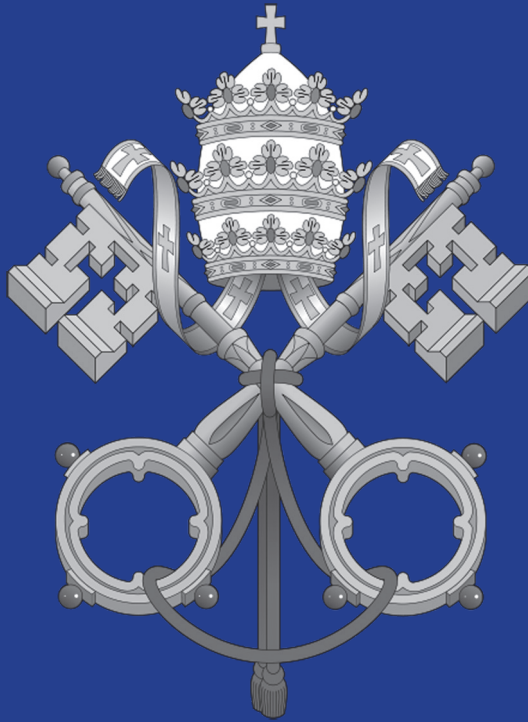


# The Enduring Nature of the Catholic University

Commemorating the Anniversary of Pope Benedict XVI's  
Address to Catholic Educators on April 17, 2008



A collection of essays on the renewal of Catholic higher education by  
Most Rev. David Ricken, Msgr. Stuart Swetland, Rev. J. Augustine DiNoia,  
Rev. Joseph Koterski, Rev. David O'Connell, and Dr. John Hittinger  
with a foreword by The Hon. Kenneth Whitehead

# The Enduring Nature of the Catholic University



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Dedicated to His Holiness, Pope Benedict XVI  
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# Catholic Higher Education in the United States: A Modern Retrospective

*Very Rev. David M. O'Connell, C.M.*

One year ago (April 17, 2008), Pope Benedict XVI arrived on the campus of The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., to deliver a much anticipated address to Catholic college and university presidents and diocesan education administrators. As president of The Catholic University of America, I was honored to be his host that day.

Although some observers predicted a “pontifical spanking” for those gathered, the Holy Father’s speech was anything but that. In carefully planned and beautifully delivered remarks, Pope Benedict XVI both praised and encouraged Catholic educators for their great service to the Church in our country. At the same time, he presented a vision of and for Catholic education that was clear and compelling:

Education is integral to the mission of the Church to proclaim the Good News. First and foremost every Catholic educational institution is a place to encounter the living God who in Jesus Christ reveals his transforming love and truth (cf. *Spe Salvi*, 4). This relationship elicits a desire to grow in the knowledge and understanding of Christ and his teaching. In this way those who meet him are drawn by the very power of the Gospel to lead a new life characterized by all that is beautiful, good, and true; a life of Christian witness nurtured and strengthened within the community of our Lord’s disciples, the Church.<sup>1</sup>

With respect to the meaning of Catholic identity, the pontiff observed:

Clearly, then, Catholic identity is not dependent upon statistics. Neither can it be equated simply with orthodoxy of course content. It demands and inspires much more: namely that each and every aspect of your learning communities reverberates within the ecclesial life of faith. Only in faith can truth become incarnate and reason truly human, capable of directing the will along the path of freedom (cf. *Spe Salvi*, 23). In this way our institutions make a vital contribution to the mission of the Church and truly serve society. They become places in which God’s active presence in human affairs is recognized and in which every young person discovers the joy of entering into Christ’s “being for others” (cf. *ibid.*, 28).<sup>2</sup>

He also presented an insightful and instructive understanding of academic freedom, born from his own experience as a university professor and, now, as Chief Shepherd and Teacher in the Church:

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1. Pope Benedict XVI, “Address to Catholic Educators at The Catholic University of America,” April 17, 2008. He cites his encyclical *Spe Salvi*, November 30, 2007 (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2007).

2. *Ibid.*

In regard to faculty members at Catholic colleges and universities, I wish to reaffirm the great value of academic freedom. In virtue of this freedom you are called to search for the truth wherever careful analysis of evidence leads you. Yet it is also the case that any appeal to the principle of academic freedom in order to justify positions that contradict the faith and the teaching of the Church would obstruct or even betray the university's identity and mission; a mission at the heart of the Church's *munus docendi* and not somehow autonomous or independent of it.<sup>3</sup>

His address was well-received and deeply appreciated. As I sat there, listening to Pope Benedict, I could not help but reflect how far Catholic higher education has come in this country in the past more than half-century.

