The rubric under which this evening’s presentation is placed is “Stewards of the Tradition.” My own contribution will be to focus our attention upon what I consider to be the very heart and center of the Catholic intellectual (or, as I prefer, “wisdom”) tradition: the Lord Jesus Christ himself. My presentation will be in three parts. First, I will consider the notion of tradition and defend the claim that Jesus Christ is indeed the living center of the tradition. Second, I will suggest that the “crisis” of the Catholic intellectual tradition is, at its most profound, a Christological crisis. Third, I will hazard some suggestions regarding the context of the Catholic college and university and the challenge of reaffirming the Christic center. Because of limitations of time, all this will be done briefly, but, I hope, in a way suggestive of further development.

The Christic Center of Tradition

In considering “tradition,” I find it helpful to distinguish three interconnected senses of the word. Prior to Vatican II when Catholics spoke of “tradition” they most commonly intended the tradita: those things that had been handed down, whether Scripture, creeds, or catechetical formulations. These tradita, often
referred to as "the deposit of faith," were presumed to be handed down unchanged through the centuries, often enshrined in the venerable Latin of the Tridentine Mass and the texts of Denzinger.

A second sense of "tradition," come newly to the fore since Vatican II, is that of traditio. Here tradition indicates less what has been handed down, than the very process of handing down, of "traditioning" (as is sometimes said): the ongoing interpretation and reinterpretation of the past into the present. Here the center of concern is the present and the future; and one often encounters the language of "accommodation" and "inculturation."

But I would suggest a third sense of tradition, less frequently invoked, yet foundational to the previous legitimate uses. I refer to this by the Latin designation, Traditus. Here tradition is the One who is handed down, Jesus Christ himself as the living heart and center of Christian tradition. Thus when we speak of "Stewards of the Tradition," at its theologically most profound level we are speaking of our institutions and ourselves as bearers of the multiple riches of the mystery of Christ.

Now this Catholic wisdom tradition, in all three senses, but especially the third, comes to privileged expression in the Eucharistic liturgy. Here the Real Presence of Christ is proclaimed and enacted. I concur, then, with authors like Aidan Kavanaugh and Catherine LaCugna who speak of liturgy as theologia prima, the living theology which nourishes and sustains our second order reflection. Liturgy is the primary bearer of tradition, because here, in sacramental fulness, Jesus "hands himself over" for the life of the world.

Let me highlight three historical moments in the Catholic intellectual tradition; three "snapshots" of its Christic center. The first is the liturgical feast we celebrate today (November 10th), the feast of St. Leo the Great. Leo, as you know, was the bishop of Rome, a great preacher and defender of the mystery of the Incarnation. His exposition of the Church’s teaching concerning Christ was acclaimed by the Council of Chalcedon (451 A.D.) as the voice of orthodoxy.

Father Gerald McCool presents a second salient moment in the expression of the Catholic intellectual tradition’s living center.
He evokes the passionate sermon preached at the University of Paris by the young Franciscan theologian, St. Bonaventure. At a time of crisis and confusion, of factionalism and intellectual disarray, Bonaventure proclaimed Christ as the flaming center of devotion and thought. For Bonaventure, Christ alone was the teacher of truth: “Christ, the Word, Pre-existent and Incarnate, the universal master of every student—Christus omnium magister.”

Having invoked a patristic and a medieval witness, let me, lastly, quote from two contemporaries. Anthony Cernera and Oliver Morgan, in the article they authored for their jointly edited volume on the Catholic intellectual tradition, well articulated what I have been calling the Christic center of that tradition. They wrote: “For Catholicism . . . the center-point of human history is that the Son of God became incarnated in Jesus of Nazareth. The eternal Word of God is made visible in the flesh. This has consequences for all of human history, both before the historical event of Jesus and into the future.”

The Crisis of Tradition

With such testimony by distinguished witnesses, it would seem that the tradition’s center is secure. Yet, if as Father McCool contends sorrowfully, the Catholic mind or intellectual tradition is in a state of acute crisis today, I would suggest that a key dimension of that crisis is the loss of a robust Christic center. Obviously, here too I can only signal some signs of the times pointing to what I discern to be a Christological amnesia and neglect in some quarters of contemporary Catholicism.

For a number of years now, I have noted in theological writings, both scholarly and popular, what I call a “unitarianism of the Spirit.” As the term implies, these authors tend to speak almost uniquely of God in terms of “Holy Spirit,” neglecting the traditional language of “Father” and “Son.” Sometimes this development is fueled by a misguided ecumenism that seeks not to cause offense. But its outcome is the invocation of a “generic brands” deity that only exists in an abstract realm, uninhabited by any living tradition. Have we not unfortunately heard such anodyne invocations in faculty convocations and commencements even in Catholic colleges?
Moreover, do not such vague and nondescript generalizations seep all too readily into our attempts to articulate the vision and mission of our institutions of higher education? So, to choose an example with which I am most familiar, one hears repeated, in almost mantra-like fashion, that the aim of education in the Jesuit tradition is “to educate men and women for others.” Undoubtedly, an admirable sentiment; but one not at all distinctive to Jesuit colleges and universities. Indeed, its incantation risks carrying an undertone of smugness regarding other institutions’ purposes.

Now the phrase “men and women for others” is culled from an address by the then-Father General of the Society of Jesus, Pedro Arrupe. What I find intriguing is that even in official digests of his talk one rarely finds the full expression of Arrupe’s thought on the matter. Here is the key sentence: “Today our prime educational objective must be to form men and women for others; men and women who will not live for themselves but for God and his Christ—for the God man who lived and died for all the world...” There is a striking Christocentrism to Arrupe’s vision that is faithful to the Ignatian tradition and that one sorely misses in the reductionist and abbreviated versions too often transmitted.

Finally, when pressed to characterize what is distinctive about the Catholic vision and the Catholic intellectual tradition, one frequently encounters appeals to terms such as “sacramental consciousness” and “incarnational sensibility” (more often than not, accompanied by a well-known line from the Jesuit poet, Gerard Manley Hopkins, “The world is charged with the grandeur of God”). Now, I do not dispute the validity of these claims, nor the beauty of the verse. But I maintain that unless this widespread appeal is explicitly founded upon the confession of the unique Incarnation in Jesus Christ, who is thereby the Sacrament of encounter with God, we will lack the one sure foundation for renewal and transformation, both personal and institutional.

In sum, reading and listening to statements of vision and mission, I often feel as St. Augustine did in his Confessions. Augustine gratefully benefitted from the writings of the Platonists he had read, but failed to find there the one salvific name he longed for: that of Jesus Christ. What Ignatius and Hopkins and Arrupe took for granted, we must learn to appropriate and articulate anew.
Renewing the Christic Center

Having reviewed some signs of Christological forgetfulness, let me pass on to signs of promise, hopeful indications of Christological renewal.

I would first point to the theological work of Frans Jozef van Beeck, S.J., who is a participant in our conference. Father van Beeck is the author of a multi-volume work on Catholic systematic theology entitled *God Encountered*, that, when complete, will be a milestone in American Catholic theology. In a preliminary programmatic essay towards his *magnum opus*, van Beeck summed up its guiding vision of renewal in theology and pastoral practice in these words: “This renewal, if it is to be authentically Christian, must go back to the original and abiding realization that Christ is alive and present in the Spirit, a realization found everywhere in the New Testament and one that remains the original source of all Christian faith and identity experience.”

With regard to the distinctive vocation of Catholic colleges and universities, this “abiding realization,” that the living Christ is the heart of the Catholic wisdom tradition, must inspire and direct more than our theological offerings and ministerial programs, important as these undoubtedly are. It also holds implications for mission statements and curriculum decisions; for environment and art; for class size, administrative policies, and, yes, for hiring. Passing from a merely notional apprehension to a real apprehension of these matters (to use Cardinal Newman’s categories), will require imaginative and discerning leadership and commitment. But so has every authentic renewal in the Church.

For Newman, the mind’s passage from the notional to the real is mediated by the imagination that allows the mind to engage and energize the heart. And poetry is a prime vehicle for this heart-felt enfleshment of the word. Another sign of hope, then, arises from the recent study by Peggy Rosenthal, *The Poets’ Jesus*. Reminiscent of my earlier cautions regarding “incarnationalism without Incarnation,” Rosenthal writes, “Even for many practicing Christians, the late-twentieth century’s strong spirituality of incarnational presence was linked only weakly to the name and
person of Jesus." But in the last chapter of her work, entitled "Jesus Present," she discusses a number of contemporary American poets, like Andrew Hudgins, Scott Cairns, Denise Levertov, and Vassar Miller. Her analysis of their common ground is noteworthy: "They seem, at the end of two millennia in which this central figure of Christianity [Jesus Christ] has been reshaped and reconfigured, very comfortable with the orthodox configurations yet energized by what they mean for human life at this moment." Indeed, Denise Levertov's persuasion is particularly radical: "The miracle of God assuming flesh in the Incarnation, and continuing to become the 'bread of life' in the Eucharist informs her faith in the very possibility and meaning of metaphor." Only Real Presence is able to ground and guarantee real presences.

One final sign of Christological hope bears mentioning. Over the past ten years a number of graduate students in theology seem to be moving beyond the shop-worn labels of "liberal" or "conservative" to a new engagement with the tradition. Often they sense that they were deprived, through faulty religious education, of life-giving roots. Hence they undertake an in-depth study of the patristic or scholastic traditions for their doctoral dissertations. This is ressourcement, return to the sources, not for the sake of nostalgia, but for the sake of authentic aggiornamento that is more than mere cultural accommodation. They are captivated by Christ, the Traditus; and hence they diligently search the tradita for signs of the Beloved to whom we must bear witness in the present, the "today" of faith.

I quote one young Catholic theologian who speaks for many:

Let us leave liberal/conservative behind us. And let us leave behind us, too, that Catholicism which had allowed its distinctive colors to bleed into beige. Let us embrace the spicy, troublesome, fascinating, and culture-transforming person of Jesus Christ and let him shape our experience and our world. 

Then, I am convinced, we shall discover anew that ex corde ecclesiae is ever ex corde Christi.
Notes


3. McCool sets forth a number of factors contributing to the crisis in “Spirituality and Philosophy,” 45-49.

4. At a rather more elevated theological level, I suggest that concern about the spread of this “unitarianism of the Spirit” underlies the controversial Declaration of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Dominus Iesus*.


The invitation to speak about “Stewards of the Catholic Intellectual Tradition” affords an opportunity to present findings from a recently completed evaluation for the Lilly Endowment reviewing its funding in the area of religion and higher education over the past ten years. My comments present a slice of that study which I co-authored with James Youniss of the Catholic University of America and John Schmalzbauer of the College of the Holy Cross. Our findings are available in a public report entitled “Revitalizing Religion in the Academy.”

The panel convened this evening is called “Stewards of the Catholic Intellectual Tradition” and I took as my task an examination of the stewards themselves. With that in mind, I first turned the Oxford English Dictionary, which was, as always, a rewarding venture. The venerable dictionary offered fifteen full definitions of the word “steward,” with an additional thirteen variants, leaving us twenty-eight different ways to use the word steward as a noun. A few examples of the definitions offered for the word “steward” are in order. A steward can signify “an official who controls the domestic affairs of a household, supervising the service of his master’s table.” There is a variant of this: the steward as a servant of the college, who is charged with the duty of catering. On a more exalted note, a steward can be used as a title for an officer of the royal household, such as the “lord high steward” or the “great steward.” Devoid of royalty per se,
we in this country are probably more familiar with the notion of a steward as one who manages the affairs of the estate on behalf of the employer. For those who move in ecclesiastical circles, the word steward often signifies "an administrator and dispenser of wealth and favors, an individual who is regarded as a servant of God and God’s people.” The threads tying these twenty-eight definitions for the word steward together are threefold. First, it involves an individual; second, this individual is charged with responsibility for a valuable resource; and third, a steward does his or her work on behalf of someone else.

Given these characteristics of a steward, a host of questions comes to mind when considering the Catholic intellectual tradition. Who are the stewards? On whose behalf are the stewards acting? What valuable resources are these stewards charged with? And how does an individual become a steward? Here I would like to focus on a few questions relative to Catholic intellectual life. Who are the stewards? What do we know about them? Are they willing and able to steward?

There has been a great deal of rather lively discussion over the past ten years about religious identity and mission in Catholic higher education. (As an aside, I mention that this conversation is also going on in Protestant higher education, and much of what I say tonight applies to it as well.) In reading the literature on religion and higher education published over the past ten years, and in our interviews conducted as part of our evaluation for the Lilly Endowment, we found that those interested in religion and the intellectual life and sympathetic to the project of the Catholic intellectual tradition have three broad concerns: pluralism, literacy, and loyalty.

Pluralism has created a number of serious challenges in American higher education, although at the beginning of the twenty-first century, we would be hard-pressed to find a college that did not hold up pluralism, diversity, toleration and multiculturalism as valued social and intellectual resources. Nonetheless, these very laudable phenomena create significant challenges for colleges wishing to express their religious identity in denominationally specific and normative ways. In Catholic higher education, the question becomes one of how an institution committed to true
pluralism and diversity can marshal its corporate intellectual and academic resources in the service of a particular religious tradition—in this case, Catholicism.

Second, there is significant concern about the issue of literacy, or more precisely, theological and religious illiteracy among faculty and staff. Though many faculty and staff, Catholic and non-Catholic, are supportive of and committed to the religious mission of the institutions in which they work, few are possessed of a deep understanding of and appreciation for the Catholic intellectual tradition.

