

# Catholic Traditions and Catholic Universities

Marianist Universities Meeting

June 6, 2006

## Introduction

*(Note to readers of this draft: I am not planning to read this paper; it is obviously too long to read at the MUM Meeting. Instead, I will speak from an outline that covers a number of what I think are the most important topics. I realize this will make it a little more difficult for those who have been asked to respond to the presentation, but I think speaking from the outline will be better for all in attendance. Please do not cite this paper without permission of the author.)*

The purpose of this paper is to suggest a number of fruitful ways that Catholic traditions might inform our three Marianist universities.<sup>1</sup> That Catholic traditions already inform our universities goes without saying. What this paper aims to do is name some of those already existing embodiments of the tradition, and then suggest ways that they may be further strengthened, and add still other suggestions for new embodiments of those traditions. I will be drawing on a number of the resources provided as background reading for our meeting,<sup>2</sup> as well as on other texts

In speaking, as I do in the title of this paper, of “Catholic traditions,” I am not backing away from an emphasis on Catholic intellectual traditions. I have in the past stressed, and will continue to stress, Catholic intellectual traditions (an important part of the larger term, “Catholic traditions”), since I have typically been speaking first to faculty, too many of whom are likely not to recognize in Catholicism an intellectual tradition with much to contribute to their own disciplines. Catholics in general tend to reduce Catholicism to moral teachings (who doesn’t know what the Church teaches about birth control, pre-marital sex, adultery, and divorce, as opposed to its teachings on the significance of the incarnation, the resurrection, and justification), that is, to do’s and don’ts, but fail to recognize the fundamental vision of life and community in which such teachings are based. And even more, too many Catholics fail to recognize the

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<sup>1</sup> I thank my generous colleagues Paul Benson, Una Cadegan, Christopher Duncan and Christopher Wittmann for their comments and suggestions on an earlier draft.

<sup>2</sup> (1) Mark W. Roche, *The Intellectual Appeal of Catholicism and the Idea of a Catholic University* (Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 2003); (2) *Characteristics of Marianist Universities*, accessed at: <http://www.udayton.edu/~amu-usa/pdfs/characteristics.pdf>; (3) Sandra M. Estanek, “Student Development and the Catholic University: Philosophical Reflections,” in *Current Issues in Catholic Higher Education* (Washington, DC: Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities (ACCU), December 2001); (4) Monika Hellwig, *What Makes Our Colleges Catholic?* In *Mission and Identity: A Handbook for Trustees of Catholic Colleges and Universities* (Washington, DC: ACCU, Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB), and Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities (AJCU), 2003), p. 45-52.

theological foundations for life and community which shape that vision. So, in this paper, I will be referring to “Catholic traditions” since I am speaking not only to faculty, but also to staff, administration, and students. At the same time, I will be drawing frequently on Catholic intellectual traditions, but will be explaining them so that they relate to student life, the responsibilities of staff and faculty. Unfortunately, my experience with staff and student affairs professionals is more limited than is my experience with faculty, and that will show in this paper. The more general audience makes this paper in some ways more difficult to write, but it also makes it, I hope, more useful for all of us.

Finally, also by way of introduction, I want to comment on one statement that some of our colleagues, mostly but not only non-Catholics, frequently make when the Catholic and Marianist mission is the topic of discussion. The statement usually takes the following form: “I could be Marianist but not Catholic.” I take this statement as a compliment to the Marianists. I think it underscores some aspects of the Marianist traditions—usually a commitment to community, to a collaborative spirit, and to a certain egalitarian ethos—that they see embodied in the Marianists they have come to know and admire, and with which they willingly identify, even though they may not be Catholics. But what I think some of these colleagues fail to realize is that these characteristics are also Catholic. Catholicism has always striven to sustain a community of believers with distinctive practices, and among those practices, especially in more recent times, both collaboration and equality (remember Jesus told us that those who exercise authority in the Christian community are to lay down their lives for others, not lord it over them, and St. Paul made it clear that while we have different gifts we are all one in the Spirit). Moreover, it should be added that there are Marianist traditions that are not often enough expressed, even by vowed Marianists, that many non-Catholics and even some Catholics would find it hard to embrace, such as the Marianist vow of stability which commits Marianists to making Mary, the Mother of Jesus, better known, loved and served in the world, the centrality of obedience in the vowed life, and Chaminade’s commitment to multiplying apostles, that is, to increasing the number of Catholics committed to building up the Catholic Church—again, all of which are not only Marianist, but a part of a fuller understanding of Catholicism. In short, we have to be careful about separating too neatly Catholicism and Marianist traditions, and less selective in highlighting only certain aspects of each tradition that we find more “user friendly.”

### **The Readings: An Overview**

Let us now turn to the theme of our meeting. Perhaps like some of you, I have over the years attended many conferences for which the organizers have required

certain readings to be done beforehand. But at the majority of these conferences, any serious discussion of those readings rarely happened. In order to avoid simply passing over the readings required for this meeting, and especially since I suggested those readings, allow me to spend a little time summarizing and commenting on them. Let us begin with Dr. Estanek's article. She has been for a number of years a leader among student affairs professionals on Catholic campuses, and is currently Assistant Professor and Director of the Student Personnel master's program at Canisius College. She writes about the challenges specific to student development or student affairs professionals. In essence, she argues that current student development theory is at odds with a Catholic understanding of how students should live and be formed on three fundamental points: (1) that Catholic tradition is deductive not inductive; (2) that Catholic tradition fosters community rather than individualism; and (3) that the community (or the common good) and not individual choice, is the fundamental value. While I agree with her desire to distinguish between a Catholic set of assumptions about student life and a secular set, I find some of her distinctions overdrawn—facile either/or statements when a more careful both/and, as well as a realization, for example, that to contribute to the common good one needs to be an individual (which need not lead a person to be an “individualist”).

When I first read her statement that Catholic tradition is deductive and not inductive, I shook my head. I understand a “deductive” approach to be one that draws conclusions from premises that are taken as “givens,” whereas an inductive approach to knowledge draws upon actual experience for understanding. I believe, therefore, it would be more accurate to say that over the centuries Catholicism draws out of lived-experience certain insights and understandings that eventually function as enduring norms, guidelines and rules. These insights (for example, stealing and lying are wrong, murder is forbidden, fidelity in marriage is better than adultery, and reverence for God is better than thinking that nothing is sacred) are in some instances for Jews and Christians also strengthened by revelation (“Worship the Lord your God with your whole heart and mind and soul, and love your neighbor as yourself”). Thus, I would rather suggest that much of Catholic moral teaching is the result of mainly an inductive process based on careful observation of experience and what makes people truly flourish.<sup>3</sup> We use both our reason and our faith in coming to conclusions about what is moral and immoral, what leads to lasting happiness and what presents itself initially as happiness, but actually provides only an immediate advantage or pleasure in the short term, but sadness and broken relationships in the long term. Catholicism is more likely to say that some things are condemned because they are wrong than it is to say that

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<sup>3</sup> The traditional word, “happy”, goes all the way back to Aristotle. I hesitate to use that word in a culture which confuses happiness with immediate satisfaction.

some things are wrong because they are condemned. To say that certain deeds are condemned because they are wrong, that is, that they are destructive and disrespectful, is to appeal to what we have learned both individually and collectively through lived-experience.

But the appeal to lived-experience, and even to the Scriptures, does not always lead to correct moral judgments, as the case of only recent condemnation of slavery makes painfully clear.<sup>4</sup> Beyond most of the Ten Commandments, it takes continuous careful discernment to understand what is sinful and what is not.<sup>5</sup> Catholic tradition often speaks of the importance of the virtues, such as fortitude (or courage), temperance (or “self-control”), prudence (or good sense) and justice. Virtues are strengths developed over time through practice with the help of God’s grace. Protestants may be just as virtuous as Catholics, but conservative Protestants tend to shy away from talk about the virtues since in their view there is the danger, not without some reason, that emphasizing virtues as personal strengths might take away from the necessity of God’s grace and forgiveness. In its more extreme and memorable form, their objection is to “works” that replace the need for “grace.” “Virtue-talk” leads Catholics, they think, to believe that their good works earn salvation, rather than realizing that salvation is a gift of God. And indeed, Catholics who believe that God loves them only because they do good works end up believing that God’s love and forgiveness is a reward for doing those good works. The truth of the matter is that we are good because God loves us, and that any goodness that we may grow into through performing good works is, ultimately, traceable to God’s grace.<sup>6</sup>

Nevertheless, Catholics speak of the virtues and the call to become holy.<sup>7</sup> Certain practices are important. Catholics tend not to say “God did it all; I did nothing.” Catholics should say, “I did it with the help of God.” Still, the good that we do is

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<sup>4</sup> See John Noonan’s *What Can and Cannot Change in the Church* (Notre Dame Press, 2005). Christians, including popes right up to Leo XIII (1878-1903) argued that slavery was a consequence of the sinful condition of humanity.