### **Doubting the Catholic university**

In 1955, Monsignor John Tracy Ellis, professor of Church history at The Catholic University of America, wrote a scathing criticism of the quality of American Catholic intellectual life in a paper that he delivered at the annual meeting of the Catholic Commission on Intellectual and Cultural Affairs in St. Louis. In his presentation, later published in the Fordham University journal *Thought*, Ellis gave voice to the belief noted in a popular text of his day on American institutions that

... in no western society is the intellectual prestige of Catholicism lower than in the country where, in such respects as wealth, numbers, and strength of organization, it is so powerful.<sup>4</sup>

Ellis went on to observe that:

No well-informed American Catholic in this country will attempt to challenge that statement. Admittedly, the weakest aspect of the Church in this country lies in its failure to produce national leaders and to exercise commanding influence in intellectual circles, and this at a time when the numbers of Catholics in the United States... and their material resources are incomparably superior to those of any other branch of the universal Church.<sup>5</sup>

Ellis presented these ideas over fifty years ago. If his stinging indictment were considered to be true at that time or up to that time, we should wonder why. Much of the fault, I believe, lay not so much in a fear that Catholic scholars demonstrated for Church authorities as some have argued but, rather, in a fear of the judgments of their secular academic counterparts. The lack of courage to present the teachings of the Church with conviction in their inherent truth within a broader scholarly community evidenced a not-too-subtle belief among our own Catholic scholars that religious faith and scholarly activity based upon it was an embarrassment

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3. *Ibid.*

4. D. W. Brogan, *USA: An Outline of the Country, Its People and Institutions* (London, 1941), p.65, in John Tracy Ellis, "American Catholics and the Intellectual Life," *Thought* 30 (1955), p.353 (hereinafter referred to as "Ellis").

5. Ellis, p.353.

that relegated Catholic intellectuals to a second-class status. Faith, after all, was considered in the secular arena to be the true enemy of reason in an “enlightened” intellectual world.

There was, no one can honestly doubt, an anti-Catholic prejudice at work in the United States from the time of its foundation and a genuine hostility “to all things Catholic,” as Monsignor Ellis noted.<sup>6</sup> Even Harvard professor Arthur M. Schlesinger, Sr., once labeled “bias against your Church as the most persistent prejudice in the history of the American people.”<sup>7</sup> For that reason, among others, much of the energy within the American Catholic community in general and the American Catholic professorate in particular during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries was devoted to “apologetics” rather than pure scholarly endeavor. The audience to which they made their appeals was largely an immigrant population that did not place primary value on Catholic intellectual advancement let alone creating great Catholic institutions of higher learning. One needs look no further than the history of The Catholic University of America to verify that assertion.<sup>8</sup>

The concept of a national Catholic research university was hotly debated within the American hierarchy itself. And, yet, although visible efforts were made by many within the Catholic academy to promote Catholic higher education as their existing colleges expanded into universities, as late as 1938 the challenge was presented to the Church and Catholic scholars that “research cannot be the primary object of a Catholic graduate school because it is at war with the whole Catholic life of the mind.”<sup>9</sup> American Catholic “universities” were popularly viewed as concerned not so much with the penetration of truth as they were with passing on a given tradition of truth, the Catholic tradition, in which little in the way of addition, alteration, or development was deemed necessary.<sup>10</sup> It was an unfortunate perception that higher education within the American Catholic academic community was an “either/or” proposition rather than “both/and.”

When Ellis authored his now famous essay, he had no idea that a Vatican Council would soon be convened to address the situation of the Church in the modern world. The pope who would call for that council was still the cardinal archbishop of Venice. When he assumed the papacy in the fall of 1958 and a year later announced the 21<sup>st</sup> ecumenical council, Pope John XXIII would usher in a new era in the history of the Catholic Church and with it, a new urgency to reform its structures and institutions throughout the world. Catholic higher education was not spared the effects of this “*aggiornamento*.”

In his apostolic constitution *Humanae salutis* convening the Council, Pope John XXIII wrote that the Church at that moment was:

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6. *Ibid.*, p.354.

7. *Ibid.*, p.353.