Third, there is concern over the issue of loyalty. The research university model, wherein moral values and religious beliefs were separated from teaching and scholarship, has eroded a sense of Christian vocation among scholars during the twentieth century. Loyalty to disciplinary guilds, memberships in professional associations, and a long record of scholarly publications are the chief criteria for tenure and hallmarks of an academic life honorably lived. That acknowledged, what resources and motivation do faculty members have to contribute to and engage the Catholic intellectual tradition?

These concerns are not exclusive to Catholic higher education; similar issues surface in Protestant circles. They resonate in discussions in American higher education at large, which seeks greater coherence and a deeper sense of meaning and mission in light of increasingly complex social and technological realities. But I do think that such concerns are more acute in Catholic higher education. In Catholic circles, when individuals talk or write about the challenges raised by pluralism, literacy, and loyalty, they often frame them as part of an intergenerational crisis. Simply, and I am oversimplifying here, there is a perceived crisis wherein the torch is being passed from a generation of religious “haves” to a generation of religious “have-nots.”

Many of you are familiar with Thomas Landy and the good work of the Collegium program for faculty and graduates students. In 1990, he wrote, “In the next five to seven years as many as half of our religious faculty and their traditional Catholic lay colleagues who were hired in the postwar boom will retire.” Peggy Steinfels made a similar claim in 1995: “We have a decade,
in which this question of identity must be honestly addressed and
definitely taken on as a commitment and core project of institutions
that hope to remain Catholic.” In a similar vein, in 1999, Charles L.
Currie, S.J., the president of the Association of Jesuit Colleges and
Universities, pondered in print whether he was presiding over the
demise of Jesuit education. In a recent issue of the Chronicle of Higher
Education, Currie responded to an article about the declining number
of women and men religious in higher education: “It is going to take
a lot of hard work and imagination to keep these traditions alive.”
There is, of course, very good reason to be concerned about the
decreasing number of women and men religious who are working
in higher education. For generations, they embodied in many
significant ways the religious mission of the institutions in which
they worked. They made immense contributions in Catholic
higher education, and thus concerns about the religious identity
and mission of Catholic higher education are well-founded.

But let us shed some light on those who are occasionally
depicted, implicitly and explicitly, as the religious have-nots. To
whom is the torch being passed? Our research for the Lilly
Endowment included a survey of faculty and staff who partici­
pated in Lilly-funded programs. (There are, of course, many
faculty interested in the Catholic intellectual life who have not
participated in a Lilly-funded program.) On average, about 2.5
percent of faculty members in Catholic institutions have partici­
pated in Lilly-funded programs such as Collegium, giving evidence
by their involvement of an interest in the Catholic intellectual
tradition; they are looking for ways to integrate their religious
beliefs with their work in the academy. The average participant is
about forty-five years old. Men and women have participated at
roughly comparable rates, yet at the level of leadership in
discussions about religion and higher education, women are under­
represented. Members of minority groups are underrepresented
across the board. As a cohort, those who have participated in
Lilly-funded programs score high on traditional markers of
religiosity, e.g., 40 percent attend religious services at least once a
week and 19 percent attend more than once a week.

Relative to this conversation on the Catholic intellectual life,
our data temper criticism to the effect that faculty in Catholic
colleges are wholly secular or disinterested in religion. Ninety-three percent of those responding to our survey say they are committed to the religious mission of the institutions in which they work. Eighty-four percent try to connect their personal religious beliefs with their teachings and research. When asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement, "One should attempt to insulate one's academic work from one's personal values," 95 percent disagreed. Seventy-six percent claimed that their religious beliefs were relevant to the content of their disciplines. Moreover, these individuals are heavily involved in what might be called identity and mission activities. Eighty percent have been involved in on-campus discussions about religion, while 84 percent have been involved in discussions about mission statements. Fifty-nine percent have been in discussions about or involved with Catholic studies programs, 45 percent have conducted service learning courses, and 32 percent have participated in campus Bible study or prayer groups.

Let me conclude with a few reflections about these findings and one recommendation. In the first instance, I hope to temper laments over this new generation of stewards. Like Father Currie, Peggy Steinfels, and Tom Landy, I recognize and am deeply concerned about the religious identity of Catholic institutions, particularly in light of the declining number of religious. On the whole, lay faculty do not take up their work in higher education with the same social, cultural, intellectual, and theological resources as their religious colleagues. Yet at the same time, it is somewhat encouraging to know that there is a cadre of faculty working in Catholic higher education who are interested in the Catholic intellectual tradition and integrating their religious beliefs with their scholarly endeavors.

Charles Currie was right: it will indeed take hard work and imagination to keep religious traditions alive in the light of the declining numbers of sisters, brothers, and priests working in higher education. I wish to elaborate on his claim. It is going to take hard work to reconceptualize, reimagine, and recast our lay faculties in our collective imagination as full players in terms of religious identity and mission.

How can we identify potential stewards and provide them
with the resources that would turn them into good stewards? How can we turn the have-nots into the haves? A number of individuals are convinced that Catholic colleges should “hire for mission.” But it is not enough nor is it easy to do so, for setting out to “hire for mission” presumes that there are young Ph.D.’s and faculty who are well-versed in the Catholic intellectual tradition. Many faculty are committed to mission, but often lack the theological and religious resources necessary to engage and advance the Catholic intellectual tradition. Therein a recommendation: Catholic colleges and universities, either individually or corporately, would be well served by development of substantive seminars and colloquia that would orient and introduce faculty, junior and senior, to the history, theology, and traditions of their institutions, making conversations about religion normative throughout faculty members’ careers.

This is, I believe, an opportune moment. In conducting our study for the Lilly Endowment, we found growing interest in religion and spirituality rippling across the academy—through Catholic colleges, Protestant institutions, and even secular universities. There are faculty members in Catholic colleges and universities who are interested in advancing the Catholic intellectual tradition. It is a fertile time to capitalize upon their interest in religion, to encourage and invest in these current and future stewards of the Catholic intellectual tradition.

Notes

I would like to set before you three distinct and related headings while thinking about this question—Catholic intellectuals, Catholic intellectual life, and Catholic colleges and universities. I will leave it to others better educated than I to carry the heavy water on Catholic intellectuals, and it is heavy. Here, we encounter all the great issues of faith and reason—Athens and Jerusalem—that are deep in the fabric of Christian history. I would simply offer a few propositions.

First, Catholics have made well-documented progress in achieving positions of leadership and accomplishment in American culture in and out of the academy. While I know of no major studies of the matter, there is plenty of anecdotal evidence to suggest that Catholics who are intellectuals, writers, and artists experience the segmentation of religion and professional work similar to that of other Americans. As one report said, and perhaps in exaggerated terms, of many Notre Dame faculty, “Their faith is for them and other Christians on the faculty a private matter. Their beliefs and commitments bear the same relationship to Notre Dame as they would to any corporation that was their employer. The Christian life informs their personal relationships and conduct but it is unconnected with their professional life as teachers, scholars, and researchers.”

It is interesting that Kathleen Mahoney mentioned data from her study there, that people do not really accept that kind of
separation, but it is one that has been regularly noted by people on Catholic colleges and elsewhere. One suspects the same would be said of Catholics of an intellectual bent working outside the Catholic sub-culture as well. Maybe Pope John XXIII got it right some forty years ago now. Indeed, it happens too often, he wrote, that there is no proportion between scientific training and religious instruction. The former continues and is extended until it reaches higher degrees while the latter remains at an elementary level. Numerous Ph.D.’s settle for pablum and platitudes in church, and I might add, even politics.

Pastoral care for Catholic intellectuals is a worry, especially now that shrinking religious orders are already overburdened with campus ministry on non-Catholic, private and public campuses. We seem to have few resources even when there is interest for reaching out to intellectual and artists. Moreover, intellectual networks that once connected people with one another, and with Catholic thinking, seem beset by lack of support due to ideological divisions and generational discount annuities. My generation’s multiple Catholic disappointments are a poor basis for attracting younger people with religious interest. Post-sub-cultural Catholicism has perhaps to look in different places to find ways to reconnect faith, Church, and the lives of serious thinking Catholics. I have in mind Thomas Merton’s combination of the deepest moments of the tradition and the farthest reaches of humanity’s quest for meaning, or put another way, the fullest points of God’s presence and God’s absence. The action, in short, is probably a long way from the ecclesiastical bog. Therefore, one imperative seems to be to identify, nourish, and support Catholics who are intellectuals. We have the opportunity to provide them with resources to build a vital relationship between their faith and their work, and between their work and the life and work of the Church. Who will do that and how to do that are the initial and crucial questions of the present and future.

Second, Catholic intellectual life. Here the problem is fairly clear but even harder to address. The problem is the decreasing intellectual tone of much of the popular Catholic faith and life noted by many observers. We refer to it sometimes as illiteracy and we have all of our favorite groups to blame, with religious
educators, youth ministers, and even social justice advocates taking their share of the hits. I think it has something to do with the impact of democracy on religion. Once Christianity is extracted from a formative cultural role among a distinct people, it takes on an evangelical spirit in which religious experience regularly trumps religious learning. And Scripture with a popular hermeneutic shapes Christian imagination. Sustaining a vital Christian intellectual life, in any American community of faith, is a real challenge.

Here I draw on Bernard Lee and his associates on the school’s ministry rather than the schools of theology. They call for a practical theology that is most intimately connected with pastoral ministry. In short, how do we learn to read our experience of life in terms of our faith, and how do we learn to read our faith in terms of our experience of life? All those projects which involve theological reflection get trivialized not simply because participants don’t understand the tradition, but just as often because the theological reflectors or ministers neither understand nor appreciate the culture. Excellent pastoral ministry led by people who respect the people they work with, is deeply formed in the Christian tradition’s spirituality, and at the same time is alert to deep religious currents in American culture, is the best way to a revitalization of Catholic intellectual life in the Church as a whole. But like all other areas of contemporary Catholic life, achievement of a high level of Catholic intelligence would require acknowledgement of shared responsibility and an effective mechanism for pastoral planning. Obvious enough, perhaps, but also rare. So, once again, whose responsibility is it and how would one fill that responsibility if one wishes to?

Third is the related question of higher education—if we can still stand discussion of Catholic higher education ten years after the publication of *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* and fifteen years since the conversation about *Ex Corde* began. Catholic colleges and universities need to provide trained teachers and research opportunities that draw on the Catholic intellectual tradition and on the life of the contemporary Church—not only in theology where the claim is acknowledged, but in all disciplines and programs. Thus, seek growing interest in Catholic studies, which is nothing more than
self-conscious attention to Catholic life and thought with adequate human and financial resources essential to Catholic education and obviously a matter of simply integrity. I would argue that fulfillment of that responsibility would require, though, an uncharacteristic cooperation among the many Catholic institutions of higher education in dozens of projects, most of which have already been proposed. In seeking a positive and constructive orientation towards the Church as we find it, Catholic colleges could do worse than try to focus on the two problems outlined earlier. That is, pastoral care for Catholic intellectuals, and strategic planning for Catholic intelligence. The former is mostly a question of will, the latter could perhaps get started here and there with simple, but sincere invitations.

Everything I have suggested turns on the pastoral life of the American Catholic Church. We need pastoral care for Catholic intellectuals, artists, and writers, and we need to help people probe the religious dimensions of everyday experience. Helping people find God, I think, is the definition of pastoral care. In the United States, we would also say that pastoral care is helping one another to find God, often in unexpected places through community found in parishes in the numerous small groups and apostolic movements. Most of our arguments should be made on pastoral grounds, which may be also our best potential common ground.

In my judgment, American colleges and universities could make no better contribution to the life and work of the Church, and then to the eventual renewal of Catholic intellectual life worthy of our labors than by launching intellect and interdisciplinary projects focusing on American pastoral Catholic practice. After all, the best solution to the problem of Catholic intellectual life is an intelligent, engaged, and enthusiastic Church. That would stir some interest in the matter of shared responsibility. Too often, we consider the whole question of Catholic intellectual life, like the question of Catholic social teaching, as if it were in some other realm than the world of pastoral care, the world of parishes, dioceses, movements, and pastoral programs.

I want to end by suggesting that we cannot have an intelligent and engaged Catholicism without a spiritually and liturgically rich community of faith.
I have been asked to talk about “Catholic” and “intellectual,” about the condition they are in now, and the challenges we face in the future. The brevity of my presentation puts me in mind of a sermon and so if you will indulge me, I would like to read the text for my “sermon”:

In the daily exercise of our pastoral office, we sometimes have to listen, much to our regret, to voices of persons who though burning with zeal are not endowed with too much sense of discretion or measure. They say that our era in comparison with the past eras is getting worse. And they behave as though they have learned nothing from history, which is nonetheless the teacher of life. They behave as though, at the time of formal councils, everything was a full triumph for the Christian idea. We feel we must disagree with these prophets of doom who are always forecasting disaster as though the end of the world were at hand.

Some of you will recognize the words of Pope John XXIII in his opening address to the first session of the Second Vatican Council on October 11, 1962. Having, in that opening, addressed his critics, the pope went on to highlight the purpose of the Council, as he said, was not “the discussion of one particular article or another
of a document on the Church. For this,” he said, “a Council is not necessary.” Rather as he went on to say, “The substance of the ancient doctrine of the deposit of faith is one thing, and the way in which it is presented is another. And it is the latter that we must take into great consideration, with patience if necessary—everything being measured in the forms and propositions of the magisterium, which is predominately pastoral in character.”