<sup>5</sup> At the same time, it sometimes proves difficult to know just what constitutes idolatry in one’s life or to know when in reference to the fifth commandment that a war is just.

<sup>6</sup> Part of the difference between conservative Protestants (fundamentalists and evangelicals, though the distinction is not always clear) and Catholics on this matter comes down to the differences on how wounded human nature is by original sin. Catholics believe humans are wounded, not completely destroyed by sin; conservative Protestants tend to believe that the damage of original sin is greater and removes nearly any capacity for salvation apart from explicit belief in Jesus Christ. In theological language, Catholics say that human beings are deprived, not depraved, by original sin.

<sup>7</sup> Because of the belief in the possibility of a person becoming holy, Catholicism has continuously supported a rich tradition of mysticism, which emphasizes graced “union with God.” But others are suspicious of mysticism: a rabbi friend of mine once remarked that mysticism is a “mist that ends in schism.” Conservative Protestants so emphasize the pervasiveness of sin that “holiness” seems a presumption. At the same time, a rediscovery of the reality of sin, both personal and social, would sharpen our vision as to our responsibilities and the need for a community of support to meet them.

discerned, at least in part, from examining human experience over time. One of my favorite moral theologians, the late Dominican Herbert McCabe, has written a short catechism entitled *The Teaching of the Catholic Church*. He includes in his catechism a section about the importance of living a virtuous life.<sup>8</sup> In answer to how we might sin against courage, he writes:

We fail in the exercise of courage by acquiescence in injustice through fear of the powerful or of public opinion; by conformity with the values of this world and by all forms of cowardice and laziness; by unreasonable anger and bad temper and by irresponsible rashness.

His description of failures against justice is also worth noting:

Failures against justice occur by...depriving others of their due or by failing to defend them against injustice: by murder, abortion, injury, including self-injury, torture, rape and adultery; by collusion with an oppressive and exploitative regime or with an unjust war; by indulging racism, sexism, or religious bigotry, by avarice, by accumulating wealth and keeping it from the poor; by stealing or misusing the legitimate property of the community or individuals by tax evasion and inequitable forms of legal tax avoidance; by spreading deceptive propaganda or misleading advertising; by perjury and all forms of dishonest or sharp practices; and by any form of cooperation with the injustice of others.

And finally, in his response to the question concerning our failures in the exercise of self-control in the matters of eating and drinking, McCabe emphasizes the importance of social joys, a point too rarely made by moralists:

We may fail by indifference to the enjoyments of table; by eating and drinking that is totally divorced from either friendship or the requirements of health; by eating what is merely superficially attractive at the expense of reasonable diet, by drug abuse, and by all forms of gluttony and drunkenness.<sup>9</sup>

One of the most important moral realizations that we seem in recent years to be coming to is that the virtues of the table, if I may use that phrase, are integrally related to important matters of social and ecological justice. We are beginning to understand that when we pray before meals for those who have harvested the crops and slaughtered the

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<sup>8</sup> Published by Michael Glazier, 1986.

<sup>9</sup> See my article, "Rethinking Sin: The Existential and Social Dimensions," in *The Catechist* (October, 1988), pp. 10-12.

animals (though we rarely speak so bluntly about the latter), issues of justice are deeply embedded in our prayer.

I have quoted McCabe on the nature of sin at some length since his way of describing sin clearly underscores several key aspects of the Catholic understanding of the human person, points also made, but less clearly and carefully, by Dr. Estanek: (1) that we are not just individuals who are free to make self-centered choices; (2) that community and friends are important; and (3) that understanding what is right and wrong takes education and training. We tend to privatize morality in our culture to individual acts, especially related to sex. McCabe's inclusion of the sins of racism, collusion with an oppressive political regime, support for an unjust war, misusing the property of others, and inequitable forms of legal tax avoidance—deeds not typically listed as sins by many moralists—makes clear the importance of the community. It also makes clear the need for both study and courage—for study simply to understand the forms of sinful behavior that are more social and deeply affect others, and for the courage to act on what one learns through such study. We could profitably speak of “sin” as well when we speak of plagiarism, laziness and various forms of self indulgence (e.g., drinking, addictions to media and pornography, and the lack of courage and prudent decision making).

Except for my disagreement with Estanek's claim that Catholicism is deductive rather than inductive, a claim she perhaps unwittingly but rightly qualifies somewhat later in her paper when she quotes Richard McBrien (“Principles do not appear full-blown apart from experience”), and my concern about the overly simple way she contrasts student development theory and Catholic tradition, I think that she is right to emphasize that Catholicism's approach to wise living, whether we talk of students or adults, differs in some significant ways from the approach promoted by the larger culture, marked as it is, especially in the United States, by a market-driven consumerism that floods people with choices, and where the choices are always right. In fact, I believe the major source of the disconnect between basic Catholic approaches and what Estanek describes as a different epistemology (“belief-empiricism”), is not so much a philosophy that has affected the way people think, but a consumerist culture that has deeply shaped the practices and expectations of most all of us. And that very culture affects the way many people think of religion today. In a review of sociologist of religion Wade Clark Roof's book, *Spiritual Marketplace*, Catholic University professor William Dinges writes:

Among the more significant findings (of sociologists) are the diffusion or fading of traditional religious identities and boundaries; the preference of personal experience as the normative datum of religion; the self-constructed, fluid,

eclectic, and multi-layered bricolage of religious identity; and the uncoupling of spirituality from religion. Other trends include the growing commodification of religion and spirituality; the conflation of religion and ethics (in which “religion” means being a “good person”); and the homogenization of religious belief and practice into what the author (Roof) calls a “redefined” center.<sup>10</sup>

Even more than faculty, our staff and especially our campus ministry and student affairs professionals deal directly, sometimes nights and weekends, with students, especially residential ones, deeply shaped by a marketplace culture. It also should be noted that some of these staff have affected more deeply the personal development and maturity of students than have the faculty. When we speak of a commitment to the “whole person,” we should also realize we are often speaking of a commitment to persons the *whole* time they are with us. Substantive conversations between faculty and staff take place too infrequently.

Before moving on, I should add that, in my view, Dinges’ description of the larger market culture dwells a bit too much on only the negative. In the midst of consumerism and the focus on the self, there is also a greater freedom to explore, less resistance (due mainly to ignorance) to religious traditions, a greater openness and spiritual hunger, and, in fact, a desire, at least on the part of some people, to rediscover religious traditions and practices that erect some foundations and boundaries for identity and provide some moral guidance. If the religious identity of most youth today is more diffused and less defined, that same fuzzy identity makes it harder for them to condemn other religions or pass moral judgments on forms of behavior traditionally condemned (e.g., remarriage after divorce and acceptance of homosexuals as persons deserving of respect and having dignity). There is also a greater interest in and knowledge of other peoples of the world, and a generosity and service orientation, and practices of philanthropy that in some cases are simply remarkable. While such moral “gains” in our current culture are mixed and still in need of clarification and direction, they are nonetheless some real positives that can be found in our culture and important to many young people.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> William Dinges, “Review Article,” *The Living Light* (Fall 2000), p. 76. Dinges adds that “in a culture of mobility, choice, and self-actualization, religion is less likely to be organized around ethnicity or social class and more likely to be galvanized around gender or lifestyle orientations.” And a little later, Dinges highlights Roof’s description of the baby boomer’s deeply subjective approach to religion, an approach Roof names “reflexive spirituality,” which is “pervasive, individualized self-consciousness about our deepest affirmations and commitments...that expresses the cultural preoccupation with “self”; the linking of spirituality with techniques of self-expansion, self-exploration, and other norms of America’s therapeutic culture.”