8. See: C. Joseph Nuesse, *The Catholic University of America: A Centennial History* (Washington: CUA Press, 1990); see also: Margaret Mary Reher, “The Catholic University and Americanism: 1880-1900” in Margaret Mary Reher, *Catholic Intellectual Life in America: A History of Persons and Movements* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, Inc., 1989).

9. George Bull, “The Function of the Catholic Graduate School,” *Thought* 13 (1938), p. 378.

10. Andrew M. Greeley, *From Backwater to Mainstream: A Profile of Catholic Higher Education*, Carnegie Commission Studies (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1969), p.11.

...witnessing a crisis under way within society. While humanity is on the edge of a new era, tasks of immense gravity and amplitude await the Church, as in its most tragic periods of history. It is a question in fact of bringing the modern world into contact with the vivifying and perennial energies of the gospel, a world which exalts itself with its conquests in the technical and scientific fields, but which brings also the consequences of a temporal order which some have wished to reorganize excluding God. This is why modern society is earmarked by a great material progress to which there is no corresponding advance in the moral field.<sup>11</sup>

The Holy Father addressed the hierarchy gathered in Council on October 11, 1962, stating that “the greatest concern of the Ecumenical Council is this: that the sacred deposit of Christian doctrine should be guarded and taught more efficaciously.”<sup>12</sup> Notice the phrase “guarded and taught!”

That concern, as it related to Catholic institutions of higher learning, had been voiced some thirty-one years earlier by Pope Pius XI in his apostolic constitution *Deus Scientiarum Dominus* where he wrote that the Church’s chief concern in all of Catholic education had always been the correct *teaching* of doctrine.<sup>13</sup> Anyone well acquainted with Church teaching and its development in history could hardly argue that this process was ever or could ever be legitimately envisioned as a static enterprise.

## Defining the Catholic university

The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) dealt specifically with the broad topic of formal Catholic education in their 1965 declaration *Gravissimum educationis*. It has been said that the underlying concern of the Council was “education,” “Catholic education” in one form or another.<sup>14</sup> The situation of Catholic universities and colleges received specific attention. The declaration stated that:

The Church is preoccupied too with schools of higher learning, especially colleges and universities and their faculties. In schools of this sort which are dependent upon her, she seeks in a systematic way to have individual branches of knowledge studied according to their own proper principles and methods, and with due freedom of scientific investigation. She intends thereby to promote an ever deeper understanding of these fields, and as a result of extremely precise evaluation of modern problems and inquiries, to have it seen more profoundly how faith and reason give harmonious witness to the unity of all truth. The Church pursues such a goal after the manner of her most illustrious teachers, especially St.

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11. Pope John XXIII, apostolic constitution *Humanae Salutis*, December 25, 1961, in Walter M. Abbott, S.J., gen. ed., *The Documents of Vatican II* (New York: Guild Press, 1966), p. 703 (hereinafter referred to as “Abbott”).

12. Pope John XXIII, “Opening Speech to the Council, October 11, 1962, in Abbott, p.713.

13. Pope Pius XI, apostolic constitution *Deus Scientiarum Dominus*, May 24, 1931, in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis (AAS)* 23 (1931), p.245.

14. G. Emmet Carter, “Education” in Abbott, p.634.

Thomas Aquinas. The hoped-for result is that the Christian mind may achieve, as it were, a public, persistent, and universal presence in the whole enterprise of advancing higher culture, and that students of these institutions may become men (and women) truly outstanding in learning, ready to shouldered society's heavier burdens and to witness the faith to the world.<sup>15</sup>

One should notice the emphasis given here to proper disciplinary methodology, due freedom of inquiry, growth in understanding, students outstanding in learning, advancing higher culture and witness to faith.

During the years immediately following the Second Vatican Council, Catholic universities and colleges throughout the world engaged in an effort to define their nature and mission in the Church and world more clearly. That process witnessed the eager participation of members of the American Catholic academy, chastised as they had been by Monsignor Ellis over ten years earlier.