The pope was no liberal, but he was not a conservative either. In any case, I do not mean to quote him to either effect, but to remind us of the spirit in which he called the Council, the spirit with which the Council was conducted by the bishops and eventually received by the faithful. That spirit was one of confidence and expansiveness, enthusiasm and even ebullience. Confidence in a sense that the Catholic tradition was strong enough and smart enough to teach the world, as well as to learn from the world. If I had to describe my own work at Commonweal in reference to the Catholic tradition and to the Council, it would certainly be in that spirit.

The Catholic intellectual tradition is strong enough and smart enough to provide us with the tools, the conceptual frameworks, rhetorical systems, systems of political and moral thought, and sometimes even language to help us to look at our culture, our politics, our own somewhat confused nation and our shrinking world with its ever greater need for conscientious care and conservation. This tradition of ours can genuinely inform and guide our understanding of how to see issues, how to analyze them, and how, if need be, to change the world around us.

John XXIII, the bishops at the Council, and a receptive faithful were filled with a spirit: they were members of a confident and expansive Church that saw its intellectual heritage available for tackling the great issues of the time and the great issues of our cultures. This confidence, it seems to me, made a place for the Catholic intellectual to be a public intellectual. I will not say a great deal about that tonight. But obviously, those of us who are not in the academy are in some other world. I will call them public intellectuals: politicians, writers, editors, poets, artists, and policy makers. There is a wide range of such people. There are Catholics, public intellectuals, who make use of and know how to
make use of this tradition as it applies to their work and their civic life. I think many of us felt we were given a mandate from the Council to engage the world with that tradition.

Of course, as we all recognize, in a culture such as our own that has never fancied Catholics or intellectuals in particular, this in itself is a somewhat counter-cultural activity. On the other hand, the Church, besides teaching, had much to learn from the world, even from the Catholic faithful who had more often been regarded as aliens than as allies in doing the work of the God. This gives and gave a certain positive, sometimes exuberant and even aggressive character to one's work and one's view of the world. Catholics in the United States certainly took that spirit of confidence and expansiveness and ran with it.

As we look to the future, we cannot help but stop for one moment in the present because there are few of us, I think, who would find in today's Church the same spirit operating at the same level of energy. It is there, of course, but it is muted. I do not claim, as some might, that two popes, John XXIII and John Paul II, really have a different Church in mind or a different set of doctrines. It is certainly the same message and the same Church, but not, I think, operating in the same spirit. Oddly enough, the current pope, who began his pontificate as a young man, relatively speaking, does not seem to provide the Church with the same sense of confidence or expansiveness that John XXIII, who was quite old when elected, brought in like a breath of fresh air.

Or perhaps, as many say, it is not the pope, it is the Vatican itself. Yet by his episcopal appointments in particular, and by the documents coming from various curial offices, we now seem to have become a church full of fear and anxiety, a faith community more restrictive than expansive, more anxious than confident. Inevitably this has an effect on the intellectual life of the Church and of Catholics generally. Indeed, the current pope has given us the phrase, "the culture of death," which seems to embody not simply a critical stance toward our culture—indeed a stance that is warranted in some ways—but an indictment that seems a death warrant to the kind of dialogue that was one of the sterling outcomes of Vatican II. When you expect the worst and anticipate
the darkest motives in others, it does not help one to engage the world or carry on a dialogue with it. Such a spirit shrinks our intellectual horizons, offers automatic answers to complicated questions, and shrouds itself in the mantle of truth rather than embracing the joys and sorrows of this world.

Well, that is the bad news, at least as I see it, at the current time. But there is a future. In these circumstances, what is to be done? The first thing, obviously, is to keep the faith. The attitude and behavior of others does not exonerate any of us from the beliefs and practices that are ours as Catholics. We are all obliged to teach and to learn, in season and out.

Second, we must maintain the health and solidity of our institutions. As we live into the future, Catholics in the United States have a powerful set of institutions to preserve, to foster, to transmit the Catholic intellectual tradition, which is a faith tradition as well as a tradition that helps us to engage our world. The preservation and growth of these institutions is in many ways in our hands as lay people. They are not in the hands of the Vatican, except in some theological sense which I do not yet understand. Their faithfulness to the Christian tradition and their intellectual and financial solidity rest with all of us. These are largely self-governing institutions and, relatively speaking, independent ones. Most of them are certainly as independent as any secular school in the United States. These are not, however, and should not be little centers of defiance or rebellion, but serious and sober places that are able to think when everything else seems to be running amok. When I mention these places, obviously I am thinking of a place like Sacred Heart University, and other Catholic colleges and universities and the serious efforts they are all making in different ways to devise a means to maintain Catholic identity and to foster a rich intellectual life. It takes time, it takes money, it takes brains, it takes effort.

I am also thinking of things like think tanks. There is the Cushwa Center for the Study of American Catholicism. There is the Erasmus Institute, the Jesuit Institute at Boston College, and the Woodstock Center at Georgetown. Many schools are devising mechanisms like think tanks to tackle these issues and I think they should be encouraged. There are also plans afoot for a free-
standing Institute for Advanced Catholic Studies, which needs to be nourished and encouraged and given money. I am also thinking of journals and magazines, obviously like *Commonweal*, and our friendly colleagues downtown, *America Magazine*, and other independent associations that Catholics have founded and fostered, sometimes with a very narrow agenda, but nonetheless an agenda that can help link these questions of our world and our faith.

Third, lay people must be committed to this as intellectuals, as citizens, as faith-filled collaborators in the work that Jesus sent out to this Church of ours. A good deal could be said about this, but I think we have to face the real question of who is going to do the work. It will have to be us. We need to think seriously about how we are going to do it.

So let me close as I began, with the words of John XXIII, this time as he addressed the closing and exciting and “revolutionary” first session of the Council, which he did on December 8, 1962:

> The vision of this grand prospect which reveals the whole course of the coming year, so rich in promise, stirs up in the heart a more ardent hope for the realization of the great goals for which we have convoked a Council. Namely, that the Church founded on faith, strengthened on hope and where ardent charity may flourish with a new and useful vigor and fortified by holy ordinances, may be more energetic and swift to spread the kingdom of Christ.¹

Notes

CHAPTER FIVE

“Catholic” and “Intellectual”: The Way I See It

BRIAN STILTNER

I am a member of a transitional generation. Born in 1966, I am the child of the last generation of American Catholics who saw Catholic schooling as a religious obligation and a way to maintain a distinctive subculture. Already by the time I was being sent to grade school in the 1970s, suburban Catholics such as my family were enculturated in a pluralistic society, not sure why it was so necessary to send their children to a Catholic school and whether it was worth the increasing costs, except that they were starting to have qualms about the quality of public schools. So I, who went to Catholic schools from third grade onward, was sent there secondarily for religious reasons and primarily for the order and higher quality education. (I was a hyper-curious child who needed some order, frankly.) Yet this schooling was immensely influential to my developing understanding of faith and appreciation of the world around me. Catholic schooling reached its fruition, for me, at St. Charles Borromeo High School in Columbus, Ohio, one of the few remaining all-boys schools these days. There I learned Latin and Greek, took AP English and AP Chemistry, and had four years of religion, including courses in Social Justice and Moral Decision-Making that were the earliest roots of my eventual career. These four years, which were crucial to making me who I am today, had their power on me because
they built on a base of parochial education and were complemented by a Jesuit college education and finally—what I think was appropriate after all this Catholic schooling—by graduate education at a multi-denominational divinity school and graduate school.

My Catholic schooling is the context for my remarks tonight for two reasons. First, this education inculcated in me an attitude about being Catholic and intellectual that has greatly shaped my work as a Catholic scholar. Second, the social and chronological location of my education calls attention to a generational shift with major implications—potentially negative implications—for the future of the Catholic intellectual tradition. (Much has been written about the way of thinking of Generation X, its approach to media, knowledge, and institutional religion. But I am the very earliest of Generation X, and there is a significant difference between my attitudes and those of the youngest members of this generation and the next one, sometimes called Generation Y. This shift involves very different attitudes about the authority structures of the Church, the university, and institutions in general, and about acquiring and using information.) I will talk first about what being Catholic and intellectual means to me, and then indicate some challenges facing Catholic scholars in the postmodern era.

Probably the most important attitude I took away from my Catholic schooling was an appreciation of the beauty and value of all academic disciplines. As students, we were expected to take all our courses seriously and were given no reason to believe that we couldn’t excel in all of them. There were no awkward attempts to force Catholic lessons into different parts of the curriculum; there was a simple confidence that all truth coheres. It is a notion that I have found beautifully expressed in the poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins, one of which I will quote in full:

As kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies draw flame;  
As tumbled over rim in roundy wells  
Stones ring; like each tucked string tells, each hung bell’s  
Bow swung finds tongue to fling out broad its name;  
Each mortal thing does one thing and the same:
Deals out that being indoors each one dwells;
Selves—goes itself; myself it speaks and spells,
Crying What I do is me: for that I came.

I say more: the just man justices;
Keeps grace: that keeps all his goings graces;
Acts in God’s eye what in God’s eye he is —
Christ. For Christ plays in ten thousand places,
Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his
To the Father through the features of men’s faces.¹

This poem expresses three characteristics of the Catholic intellectual tradition that are significant to me, that I hope inform my intellectual endeavors, and that are an important gift to the cultures and traditions with which Catholicism interacts. The first is the sacramental imagination.

The underlying theological conviction is that every created thing and creature reflects the glory of God’s handiwork. “Each mortal thing does one thing and the same: / Deals out that being indoors each one dwells.” It is a commonplace how sacramentality is central to Catholicism—to its liturgical practice, theology, cultural expressions, and scholarship. This conviction has undergirded the Catholic intellectual tradition’s serious engagement with various sectors of human knowledge: early on, philosophy, then later on adding the natural sciences, the social sciences, and most recently, cross-cultural studies. A fuller treatment, following David Tracy and others, would incorporate the sacramental imagination under the analogical imagination—“a specific intellectual practice . . . [that] seeks to discern the similarities or the unities that exist among events, entities, or state of affairs that seem different.”² In short, the analogical imagination refers to Catholicism’s distinctive emphasis on both/and instead of either/or. In the case of sacramentality, the analogical imagination affirms both supernatural and natural realities, both God and the world; it coordinates these through creation-oriented theology, natural law theory, liturgy, and art.

A second characteristic of the Catholic intellectual tradition is entailed by sacramentality: attentiveness to the distinctive nature
of things. Appropriate to the sacramental imagination is to start each quest for truth with observation, with paying attention. The approach is bottom-up rather than top-down. The method is to let things reveal themselves, speak on their own terms. Hopkins did this wonderfully in his poetry: "As kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies draw flame”; “rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim”; “Nothing is so beautiful as Spring — / When weeds, in whiles, shoot long and lovely and lush”; “Towery city and branchy between towers; / Cuckoo-echoing, bell-swarmed, lark-charmed, rook-racked, river-rounded.” One pays attention to see and know what is, as well as to be impressed by its beauty. There is an interesting tension between the sacramental confidence that God is disclosed in the natural world and the method of starting with observation and attention. If the former is stressed too much, then the academic disciplines become mere tools for trying to prove theological convictions. If the latter is stressed too much, the disciplines forget why theology is important and set themselves up as better, rather than as complementary, ways of knowing. This is an analogical tension, the best approach to which is to affirm both/and. The Catholic intellectual tradition strives to get the delicate interplay right and, on the whole, I think it succeeds.

At the same time, the Catholic sacramental imagination is not starry-eyed. As Terrence Tilley puts it, the tradition is better described as “hopeful” rather than “optimistic.” Discussing the Catholic notion of redemption, he writes, “An important factor that differentiates this form of hope for redemption from an optimistic attitude is that the latter need not recognize the ‘darkness’ in and of the world.” Catholic writers, artists, dramatists, and musicians have a knack for expressing the beauty and goodness of the world without neglecting the dark undertones of human experience and culture that cry out for reform. To take just one example, the Irish rock group U2’s last two albums contain numerous expressions of the highs and lows of human life. U2 offers, for instance, a celebration of nature and the workaday world reminiscent of Hopkins:

See the world in green and blue
See China right in front of you

30 / Brian Stiltner
See the canyons broken by clouds
See the tuna fleets clearing the sea out
See the Bedouin fires at night
See the oil fields at first light
See the bird with a leaf in her mouth
After the flood all the colours came out
It was a beautiful day.\

Just as frequently, the group presents moral outrage or plaintive queries at the injustices that, it appears, God fails to stop:

God has got his phone off the hook, babe.
Would he even pick up if he could?
It’s been a while since we saw that child hangin’ ‘round this neighbourhood
See His mother dealing in a doorway,
see Father Christmas with a begging bowl.
Jesus’ sister’s eyes are a blister,
the high street never looked so low.\

Note that in this lyric, U2’s outrage is generated in part by a confidence that God, Jesus, and Mary are joined incarnationally to human experience. It is an analogical, sacramental imagination that allows these affirmations of beauty and gloom; it is an imagination informed by Christian hope that leads to the coordination of good and bad in the final words of their most recent album:

What once was hurt
What once was friction
What left a mark
No longer stings
Because Grace makes beauty
Out of ugly things.\

Hopkins’ poems and U2’s songs are representative of the Catholic intellectual tradition’s conviction that the act of knowing has an aesthetic dimension. The tradition also claims that the act of knowing has a moral dimension; this is my third characteristic.
The description of a grace-filled world leads ineluctably to a commitment to the dignity of each person as created in the image of God. "Christ plays in ten thousand places, / Lovely in limbs and lovely in eyes not his / To the Father through the feature of men’s faces." Much could be said here about moving from this apprehension of God in fellow persons to the affirmation of human rights and the common good. For now, I’d like simply to note that, as before, there are tensions that arise from this analogical claim. One concerns theology and theological anthropology. Human beings are good because they are God’s creatures and are so loved by God that God fully took on human flesh—it’s joy, pain, limitations, and expectations—in the Incarnation. But something is missed if that is all we assert about human worth, for it could suggest that we value other persons, and ourselves, merely as channels to valuing God. But humans are real, eternally connected to God but not the same as God, and we have been called by God “very good.”

