many times of his youth visiting Notre Dame with his father. Herbert served on the Advisory Council of the College of Business for the University under the presidency of Rev. John Cavanaugh, C.S.C. Joe's fond memories include spending time in Fr. Cavanaugh's office and meeting other Holy Cross religious during his visits. Those memories ignited a desire to help support the Congregation of Holy Cross and the young men who are discerning a religious vocation with the Congregation.

Recognizing that some Holy Cross seminarians have loan debt, particularly those who enter the formation program after receiving an undergraduate or advanced degree, and that once a seminarian professes Final Vows with Holy Cross the debt becomes the responsibility of the United States Province, Joe worked with the University and the Congregation of Holy Cross to develop a program to

underwrite the debt.

The first funding was granted in 2002. In the 13 years under Joe's guidance, a total of \$643,800 has been gifted to Holy Cross.

In 2013, inspiration again came when some unused fund earnings were available. Joe and his wife Barbara asked if there were other formation opportunities the fund could support. After meeting with Rev. Thomas O'Hara, C.S.C., Provincial Superior, they developed a secondary focus for the fund, providing financial resources for both recurring and unique formation opportunities for temporarily professed members of Holy Cross. Toward this end, the Herbert Mendelson Fund has gifted more than \$166,479 for international immersion experiences to Bangladesh, Israel, México, France and Perú, provided underwriting for workshops and retreats, and supported textbooks and other formation resources. These enhanced learning opportunities have been of tremendous benefit for the young seminarians in further preparing them for their lives in ministry.

The prompting of the Holy Spirit, along with their faithful stewardship, brought Joe and Barbara closer to Holy Cross in creating a unique legacy to serve Holy Cross and the Church for generations to follow.



Barbara and Joe Mendelson, center, were honored by Fr. Tom O'Hara, C.S.C., second from right, for their support of the Congregation of Holy Cross. Surrounding Joe and Barbara are a few of the Holy Cross priests benefitting from the Mendelson Fund.