In 1967, a gathering of Catholic educators in Land O'Lakes, Wisconsin, sponsored by the International Federation of Catholic Universities (IFCU) produced a document that set forth its own credo on the nature of Catholic colleges and universities:

The Catholic university today must be a university in the full modern sense of the word, with a strong commitment to and concern for academic excellence. To perform its teaching and research function effectively, the Catholic university must have a true autonomy and academic freedom in the face of authority of whatever kind, lay or clerical external to the academic community itself. To say this is simply to assert that institutional autonomy and academic freedom are essential conditions of life and growth and indeed of survival for Catholic universities as for all universities. The Catholic university participates in the total life of our time, has the same functions as all other true universities and, in general, offers the same services to society.<sup>16</sup>

Notice the emphasis given to authority "external to the academic community itself." The stage was now set for what would become a decades-long effort to resolve growing contemporary tensions between the teaching Church and Catholic institutions of higher learning that existed in a variety of forms within its embrace in the post-conciliar era. Other international meetings would continue to occur but nowhere, at least in my opinion, were these tensions as keenly felt as within the American Catholic academic community.

The controversy surrounding the publication of Pope Paul VI's encyclical *Humanae Vitae*<sup>17</sup> in 1968, again in my opinion, distracted educators from the process of addressing the issue of

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15. Vatican Council II, *Declaration on Christian Education: Gravissimum educationis* (October 28, 1965), 11, in Abbott, p.648.

16. International Federation of Catholic Universities, "Land O'Lakes Statement: The Nature of a Catholic University," article 1 in Alice Gallin, O.S.U., ed., *American Catholic Higher Education: Essential Documents 1967-1990* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992), p.7.

17. Pope Paul VI, encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, July 25, 1968 (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 1968).

the nature and purpose of Catholic institutions of higher education. In the minds of some, however, especially in the United States, *Humanæ Vitæ* was precisely the type of Church teaching that provided a timely example with which to frame the debate. Dissent over this encyclical crystallized the polarization between the faithful presentation and teaching of Church doctrine that Pope John XXIII saw as the “greatest concern” of the Council he convened and “the true autonomy and academic freedom in the face of authority of whatever kind” that was the mantra of those who subscribed to the assertions of the Land O’Lakes manifesto. In many respects, The Catholic University of America at the time was the epicenter of the storm.

In 1972, at the invitation of the Holy See and IFCU, Catholic universities and colleges were invited to send delegates to an international congress in Rome, the second such gathering in Rome since Land O’Lakes. Their deliberations resulted in a document, “The Catholic University in the Modern World,”<sup>18</sup> which accomplished two major things:

- (1) it defined six basic types of Catholic post-secondary institutions that existed within the Church:
  - (a) those directly established by ecclesiastical authorities and those which were not;
  - (b) those with statutory relationships to ecclesiastical authorities and those which had none;
  - (c) those with a formal, explicit commitment to Church teaching and beliefs and those whose commitment was merely implicit.
- (2) it also provided a framework for Catholic identity and mission later cited by Pope John Paul II in his apostolic constitution *Ex corde Ecclesiae*.<sup>19</sup>

Responding to this document, the Prefect of the Congregation for Catholic Education at that time, Cardinal Gabriel Marie Garrone, wrote that although the statement envisioned the existence of Catholic institutions of higher learning without formally established or statutory links to ecclesiastical authority, Catholic institutions should not consider themselves removed from those relationships with the hierarchical structures of the Church which must characterize institutions that call themselves Catholic.<sup>20</sup> A clear point of difference with the Land O’Lakes statement!

Ten years later, the revised 1983 Code of Canon Law,<sup>21</sup> also mandated by Pope John XXIII along with the Second Vatican Council at the beginning of his papacy in 1959, introduced

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18. Delegates of the Second Congress of Catholic Universities of the World, “The Catholic University in the Modern World” in NCEA College Bulletin 35 (1973), pp.1-10.

19. Pope John Paul II, apostolic constitution *Ex corde Ecclesiae*, August 15, 1990 (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1990).

20. Cardinal Gabriel Marie Garrone, “*Litterae S. Cong. Pro Institutione Catholica Ad Rectores Universitatum Cath. Et Directores Institutionum Universit. Cath.*,” April 25, 1973 in *Periodica* 62 (1973), pp. 659-661.

21. Pope John Paul II, *The Code of Canon Law: Latin-English Edition* (Washington: The Canon Law Society of America, 1983).

specific legislation intended to address all Catholic colleges and universities, those canonically dependent upon the Church as well as others that claimed a Catholic foundation, character, and purpose but which lacked an explicit canonical establishment. Pope John Paul II had already addressed the former type of institution before the new Code appeared in his apostolic constitution *Sapientia Christiana* (April 15, 1979).<sup>22</sup> It should be noted that the overwhelming majority of Catholic universities and colleges in the United States were of the latter variety. Needless to say, the provisions of the new Code received a chilly reception within the American Catholic academic community.