So the Catholic-Christian moral vision not only imputes infinite worth to persons, but appraises a value that resides there that a supremely just God himself recognizes. Another tension concerns political thought. The Catholic social tradition has arrived at an unequivocal embrace of pluralist democracy. The sacral age, when the Church demanded a privileged place in the polity, has fallen to the wayside in the forward progress of civilization. And yet a genuine democracy should never leave behind its Christian inspiration. To a dialectic imagination, the following argument of Jacques Maritain is likely to be confusing, but it makes sense within the analogical, sacramental imagination that animates Catholic social theory:

The more the body politic—that is, the people—were imbued with Christian convictions and aware of the religious faith which inspires it, the more deeply it would adhere to the secular faith in the democratic charter; for, as a matter of fact, the latter has taken shape in human history as the result of the Gospel inspiration awakening the “naturally Christian” potentialities of common secular consciousness, even among the diversity of spiritual
These are among the reasons I embrace the Catholic intellectual tradition. It affirms faith and reason, aesthetic appreciation and moral development. With these characteristics of the Catholic intellectual tradition in mind, I’d like to name very briefly what I personally have found to be some of the joys and difficulties of working within this intellectual tradition. One joy is the interdisciplinary engagement. Working in the Catholic intellectual tradition disposes me to be interested in a lot of things! Why? Because, in various ways, truth, beauty, and moral challenges are to be found in political science, sociology, computer science, literature, and so on. A corresponding difficulty is intellectual fragmentation and the need to justify one’s ideas in many courts. For example, like many Christian ethicists and theologians, I pay a lot of attention to the work of contemporary philosophers, yet the interest is usually not mutual.

A second joy is to pursue learning that is valued for its own sake, for the pure satisfaction of intellectual growth and the aesthetic appreciation of the world. At the same time, it is no easy task to excite contemporary university students to such appreciation. It is not impossible, certainly, but economic and cultural trends push increasingly for instrumental education: preparation for a career. I don’t want to state this too broadly or stereotypically. Students need training for a career, and no humanist like myself would stay in this business if he or she did not encounter on a regular basis students who get excited over the ideas we present. The challenge here is directed to cultures and institutions. What is the best way for Catholic universities to make theology, philosophy, and the humanities both compelling and viable to the students of the twenty-first century?

A third joy for me has been engaging the prophetic tradition of Catholic-Christian thought. A recent example was hearing Sister Helen Prejean speak at Sacred Heart University on October 31, 2000. Her passionate witness against capital punishment, thoroughly interwoven with concrete compassion for victims’ families, stirred in me and many others a desire to reinvigorate
our moral, political, and spiritual commitments. What particularly struck me was her metaphor of Christ's cross that has two arms, one reaching out to embrace death-row inmates and their families, the other reaching out to enfold victims' families. I can think of other symbols besides the cross that can seize our imagination for stopping capital punishment; I cannot think of another that captures as profoundly the reality of emotional loss and justified rage when a loved one is murdered and the possibility, indeed the necessity, of healing forgiveness. Again, the analogical imagination reconciles—perhaps tenuously and painfully—what our culture would force us to choose between.

Helen Prejean's ministry to death-row inmates and to victims' families stands at the near end of a long line reaching back to Jesus, who said, "Father forgive them; for they know not what they do," and to the prophets who held out to the Jewish people the opportunity for healing and restoration through moral and spiritual reform. A related difficulty is the difficulty of being prophetic, failing to live up to the awesome responsibility of resisting the awful ways human beings can treat each other. This obstacle is rooted in the human heart and faces both individuals and institutions. As Reinhold Niebuhr conveyed with the dichotomy "moral man/immoral society," and John Paul II with the category "structures of sin," it is all too easy for relatively benign intentions to become morally corrupted, especially in collectivities.

My fourth joy in working in the Catholic intellectual tradition is being able to contribute to the ongoing implementation of the Second Vatican Council in the life of the Church and the Catholic academy. I am a post-Vatican II baby whose understanding of the Church and of his role as a layperson has been thoroughly shaped by the Council's articulation of the Church as the People of God. I internalized this understanding both in a number of informal ways (for example, as I saw laypersons have roles in the liturgy, as lay teachers had as much influence on my faith as clerical teachers, as I was inspired by movements like the Catholic Worker) and in formal ways (namely, as I learned about the Vatican II understanding of the Church in high school and college). When I first got involved in social service projects at
college, wrote articles for the student newspaper on topics ranging from arming the Contras in Nicaragua to rethinking birth control, I always had the nascent sense that I was speaking for the Church, my Church, playing a small role in shaping its thought and practice, particularly the practice of Catholic lay people in the modern world. That is an exciting, if daunting and occasionally burdensome, vision. It is a vision I carry into being a moral theologian.

Yet difficulties for me as a teacher and scholar arise here as well. (Some are occasioned by *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, a topic I will leave aside here.) A major challenge is making Vatican II relevant to the newest generation of Catholics, today's college-aged and younger students. Do they care, can they care, about what they take for granted and have already moved quite beyond? More broadly, how can today's Catholic young adults—raised in a digital, hyperlinked, media-saturated culture—come to appreciate the Catholic intellectual tradition, this ancient tradition stretching back through 2000 years of systematic theology, philosophical speculation, and largely European history? I like to think that if it matters to me, a member of Generation X, then it can matter to Generation Y and beyond, but I know it is a daunting task for us teachers. When it comes to teaching the Catholic intellectual tradition to today's students, I often feel more like a contemporary of Maritain than of Madonna.  

Vatican II opened as many questions about the role of the lay theologian as it did opportunities. Vatican II greatly legitimized the role of the lay theologian. At the same time, it tended to accelerate the lay person's movement into the crosscutting conversations and engagements of a pluralistic world. So as moral and systematic theologians inhabit the overlapping worlds of the Catholic scholarly community and the secular academy, a number of tensions arise—from justifying the place of theological studies in a public university to justifying to the Church's hierarchy our critical reflection upon the *magisterium*. *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* offers a model of being a theologian that tries to respond to the conflict between these worlds, but at the expense, most Catholic professors feel, of Vatican II's understanding of the competency of laypersons and the Church as the People of God. The way forward will undoubtedly be difficult.
Taking off from this point, I will conclude with a few directions for the future, each of which is quite challenging and requires coordinated efforts among many Catholic institutions. One is the need for better primary, secondary, and family/parish education of young people into the Catholic intellectual tradition. If we want students at the collegiate level to explore and appropriate the Catholic intellectual tradition, they need to have a good foundational education in the tradition, just as we cannot expect them to learn the college-level math they need for the technical twenty-first century without studying algebra, geometry, and trigonometry in high school. Can Catholic universities fill a role that is not remedial, but perhaps that assists Catholic high schools, grade schools, and parishes in their roles? (At Sacred Heart, REAPS is an institution that plays such a role by training parochial school teachers in the Hartford archdiocese.) Of course, such initiatives do not address the facts that many Catholic students have not attended parochial schools, and that many students at a Catholic university are not Catholic.

A second direction involves coming to grips with how to teach the Catholic intellectual tradition in the postmodern era. Some commentators on education have claimed that the only way to make teaching viable to Generation X and beyond is to replace the model of the teacher as a disseminator of knowledge to the model with the teacher as a facilitator of learning that students accomplish largely on their own and access through the web and other multimedia. Classrooms should be transformed from lecture halls to project rooms where students learn by creating and applying information to real-life problems. I imagine the Catholic intellectual tradition can be taught, and perhaps more effectively, with the assistance of new technology. Parts of it, such as the ethical and social teachings, may even be well suited to a problem-based and project-based approach. But an embrace of the postmodern, technological era entails a fundamental shift in how we think about tradition, its authority, and its content. I am unsure how much justice will be done to the Catholic intellectual tradition by these new educational models. At any rate, it is an open question that cannot be avoided and must be explored creatively.
A third direction is to put renewed effort into “doing” the Catholic intellectual tradition, as opposed to studying it and talking about it. We must certainly study and examine, but then how can we nurture, promote, renew, and expand the Catholic intellectual tradition in all its cultural manifestations? The question must be directed more broadly than to Catholic theology and philosophy. Fortunately, that is the purpose of tomorrow’s working groups. It was the question raised by David O’Brien when he convoked people to Holy Cross last November to talk about the future of Catholic intellectual and cultural life. Some basic ideas are taking shape at a number of institutions. I would like to see Catholic universities exposing their students to novelists, poets, musicians and filmmakers who express Catholic themes in their work, and even sponsoring such work. I would like to see initiatives for engaging the Catholic intellectual tradition in courses and research projects in the natural and social sciences. These initiatives often take place through Catholic Studies programs and core curricula, which are two means among others for “doing” the Catholic intellectual tradition. Whatever form the initiatives take, they should be cognizant of and responsive to the technological and multicultural global environment that is taking shape. As the Catholic Church is ever more a worldwide church, the study and practice of the Catholic intellectual tradition must be attuned to the multiple enculturations of Catholicism. In addition, “doing” the Catholic intellectual tradition should not be limited to universities, so we need to explore the creation or rejuvenation of institutions that support Catholic-themed arts and letters.

A final point for consideration would be for educators to make a renewed appropriation of our prophetic traditions. This would open so many avenues that for now it is best to close with another open question: What will it mean for Catholic education in the next century to claim its prophetic roots?

Notes


CHAPTER SIX

College Educators and the Maintenance of Catholic Identity

Michele Dillon

The publication of the Vatican’s apostolic constitution on higher education, *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* (1990), and the U.S. Bishops’ agreement that external oversight is necessary to ensure the maintenance of Catholic identity at Catholic colleges and universities, reignited public discussion of the role of Catholic higher education in America. The ensuing dialogue has sharpened attention to the ways in which Catholic institutes of higher education maintain their dual commitment to be centers of Catholicism and of intellectual inquiry. Although *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* hastened an evaluation of the contemporary mission of Catholic colleges and universities, the purpose of Catholic higher education has for many years being in need of clarification and explication.

The socio-demographic and economic changes of the latter decades of the twentieth century presented new challenges to the institutional task of Catholic higher education. The new institutional environment must adjust to: 1) the significant advance in the educational achievements and social status of American Catholics and the de-ghettoization of Catholics as a minority subculture; 2) the changing expectations of an information economy in which qualifications in science and technology rather than immersion in the liberal arts are increasingly valued; and 3) the cultural changes attendant on the greater visibility of Asian and Hispanic immigrant groups in American society.
Catholics, therefore, are rethinking the means by which Catholic higher educational institutions can best serve the intergenerational transmission of Catholic identity. Thus far, discussion of the issue has tended to rely primarily on the viewpoints advanced by theologians, bishops, and Catholic intellectuals whose voices are frequently heard in the Catholic public sphere.\(^1\) Although faculty and administrators at Catholic colleges and universities directly encounter the routines, dilemmas, and challenges of Catholic higher education, their voices have been relatively scant in the public conversation about Catholic identity.\(^2\) Yet, in accord with the Second Vatican Council’s affirmation of the fact that people are the “authors and artisans” of culture, faculty and administrators have a privileged position in the ongoing construction and maintenance of Catholic identity. In recognition of the critical role played by faculty and administrators at Catholic colleges and universities, this research essay presents an overview of their disposition toward the Catholic tradition and their opinions with respect to its integration with academic inquiry.

The empirical findings reported in this essay are based on a survey of Catholic identity conducted among faculty and senior administrators at Catholic colleges and universities in the United States. The survey was initiated and sponsored by the Office for Mission and Planning at Sacred Heart University, Fairfield, Connecticut in the Spring of 2000, under the leadership of University President, Anthony Cernera, Ph.D., and Donna Dodge, Ph.D., Vice President, Office for Mission and Planning. The study is an extension of Sacred Heart University’s commitment to encouraging dialogue about the Catholic intellectual tradition and ways in which colleges and universities might approach the challenges confronted in articulating its relevance in contemporary times.

Sample

In the Spring of 2000, a sample of 40 Catholic colleges and universities was randomly chosen from a comprehensive listing of all Catholic colleges and universities in the U.S. Each
college/university had an equal probability of being selected. From the list of 40 colleges/universities, a random sample of 42 faculty was systematically selected from each of the colleges/universities. Each person who was listed as teaching in an undergraduate department/academic program had an equal probability of being chosen for the sample. This method yielded a target sample population of 1,680 faculty members. The sample population of administrators comprised all of the presidents and two other senior administrators (deans/provosts) from each of the 224 Catholic colleges and universities listed in the directory issued by the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities (ACCU).

A self-administered questionnaire was mailed to each of the faculty members in the faculty sample population, and to the administrators in the administrator sample. The questionnaire was seven pages long and included closed-response and open-ended questions. Faculty and administrator questionnaires followed a similar structure and format with the exception that the wording of some of the questions was tailored depending on whether the questionnaire was directed to a faculty member or to an administrator. An accompanying letter explained the origins of the study and my research interest in the issue of Catholic education and cultural pluralism. In the letter and on the questionnaire respondents were assured of the anonymity and confidentiality of the survey process, and were advised of the fact that the survey results would be presented at a public conference on the Catholic intellectual tradition being organized by Sacred Heart University for November, 2000. The respondents were asked to return their completed questionnaires in a stamped envelope addressed to me.

