

WHAT EXACTLY IS A BOND?

The congregation I serve is large enough that we can have a staff person responsible for confirmation ministries. That's the educational program we use with junior high students to help prepare them for adult participation in the life of our congregation. Because I think it is important that the youth get to see their senior pastor in a role outside of worship, I arrange to go to the confirmation class twice a year and teach. This semester, I am going to teach a unit on "relationships".

I have been very intentional over the past several years to make a difference between "membership" in our congregation and "discipleship", meaning that one is lifelong follower of the teachings of Jesus. I make the point that by sending in my dues each year, I could be a member of the National Rifle Association (if I even owned a gun!), but I could be a member without ever meeting another member face-to-face. Of course, if the other member were someone from my college days, perhaps someone from another Fraternity, someone whose girlfriend dumped him to go out with me, I don't think I'd want to meet him face-to-face with a gun in his hand. But I digress...

When each of us joined Alpha Chi Rho, we swore allegiance to the Landmarks of the Fraternity, as well as acknowledging our allegiance to the Bond of Alpha Chi Rho. But if all those words were only words, we really don't have a Bond with any other Brother. After years of marriage, and years of parenting, and years of leadership in school and church, I have learned that relationships are hard work! To assume that my wife is always going to love me simply because of words we spoke thirty-three years ago is a dangerous assumption; I have changed and she has changed in the ensuing years. We have had to work with each other to acclimate ourselves to those changes.

When we were initiated into the Brotherhood of Alpha Chi Rho, we were not initiated into a "four years and out" program. We took a vow for a lifelong relationship with thousands of other Brothers, not just those in our Chapter, but all of those in the Bond of Alpha Chi Rho. If your undergraduate experience with Alpha Chi Rho was a lousy one, I will assume that you are not even reading this article, let alone the rest of the Garnet and White. But if your college years were enhanced by your participation in Alpha Chi Rho, then you have probably taken time to reflect on what Fraternity membership has meant to you in the years since.

At the recent Leadership Conclave held at Drexel University, graduate Brothers were asked what Fraternity membership meant to us and means to us. One of the graduate Brothers immediately raised his hand (academic habits die hard) and said "Friendships! Five of my best friends were Fraternity Brothers thirty years ago, and they remain five of my best friends to this day!" He doesn't remember the names of some of his professors, or the names of some of the buildings on campus, but he remembers these five Brothers of Alpha Chi Rho!

At your National Council, we are always having conversations about how to stay in touch with graduate Brothers. Perhaps if all of us – undergraduates, graduates and officers – made a new commitment to the relationship we share in Alpha Chi Rho, remembering that we are the men we are today because of what our Fraternity

relationship has taught us, we would develop stronger ties with our Chapters, with our National office, with our National Council – and with each other.

As Yogi Berra might have said, if he were writing for the Garnet and White, “If you’re not reading this article, you can stop now.” If you are reading it, think about what Alpha Chi Rho has offered you in the years since graduation. Think about the relationships forged in those college or university years and how that relationship has shaped your life since then. Take the time to reach out to a Brother who made a difference in your life. Reach out and, if need be, renew a relationship forged in the Bond.

In peace,

Pastor David Jost
AXP National Chaplain
Eta Phi '75