<sup>11</sup> In general I find the analysis of contemporary culture by authors like Charles Taylor (e.g., *Sources of the Self* [Harvard, 1989]) and Vince Miller (*Consuming Religion: Christian Faith and Practice in a Consumer Culture* [Continuum, 2005]) more balanced than the cultural analysis typical of most religious people who tend to be, on the whole, too negative. The Irish rock star, Bono, recently remarked at a presidential prayer breakfast that Americans

Turning now to a more explicit treatment of Catholic intellectual traditions, I find, as I would expect, a high degree of overlap between Hellwig and Roche's descriptions of certain facets of Catholic intellectual traditions. This is all the more striking since Hellwig, the then executive director of the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities, provides a theological and practical commentary on the 1990 Vatican document on Catholic higher education, *Ex corde ecclesia*. She wrote this article mainly for people who serve on the boards of Catholic colleges and universities; she is, therefore, concerned about not just Catholicism as an intellectual tradition, but also policies and strategies for leaders in Catholic higher education. Roche is writing as a historian of ideas and a dean at a major Catholic university. This short book was first a lecture given at a conference on Church-related higher education; part of his purpose was to distinguish the Catholic approach from Protestant approaches.<sup>12</sup>

Hellwig draws special attention to the distinctive character of US Catholic colleges and universities (unlike European universities that specialize in a profession or single discipline, Catholic colleges and universities promote the liberal arts, require theology and philosophy courses, and work to build a strong relationship between the liberal arts and the professions), the important dialogue between faith and reason, the four essential characteristics of a Catholic university (a Christian inspiration, continued reflection on and contribution to new knowledge in the light of the Gospel, fidelity to the Christian message as it comes to us through the Church, and service to the Church and society), the importance of sacramental worship on campus, and careful hiring and development of faculty and staff. She concludes by drawing attention to John Paul II's commitment to a "cultural dialogue" which the pope hoped would focus attention upon "the meaning of the human person, his or her liberty, dignity, sense of responsibility, and openness to the transcendent...the preeminent value of the family, the primary unit of human culture." Over his long tenure as pope, John Paul II repeatedly called for a "dialogue with the culture," stating boldly in *Ex corde ecclesiae* that "a faith that places itself on the margin of what is human, of what is therefore culture, would be a faith unfaithful to the fullness of what the Word of God manifests and reveals, a decapitated faith, worse still, a faith in the process of self-annihilation" (par. 44). Hellwig's short article condenses, with nuances, a great deal of information, and repays careful reading and discussion.

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are "great on charity but thin on justice"; I think Bono has it basically right (see John Coleman's review of Robert Wuthnow's *American Ethos* (Princeton University, 2006), in *America*, May 22, 2006, p. 28.

<sup>12</sup> Unfortunately, throughout his book, he paints Protestants with a very broad brush, never distinguishing at least between conservative (fundamentalist and evangelical, though even those two terms admit of various definitions) and liberal (mainline) Protestants. He also never refers to those Protestant colleges that have retained a strong Christian identity (e.g., Calvin and Wheaton), but rather has, it seems, in the back of his mind, those originally Protestant colleges that have become major secular private universities (e.g., Harvard, Chicago and Princeton).

In his short book, *The Intellectual Appeal of Catholicism and the Idea of a Catholic University*, Roche points to the following themes as embodiments of the distinctiveness of Catholicism: (1) its universality; (2) its sacramental nature; (3) the importance it places on tradition and reason; and (4) its continuous quest for a unity in knowledge. In valuing reason, Roche writes, Catholics open the door to learning from others; and in valuing tradition, Catholics open the door to a rich collection of writings and works of art. He believes that philosophy and theology bear a special responsibility to work at the unity of knowledge. To his credit, I believe, Roche speaks explicitly about the Trinity, about the incarnation of Jesus and the role of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the scholars and students at a Catholic university. Finally, he mentions the highly competitive environment created by excellent Protestant and secular universities, and underscores how at Catholic universities the liberal arts should retain a special existential character—one that encourages not only learning *about* the past but also *from* the past. He admits that his book focuses only on Catholic intellectual traditions, and not on the wider richness of the whole Catholic tradition, that he left unexplored some good secular standards for academic excellence, and he did not present any institutional strategies for the deeper realization of an institution's Catholic identity and mission. And, he says little about curriculum and programs that engage students in living and learning together.

All of us were asked to read (again) the 1999 document, *Characteristics of Marianist Universities*, which comments on five of those characteristics: (1) education for formation in faith; (2) provide an integral quality education; (3) educate in family spirit; (4) educate for service, justice and peace; and finally, (5) educate for adaptation and change. When I spoke here three years ago on the characteristics of Marianist universities, I first described three aspects of our culture—its individualism, its promotion of tolerance and its privatization of religion, with the consequence, especially in higher education, of largely banning the serious study of religion on our country's campuses. Then I argued that at our best our Marianist universities welcome diversity, work to integrate the curriculum and the knowledge it offers, and issue challenges instead of just coddling our students. Finally, I said that three challenges still squarely face us: welcoming a diversity that strengthens rather than undermines our distinctive mission; dealing openly instead of just tolerating our differences (for example, differences over the importance of Catholic intellectual traditions and working to make our campuses more “Catholic”), and finally, figuring out how to hire faculty and staff who will actively contribute to the mission of our institutions, and how to celebrate the Eucharist in ways that those who are not Catholics will understand and not feel unfairly excluded. These are not the only challenges we continue to face; they remain formidable and, in my opinion, our progress in meeting them has been uneven.

I would have some competence to speak of the successes and shortcomings of our efforts only at the University of Dayton. One of the important tasks over the next few days is to do an honest appraisal of where our own universities strengths and weaknesses are, especially with regard to Catholic intellectual traditions, to which I turn now.

### **Catholic Traditions and their Intellectual Roots**

Allow me to focus my remarks on a number of key issues (it is not possible to do more, even in a long paper such as this one). First, I think it is important to realize at the outset how difficult it is for all of us—staff, faculty and students—to understand the religious mission of our institutions in intellectual terms that relate to the disciplines. I see this problem especially among faculty. Unfortunately, too many people assume that the religious mission belongs first to the campus ministry and then to the theology department, and then only to the way faculty act in the classroom with their students; they are to be fair and kind and generous. Few people, it seems to me, see our religious mission in terms that translate into distinctive curricula and research—and because distinctive, research and teaching that are even more challenging and worthwhile, and a distinctive approach to student life. I think the greatest value of Mark Roche’s book is its ability to link in thoughtful ways Catholic intellectual traditions to academic disciplines. He points out that at Catholic universities, theology is studied not only to understand religious phenomena of the past and present, but even more importantly as faith seeking understanding, so that the faith might be lived with greater understanding and love. As I mentioned earlier, we seek not only to learn about the past, but from the past.<sup>13</sup> The quantitative tools of the social sciences do not stop with the production of sophisticated mathematical models, but assist faculty and students in gaining a

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<sup>13</sup> The experienced devil in C. S. Lewis’ *Screwtape Letters* explains to a novice devil how to produce an intellectual climate in the universities that make it very unlikely that one will ever arrive at wisdom: “Only the learned read old books, and we have now so dealt with the learned that they are of all men the least likely to acquire wisdom by doing so. We have done this by inculcating the Historical Point of View. The Historical Point of View, put briefly, means that when a learned man is presented with any statement in an ancient author, the one question he never asks is whether it is true. He asks who influenced the ancient author, and how far the statement is consistent with what he said in other books, and what phase in the writer’s development, or in the general history of thought, it illustrates, and how it affected later writers, and how often it has been misunderstood (specially by the learned man’s own colleagues) and what the general course of criticism on it has been for the last ten years, and what is the ‘present state of the question.’ To regard the ancient writer as a possible source of knowledge—to anticipate that what he said could possibly modify your thought or your behavior—this would be rejected as unutterably simple-minded. And since we cannot deceive the whole human race all the time, it is most important thus to cut every generation off from all others; for where learning makes a free commerce between the ages there is always the danger that the characteristic errors of one may be corrected by the characteristic truths of another. But, thanks to Our Father and the Historical Point of View, great scholars are now as little nourished by the past as the most ignorant mechanic who holds that ‘history is bunk’” (conclusion of letter 27).

purchase on complex and pressing social problems that need to be addressed. Let me quote Roche at some length:

At a Catholic university religious and intellectual history, including the history of Christianity, is normally represented. Also frequently privileged are classics and art history. Modern literature departments at Catholic universities may have unusual expertise in literature and religion, or literature and philosophy. Music departments may have several faculty members whose specialty is sacred music. Sociology may include among its emphases family, stratification and religion. A department of economics may focus on problems facing humanity, such as development, health and education. In departments of political science, comparative politics and political philosophy may be among the strongest areas; in addition, peace studies and the study of religion and politics are common subfields. A Catholic university's psychology department may stress developmental psychology and the related issues of poverty, family, and moral development, as well as fields that are central to a contemporary understanding of the human being, such as cognitive psychology. Among the strengths of science and engineering may be biomedical research, including diseases of developing countries, and environmental studies (p. 8).

I do not believe that any of our universities have incorporated all these Catholic dimensions of the disciplines. I know that the University of Dayton has not captured all of them. I do know that all three of our universities have integrated some aspects of Catholic preoccupations in their academic programs. Roche's list presupposes a larger faculty and more resources than any of our three institutions currently have. Nevertheless, his suggestive list of possible Catholic emphases makes clear that existing disciplines can and should take on a distinctive character at Catholic universities.