Of the 1,680 questionnaires sent to faculty, 472 completed questionnaires were returned, yielding a response rate of 28%. Of the 672 questionnaires sent to administrators, 183 completed questionnaires were returned, yielding a response rate of 27%. These response rates compare favorably with the rate of response for self-administered mail questionnaire surveys of similar length and format sent to general populations.

The issue of non-response inevitably raises questions about the extent to which the sample respondents are representative of the population of Catholic college faculty and administrators which
comprised the original sample. There is no direct way of ascertaining whether the respondents are different than the non-respondents, unless one were to re-contact and interview the non-respondents about their reasons for choosing not to participate in the initial survey. The probability is high, however, that the sample of non-respondents would still choose not to respond to the follow-up survey.

On the one hand, it could be argued that those who returned a completed questionnaire are more interested in and committed to Catholicism than those who did not respond and that, therefore, the survey results are biased in favor of the affirmation of Catholic identity. By the same token, however, it could be argued that those who responded are more negatively disposed toward the issues surrounding Catholic institutional identity and thus saw the survey as an opportunity to communicate their antipathy. Ultimately, what is important is that the initial sample was randomly drawn thus giving each person an equal chance of being selected irrespective of their religion or of their views on Catholic identity and independent of any other arbitrary characteristics. Confidence in the survey results is also strengthened by the fact that the respondents appear to be proportionally divided in terms of expected socio-demographic and institutional characteristics, thus suggesting that the opinions of any sub-group of the sample population are not under-represented to a significant degree.

Survey Results

Socio-demographic and Institutional Profiles of the Respondents

In the sample of administrators (N = 181), 53% were presidents and a further 26% were vice-presidents. Eight percent were deans, 7% provosts, and 6% held other administrative posts. Almost half of the administrators had a graduate degree in the humanities (49%), one-fifth in the social sciences (22%), and another one-fifth in religious studies/philosophy (21%). Few administrators held graduate degrees in business (5%) or in science/engineering disciplines (4%). The majority of the administrators, 59%, were
men and 41% were women. The modal age category was 45-54 years (55%), and one-third (32%) were in the 35-44 age bracket.

The sample was almost evenly divided between administrators from general universities (41%) and liberal arts colleges (38%), with a further 7% from research universities. Fourteen percent were at Associate of Arts or other colleges. Well over half of the administrators (63%) worked at institutions with enrollments of between one thousand and five thousand students, 24% worked at colleges with fewer than one thousand students, and 13% at schools with over five thousand students. The institutions were located primarily in urban (54%) and suburban areas (32%) with 14% in rural settings. Regionally, 40% were in the Midwest, 30% in the Northeast, 11% each in the West and Mid-Atlantic, and 8% in Southern states.

Almost all of the administrators were raised Catholic (88%) and the same percentage reported their current religious affiliation as Catholic. Currently, 84% of administrators attend church at least weekly, with a substantial 39% of these reporting daily church attendance. Sixty-five percent said that religion was very important in their families while growing up, an additional 31% said it was important, and only 4% said it was not important.

In the faculty sample (N=472), 68% were men and 32% were women. Over one-third of the faculty were full professors (37%), another 39% were associate, and 22% were assistant professors. Just 2% of the respondents were instructors. Thirty percent were faculty in Humanities departments, 26% in the Social Sciences, 25% in Sciences/Engineering, and 19% in Religious Studies/Philosophy departments. The faculty respondents were relatively evenly divided in age: 34% were between 45 and 54 years, 28% were aged 55-64, and 24% were in the 35-44 age category.

Sixty-six percent of the faculty were employed at general (43%) or research universities (23%), one-third were at liberal arts colleges (32%), and just 3% at other colleges. The majority of faculty respondents (56%) came from institutions with an enrollment of between one thousand and five thousand students, and 28% came from schools that had between five thousand and ten thousand students. Less than one in ten faculty worked at schools that had either fewer than one thousand (7%), or more
than ten thousand (8%) students. Similar to the sample of administrators, the majority of faculty were at schools in urban (61%) or suburban areas (35%) and only 4% were in rural locations. Regionally, most faculty were employed at institutions in the Midwest (39%) or the Northeast (34%). Fifteen percent were in the West, 9% in Mid-Atlantic states, and only 2% in the South.

Almost two-thirds of the faculty respondents were raised as Catholic (60%), 27% were raised Protestant, 5% were raised Jewish, and less than one in ten (8%) had no religious upbringing. The vast majority (84%) said that religion was very important (47%) or important (37%) in their families while growing up and 16% said it was not important. Just over half of the faculty (53%) reported their current religious affiliation as Catholic, 17% as Protestant, 4% as Jewish, and 11% as other. Fifteen percent said they were atheist or agnostic. Over half (54%) of the faculty went to church at least once a week with 14% of these reporting daily church attendance. A further 6% went to church once or twice a month, 13% went several times a year, 18% went on special occasions only, and 9% said they never attend church.

Just less than half of the faculty reported attending Catholic elementary (46%), high school (42%), and college (42%), and 26% went to Catholic graduate schools. Over one-third of the faculty majored in the humanities as undergraduates, 28% in science/engineering, and 23% in the social sciences. Fourteen percent majored in religious studies/philosophy. The vast majority of faculty (86%) said that as students they had enrolled in one or more classes in religion, philosophy, church history, or theology.

Three-quarters of the administrators went to Catholic elementary (71%), high school (75%) and college (76%), and almost half (45%) went to Catholic graduate schools. Administrators were most likely to have majored in the humanities (49%). Among the remainder, relatively similar proportions majored in the social sciences (17%), science/engineering (14%), or religious studies/philosophy (16%). Nevertheless, almost all of the administrators (96%) reported that they had enrolled in at least one religious-oriented class while in college.
Faculty and administrators were given a closed-response question asking them to indicate how much importance (a lot, some, or none) they personally attach to specific aspects of the Catholic tradition. The vast majority of administrators said that they attach "a lot" of importance to social justice teaching (89%), communal ethics (78%), and the coupling of faith and reason (74%). Just under half said they personally attach a lot of importance to the Church’s liturgical rituals (49%), and to the fact that the Church is publicly engaged (47%), while a further 44% said they attached "some" importance to each of these aspects. On the other hand, it is noteworthy that only 12% of the administrators said that they personally attach a lot of importance to the papacy. An additional 55% attach some importance and a substantial 33% said they attach no importance to the papacy.

Faculty respondents were significantly more likely than the administrators to say that they attach "some" rather than "a lot" of importance to aspects of the tradition. Overall, however, the vast majority said that they personally attach either a lot or some importance to the Church’s social justice tradition (92%), the Church’s communal ethics (88%), the Church as publicly engaged (74%), and the coupling of faith and reason (71%). Over half of the faculty respondents said they attach a lot or some importance to the Church’s liturgical rituals (58%). Strikingly similar to the administrators, only 12% of faculty said they personally attach a lot of importance to the papacy. An additional 31% said they attach some importance to it, but a substantial 57% (compared to 33% of administrators) reported attaching no importance to the papacy. In sum, while there were some significant differences between administrators and faculty in the amount of personal importance they attached to aspects of the Catholic tradition, both groups were positively disposed toward the same aspects, and both were negatively disposed toward the papacy.

There were also some significant differences within the faculty sample. Faculty who themselves were undergraduates at Catholic colleges/universities were significantly more likely than graduates of non-Catholic schools to say that they attach importance to all
aspects of the Catholic tradition. Somewhat similar substantial majorities of Catholics (96%), Protestants (90%), and respondents who were either agnostic or atheist (87%) said they attach importance to Catholic social teaching, and to the Church’s emphasis on communal ethics (Catholics: 94%; Protestants: 88%; Agnostic/Atheists: 75%). Protestants, however, were significantly less likely than Catholic faculty to attach importance to the Church’s public engagement and to the coupling of faith and reason; and atheistic/agnostic faculty were significant less likely than both their Catholic and Protestant colleagues to attach importance to these two latter dimensions of the tradition. Irrespective of particular religious affiliation, frequency of church attendance was also positively associated with personal attachment to all aspects of the tradition. Finally, women were significantly less likely than men to say that they attach importance to the papacy.

Regression Analyses

A statistical procedure called regression analysis was used to identify which of the significant independent variables (e.g., gender, frequency of church attendance, whether or not the respondent was Catholic, and whether or not the respondent had graduated from a Catholic college), when examined in relation to one another, remained significant predictors of the variation observed in the dependent variable (e.g., the personal importance attached to the coupling of faith and reason). Regression statistical models control for overlap between independent variables and identify the additional amount each variable contributes, independent of the other variables, to explaining the variation in the dependent variable. Regression is thus a parsimonious way of sorting out the comparative explanatory power of discrete independent variables.4

The results from the regression analyses pointed to a nuanced rather than monolithic effect of the independent variables. Church attendance independent of religious affiliation was by far the strongest predictor (beta = .41) of importance attached to the coupling of faith and reason.5 Being Catholic (beta = .21) and graduating from a Catholic college (beta = .14) remained significant
predictors but they contributed far less to the overall amount of variance explained. Church attendance (beta = .28), and being Catholic (beta = .24) were the best predictors of importance attached to the Church's public engagement, each contributing approximately one-quarter of the variation in faculty attitudes. On the other hand, being Catholic was the best predictor of the valuing of the Church's liturgical rituals and of the papacy, although in both cases church attendance was also a significant predictor. All three religious variables (being Catholic, attending church, being a Catholic college graduate) were virtually equal in their accounting for faculty respondents' valuing of the Church's emphasis on communal ethics, whereas being Catholic (beta = .17), and a woman (beta = .14) were the best predictors of importance given to the Catholic social justice tradition.

In sum, the regression models confirmed that being Catholic, attending church, and graduating from a Catholic college combine as significant predictors of attachment to different aspects of the tradition. In addition, gender contributes to the amount of overall variance explained in each model, but is a significant predictor only in regard to attachment to the Church's social justice tradition and to its liturgical rituals. These variables' hierarchical importance in accounting for attachment varies, however, depending on which aspect of the tradition is specified. In some instances the most important piece of information is knowing whether the respondent attends church frequently, whereas in other instances, knowing whether the faculty member is a Catholic or is a Catholic college graduate is more salient to predicting the attitudes in question.

When combined, the independent variables accounted for a greater proportion of overall variance in some dimensions (e.g., coupling of faith and reason) than in others (e.g., communal ethics). This indicates that the independent variables included in the analyses (e.g., frequency of church attendance) are stronger predictors of faculty dispositions toward select aspects of the Catholic tradition than are others. To explain more of the variance in faculty attitudes toward, for example, the Church's emphasis on communal ethics, we would have to experiment with including additional and/or different variables in the model.
In an open-ended question, faculty and administrators were asked to state which aspects of the Catholic tradition they considered to have the most relevance for contemporary times. The written responses to this question paralleled the respondents’ assessment of the personal importance of different aspects of Catholicism. Over half of the administrators mentioned Catholic social teaching (53%), one-third mentioned the Church’s emphasis on morality (31%), and one-fifth mentioned Catholic spirituality (21%), theology (20%), and the coupling of faith and reason (19%). Somewhat smaller minorities highlighted the Church’s valuing of community (17%), the sanctity of the individual (16%), the Church’s global presence (12%), its openness to other faiths/traditions (10%), and the affirmation of such values as hope, love, and trust (10%). Only 8 percent mentioned Catholic education.

Similarly, 45% of the faculty respondents mentioned Catholic social teaching, and 31% mentioned the Church’s moral absolutes. Smaller minorities highlighted the Catholic valuing of community (18%), the sanctity of the individual (16%), faith and reason (14%), the Church’s global presence (14%), Catholic spirituality (13%), and theology (11%). Twelve percent of the faculty mentioned Catholic education. Fewer than one in ten mentioned Catholic symbols (9%), openness to other traditions (9%), the valuing of hope, love, and trust (7%), and the Church’s public presence (7%). Five percent of both faculty and administrators mentioned the papacy.

Theological/Doctrinal Reading

The questionnaire included a closed-response question asking administrators and faculty whether they had read some portions or the complete text of specific encyclicals issued during John Paul II’s papacy. As might be expected, a significantly greater proportion of administrators than faculty said that they had read the papal encyclicals. One noteworthy exception was We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah which was read by a similar minority of both administrators (40%) and faculty (39%). Ex Corde
Ecclesiae was read by 97% of administrators and by a substantial 72% of faculty. The majority of faculty also reported having read Fides et Ratio (61%), Veritatis Splendor (56%), and 44% said that they had read some or all of The Gospel of Life (44%). In contrast, over a half to three-quarters of administrators reported reading the latter three encyclicals.

Once again, there were intra-faculty differences. Faculty who were Catholic college graduates were significantly more likely than graduates from other colleges, and Catholics were more likely than non-Catholic faculty to have read all of the specified papal encyclicals. It is noteworthy that Protestant faculty were significantly more likely than agnostic/atheistic faculty to have read Veritatis Splendor and Fides et Ratio. On the other hand, relatively similar proportions of Protestant and agnostic/atheistic faculty reported having read Ex Corde Ecclesiae (59%, 53%), and The Gospel of Life (22%, 19%). Male faculty respondents were significantly more likely than women to have read Fides et Ratio and Veritatis Splendor. There was also a positive association between frequency of church attendance and the tendency to report having read the encyclicals.