## Magna Carta for Catholic higher education

Himself a Catholic university professor, Pope John Paul II evidenced a great concern for Catholic institutions of higher learning. Following on the heels of both *Sapientia Christiana* and the 1983 Code of Canon Law, the Holy Father published a second apostolic constitution in 1990 intended to address Catholic universities and colleges that were not ecclesiastical in nature. *Ex corde Ecclesiae* (August 15, 1990) was, in my opinion, the beginning of the “great thaw” in “the winter of our discontent.”

While not original in the sense that they first appeared in a 1972 document “The Catholic University in the Modern World” produced by the Second International Congress of Delegates of Catholic Universities referred to earlier, the observations of Pope John Paul II summarized what he considered the “bottom line” for Catholic institutions of higher learning. These “essential characteristics” are particularly significant not only because the Holy Father made them his own in *Ex corde Ecclesiae* but also because they are the reflections of a body of international Catholic educators that helped make the case for a strengthening of the meaning of Catholic identity in Catholic post-secondary academic institutions. Pope John Paul II wrote that:

Since the objective of a Catholic university is to assure in an institutional manner a Christian presence in the university world confronting the great problems of society and culture, every Catholic university as Catholic, must have the following essential characteristics:

1. Christian inspiration not only of individuals but of the university community as such;
2. A continuing reflection in the light of the Catholic faith upon the growing treasury of human knowledge, to which it seeks to contribute by its own research;
3. Fidelity to the Christian message as it comes to us through the Church;
4. An institutional commitment to the service of the people of God and of the human family in their pilgrimage to the transcendent goal which gives meaning to life.<sup>23</sup>

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22. Pope John Paul II, apostolic constitution *Sapientia Christiana*, April 15, 1979 (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1979).

23. Pope John Paul II, *Ex corde Ecclesiae*, 13.

To assist in providing that assurance, the Holy Father noted, perhaps in part an answer to “Land O’Lakes” and other responses of similar kind:

Every Catholic University, without ceasing to be a university, has a relationship to the Church that is essential to its institutional identity. ...One consequence of its essential relationship to the Church is that the institutional fidelity of the university to the Christian message includes a recognition of and adherence to the teaching authority of the Church in matters of faith and morals. Catholic members of the university community are also called to a personal fidelity to the Church with all that this implies. Non-Catholic members are required to respect the Catholic character of the university, while the university in turn respects their religious liberty.<sup>24</sup>

With the deftness and insight that have characterized his pontificate and all his writings, drawing upon extraordinary human experiences including that of being a university professor, Pope John Paul II provided in *Ex corde Ecclesiae* a “magna carta”<sup>25</sup> for Catholic higher education throughout the Church, including the United States. Calling for a clearly recognizable relationship between Catholic colleges and universities and the universal and local church in which they exist,<sup>26</sup> the Holy Father has wisely required that these institutions “operationalize” their Catholic identity through the assistance of a formal, juridical association with the Church. This juridical dimension and its accompanying call for greater accountability to the Church, unfortunately for some, dominated the discussions that would follow within the American Catholic academic community. I say “unfortunately” because the text and substance of the Holy Father’s apostolic constitution—recognized by many, including those outside of the Catholic academic community, as a magnificent exposition of the unique mission of Catholic higher education—have often been reduced by some to a mere set of legal norms.

When the constitution appeared in its final form, after three drafts and the widest, most extensive public consultations to accompany any Church document, it was generally well received in America. Bishops and Catholic educators in the United States appeared appreciative of the opportunities afforded them by the Congregation for Catholic Education to be involved in its formulation. Some hesitation still lingered in these and other circles with respect to the idea of any juridic norms at all—general or particular—but the prevailing sentiment seemed to be that “there was little to cause anxiety and much to enable and inspire” those involved in Catholic higher education.<sup>27</sup>

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24. *Ibid.*, 27.

25. *Ibid.*, 8.

26. *Ibid.*, 28: “Bishops have a particular responsibility... to promote and assist in the preservation and strengthening of their Catholic identity... Even when they do not enter directly into the internal governance of the university, Bishops should not be seen as external agents but as participants in the life of the Catholic university.”

27. Alice Gallin, O.S.U., ed., *American Catholic Higher Education: Essential Documents, 1967-1990* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992), p. 190.