Roche also makes clear that the development of such subfields will not alone make a university Catholic. A number of Christian universities already enrich the liberal arts curriculum in such ways.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, distinctive curricula and scholarly

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<sup>14</sup> It is also common among church-related institutions, and even secular liberal arts colleges, to speak about the education of the "whole person." Some student affairs people feel that they are the only part of the university that take seriously the "whole person," especially when they serve at mainly residential campuses. Some faculty unfortunately dismiss any sense that they have responsibility for the whole person. A few years back, a letter from a faculty member to the *Chronicle of Higher Education* sarcastically dismissed an essay that called upon faculty to be concerned holistically with their students. He wrote: "Some of our colleagues clearly hunger to acknowledge this warm and fuzzy side of themselves, and to bare their souls. Let us not begrudge them in their spiritual journeys, but let them not resent the rest of us when we roll our eyes and say under our collective breath, 'Oh, puh-leez.' And surrendering control of the classroom, the syllabus, and grading to students is beyond goofy." He concludes by citing another academic: "It's not the purpose of teaching to form an emotional bond with students. The purpose is to teach students to think, not teach them how to feel.... The 'whole human being' is none of her goddam business"

focus (p. 9) alone will not set Catholic universities apart from some other universities that have created some distinctive curricular focus. For Roche, not even the integration of the spiritual and residential life (as difficult as that is according to Estanek) is sufficient to establish a distinctive intellectual Catholic vision of the universities. No, for Roche that distinctiveness lies in Catholicism's universalism, its sacramental vision, the importance it gives to tradition and reason, and its quest for the unity of knowledge. He does not stop at these general ideas; he also affirms Jesus Christ as the embodiment of divine wisdom.<sup>15</sup> Allow me to reflect briefly on each of these four Catholic themes.

First, **Catholicism's universality.** We, as United States citizens, should never forget that Catholicism has not only a two thousand year history, but also, like the Marianists themselves, a global reach. We should be as aware of what the larger Church offers our institutions as we are aware of what we can offer the larger Church. Nathan Hatch, longtime provost of Notre Dame and now president of Wake Forest University, recently wrote an essay in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*<sup>16</sup> in which he emphasized things that the Church can learn from our colleges and universities, namely, open dialogue and debate on all issues in full academic freedom, diverse faculties with diverse ways of thinking, collegueship between religious and lay scholars, and the development of a growing number of gifted lay leaders. He notes with sadness what he perceives as the distrust that many bishops seem to continue to have of Catholic colleges and universities. I agree with Hatch on all these points. I only wish he would have added more about what our colleges and universities might learn from the universal Church. At one point, he does mention that Catholic colleges and universities need to learn how to recruit Catholic intellectuals who are committed, he writes, "to the august tradition of 'faith seeking understanding.'"

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("Letters," by Karl M Petruso, August 14, 1998, B3). A better approach would, as Robert Bellah suggests, enlarge "the paradigm of knowledge" so that it includes practical reason, the imagination and the arts (*The Good Society*, Alfred A. Knopf, 1991, p. 177). Professors with such a narrow view of their responsibilities should also take note of the important research of neuroscientist Antonio Damasio on the interaction of feelings and understanding (see his "Descartes' Error and the Future of Human Life," in James McConkey, ed., *The Anatomy of Memory: An Anthology* [NY: Oxford University Press, 1996]) and the work of social psychologists Jan Stets and Jonathan Turner (*The Sociology of Emotions*, Cambridge University Press, 2005).

<sup>15</sup> Some years ago I gave an address (never published) at the University of Dayton entitled "Jesus and the University," in which I asked why it seems so difficult to speak of Jesus even at a Catholic university. I offered a number of possible explanations, but most of them pointed to the ways in which the disciplines have marginalized religions, religious concerns and religious language, and how the deeper spiritual and inter-personal dimensions of life are rarely addressed in these disciplines (obviously, some disciplines are more capable than others in this regard) our research and courses. In May of 2006, I was invited to attend a national conference organized by Duke University's Excellence in Ministry program. The three major addresses about Christian ministry, all given by mainline Protestant ministers, never once mentioned Jesus by name.

<sup>16</sup> "Intellectual and Moral Purpose Still Meet at Catholic Universities", May 6<sup>th</sup> 2005, B 16-B17.

I would add several other things our institutions can learn from the Church and the Marianists. An international Church with real teaching authority helps local colleges and universities avoid uncritical nationalism. Even as we work to establish more visibly the equal dignity of men and women within the Church and in society, we treasure that growing body of Catholic social teachings that keeps us critical of both socialist and capitalist economies that impoverish millions of people, women and children being the most affected. Besides offering us the gospel and the sacraments, the greatest gift of the Catholic Church to our colleges and universities is to help us be centers of learning and practice that will benefit all the peoples of the world, instead of simply preparing students to feed the economy and serve corporate and government priorities. I am suggesting here that at its core, Catholicism ought to be an antidote to idolatrous forms of nationalism and spiritually suffocating forms of corporate capitalism.<sup>17</sup> It is here that Catholicism's growing commitment to international forms of social justice remains critically important. We in the United States, the only remaining super power, have some way to go in the dialogue with our bishops and the universal Church about these matters, but we should realize that this dialogue is a very important one, and we, and they as well, have much to learn from it. We have yet, in my opinion, to draw sufficiently upon the international resources of the Marianist brothers and sisters. We live and work and are from many different parts of the world. Our three institutions must figure out how to tap that international character of the Marianists for enriching especially our undergraduate educational experiences.<sup>18</sup>

Second, a **sacramental vision** is characteristically Catholic. Roche contrasts Sacramentality with a "constructivist view" which assumes that "our obligations to other human beings can be revised in the light of our developing preferences, for even our highest moral principles are invented, not discovered" (p. 18). There is a strong strain in the social sciences that asserts that morality and even religion is only a human construction, which might be quite otherwise given differences in culture. The natural law tradition, an important part of Catholicism, suggests that basic moral principles, though embedded in experience of being human, are not fully malleable. There is therefore a certain given-ness in the Catholic view, which "upholds the innate dignity of every human being and argues for the binding nature of the moral law" (pp.18-19). For Catholics, God is not wholly "other," but rather present in our world. Hence, within Catholicism there is greater confidence that we can learn about God in and through our

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<sup>17</sup> It may be helpful to distinguish between consumerism and corporate capitalism. The former is often reduced to a personal attitude that personal asceticism can correct; the latter refers to social structures that have a history and can be changed, but require study and social analysis focused on a public dimension we too often neglect.

<sup>18</sup> I am struck by the number of people who agree with Tom Friedman's "flat world" internationalism. Catholic universalism differs from Friedman's view in that Catholicism does not give unqualified support to global capitalism

experiences of the world, God's creation. For Catholics, original sin leaves us wounded but not mortally, limited in our ability to know God, but not incapable of knowing him. Consequently, Catholicism can be more hopeful about the salvation of all peoples than those Christian traditions that believe that original sin has so destroyed our ability to reason that without explicit faith in Jesus Christ people will likely be damned for eternity. At the same time, Catholicism witnesses to Christ as the fullest personal expression of who God is, and commits Catholics to an open and loving witness of their faith in Christ. In this sacramental view of reality, the knowledge derived from nature, from a prudent reading of the "signs of the times," and from the disciplines all will in some way, indirect but real, reflect God's presence and nature.

The sacramental vision not only supports a robust confidence in reason's ability to know the truth, it also grounds a life of worship and prayer that is enriched through the senses and community rituals. In fact, Catholic intellectual traditions are rooted in specific religious beliefs and practices, most fundamentally, the Incarnation, the Trinity and the Eucharist. Even prior to the Word becoming Flesh, that is, prior to the Incarnation, the doctrine of creation affirms that all that is, is good, because it is from God. Moreover, all human beings are, as I have already mentioned, created in the image and likeness of God, an image whose dignity is made most clear in the person of Jesus Christ, the human face of God. But Jesus, though fully divine and human, is not all of God. We also affirm, with other Christians, the existence of the Trinity, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Christian godhead is a community of persons. Catholic Christians build community through the sacraments, primarily through the Eucharist. Ordinary bread and wine, through the action of the Holy Spirit, become the body and blood of Jesus. Building community, the breaking of the bread and the laying down of one's life for others are paradigmatic practices for Catholics. Through a sacramental sense, the extraordinary is found within the ordinary. A sacramental vision, drawing upon personal discipline, selfless sacrifice and genuine thanks, reveals God's presence in our midst and in all things and gives direction to our lives. The life of faith entered into through sacramental worship is not only characteristic of Catholic parishes, but also both a core practice within a Catholic university and the tap root of its intellectual traditions. Since love and persons are at the center of the Catholic intellectual tradition, Christianity can never be reduced to a philosophy or general principles, as helpful as they can be for understanding the broader ramifications of faith. In these matters, not only campus ministry but student affairs professionals often play a key role in the faith formation of students. If we set aside time and money for the on-going development of faculty in the mission of our universities, should we not also be doing this for our staff?