Regression analyses were performed to identify the independent effects of these discrete variables on the likelihood of faculty to have read the papal encyclicals. The resulting models indicated that being Catholic and having attended a Catholic college were the best predictors of having read Fides et Ratio and Ex Corde Ecclesiae. Church attendance and graduating from a Catholic college were the strongest predictors of the likelihood to have read Veritatis Splendor and the Gospel of Life. None of the variables in the regression model for the likelihood of faculty having read We Remember were significant due to the relatively small amount of variation that existed in the faculty sample with respect to this encyclical.

A substantial minority of the faculty respondents also reported reading one or more religious magazines on a regular or occasional basis (46%). Specifically, 30% said that they read America, 22% read Commonweal, and 40% read other magazines such as Crisis, First Things, National Catholic Reporter, Christian Century, or their local diocesan paper. Almost all of the administrators (92%)
reported reading one or more religious magazine either regularly or occasionally. Seventy percent of administrators read *America*, 55% read *Commonweal*, and 85% reported reading other religious magazines.

In addition, 80% of administrators and 58% of faculty said that they had read some books in theology, religion, or spirituality in the year preceding the survey. Moreover, a substantial proportion of both groups (48% of administrators and 39% of faculty) said they had enrolled in a lecture course, seminar, or workshop on some aspect of theology, religion, or spirituality since finishing their graduate training. Among the recently read books were Karen Miller, *Searching for Darwin's God*; Garry Wills, *Saint Augustine*; George Marsden, *The Soul of the University*; Mary Gordon, *Joan of Arc*; Parker Palmer, *The Courage to Teach*; George Weigel, *Witness to Hope*; Sallie MacFague, *The Body of God*; Andrew Greeley, *The Catholic Imagination*; Donald Cozzens, *The Changing Face of the Priesthood*; John Haught, *Science and Religion*; John Polkinghorne, *Faith of a Physicist*; John Quinn, *Reforming the Papacy*. Other authors cited include Simone Weil, C.S. Lewis, Patricia Hampl, and Charles Curran.

*The Promotion of Catholic Identity in Campus Practices*

Two-thirds (67%) of the faculty respondents and 87% of administrators stated that they had talked about the issue of Catholic identity in a formally organized forum at their respective college campuses. The size (based on student enrollment) and type of educational institution (whether research university, comprehensive university, or liberal arts college) did not affect whether faculty or administrators had talked about the issue.

Faculty and administrators differed significantly in their attitudes toward the priority that Catholic colleges should give to discussion of identity. Seventy-five percent of administrators but only 32% of the faculty said that high priority should be given to discussing it. The majority of faculty (62%), nonetheless, agreed that some priority should be given to the issue. Similarly, 71% of administrators compared to 38% of faculty said that Catholic colleges should make a greater effort to highlight their Catholic
Faculty (37%) were more likely than administrators (22%) to say that “things are fine as they are.” Among the faculty, Catholic college graduates were significantly more likely than other graduates, currently affiliated Catholics were significantly more likely than non-Catholics, frequent church attendees were more likely than those who attended occasionally or never, and men were significantly more likely than women to favor both the high prioritization and a greater effort towards the highlighting of Catholic identity on campus. Regression analyses indicated that church attendance and being Catholic were the strongest predictors of faculty attitudes favoring the high prioritization and greater effort being made toward the highlighting of the institution’s Catholic identity, although being a Catholic college graduate also remained a significant independent predictor in both instances. In addition, gender remained independently significant in contributing to the amount of variance explained with respect to attitudes toward the institutional highlighting of identity.

There were also some significant differences among administrators on these questions. In a regression model, the size of institution emerged as a significant predictor of administrators’ attitudes toward the prioritization of campus discussion of Catholic identity. Administrators from larger colleges/universities were less disposed to this than were their counterparts from smaller institutions. On the other hand, the single best predictor of agreement with the view that colleges and universities should make a greater effort to highlight their identity was whether the administrators were themselves graduates of Catholic colleges.

In a closed-response question, respondents were asked whether in their opinion it was appropriate for Catholic colleges and universities to specifically highlight the Catholic tradition in various public and classroom settings. The vast majority of both faculty and administrators tended to agree with such practices. In each case, however, administrators were significantly more likely than faculty to endorse the highlighting of Catholic identity whether in public advertisements for faculty positions (91%, 76%), in letters to prospective students (91%, 84%), in theology classes (94%, 84%), with a core curriculum that includes readings in
Catholic philosophy, theology, and social teaching (86%, 73%), and in campus public discussions of controversial topics such as global population policies, or capital punishment (90%, 75%). A substantial deviation from this overall consensus, however, emerged in regard to non-theological classes. Here, only 41% of faculty compared to 76% of administrators agreed that it was appropriate for the Catholic tradition to be highlighted. It is indicative of the tensions surrounding the integration of Catholicism within the standard curriculum that comparatively fewer of both administrators and faculty agreed with this item relative to the highlighting of Catholicism in other forums.

As with the intra-faculty patterns observed thus far, a significantly greater proportion of respondents who were Catholic college graduates than those who graduated from other institutions favored the highlighting of the Catholic tradition in all of the specified forums. Frequency of church attendance was also positively associated with a favorable disposition toward the highlighting of Catholic identity in the various contexts. Agnostic/atheistic faculty were significantly less likely than Protestants, who, in turn were significantly less likely than Catholic faculty to agree with the highlighting of the Catholic tradition in theology classes, a core curriculum, and in non-theological classes. The only significant gender difference observed was that women were less likely than men to agree with the idea of highlighting Catholicism in a core curriculum.

Regression analyses showed that the independent effect of gender remained significant, but it was a weaker predictor than either being Catholic or church attendance in accounting for variation in attitudes toward a core curriculum in Catholic thought. Being Catholic and church attendance were similarly strong predictors of attitudes toward highlighting Catholicism in the other forums specified, although in the case of both theological and non-theological classes, church attendance was the slightly stronger predictor.

Catholic Institutional Identity and Academic Freedom

Faculty and administrators were asked a closed-response question about their perception of the difficulty involved in
maintaining academic freedom and encouraging awareness of Catholic
institutional identity. In response, almost three-quarters of the
faculty (72%) compared to less than half of the administrators
(45%) saw the task as "difficult" or "somewhat difficult." Administrators were more likely to see the balance as being not
difficult (55%) to maintain. Faculty who were at research or
general universities rather than at liberal arts colleges were more
negative in their assessments of the difficulty of maintaining both
academic freedom and Catholicism.

A follow-up, open-ended question gave the survey respondents
an opportunity to elaborate on their views of the issues involved
in maintaining the institution's dual identity as Catholic and
academic. One administrator who saw no difficulty in maintaining
both tasks stated:

The Catholic traditions themselves invite thought,
reflection, dialogue, and communal sharing. What better
setting can one find for this than a college?

Others similarly argued:

Catholic colleges must remain true to their founding
identity and mission. Otherwise academic freedom as a
basic tenet exists in a vacuum.

Truth in disciplines (academic) cannot contradict the
Ultimate Truth. True liberty can only be found in the
truth.

Both are values which must be maintained. I see no
conflict because I believe God's truth will always shine
faith. However, public perception is often the problem.

Some of the administrators, as the following two quotes indicate,
simply acknowledged the tension inherent in the balance:

A specific religious heritage, whatever it may be, implies
certain boundaries and, thus, limitations.
Faculty, as they take advantage of the academic freedom which is theirs, must be cognizant of the mission of the institution with which they have contracted.

Other administrators who saw some difficulty in balancing academic freedom with the institutions' Catholic identity tended to point to the importance of maintaining awareness of the diversity of faculty backgrounds and interests:

Maintaining an ecumenical outreach to faculty (not excluding them and their faith) makes for sensitive discussions.

It matters when curricular offerings are skewed in such a way as to accommodate religious beliefs as opposed to a broader liberal approach.

The stipulations of *Ex Corde* raise a number of serious concerns among faculty that are hard to respond to. Although I am confident that we will be able to maintain academic freedom, I find it difficult to convince faculty of this.

Some administrators, on the other hand, were critical of faculty and questioned their willingness to engage openly with the issues surrounding Catholic institutional identity:

The awareness of religious identity, in a non-judgmental frame, is more difficult than maintaining academic freedom.

The difficulties are primarily within the institution—reluctance on the part of the faculty to discuss openly—to remove the political correctness mentality that prevents many from speaking on religion.

There is a pervasive misunderstanding about the purpose and scope of *Ex Corde* which leads some faculty to think that academic freedom will be seriously threatened.
Notwithstanding the concerns voiced by administrators, many of the faculty, while seeing the task of balancing freedom and Catholicism as difficult, were nonetheless quite moderate in their evaluation of the tensions at issue. The following quotations from faculty respondents provide a good sense of faculty perceptions of the difficulties involved:

Awareness of religious identity is not the same as adherence to Catholic identity.

Every university is based on some set of principles that might at some time conflict with free discussion of issues: e.g., the commitment to democracy and equality, in some cases, might conflict with a commitment to excellence. What matters is how open the intellectual climate in the classroom is.

If religious identity is used to frame questions and issues that might be confronted I think it can foster excellence. If it prescribes answers, it would be a problem.

The institution needs to be what it claims to be and those hired ought to respect its identity. If faculty comport themselves with objectivity—treating all sides of an issue with fairness and not impugn the religious identity of the institution—I see no problem with the fact that the faculty member may not hold a position held by the institution.

The two are in tension. As long as the tension exists, there can be a Roman Catholic university. When the tension is resolved one way or the other, the institution becomes either a secular university or an ecclesiastical institution.

Faculty and administrators were also given a closed-response question asking them to evaluate whether the goal of affirming a college or university’s Catholic identity was different to affirming the identity of particular sub-groups (e.g., ethnic groups) on campus. Sixty percent of administrators compared to just under
half of the faculty respondents (48%) said that maintaining Catholic identity was "very different" from affirming the identity of various racial or ethnic sub-groups on campus. Faculty (36%) were more likely than administrators (27%) to see these goals as somewhat different, and similar proportions of both faculty (16%) and administrators (13%) saw the goals as being not different.

Some administrators saw the maintenance of Catholic identity as counter-cultural and thus more challenging, as indicated by one respondent who stated:

It is much easier to affirm identity for groups whose identity is championed by society; being "Catholic" is being counter-cultural—always a tough issue!

For the most part, however, administrators were likely to stress that Catholicism is an overarching identity for Catholic institutions, part of their defining essence, rather than an affirmation of sub-cultural diversity. The following three quotations illustrate this view:

Catholic speaks to the global mission more than any other single issue.

It goes to the very nature of the institution.

Because identity is the basis upon which such institutions were founded. Yet it is much more than heritage.

Other administrators pointed to the multi-layered nature of their institution’s identity, as in the following quotation:

We are a Catholic university, one perspective from which we look outward and inward. We are a Hispanic university (some would say Hispanic-serving), another perspective from which we look outward and inward. Religion is an aspect of culture, so too ethnicity. Much of our religious expression, the paradigm of our institutional spirituality, the content of our religious celebration and the intellectual discourse is Hispanic.
We are at greater pains to affirm the Franciscan part of our identity rather than the “Catholic.”

Faculty respondents also emphasized the overarching nature of Catholic institutional identity, as in the following three quotations:

A college’s identity as a Catholic college defines what it essentially is. It is not a matter of affirming something; it is explaining its essence and reason for being.

A search for, and maintenance of, diversity is not the same as an affirmation of an identity.

In a Catholic institution, the whole institution is committed to and guided by its goals and identification. Sub-groups are legitimate sub-units.

Many faculty respondents, however, drew attention to the challenge of translating identity into mission, and the need for recognition of the multiple strands contained within Catholicism and within an academic community:

To affirm the identity of the whole is obviously different from affirming the identity of a part. The problem is not identity, but the mission associated with the identity.

There are different flavors of Catholic identity. It is tough to accept this sometimes.

Because it affects everyone in “some way.” The “some way” is what needs to be worked out so as to include as many as possible.

A choice precludes other choices. Someone whose cultural identity includes religion (e.g., Islam) will not feel “affirmed” by discussion of Catholic identity.
Work Routines

The faculty questionnaire included several closed-response questions that aimed to establish the extent to which faculty respondents' presence at a Catholic college/university impacted on their work routines. One set of questions asked faculty whether being at a Catholic college/university has had any influence on the content of their teaching, research, and student advising. In response, 61% said it had an impact on their teaching, whereas 32% said it influenced their research. Just less than half (45%) said it influenced the advice they give to students. There were no significant gender differences among faculty in their responses to these questions. Catholic college graduates, currently affiliated Catholics, and frequent church attendees followed the trend for the sample as whole by their tendency to say that their teaching rather than research was influenced by being at a Catholic school. At the same time, however, faculty in each of these groups were significantly more likely than their respective counterparts to say that being in a Catholic environment influenced the content of their teaching, research, and advising. In the regression model, church attendance was the best predictor of teaching content being influenced by the faculty member's presence at a Catholic school although being a graduate of a Catholic college was also significant.

Faculty and administrators were also asked whether they have given much thought to incorporating Catholicism in their daily academic activities. In response, 68% of faculty reported having given either a lot (31%) or some (37%) thought to how they might draw on aspects of the Catholic tradition in their classroom teaching, whereas 94% of administrators reported having given a lot (62%) or some (32%) thought to introducing new initiatives on campus that would affirm their institution's Catholic identity. More noteworthy perhaps is the fact that 32% of faculty said that they had not given any thought to the idea. At the same time, of course, it is somewhat surprising that even 6% of administrators reported having given no thought to introducing new Catholic identity initiatives on campus in view of the impetus provided by the discussion of *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* in Catholic circles.
Nevertheless, 38% of faculty said that they envisage incorporating aspects of the Catholic tradition in future courses, research, or other academic activities in which they are engaged, and a further 14% said that there was a possibility that they might do this.

