



BOSTON COLLEGE

January 20, 2000

PHILOSOPHY DEPARTMENT

This is a letter of support which I am very happy to write for the Institute for Faith and Psychological Sciences.

I was first contacted about a year ago by Dr. Gladys Sweeney, the Institute's Executive Director and Dean, with an appeal to serve on its Board of Trustees. I have always refused such requests, since I am a genuine, certified absent-minded professor and therefore neither competent nor interested in the business or "professional" angle of anything at all; but Dr. Sweeney and her Institute struck me as so unique, so appealing, and so persuasive, and their mission so urgent, that I agreed. Since then, all the contacts I have had with her and the Institute have firmed up my suspicion that it is the work not just of men and women but also of the angels. The personnel, the policies, the curriculum, the faculty, the conception of their vocation, and the providential help they have been receiving at every turn, all seem almost too good to be true.

I believe they are rendering a unique and crucial service to both Christendom and our secular culture. I am not a psychologist but a philosopher, but I know that what has happened in Catholic psychology since the debacle of the Sixties has been disastrous, nearly to the point of annihilation. An indication of this is the fact that The Catholic Psychological Association, which flourished in the fifties, has simply ceased to exist. Most universities that label themselves "Catholic" have few, or one, or no, Catholics teaching psychology, especially in their graduate programs (which are all, it seems, totally secular). In light of the fact that psychology has become America's #1 substitute for religion (a fact amply documented by Dr. Paul Vitz, Dr. Kirk Kilpatrick, and others), there would seem to be few more crucial "culture war" needs than to restore a genuine Christian alternative for Catholics, which would produce not just psychologists who just happened to be Catholics, or even Catholics who just happened to be psychologists, but Catholic psychologists.

I am deeply impressed by Dr. Sweeney, by all the people I have met who are associated with the Institute—its faculty, its students, their parents, and the ecclesial support of this lay enterprise. Neither it nor they strike me as narrow in any way; despite the cultural emergency they are aware of and addressing, they are not angry, worried, or pessimistic but enthusiastically, happily, and intelligently dedicated to their task like cathedral builders. This attitude is a hard thing to define, and the best way I can think to put it into words is an anecdote: A medieval traveler came upon two groups of peasants dragging heavy stones over a muddy road; one group was cursing, the other was singing. The traveler asked them what they were doing. The first group said, "We're trying to get these stupid stones through this stupid mud!" The second group said, "We're building a cathedral."

The history of this small Institute, from its beginnings, is full of remarkable Providential successes, from the unprecedented quickness with which it received each step of its certifications and approvals so far, to the construction workers' transformation of a downtown bank into a school in three days and three nights. I am convinced that this work is not just theirs, with some vague hope of divine assistance, but the work of Heaven (which is always good, competent work!) with which they are cooperating like a surfer on a wave.

I am pleased and privileged to put in a very good word for the very good work of these very good people.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Peter J. Kreeft

Peter J. Kreeft
Professor of Philosophy