Finally, a sacramental vision of life is suspicious of the "spiritual but not religious" vision of life. A common misunderstanding at the university level is an

emphasis on intellectual and spiritual formation detached from a specific religious tradition.<sup>19</sup> The “university experience” is supposed to broaden students’ horizons. But that broadening is too often done in a way that weakens and even severs the religious roots students bring with them to college. Faculty and staff together need to grasp more fully that the many different views and cultures of the world need not make students think that their beliefs as Christians, Jews, Muslims or Buddhists should be dismissed as parochial embarrassments appropriate only for childhood.

The current growth of various forms of religious fundamentalism is outstripped by the rapidly growing number of persons who describe themselves as “spiritual but not religious,” people who say they believe but don’t belong. For Catholics, spirituality and religious tradition are like inseparable conjoined twins: if you separate them, both die. Understood in their proper relationship, community traditions and religious practices provide the most consistently rich soil for spiritual growth. Given a Catholic vision of the life of faith in community, a “spiritual but not religious” approach is inadequate. Why? Because it is invariably individualistic, typically relativistic, and rarely sacramental. Moreover, this approach rarely has a prophetic edge.

Catholic beliefs and practices ground the liberal arts in a communal search for the truth and life-long dedication to the common good. Education at a Catholic university is not about deciding who we want to be, but rather discovering whom we have been called to be. The key question is not who we are, but whose we are. Such discoveries are not a passive acceptance of a divine given, but rather the discovery of a vocation that invites persons to lay down their lives for others. The presence of the members of religious communities who have founded so many of the Catholic colleges and universities has made it more obvious that an intimate link should exist between scholarship and life, between thinking and living, and between faith and the intellectual life. Their diminished numbers today should be a serious concern for all who value Catholic intellectual traditions.

A third distinguishing characteristic of Catholicism, according to Roche, is its **commitment to reason**.<sup>20</sup> This emphasis on reason may seem strange for a religion that

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<sup>19</sup> Alexander Astin’s Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) is currently involved in a study of the spirituality of college students. Not surprisingly, it has found that college students typically disengage from religious traditional practices they may have been raised in, but nevertheless seek to be “spiritual” in a more personal way. Their study also shows that professors at universities rarely offer any opportunity to discuss religion. See Jennifer Lindholm, “The ‘Interior’ Lives of American College Students: Preliminary Findings from a National Study,” in J. Heft, ed., *Passing Three Faiths on to the Next Generation*, (NY: Fordham University Press), forthcoming 2006.

<sup>20</sup> Roche regularly writes of “tradition and reason.” Ordinarily, Catholics would speak of “faith and reason.” Why Roche does not I can only speculate. Other parts of his book make it obvious that he believes it is important to work intellectually out of Catholicism as a *faith* tradition.

also emphasizes the importance of faith. But Catholicism has never agreed with Luther's principle, *sola fides*, or faith alone. Faith, hope and love—all three—are important. Catholicism sees a rich and subtle interplay between faith and reason. Augustine once wrote, "No one believes anything unless one first thought it believable...Everything that is believed is believed after being preceded by thought .... Not everyone who thinks believes, since many think in order not to believe; but everyone who believes thinks, thinks in believing and believes in thinking."<sup>21</sup> One of the last encyclicals published by John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio* (Faith and Reason), was in large part a plea for humanity not to lose its faith in reason. Robert Wilken, a patristic scholar, argues that Christian revelation actually strengthened the believer's confidence in the power of reason:

It has been said that Christianity brought a loss of nerve and a distrust of reason. But one might argue that Christian revelation put an end to skepticism and gave men and women new confidence in reason. Whether one reads Saint Augustine, who wrote that 'anyone who supposes that the senses are never to be trusted is woefully mistaken,' or Saint John of Damascus, who said that the 'mind which is determined to ignore corporeal things will find itself weakened and frustrated,' under the tutelage of historical revelation, reason became more certain of its starting point, more confident, less abstract, and more purposeful. Though respectful of its limitations, reason's scope was also expanded and enlarged. That God was known in history, in the life of a human being, validated experience; it allowed Christian thinkers to appeal to the lives of holy men and women, especially the martyrs and the saints, and to the experience of the Church, as testimony to the truth of God.<sup>22</sup>

John Paul's encyclical addressed a major danger among today's intellectual elite: the danger that reason is unable to arrive at the truth about things, that all we are able to affirm are our own projections, and that our social location, gender and personal experiences make it nearly impossible to gain reliable knowledge about others and the world. In contrast to such limited confidence in the ability of reason to arrive at truth, Roche states that "the Catholic intellectual sees the moral law as independent of human invention and as sacred. At the same time, it can be discovered via reason and is to be tested by argument; it need not be accepted simply on faith" (p. 21). The moral law, to revert back to Estanek's dichotomous language, is neither simply deductive nor inductive; rather, it is focused on experience which through reason can conclude some

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<sup>21</sup> Augustine, *Predestination of the Saints* 5 (PL 44:962-63), as cited by Robert Louis Wilken, *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought* (Yale University Press, 2003), p. xiii-xiv.

<sup>22</sup> Robert Louis Wilken, *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought* (Yale University Press, 2003), p. 23.

truths about the human person and moral behavior.<sup>23</sup> In terms of the disciplines, the idea that God is somehow manifest in nature means, according to Roche, that “biology, chemistry and physics gives us windows onto the divine structure of reality...since the glory and truth of God are mirrored in creation” (p. 21). And referring to art, Roche says that it, “like the sacraments themselves, not only give us a window onto the transcendent, it leaves us with a sense of mystery and multi-valence. Like the sacraments, great art is inexhaustible” (p. 23).<sup>24</sup>

Roche’s fourth and final distinguishing characteristic of Catholic intellectual tradition is its constant effort to find **unity in knowledge**. The quest for unity has become all the more difficult given not only the way in which the disciplines for the last one hundred and twenty-five years or so have often produced discrete bodies of knowledge, but also because of the huge explosion of knowledge, especially in the modern sciences. As a consequence of this division and explosion of knowledge, the modern secular university has become, in the view of some observers of higher education, “an intellectual department store” or a “multiversity” “where disciplines develop side by side and scholars pursue independent pursuits with no sense of connection or overarching purpose” (Roche, p. 34).

Fragmentation, however, takes place not just through the arbitrary compartmentalizing of knowledge within disciplines, but also through various forms of reductionism. For two opposite examples, we should not be reduced to our genetic code—as though our intelligence and freedom were meaningless, nor should we think we can be whatever we think we want to be—as though there were no “givens” within and about us.<sup>25</sup> In conscious contrast to the fragmentation of knowledge, Catholic

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<sup>23</sup> The Anglican philosopher Austin Farrer offers perhaps one of the best statements about the value, though limited, of rational argument, from the perspective of the Christian: “It is commonly said that if rational argument is so seldom the cause of conviction, philosophical apologists must largely be wasting their shot. The premise is true, but the conclusion does not follow. For though argument does not create conviction, the lack of it destroys belief. What seems to be proved may not be embraced; but what no one shows the ability to defend is quickly abandoned. Rational argument does not create belief, but it maintains a climate in which belief may flourish. So the apologist who does nothing but defend may play a useful, though preparatory, part” (Jocelyn Gibb, ed., “The Christian Apologist,” in *Light on C. S. Lewis*, [NY: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966, c1965] p. 26.)

<sup>24</sup> Because inexhaustible, art needs to be appreciated in ways often more open to diverse interpretations than say dogmas of the faith. Sr. Wendy Beckett, the art historian, commented that Andres Serrano’s “Piss Christ” (a crucifix submerged in a beaker of urine), though hardly more than adolescent art, could be interpreted as the artist’s dismay over how Christ is treated today. I am not saying that in art there are no standards; I am simply say that the standards that help us understand great art are of a different sort than those that might apply to great philosophy or theology.