Among the faculty, Catholic college graduates (85%, compared to 56% of other graduates), currently affiliated Catholics (82%), and frequent church attendees (79%) were significantly more likely than their respective counterparts to say that they had given either some or a lot of thought to ways in which to incorporate Catholicism in their teaching. Equal proportions of Protestant (52%) and agnostic/atheistic (48%) faculty reported not having given any thought to including Catholic themes in their teaching. The regression model showed that being Catholic independently contributed 17% of the variance, being a Catholic college graduate independently contributed 21%, and church attendance contributed 22%.

Talking About the Catholic Intellectual Tradition

Faculty and administrators were asked a closed-response question ascertaining how comfortable they feel (or would feel) in talking about the Catholic intellectual tradition to students, students’ parents, departmental/campus colleagues, and colleagues at a secular college/university. Just over half of the faculty respondents said that they would feel “very comfortable” in talking about the tradition to students in their class (53%), to parents (50%), and to a departmental colleague (55%), and just under half would feel very comfortable in talking to a colleague at a secular university or college (47%). A substantial minority in each case said that they feel or would feel “somewhat” comfortable in these circumstances, and smaller, but still relatively substantial, minorities said they would not be comfortable in talking about the Catholic intellectual tradition in any of these various contexts (ranging from 17% for departmental colleagues to 25% for students’ parents). As we might anticipate, a greater proportion of administrators (ranging from two-thirds to three-quarters) reported feeling “very comfortable” in talking about the Catholic intellectual tradition to students (75%), students’ parents
(74%), and colleagues at their own institution (66%). It is noteworthy that somewhat fewer administrators (62%) said that they would be very comfortable in talking about the tradition to colleagues at a secular institution.

Not surprisingly, Catholic faculty were significantly more likely than non-Catholics, and frequent church attendees were significantly more likely than others, to indicate feeling comfortable in these situations. Similar proportions of Protestant and agnostic/atheistic faculty stated that they would not feel comfortable in talking about the Catholic tradition to students (37%, 38%), students' parents (43%, 44%), departmental colleagues (27%, 25%), or colleagues at a secular college or university (27%, 29%). Male faculty were significantly more likely than female faculty to say they would feel very comfortable in talking to students and parents about the tradition, but there were no apparent gender differences with respect to talking to colleagues.

The regression models investigating the independent effects of these variables showed that being a Catholic was the single best predictor of comfort in talking both to students and to students' parents, although being a Catholic college graduate and church attendance remained significant. By contrast, in the case of comfort in talking to colleagues (either at one's own or at a secular school), being a Catholic college graduate was the best predictor in the models, followed by being Catholic. It is noteworthy, however, that across the four models, there is a greater amount of explained variance in regard to talking to students and parents than in talking to colleagues.

In response to an open-ended question, faculty and administrators listed the themes they would emphasize in talking about the Catholic intellectual tradition to colleagues at a secular university. Many of the respondents highlighted Catholic social thought, the compatibility of faith and reason, Catholic thought as the core of philosophy and theology, the valuing of human dignity, the perception of everything as sacred or sacramental, and ethics as important questions. The space for religious tolerance in the tradition and, as one faculty respondent stated, "the ability to accept difference" were also noted. Similarly, others variously mentioned the "plurality of traditions" and freedom within the
tradition, and the openness of the tradition to "the deepest questions." One administrator, a member of a Protestant denomination, spoke about what he identified as the Catholic tradition's recognition of the importance of balancing individual and community imperatives. He phrased this as:

Its position as one of the great wisdom traditions that invites one to balance commitment to the individual with the needs of the common good and equally the struggle to develop conscience and freedom in some kind of healthy balance.

Perceptions of Working at a Catholic College or University

The questionnaire used open-ended questions to ask faculty and administrators what they particularly like about being at a Catholic college/university, and what, if anything, they particularly dislike about being at a Catholic college/university and that they think might be different if they were employed at a secular college/university. Fourteen percent of faculty did not complete the question asking what they like about being at a Catholic college/university. Among those who provided written responses (N=405), a relatively broad range of characteristics were mentioned. It was possible, however, to categorize the discrete points into a smaller number of general themes.

The most frequently cited characteristic was that of freedom of discourse and the related freedom of being able to integrate religious beliefs as part of their faculty routine (29%). Other frequently cited themes revolved around the respondents' appreciation of the school's emphasis on social, ethical, and spiritual values (22%), and the sense of community (22%). Smaller proportions of faculty said they liked the school's emphasis on a philosophical core (9%), and the well-behaved and respectful students (4%). A further 4% offered miscellaneous reasons, ranging from the school's discouragement of sexual harassment to the physical environment of the campus. One in ten of the faculty respondents (10%) said they did not like anything about being at a Catholic institution.
The following quotations reflect the various ways in which faculty expressed their valuing of the freedom to talk openly and seriously about religious issues:

There is no question, no area of thought that cannot be engaged in class, in faculty seminars, etc.

The open public discussion of religious and ethical concerns.

One is free to speak on all issues and express one's views—if the Church bishops become stricter on Church positions it might raise some problems, i.e., I do not accept the current position on women in the Church, or birth control, for example, and state both.

I like the public affirmation/support for interrelating faith and reason, the presumed compatibility of rigorous scholarship/intellectual activity and a faith. I also appreciate the sense that values do/should undergird our behavior/beliefs as individuals and as a community.

I can speak about God any time I want without fear of reprisal.

I am not Catholic but am an active Lutheran. I like being able to be open about being a person of faith. I also like being in an environment where my beliefs and traditions are constantly juxtaposed to a different tradition.

The intellectual life is not purely speculative but rather also practical in orientation. The "True" and the "Good" go together.

Validates my Catholic identity. Can explore Catholic social teaching and its application without negative sanctions. Can more comfortably explore ethical/moral issues in a social scientific context.
The awareness of one’s services through teaching as living the mission.

I am critically committed to this tradition and appreciate the freedom to teach within this context.

As indicated at the beginning of this section, other faculty respondents (22%) pointed explicitly to ethical, social, and spiritual values in the Catholic tradition and the personal and communal realization of these values on campus. As exemplified by the following, the values highlighted included an emphasis on service, social justice, and a focus on the person as a synthesized whole.

The shared commitment to respect the human person as made in the image and likeness of God.

The profound insight that there are ethical and spiritual dimensions intrinsic to academia; in secular institutions their presence is unevenly obscured, or worse, denied.

There really are lots of students who are committed (and comfortable in their commitment) to careers involving service/help to others even if not well paid.

I am not a Catholic but I find the emphasis on spiritual values refreshing.

My own spiritual development has taken off since I’ve been here. I am more satisfied with my quality of life (although I don’t make as much money now as I once did). It’s great to be around people who’re concerned about their spiritual journeys.

The sense of community and working within a mission emphasizing the total person and service to others.

As in the latter quote, many additional faculty (22%) similarly stressed their valuing of collegiality, shared mission, and the
strong, overarching sense of community they experience at their college/university:

Atmosphere of community often not found in secular institutions.

The friendship of people who speak the same language about beautiful things.

A close family atmosphere with an openness to diversity.

The community—brings in all, not just Catholics, to share in various aspects of college—celebrations, service, academics, etc.

Fourteen percent of administrators did not respond to the open-ended question asking what they like about being at a Catholic college/university. Among those who completed the question (N=156), there was a relatively strong consensus with respect to the aspects mentioned. A substantial proportion of administrators (45%) emphasized their valuing of the freedom to talk about religious and other issues and to integrate this dialogue as part of their work. A further 30% of administrators said they liked the emphasis on values and ethics, 13% said they liked the clear sense of mission and tradition at their college/university, and 12% cited the sense of community.

The following illustrative quotes provide a sense of the administrators’ responses:

The learning and teaching have added values in the context of a tradition that expects students to make the world a better place.

We focus on mission. We live out our values.

Opportunity to implement Catholic values in all decision-making.
Being at home—freedom to raise “my issues”—justice, equality, personal dignity of all; rights and responsibility.

The mission corresponds with my personal convictions.

The open-ended question asking administrators what they dislike about being at a Catholic college/university was unanswered by 13% of the sample, and a substantial 44% of administrators said there was nothing they disliked about being at a Catholic college/university. Of the remainder who mentioned a negative aspect (N=77), one-third, 35%, cited pressures from conservative Catholics and/or from the Church hierarchy with regard to the interpretation of Catholic orthodoxy. The following two quotations exemplify this frustration:

Dealing with the Religious Right in the Church.

Need for caution regarding engagement of speakers and policies, practices that might arouse criticism from the far right and bring about damage to the college.

A further 12% of administrators said that they disliked the lack of openness in discussing doctrinal and other issues, and an additional 9% explicitly cited having to worry about the implementation of *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*. Administrators also said that they disliked the public attacks on and the external image of Catholicism (9%), a lack of financial resources (8%), the Church’s conservatism on issues of gender and sexuality (5%), anti-Catholicism among their colleagues (5%), parochialism (4%) and moral hypocrisy (4%). Among the many miscellaneous aspects identified as sources of dislike (9%), administrators commented on the “tension of being a Catholic college for women”; the tendency to be parochial; the “higher level of accountability for behavior,” and internal political pressures such as “inserting unqualified religious into administrative positions.”

Thirteen percent of the faculty did not answer the question asking what they dislike about being at a Catholic college. Among those who provided written responses (N=409), 77% mentioned
some negative aspect, and 23% said there was nothing that they disliked about being at a Catholic college/university. The characteristics identified as being disliked were wide-ranging in scope. Among the negative aspects, however, the two modal categories were faculty perceptions that the administration was too hierarchical, authoritarian, or dictatorial (20%), and low salaries and benefits (14%).

Smaller minorities said they disliked the socio-moral conservatism of the campus atmosphere, including the attitude toward women, and gays and lesbians (10%); the preoccupation with the question of Catholic identity (10%); homogeneity of the students (9%); constraints on freedom of speech and inquiry (7%); lack of intellectual excellence or curiosity (7%); various forms of hypocrisy between rhetoric and practices on campus (7%); and the dominance of dogmatic Catholics (7%). Two percent of the faculty said they disliked the lack of respect shown toward their non-Catholic faith, whereas others cited the core requirements in philosophy (2%), anti-Catholic colleagues (2%), and the public image of Catholicism (2%).

The following quotations provide a sense of the diversity of faculty views on what they dislike about being at a Catholic college/university:

The stifling of dissent—the right to disagree. The way the structure and spirit of the Church in its secrecy, hierarchy and homosocial, misogynistic cronyism is reproduced in the university structure.

Students come from an intellectually rigid and authoritarian educational tradition that leaves them passive in the learning process.

They still have some major blind spots about women. Sometimes their culture of authority seems to be a hindrance to decision-making.

Fear of discussing abortion, homosexuality, theology in general; current reluctance to call for women in the priesthood
Its “family shop” obsession with Catholic traditions.

*Ex Corde Ecclesiae* makes me nervous.

I dislike the continuous debate about Catholic identity that probably would not take place at a secular institution except as an academic discussion.

Roman army type of governance, instead of WASP-type parliamentary governance.

The assumption by certain clergy that they own the higher ground on issues of deep concern to all.

**Hiring and Tenuring**

Some further significant sources of variation emerged between faculty and administrators in their attitudes toward faculty hiring and tenuring policies. The majority of faculty respondents indicated their opposition to policies that give greater weight to the apparent Catholicism of individual job candidates. In response to the question “Do you think the Catholicism of a candidate for a job at a Catholic college/university is a valid criterion to use in evaluating candidates for non-theological faculty position?” 71% of faculty said no, 24% said yes, and 5% were undecided. Similarly, in response to two further closed-response questions, a substantial majority of faculty respondents said that there should not be an official commitment to hiring (69%) or tenuring (77%) faculty who consider themselves active Catholics. At the same time, the faculty respondents were evenly divided as to whether, in deciding among two “equally well qualified” candidates for a job in a non-theological discipline at a Catholic college/university, the person who appeared to be more committed to the Catholic tradition, irrespective of his or her own religious upbringing and affiliation, should get the job: 47% agreed, 40% disagreed, and 13% were undecided.

Women faculty were significantly less likely than men to agree
that the Catholicism of a job candidate was a valid criterion to use in evaluating faculty for non-theological disciplines, and to agree that Catholic candidates should be given preference over others in hiring and tenuring decisions. Significantly greater proportions of Catholic college graduates and of frequent church attendees agreed with employment and promotion policies that would give recognition to Catholicism. Protestant and agnostic/atheistic faculty shared relatively similar views on employment and promotion policies. By substantial margins, both groups were significantly less likely than their Catholic colleagues to endorse as official policy the hiring or tenuring of Catholic candidates. Protestant faculty, however, were significantly more likely than those who were agnostic/atheist to favor the more Catholic-committed candidate in getting an academic position.

It emerged from the regression models that being a Catholic was the strongest predictor of the acceptance of Catholicism as a valid criterion in evaluating job candidates, and of a positive attitude toward an official commitment to hiring Catholic faculty. Church attendance and graduating from a Catholic college, although significant, were less powerful in accounting for variation in faculty attitudes on these questions. Church attendance, on the other hand, was the single best predictor of attitudes favoring the more Catholic-committed job candidate, and in tandem with whether the respondent was a Catholic, also predicted attitudes toward an official commitment to tenuring Catholic faculty.

