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Notre Dame Law Review Editors

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## Reverend Michael D. McCafferty, C.S.C.

Dear Father Mike,

It's fall and we have returned to Notre Dame. Only now do we realize that you are really gone, and that you will not be coming back. As we reflect on our years at Notre Dame, we realize what an integral part you played in that experience. Law school would not have been the same without you.

Our class, the class of 1988, was the last class to get to know you before you found out you were sick. You taught all of us for a semester of Torts first year. So, Father Mike, we all learned to read cases for details in order to survive your rigorous questioning. How quickly we discovered that birthdays were not a day to celebrate in your class. And although some were particularly vulnerable, no one escaped your "hit list."

And then, we all remember the trauma of first year exams. You helped us keep everything in perspective. At a time when we tended to define ourselves by the grades we received, you reminded us that a "C" grade does not make you a "C" person. You emphasized that it takes more to be a good lawyer. Our natural qualities of personal integrity and compassion for others, you stressed, should guide us not only in our careers, but throughout our lives. Your pep talk helped us approach exams with the proper outlook.

Father Mike, your omnipresence was both a comfort and a source of anxiety. When we stayed out too late at night, you knew by the start of class the next morning. When we threw parties to celebrate the weekend, you were there to share in the occasion. When we needed guidance with our legal careers, you were there to help. And when we just wanted to talk and to grab a handful of M & M's, your door was always open.

When we learned that you were sick, we were shocked. We could not understand how someone so strong could be struck by such a debilitating disease. Even though some days you were in severe pain, you continued teaching that fall in the characteristically entertaining McCafferty style. The comforting rapport returned and all seemed well. We ribbed you with borderline-respectful balding jokes, and you successfully sought revenge in the classroom. Only later did we realize how sick you really were.

Everyone returned to school in January confident that your Irish will had prevailed and that the worst was over. No one could believe it when we heard the cancer was back: A somber mood overcame the law school as word spread. We waited our turn outside your office intending to comfort you with words of hope and encouragement. In the end, you were the one comforting us. Your faith and courage were an inspiration to us all.

Your last mass in the law school confirmed for us the magnitude of your faith. You reminded us of the importance of never becoming too attached to material things, including life itself. And although you were obviously in considerable pain, you stayed after mass to allow each of us to say good-bye.

In the following months, we hoped and prayed that we would hear news of your recovery. Our hopes were shaken when we learned of your relapse in May. But even then, as summer began, our faith in your strength kept us from accepting the possibility that you wouldn't be here when we returned in the fall.

The news of your death came as a shock. Not only did we lose a teacher, but we lost a close friend. We knew then that the law school would seem empty without you.

Now that we have returned to Notre Dame, we realize how large a role you really played in the law school. Your presence is sorely missed. But when we think about what you taught us, we know a great part of you still lives. Your example of absolute faith in God will always be with us.

You won't be here to see us and bless us as graduates of the institution you were so instrumental in forming. Nor will we be afforded the opportunity to see how proud you would be of us at our graduation. But somehow we know you are, and always will be, smiling down on us.

Goodbye, Father Mike. We'll always miss you, but we'll never forget you.

*The Class of 1988*