<sup>25</sup> As my colleague Paul Benson notes: “Reductionism, after all, can tend toward a certain sort of (minimalist) unity; but this is not what Catholic intellectual traditions have in mind. Thus, Catholic universities respect the integrity and contributions of the various disciplines more so than reductionism would do. One of the implications of the search for unity in knowledge is that universities need not fear cross-disciplinary dialogue and critique—again, a contrast with a reductionist vision of the unity of knowledge” (personal letter to the author)—much like that offered by Harvard evolutionary biologist E. O. Wilson.

universities seek to find their linkages. To some extent, resisting such fragmentation means expanding and making more porous the borders of the academic disciplines. Were professors to seek answers by employing only certain already established methodologies, they would run the risk of constricting their thinking in such a way that they would ask only those questions that they believe they can answer, or that they have the means to answer. In other words, as British theologian Denys Turner recently put it, they will ask only “sensible questions whose route to an answer is governed by agreed methodologies.” Turner worries, as I also worry, that in our universities there is the danger that “we will reverse the traffic between question and answer so as to permit only such questions to be asked as we already possess predetermined methodologies for answering, cutting the agenda of questions down to the shape and size of our given routines for answering them.”<sup>26</sup> Were we to ask only such questions as we can answer, then we spell the death not only of the integration of knowledge, but also of all our disciplines, and certainly the death of a Catholic university which asks unanswerable questions even of God.<sup>27</sup> It should be added that the size of Catholic colleges and universities is an important factor, not only for creating a sense of community and family (how does one do that, for example, at The Ohio State University, which has over 50,000 students?), but also for taking more seriously a common curriculum and conversations between faculty of different disciplines.

Roche also makes some generalizations about Catholic college students. He thinks that given their Catholic background, they tend to be “timid, naïve, modest, deferential” (p. 31). He is concerned that they are not as “intellectually demanding of themselves as might be desirable” (p. 31). He believes Catholic students need to be more “intellectually ambitious” (32). There is little question that they are generous, admirably attentive to the needs of the poor and oriented to service. But too few really aspire to the intellectual life as such. Another Notre Dame faculty member, philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre, sees great discipline and effort on the part of many of the graduates of Catholic universities, but also sees them as people who are only professionally driven and intellectually narrow. He fears that too many of our graduates (and even our universities) will simply surrender to market forces:

Do we really want them to become what, on the best evidence that we have, recent graduates of the best research universities have tended to become: narrowly focused professionals, immensely and even obsessively hard working, disturbingly competitive and intent on success as it is measured within their own specialized professional sphere, often genuinely excellent at what they

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<sup>26</sup> Denys Turner, *Faith Seeking* (London: SCM Press, 2002), p. 136.

<sup>27</sup> I explore this question further in an unpublished address, “Secularization and Catholic Higher Education,” given at the University of Dayton, September 19, 2003.

do; who read little worthwhile that is not relevant to their work; who, as the idiom insightfully puts it, “make time,” sometimes with difficulty, for their family lives; and whose relaxation tends to consist of short strenuous bouts of competitive athletic activity and sometimes of therapeutic indulgence in the kind of religion that is well designed not to disrupt their working lives?<sup>28</sup>

While I share Roche’s concern for more intellectually ambitious students, and worry with MacIntyre about surrendering to market forces, I think both of these authors tend to be a little too negative about students. I am making this judgment based upon my own experience of students at the University of Dayton, where I see a good number of students serious about making a difference in society, and willing to commit themselves to more than finding a comfortable and lucrative place in the market economy. I would be very interested to know whether the students and faculty attending our meeting in fact agree with the concerns of Roche and MacIntyre. I will confess, however, to a desire that we would on our campuses encourage at least some of our students to consider a life of service as a scholar. At the University of Dayton, we frequently call students to involve themselves in various service opportunities, but I have rarely heard them encouraged to embrace the intellectual life as a wonderful form of service as well.

### **Some Institutional and Perceptual Concerns**

I have been focusing on some of the important characteristics of Catholic intellectual traditions. Allow me at this point to point to some larger institutional concerns. Roche mentioned that he did not treat in his book strategic questions. I think strategic questions are very important and therefore wish to consider several strategic questions here.

First, I wish to consider the delicate issue of the hiring of faculty. The current important emphases, especially in the Midwest where the diversity of faculty and students is often very limited, often seem to put mission-related hiring in either a second place or in a competitive posture with other priorities. Two types of Catholic faculty contribute little to the mission of the university: those who are disaffected from the Church and those who, though religiously committed, nevertheless insist that their Catholicism is, and properly should be, entirely irrelevant to their academic professions. We all also know that there are faculty from other faiths and even no faith who make

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<sup>28</sup> MacIntyre, “Catholic Universities: Dangers, Hopes, Choices,” in Robert E. Sullivan, ed., *Higher Learning and Catholic Traditions* (Notre Dame Press, 2001), p. 15. MacIntyre writes that colleges and universities should be “unresponsive” to the consumer demands of students, and instead give their “students what they need, not what they want, and to do so in such a way that what they want becomes what they need and what they choose is choice-worthy” (loc. cit.).

valuable contributions to the mission of our institutions. So whether a candidate for a faculty position is Catholic or not, a person of color or not, a man or a woman—they should be persons who can in their own way contribute to the intellectual mission of the institution. Notice, I did not say to the intellectual *and* the religious mission of the university. I don't distinguish them sharply for the simple reason that seeking the truth of things (possibly because of a sacramental vision of the world), be it in science or the humanities, is, in my view, a religious act. All faculty must be dedicated in their very core to that search. Some faculty will engage in that search by including, more than other faculty will, intellectual themes related explicitly to Catholic intellectual traditions. Diversity needs to be respected and emphasized, but the most important goal is that all diversity enriches the mission of the university as a Catholic university. In other words, all diversity is within, not parallel or indifferent to, that mission. Responsibility for exploring, developing and critiquing Catholic intellectual traditions resides first with the faculty. If we were to think more globally, more in a Catholic sense, I suspect that there are approaches to the issue of diversity that we haven't begun to explore yet. In other words, diversity is important, but we ought to be thinking more explicitly about the kind of diversity that we should strive for in a Catholic university. Otherwise, our efforts at diversity will be simply an exercise in conformity with other universities.

It is no less important to hire staff that understand the mission or are at least sympathetic to the mission of our universities. Like some faculty, staff can download the religious mission of the university on the president and the campus ministry staff. We all know of students who have remained in school mainly because an office assistant or a campus minister stood by them in difficult moments. The typical pecking order in universities—the president and major administrators first, the faculty second and the staff third (reflected clearly in pay scales) should not play the same role in Marianist universities.

A second strategic concern is the perception that Catholicism is exclusive. In an effort to overcome that problem, some people emphasize the idea of catholic with a small "c." That is, instead of emphasizing being a Catholic and doing identifiably Catholic things (like participating in the Church's sacramental life), they prefer to talk about issues of justice, of concern for the poor, of the dignity of every human person, or, more recently, of the importance of "inclusivity" and welcoming everyone to the table. I don't disagree with any of these emphases. I only wish to underscore two things. First, the surest foundation for all of these all-embracing categories is "Catholicism" with the big "C." Why? Because, again, every human being is, according to Catholic doctrine (as well as according to Jewish and Muslim teaching) created in the image and likeness of God, and that therefore all people are to be treated justly, that the dignity and needs of

the poor must be met, and that everyone is to be invited to the table.<sup>29</sup> And second, that embrace is universal because the gospel is to be preached to all nations. We all know that words without deeds are empty. Perhaps you have seen the saying attributed to St. Francis of Assisi, “preach the gospel at all times, and if necessary, use words.” Further, genuine concern for the poor requires more than charity and service projects—it requires critical analyses of government policies and practices that will, I believe, reveal a large gap, just staying within the United States, between the current political platforms of both major parties and Catholic traditions, be they of social justice or of personal morality. Catholicism with a big “C” commits us to an international vision of the common good rooted in an affirmation of the dignity of every human person created in the image and likeness of God.

People who emphasize the small “c” of Catholicism try to avoid what appear to them as the sharper and less attractive aspects of Catholicism, namely Catholicism’s magisterium, dogmas, moral teachings on homosexual acts and contraception, evangelizing and proclaiming that Jesus is one’s Lord and Savior—all of which seem hard to defend in the modern university. Such people believe it would be more attractive and less divisive to speak not of Jesus, but of his “values,” not of dogmas but of Christian insights, not of the magisterium, but of the “institutional Church.” I worry however that emphasizing only the small “c” will soon morph into references to Christian “values,” and before long become a congenial humanism, and eventually all that is truly distinctive of Catholicism will disappear.<sup>30</sup> To lose our distinctiveness would be especially ironic now, when more and more state universities will be offering minors in Catholic studies and establishing chairs of Catholic thought. Our programs need to be not just generically Christian, but explicitly Catholic with all that includes, especially a commitment to ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue and research. We need to rediscover the truth that we can be more inclusive because God created everyone in the divine image, more intellectually stimulated because of dogmas, and more unified because of a magisterium. That some teachings that are not dogmatic will be pushed as dogmatic, that some members of the hierarchy will seek to close off thinking that is critical but nonetheless faithful, and that some members of the laity will continue to confuse legitimate diversity of views among Catholic scholars with

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<sup>29</sup> Jesus’ practice of “table fellowship,” that is, of inviting all the people, especially the outcasts of society, to eat with him, was also an invitation to conversion and a new way of life. Jesus invited everyone as they were, but did not leave them there. Instead, he invited them to life in abundance.