Many of the reasons offered by faculty in support of the differentiated positions expressed on the issue of recognition for Catholic candidates pointed to the complexity of measuring commitment to Catholicism and incorporating such measures of "qualification" in a fair and reasonable manner. Faculty who favored such policies tended to view commitment to Catholicism as a predictor of subsequent commitment to serving the overall mission of the college/university. As one person in favor said:

I would take the greater commitment to be indicative of commitment to the school’s mission statement.
Another faculty respondent who agreed elaborated that:

One teaches students not merely in the classroom but also by one’s example both on campus and off campus. It also helps in teaching students about living their faith.

Some other faculty respondents took a sharper position intimating that unless both candidates are equally committed to the tradition, then, in fact, “they are not equally qualified.”

For still other respondents, what was critical was commitment as opposed to affiliation. In this view:

No case has two “equally well qualified” candidates. Commitment to (and understanding of) the tradition rather than personal affiliation is the key in my mind.

None are ever equally well-qualified. I think we need a critical mass of Catholic faculty, not disaffected Catholics.

That’s a tough one! It would also be absurd if the University was Catholic in name only and none of its faculty were Catholic (or even only a few).

Consider the logic: if a Catholic school has no preference for Catholics, it will with time cease to have Catholic character and will retain only a Catholic name (e.g., Georgetown). Jewish schools prefer Jews, evangelical schools prefer evangelicals etc., and that makes sense. Otherwise you destroy diversity in society and education.

[It] depends on what aspect of “the Catholic tradition” is in question—service, yes, obedience to outmoded ideals, no.

By contrast with faculty respondents’ general reservations about giving preference to Catholic candidates, administrators were more likely to endorse such measures. Forty-four percent of administrators (compared to 24% of faculty) said that a candidate’s Catholicism was a valid criterion to use in evaluating a job
candidate for a non-theological position. But underscoring the complexity of hiring decisions in general, one administrator added:

Not the only one, however. Candidates must be excellent and Catholic. We seek out candidates of other faiths too (to be Catholic).

Forty-one percent of administrators said that there should be an official commitment to hiring faculty who are active Catholics, and fewer (26%) agreed that such a commitment should also hold in tenure decisions. It is noteworthy that significantly fewer female than male administrators agreed that there should be an official commitment to hiring (12%, 29%) and tenuring (7%, 19%) faculty who are active Catholics. Once again, as with faculty concerns about the measurement of Catholic commitment, administrators reiterated the complexity involved in evaluating Catholic commitment. One female administrator, for example, added:

This is very difficult to determine! I've had some "active" Catholics during an interview who were not "Catholic" on campus.

Another administrator pointed out that "Their willingness to engage [the tradition] and not disparage it is important."

Nevertheless, three-quarters of the administrators (74%), compared to 47% of faculty, said that among equally well qualified candidates, the more Catholic-committed person should have preference for a faculty position in a non-theological department. It was clear, however, that many of these administrators were more concerned with the "fit" of prospective faculty with their institution's mission than with a candidate's "Catholicism" per se. The following quotations illustrate the reasoning of the administrators on this question:

But the Catholicism is less of an issue than the "fit" with the mission of the institution. I would want someone who could support the mission.
I would hire the person who understands and seems most comfortable with our mission statement.

Just as we take students who "fit" in our campuses, so there are also some faculty who are a better "fit." Sometimes this is related to a faith commitment—more often than not. However, faculty who are not Catholic but have a faith commitment are incredibly important to us.

It truly depends on the position and the person. On the one hand, I do think it's important for there to be Catholics at a Catholic college. The way this question is framed, hiring a Catholic sounds like an affirmative action category. And I don't quite think of it this way.

Another administrator expounded on why it was important for Catholic-committed faculty to be hired especially for non-theological departments. He stated:

The Catholic intellectual tradition is not confined to, or even primarily centered on theology. The university should contribute to the contemporary development of that tradition, as well as expose students to it. The university needs to be a place where the Church can do some important thinking on all sorts of issues, not just—or even especially—theology.

In sum, answers to closed-response questions indicated that administrators were significantly more likely than the faculty to favor pro-Catholic employment policies. Nevertheless, the majority of both faculty and administrators disagreed with the view that the Catholicism of a job candidate was a valid criterion to use in evaluating job candidates for faculty positions in non-theological departments, and disapproved of an official commitment to hiring and tenuring faculty who are active Catholics. On the other hand, 74% of administrators and just less than half of the faculty (47%) agreed that in deciding between two "equally well
qualified" candidates, the more-committed Catholic should get the job. The ambiguities perceived, however, by both faculty and administrators in making clear-cut decisions in this domain were well illustrated in the written responses elaborating on their reasoning about the issue.

Conclusion

This essay has presented research findings on a wide array of questions pertinent to understanding administrators' and faculty members' dispositions toward the institutionalization of Catholic identity in higher education. Like all studies, this study is limited by sample size, non-response rates, and the questions asked. The survey results, nonetheless, provide a reliable overview of the study respondents' involvement in, and attachment to, the Catholic tradition, and of their attitudes toward the various ways in which Catholic identity might be given practical visibility in Catholic colleges and universities. Overall, the findings point to relatively high levels of commitment to the Catholic tradition, notwithstanding substantive differences between administrators and faculty, and differences within both groups. The diverse patterns observed in the data point to the complex and multifaceted interests and considerations that have to be borne in mind in charting the way forward for Catholic higher education in America.

There are three important sets of findings from this survey. First, the results underscore that administrators and faculty have different levels of involvement in the Catholic tradition. This is not surprising in view of the fact that the faculty respondents come from diverse religious traditions—while the majority are Catholic (53%), 17% are Protestant, 4% Jewish, 11% identify as other, and 15% are agnostic or atheist. By contrast, almost all of the administrators are Catholic (88%), and most of them reported daily or weekly Mass attendance, thus highlighting their more intimate connection with the tradition. Administrators were significantly more likely than faculty to say that they give a lot of importance to emphases in the Catholic tradition on the coupling of faith and reason, social justice, liturgical rituals, and communal
ethics, and were more likely to have read such papal encyclicals as *Fides et Ratio*, the *Gospel of Life*, and *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*. It is noteworthy, however, that despite these different levels of involvement, administrators do not appear to accentuate the importance of the papacy: as documented, only 12% of respondents in each group said they attach a lot of importance to the papacy. This suggests, perhaps, that both faculty and administrators share a more local than Roman view of the structure and content of Catholicism.

The second set of findings points to the fact that faculty and administrators, because of their different structural locations within the university, bring a different prioritization of interests to academic life. The faculty and administrators in this survey clearly recognize the importance of, and show a commitment to, the pursuit of academic inquiry. Administrators, however, have an almost equally significant mindfulness of their Catholic heritage. Their approach to various policies and campus initiatives, therefore, is necessarily going to be different to, and in some instances no doubt, a source of tension in their relations with, faculty. We saw, for example, that whereas 75% of administrators said that Catholic colleges and universities should give high priority to discussing the question of religious identity, only 32% of faculty agreed with this. Similarly, over three-quarters of the administrators (76%) but only 41% of faculty agreed that it was appropriate for the Catholic tradition to be highlighted in non-theological classes. In general, administrators were significantly more likely than faculty to see the task of maintaining academic freedom and highlighting Catholic identity as being compatible: 45% of administrators compared to 72% of faculty said that it would be difficult to maintain both imperatives.

The third important finding is that faculty who teach at Catholic colleges and universities do not comprise a homogeneous group. One significant source of attitudinal differentiation in this study was gender. Women faculty showed evidence of significantly less involvement in some aspects of the Catholic tradition. They were more likely than their male colleagues to attach no importance to the papacy, and less likely than male faculty to have read *Fides et Ratio* and *Veritatis Splendor*. They also had
comparatively greater reservations toward institutional policies that would prioritize discussion of Catholic identity, or accentuate the Catholic content of the non-theological curriculum. Women faculty were also more likely than their male colleagues to oppose policies that would recognize a candidate's Catholicism as a criterion in faculty employment and promotion.

Further research would be necessary to understand the reasons for women's somewhat greater distance from the Catholic tradition and the institutionalization of Catholic identity. It may be, however, that the disaffection evident among women in general with respect to Vatican teaching on various women's issues (e.g., the ban on women's ordination) accentuates the concerns of women faculty over efforts to affirm Catholic identity in higher education. It is also important to bear in mind that women administrators were more likely than their male counterparts to oppose an official commitment to hiring and tenuring Catholic faculty.

Independent of gender, indicators of religious commitment systematically differentiated faculty views. As documented throughout the essay, faculty who were Catholic as opposed to non-Catholic, who graduated from a Catholic college, and who attended church frequently were significantly more likely than their respective counterparts to attach greater importance to the Catholic tradition, to feel more comfortable in talking about it, and to endorse practices and policy initiatives that give greater visibility to the Catholicism of their institutions.

Analyses were conducted to ascertain which of these variables, when the overlap between them was taken into account, remained significant in adding to the amount of variance explained. The statistical models presented in the essay highlighted that in some circumstances the most powerful predictor of faculty attitudes was whether or not the respondent was a Catholic. This was the case, for example, in regard to attachment to the Church's liturgical rituals and to the papacy, having read Ex Corde Ecclesiae, comfort in talking about Catholicism to students and to their parents, the hiring of Catholic faculty, and incorporating Catholicism into campus discussion of controversial topics.

In many other instances, however, church attendance contributed significantly more than either religious affiliation or
whether the faculty member was a Catholic college graduate, to explaining the variance in the dependent variable. This pattern emerged with respect to the personal importance attached to the coupling of faith and reason, and the Church as publicly engaged; the tendency to report having included Catholic themes in classroom teaching; having read *Veritatis Splendor*; attitudes toward the prioritization and greater effort to highlight Catholic identity on campus; and agreement that Catholicism was a valid criterion in evaluating job candidates. These findings demonstrate that it is not Catholicism per se, but commitment to a religious tradition (as indicated by frequent church attendance) that can be more salient in inculcating a positive disposition toward the integration of Catholic institutional identity in colleges and universities. In still other domains, (e.g., the personal importance given to the Church’s emphasis on communal ethics), being a Catholic, attending church frequently (irrespective of religious affiliation), and being a Catholic college graduate were each independently significant in contributing virtually similar amounts to the overall variance. The regression results thus point to the importance of recognizing that different (but interrelated) measures of religious commitment can differentially impact attitudes towards relatively similar aspects of the Catholic tradition and toward different dimensions of the institutional identity of Catholic colleges and universities.

Maintaining the Catholic identity of Catholic colleges and universities presents many challenges. Some of the written responses to the open-ended questions pointed to the diverse internal and external pressures that impact on a Catholic college/university precisely because of its dual commitment to Catholicism and to education. On the other hand, many administrators and faculty spoke eloquently about what they saw as the possibilities for enriching intellectual inquiry within the context of a Catholic college. There also appears to be enough goodwill on the part of many of those involved in Catholic higher education to explore the questions at issue. As we saw in this survey, the vast majority of faculty like being at a Catholic college/university and, in particular, appreciate the freedom, holistic values, and sense of community that it provides. Finally, there is also a shared minimal knowledge of the tradition from which administrators
and faculty, Catholic and non-Catholic alike, can begin to talk about their diverse interpretations of how Catholic identity and academic experiences might be integrated. The goal should be to find innovative ways by which themes from a broad and pluralistic Catholic tradition might be incorporated into non-theological (and theological) curriculum offerings and into the communal life of the college/university. Shared recognition of a tradition does not necessarily translate into common ground; it does, however, offer the possibility for discourse and the creation of enriched communal initiatives and experiences.

Notes

1. See, for example, the contributions in America by Thomas J. Reese (December 4, 1999), Richard P. McBrien (February 12, 2000), and William J. Watson (May 22, 1999); in Commonweal, the special supplement (April 9, 1999), and articles on Catholic identity (April 21, 2000); and Catholic Higher Education: Practice and Promise (ACCU, Occasional Papers on Catholic Higher Education, August 1995).

2. There are some exceptions, such as Kathleen Mahoney, John Schmalzbauer, and James Youniss, Revitalizing Religion in the Academy: Summary of the Evaluation of Lilly Endowment's Initiative on Religion and Higher Education (Chestnut Hill, Mass., November 2000); and Charles Zech's and Judith Dwyer's study of faculty identification with the Catholic mission of their institutions, reported by Charles Zech, "The Faculty and Catholic Institutional Identity." America, May 22, 1999.

3. Significance as used here and throughout the research essay refers to statistical significance. It is based on statistical analyses comparing two or more sub-groups in the sample using the Chi-square test of significance. The probability of the observed difference(s) being due to chance is set at, or less than, one in twenty ($p < .05$). This is the standard level of statistical significance used in social science research.

4. Regression analyses require linear or interval level variables and thus if categorical variables are included in the model they must be transformed into dichotomous variables, such as for sex (female = 1, male = 0); or religion (Catholic = 1, non-Catholic = 0).

5. The beta score is the coefficient of determination (or strength of association) of an independent variable on the dependent variable. Beta scores can range from -1 to +1.
6. The purpose of regression, however, is not to construct models that achieve the highest possible amount of explained variance using arbitrarily chosen variables, but to examine the effects of theoretically relevant variables on the dependent variable and how much these substantive variables contribute to the overall explained variance.