For the better part of the past fifteen years, the bishops and the Catholic academic community in the United States have been engaged in a dialogue regarding the regional application or implementation of the constitution required in its “General Norms.” Here again, several drafts and extensive consultations have accompanied the entire process.

From the beginning, two important presuppositions regarding the outcome of the process have been present: (1) that the application document would include juridic norms; and (2) that the application document would be the product of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops or NCCB (now, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops or USCCB) as an episcopal document.

Although these “understandings” were present, their implications were not always clearly appreciated, even among the bishops. One could legitimately claim that they were often avoided or ignored in the hopes they would simply “go away.” In the months immediately preceding the 1999 NCCB meeting, these elements seemed to be all but forgotten, especially within Catholic academic circles. Discussions among Catholic university presidents for which I was present were openly hostile to the idea of episcopal juridic implementation.

The NCCB established an Implementation Committee of bishops in 1991, and several Catholic university presidents were invited to participate as consultants to the committee. An application document was developed, circulated for consultation, revised, approved by the NCCB with a vote of 224-6 on November 16, 1996, and forwarded to the Holy See for the *recognitio* required by canon law.<sup>28</sup> The Congregation for Catholic Education praised the application but indicated that it needed further juridic refinement, especially with respect to Canon 812’s provision regarding the mandate to teach theological disciplines, before it could be passed on to the Congregation for Bishops.

Although the Holy See’s critique was not well received in the United States, the NCCB Implementation Committee set out to respond positively to the Vatican request. A subcommittee was created in 1997 and revised drafts of an application document were developed and circulated in 1998 and 1999 respectively, again accompanied by extensive consultations. A strong argument was made in the Catholic and secular press by critics of the application, including several university presidents and even some bishops, that its provisions would yield “disastrous” results for Catholic universities and colleges in the United States if approved. Concerns were voiced that the new text was, at best, risky and, at worst, destructive of whatever progress had been made in the ongoing dialogue about Catholic identity that had been occurring among bishops and Catholic educators since *Ex corde Ecclesiae* was first issued in 1990.

Anyone participating in American Catholic academic life since the Code of Canon Law was revised and promulgated in 1983 has heard these concerns before. In fact, some of the more controversial elements now found in the document of implementation known as *The Appli-*

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28. Canon 455.2: The general degrees mentioned in paragraph 1 can be validly passed in a plenary session only if two-thirds of the members of the conference having a deliberate vote approve them; such decrees do not have binding force, unless they have been legitimately promulgated, after having been reviewed by the Apostolic See.

tion<sup>29</sup> are already contained in canon law's treatment of "Catholic Universities and Other Institutes of Higher Studies (807-814)," although they were deemed by educators and some canonists as doubtfully applicable in the American Catholic academic context. Similarly, as *Ex corde Ecclesiae* progressed through its own draft stages in the late 1980s, these same concerns surfaced again.

It would be a mistake to separate *The Application* as it currently exists from the constitution itself. The "General Norms" accompanying *Ex corde Ecclesiae* require "local and regional" implementation of the constitution.<sup>30</sup> A very concerted effort was made by those concerned with drafting *The Application* to insure that this text remained directly focused on the constitution, its exhortations and canonical provisions. In fact, several Catholic university presidents explicitly made that recommendation, myself included, during the consultation. Hence, what is required as normative in the resulting juridic text must always be viewed through the broader lens of the constitution itself for accurate interpretation and implementation.

It would equally be a mistake to separate the constitution and *The Application* from "the teaching of Vatican II and the directives of the Code of Canon Law" upon which it is based, as Pope John Paul II himself has stated.<sup>31</sup> *Ex corde Ecclesiae*, he wrote, "was enriched by the long and fruitful experience of the Church in the realm of universities and open to the promise of future achievements that will require courageous creativity and rigorous fidelity."<sup>32</sup> In the minds of some, these two concepts—courageous creativity and rigorous fidelity—can make strange, even difficult bedfellows. I certainly do not believe that to be the case.

## Hope and vision for the future

Apart from a few members of a vanishing generation of Catholic academics, there has been no revolt as had been predicted. In fact, Catholic institutions of higher learning in this country have been unusually quiet given recent history. Catholic universities and colleges continue to possess what the Church has called a "rightful" autonomy and a "legitimate" academic freedom. There have been no major legal battles as had been predicted and the allegedly adverse financial consequences have been exposed as myths. We have witnessed no "pastoral disaster" as one bishop claimed or anything even slightly problematic.