<sup>30</sup> The late Jaroslav Pelikan gave an address in 2003, “The Will to Believe and the Need for Creed” ([http://speakingoffaith.publicradio.org/programs/pelikan/pelikan—will to believe.shtml](http://speakingoffaith.publicradio.org/programs/pelikan/pelikan—will%20to%20believe.shtml)), quotes literary critic Lionel Trilling who in 1950 wrote: “It is probably true that when *dogmatic principle* in religion is slighted, religion goes along for a while on generalized emotion and ethical intention—‘morality touched by emotion’—and then loses the force of its impulse, even the essence of its being.” Long before Vatican II, Etienne Gilson, the medievalist, called for, continues Pelikan, “a dogmatic basis for tolerance, a doctrine of religious freedom that would be based not on the rejection of creed, but on the affirmation of creed.”

illegitimate dissent—none of these difficulties should lead us to de-emphasize Catholicism. Instead we, especially in our universities, must dig deeper into its rich and multifaceted traditions, and make our own important contribution to the description of Catholicism as a living and vital tradition.<sup>31</sup>

Third, we have our work cut out for us if we are to rehabilitate the word “Catholic” from the mostly negative public, media-driven images of Catholicism. If most candidates for our faculties and staff have little other exposure to the meaning of Catholic (and most of them do not, unless they have been raised in a now nearly non-existent thick Catholic subculture and, in the case of faculty candidates, done doctoral research with Catholic intellectuals—who, alas, are also few in number), they will find “Catholicism” mainly something to avoid as inimical to the intellectual life. For centuries, especially since the Enlightenment, religion has not been seen by the cultural elite as a rich foundation for the intellectual life. And indeed, some religious leaders have, by their utterances and policies, contributed to that perception. I do not believe, however, that the solution to these problems with perceptions of Catholicism is to emphasize the mission only in terms of the religious orders that founded the vast majority of these institutions. Some orders have richer intellectual and spiritual traditions than others; none has the depth and variety of intellectual and spiritual traditions that the Catholic Church as a whole has.<sup>32</sup> Nor is any religious order promised to exist to the end of time; only the Church is, although in what condition, we know not. I would therefore recommend that we do all we can to emphasize first Catholic intellectual and spiritual traditions, and then the particular emphases of those traditions that individual religious orders can provide.

A fourth and final strategic concern has to do with our very idea of the shape that a Catholic university should have. People who say that to be a good Catholic university one must first be a good university contribute to the first common misunderstanding. This way of formulating the issue presupposes that the shape of a good university is already given and that being Catholic will provide, if you will, a

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<sup>31</sup> What the relationship between the Catholic Church and the Catholic university should be is a complex matter rife with potential misunderstandings and tensions. See my “Catholic Universities as Open Circles: Academic Freedom,” in *Origins*, March 23, 2006, pp. 660-663). I should add that I find the “inclusive” “exclusive” dichotomy particularly harmful when it suggests that welcome and hospitality have to come at the price of watering down core commitments. If the Marianists are perceived as more inclusive than other groups, I hope it is because of a conscious embrace of Marian hospitality, and not because they take their founding commitments any less seriously.

<sup>32</sup> The Marianists do not have the same intellectual reputation as do the Jesuits and the Dominicans. At the same time, I believe that the Marianists have a very rich implicit intellectual tradition grounded in community, lay and religious collaboration, more inclusive forms of epistemology, and the integration of the theoretical and practical forms of knowledge. It remains to the current generation of lay and religious Marianists to make this rich tradition more explicit. This past year, the Marianist Education Working Group at the University of Dayton has made some very interesting progress in explicating a Marianist intellectual tradition.

certain seasoning to the main dish—perhaps some required courses in philosophy and theology. For these people, being Catholic is only an adjective while being a university is a noun. This way of speaking is hardly radical enough. It creates a misunderstanding for the simple reason that there are many institutional forms of universities and colleges, not all of which are compatible with a Catholic intellectual vision. For example, a university that in reality is a technical institute with no liberal arts cannot be a Catholic university. A research university that does not seek to integrate knowledge but which promotes specialization through disciplines that never intersect (and therefore promotes the fragmentation of knowledge) cannot be a Catholic university.<sup>33</sup> And even a liberal arts college that promotes the liberal arts as a way of deciding what kind of person one wants to be, or as the last and best way of developing a person's fullest human potential does a very good thing; however, at a Catholic college the liberal arts are about deciding one's identity and developing one's potential within the richer context of discovering one's calling and dedicating one's self to God and others.<sup>34</sup>

Before concluding, allow me to return to the four real life student scenarios which Dr. Estanek describes at the beginning of her paper. At the end of her paper, however, when she mentions them again, she does not think them through. Would an understanding of Catholic intellectual traditions as I have described them help us think through appropriate responses to situations like these?<sup>35</sup>

Take her first example—the showing on campus of *The Last Temptation of Christ*. At the University of Dayton we actually faced this very situation when I was provost. We had picketers on campus; a bus full of them came from Cincinnati, and even burned in effigy a dummy dressed up to look like Bro. Ray Fitz, S.M., who was then president. Some faculty came to my office and pleaded with me to forbid the movie from being shown. The students who wanted to show it on campus had also invited three quite

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<sup>33</sup> Alasdair MacIntyre, "Catholic Universities: Dangers, Hopes, Choices," in *Higher Learning and Catholic Traditions*, Robert E. Sullivan, ed., (Notre Dame Press; 2001), p. 1.

<sup>34</sup> See Marshall Gregory, "A Liberal Education is Not a Luxury," in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, September 12, 2003, B 16, for a description of liberal education as deciding who one is.

<sup>35</sup> I stress the importance of "thinking through" difficult issues for which there may not be any easy obvious answer. Timothy Radcliffe, O. P., the former Master General of the Dominicans, recently pointed to complex moral situations and how we might best respond to them: "I once had the privilege of spending a weekend with senior executives of a major petroleum company. They wished some other outsiders to listen in on their discussions about the moral decisions they faced. I had had no idea before of the complexity of the issues. How should one balance obligation to shareholders against those to employees? How does one balance making a profit and respecting the environment? Christians in their moral lives are faced with tough choices for which the Church's teaching may not have clear and easy answers. If someone is divorced and they meet someone they love, then should they marry again or not? If someone is gay, then must their lives always be lived alone? Because it is frightening to have to think our way through these issues, pray about them, study them in the light of the teaching of the Gospels and the Church, then the temptation is either to do what one likes, or for the Church to snatch at a quick answer. The Vatican is always being begged to resolve moral dilemmas and then being blamed if it tries to do so. Choosing is a hard but necessary part of becoming free" (*What is the Point of Being Christian?* [Continuum, 2005], pp. 37-38).

competent faculty members to comment on the film after its showing. I did not forbid its being shown for though I personally did not think that highly of the film,<sup>36</sup> I thought that discussion with the three faculty could provide an excellent learning experience.<sup>37</sup>

Concerning the issues raised by homosexuality, *The Catholic Catechism*, the second edition of which was published in 1997, affirms the dignity of every homosexual as a person, a child of God. It also states that, based on the evidence, the orientation itself does not seem to be chosen. Conservative Protestants tend not to distinguish between sexual orientation and actions, simply saying both are condemned. There is no consensus on what causes a homosexual orientation. That promiscuity is less moral than a faithful partnership between two homosexuals makes sense to most people who think about this issue. This is not to say that current Catholic moral teaching considers faithful homosexual partnerships morally good or equivalent to heterosexual marriage. Given its long moral tradition that requires careful attention to lived experience, that Catholic moral tradition will continue to develop its analysis and response to the issues posed by homosexuality—especially now that some homosexuals are public about their orientation and articulate their own views, feelings and desires to be accepted as full members of the Catholic community.<sup>38</sup>

Catholicism continues to offer perspectives that illuminate some of the issues regarding the morality of heterosexual behavior, be it premarital sex or making birth control available to students through our campus health centers. Most everyone knows that Catholicism, like Judaism and Islam, affirm that intercourse belongs in a committed relationship. Moreover, intercourse expresses the love that is shared between the spouses, and is, in principle, open to new life.<sup>39</sup> It is this procreative dimension that tends to be lost sight of in developed countries. I believe students tend to respond

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<sup>36</sup> See my article “The Perennial Temptation of Christians and *The Last Temptation of Christ*,” in *The Catechist* 22:7 (March 1989): p. 12-15.

<sup>37</sup> Cathleen Kaveny distinguishes three trends in Catholic higher education: first, openness to the larger culture (1965-1985); second, a preoccupation with identity and suspicion of the culture; and third, appearing most recently, a desire to engage with the larger culture. With her, I favor the third trend, which however, depends upon an engaged and competent faculty familiar with Catholic intellectual traditions and willing to engage the larger culture, be it represented in film or speakers or books. See her “The Perfect Storm: ‘The Vagina Monologues’ and Catholic higher education,” in *America*, May 8, 2006, pp. 14-19. In my view, the best way on our campuses to oppose violence against women is to control the consumption of alcohol, and deal effectively with the widespread addiction to internet pornography among mainly male students. Instead of just punitive measures for students for repeated excessive use of alcohol, would it not make sense for Catholic universities to draw on its rich spiritual tradition and require such students to make, for example, a five day silent retreat where they would have to face themselves squarely, and with the help of staff, learn how to grow up?

<sup>38</sup> See the document published on Nov. 29, 2005 by the Vatican Congregation for Catholic Education, titled *Instruction Concerning the Criteria for the Discernment of Vocations With Regard to Persons with Homosexual Tendencies in View of Their Admission to the Seminary and to Sacred Orders*.

<sup>39</sup> If procreation were an absolute requirement, the marriage of a couple in which one person was sterile, or the marriage of 60-year-olds, would be forbidden.

positively to credible leadership, which focuses not just on what might be best in the present, but also looks thoughtfully toward the future. Catholicism should underscore the importance of sexual love in committed relationships. To say that such an expectation is unusual, given the amount of uncommitted sexual activity, is to allow statistics that are generated regularly by surveys to determine the norms by which we ought to conduct our lives. To live a moral life is no easier than to be a responsible and committed student, faculty member, or parent. And while not all our students, staff and faculty are Catholics, and while not all Catholics would agree with what I am recommending here, our universities stand within great intellectual, moral and religious traditions, and should make these traditions alive and visible and compelling. To the extent that they do so, they will not only enrich the lives of all who are part of them, they will also ensure that there are real alternatives in higher education and make it thereby possible to contribute to its pluralism as well.

### **Conclusion: Three Contemporary Challenges**

I could reduce the major contemporary challenge to one that expresses itself in a college on three levels. The challenge is the powerful commercialization of American culture. A friend of mine is fond of describing the United States as an economy with a culture loosely attached. Commercialization tends to reduce everything to monetary value (“for [almost] everything else there is a visa card”). All human interaction tends to be reduced to an exchange, a *quid pro quo*, and rarely takes the form of a gift. Worst of all, commercialization weakens if not dissolves the community dimension (it becomes typically a matter of personal acquisitions), and as a consequence renders the Church irrelevant. The danger of commercialization expresses itself in a college in at least three ways: among administrators, among faculty and among students.

First, it expresses itself among administrators, including members of boards of trustees, who no longer understand what the distinctive mission of an educational institution such as a college ought to be. Instead, many of them think in terms of models taken from the business world, models that will maximize revenue, bureaucratize all transactions, speak of faculty as employees and students as customers, and who believe that if an institution can successfully “brand” itself, then it can also quantify all the important outcomes of a college education. Of course, any college that repeatedly cannot balance its budget will cease to exist. As they say, “no margin, no mission.” But I wish to stress here that the mission is about much more than a good margin, and that managerial expertise is no substitute for academic leadership.

Moreover, boards of trustees should grasp the essential nature of a Catholic university as a place where ideas are tested over against an intellectual tradition that within itself, when it is truly alive, sustains a rich debate. Boards of trustees need to support administrators who wish to create, in Newman's phrase, "elbow room" to think out-loud about contested issues both within and outside the Catholic tradition. Monika Hellwig put it well when she wrote:

It is important for boards to defend their institutions against self-appointed and non-professional censors of orthodoxy. These last can do great harm not only to the reputation of a professor but also to the reputation of the college itself. The implementation procedures for *Ex corde ecclesiae* established by the American bishops with the sanction of the Holy See provide adequate vigilance for orthodoxy without any need of unqualified volunteers (p. 51).

Second, those faculty who think only of their own discipline and career advancement, who are not interested in seeking connections between different fields of knowledge, and who think that intellectual traditions rooted in faith traditions are irrelevant if not pernicious to the work of the academy, constitute a formidable challenge. And since in the end it is "only the faculty who can secure the Catholic identity of a [college] and determine what kind of identity it is and what its form of academic expression should be,"<sup>40</sup> then it is crucial that we have not just scholars who are Catholic, but Catholic scholars on our faculties. Hiring and developing Catholic scholars is one of the greatest needs of the present. Non-Catholic faculty are also critically important members of the college community, because, as Alasdair MacIntyre reminds us, they contribute their own excellence to the learning process and help Catholics remember "that the secular calling of the university *qua* university is shared with non-Catholics...."<sup>41</sup> We all know of faculty and staff who are not Catholics and support the mission with great thoughtfulness and energy. More than that, Christian colleagues and members of other religious traditions can insure that ecumenical and inter-faith issues remain alive on our campuses. Given the considerable ground held in common by the Abrahamic faiths, all Christians (Catholic and otherwise) and Jews and Muslims have important roles to play at Catholic universities. But if faculty think mainly about the advancement of their individual careers, the unity of knowledge, inter-faith discussions, and Catholic intellectual traditions will not be well served.

Third, staff should also be carefully hired, and be introduced more fully into the mission of the university. To do so will require time and money. The faculty are not the

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<sup>40</sup> Alasdair MacIntyre, "Catholic Universities," in *Higher Learning and Catholic Traditions*, Robert E. Sullivan, ed., p. 10.

<sup>41</sup> *Loc. Cit.*, pp. 10-11.

only people who think and read. In my experience, many staff members would deeply appreciate opportunities to read and think through, with members of the faculty and the administration, the opportunities and challenges facing a Catholic and Marianist university. One does not have to read books on management to realize that staff, who daily deal with certain crucial aspects of student and faculty life, have the best insights into how to improve how things are done.

Finally, students today present their own challenge. Newman once remarked of the laity that the Church would look foolish without them. A college without students is not a college; it may be a research institute, but it will lack the vitality that arises when faculty and students engage each other in the pursuit of truth. Just as administrators and faculty can be influenced by our consumer culture, students can become so focused on acquiring marketable skills and landing a good job that they see no market value in the liberal arts. Catholic colleges, administrators and faculty, must help such students see beyond what they want to what in fact they most need: an integrated educational experience rooted in a distinctive religious tradition that will not only sustain them in whatever profession they choose, but will also provide a vision deeper and richer than any profession.

The Catholic tradition, and more specifically Catholic intellectual traditions, are rich and complex ways of thinking and acting that have much to offer our modern society, especially when those traditions are embodied in a community and institutional setting where the young and the old and those in between meet, think together, practice the virtues, pray and prepare to make a positive difference in society. Apart from those religiously rooted traditions and practices, we have little to offer that is not already available, sometimes in better endowed and more extensive forms than we have in our universities. But when those traditions and practices are living and formative, we will be able to make the contribution that John Paul II called for in his 1990 apostolic exhortation, *Ex corde ecclesiae*:

A Catholic university pursues its objectives through its formation of an authentic human community animated by the spirit of Christ. The source of unity springs from a common dedication to the truth, a common vision of the dignity of the human person and, ultimately, the person and message of Christ, which gives the institution its distinctive character. As a result of this inspiration, the community is animated by a spirit of freedom and charity; it is characterized by mutual respect, sincere dialogue, and protection of the rights of individuals. It assists each of its members to achieve wholeness as human persons; in turn, everyone in the community helps in promoting unity, and each one, according to his or her role and capacity, contributes toward decisions which affect the

community and also toward maintaining and strengthening the distinctive Catholic character of the institution (par. 21).<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Or as Vatican II's document on education, *Gravissimum educationis* puts it, "The hoped-for result (of a Catholic education) is that the Christian mind may achieve, as it were, a public, persistent, and universal presence in the whole enterprise of advancing higher culture, and that the students of these institutions may become truly outstanding in learning, ready to shoulder society's heavier burdens, and to witness the faith to the world..." (par. 10, as quoted at the end of Hellwig's article, p. 52).