And Catholic teaching continues to be faithfully presented in our institutions by those who are faithful, although it is still challenged by some who view faith and reason at odds. I doubt very much that we will ever make converts of them, no matter what is said or done. The rigorous fidelity of their peers, a new generation of creative Catholic intellectuals and students seeking the truth, and, ultimately, time itself will work together toward the long hoped for renewal in Catholic higher education. The greatest evidence of renewal, however, is present on our campuses within the Catholic students themselves. It has been my experience that they are eager

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29. National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *The Application of Ex Corde Ecclesiae for the United States* (Washington: United States Catholic Conference, 2000).

30. Pope John Paul II, *Ex corde Ecclesiae*, General Norms, 2.

31. *Ibid.*, 11.

32. *Ibid.*, 8.

for leadership, hungry for truth, seeking to pray, and open to service to their neighbors. In many ways, they are teaching us.

*Ex corde Ecclesiae* and *The Application* promulgated to implement it, in my opinion, spear-headed and inspired an attempt to present a coherent vision that continues to unfold for and within our Catholic universities and colleges in this country. It is up to all of us to replace the tired, negative rhetoric of the not so distant past—when political and polarized ideologies seemed to dominate the conversation—with voices of Catholic scholars and leaders who are faithful and who are “convinced of the priority of the ethical over the technical, of the primacy of the person over things, of the superiority of the spirit over matter,” joining knowledge to conscience;<sup>33</sup> voices of Catholic scholars and leaders who do not, in the words of our Holy Father’s encyclical *Fides et Ratio*, “run from the truth as soon as they glimpse it because they are afraid of its demands”<sup>34</sup> but who stand and serve the truth in charity.

New leadership in the Church brings new emphases. Building upon the strong legacy of his predecessor, Pope Benedict XVI has addressed the value and importance of Catholic higher education several times. Even before his election to the papacy, as Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger wrote to me of the importance of involving our Catholic universities and colleges in confronting the pressing moral issues of our day. “Universities,” he stated, (should) “organize symposia, possibly with the participation of representatives of different confessions, religions and cultures, in order to identify currents and points of agreement which may be productive in renewing an understanding of the natural moral law.”<sup>35</sup> He sees Catholic universities and colleges as an effective element for positive social and cultural change, a “positive choice,” in his words, for all that Catholicism and Christianity represent.

In a speech at Rome’s Sacred Heart University in 2005, Pope Benedict remarked that “The Catholic university is a great workshop in which, in keeping with the various disciplines, new lines of research are constantly being developed in a stimulating encounter between faith and reason... This then is the great challenge to Catholic universities: to impart knowledge in the perspective of true rationality, different from that of today which largely prevails, in accordance with a reason open to the question of the truth and to the great values inscribed in being itself, hence, open to the transcendent, to God.”<sup>36</sup> And when our students graduate, he continued, “How do they leave? What culture did they find, assimilate, develop?” Addressing himself to administration, faculty, staff and students, Pope Benedict encouraged all Catholic universities and colleges “to give life to an authentic Catholic university that excels in the quality of its research and teaching and, at the same time, its fidelity to the Gospel and the Church’s Magisterium.”<sup>37</sup>

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33. *Ibid.*, 18.

34. John Paul II, encyclical *Fides et Ratio (Faith and Reason)* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1998), 28.

35. Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, “To Rev. Fr. David M. O’Connell, C.M.,” Prot. No. 66/01-12262.

36. Pope Benedict XVI, “Address at the Inauguration of the Academic Year at Sacred Heart University,” November 25, 2005.

37. *Ibid.*

At his Angelus address on January 20, 2008, the Holy Father responded to a protest that, despite the invitation previously extended, occasioned him not to speak on the campus of La

Sapienza University in Rome. His words in St. Peter's Square that day gave us a glimpse into his view of the mission of Catholic higher education in our world today:

The university environment, which for many years was my world, linked for me a love for the seeking of truth, for exchange, for frank and respectful dialogue between differing positions. All this, too, is the mission of the church, charged to faithfully follow Jesus the Teacher of life, of truth and of love. As a professor, so to say, emeritus, who's encountered many students in his life, I encourage you... to always be respectful of other people's opinions and to seek out, with a free and responsible spirit, the truth and the good.<sup>38</sup>

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38. Pope Benedict XVI, "Angelus Message," January 20, 2008.