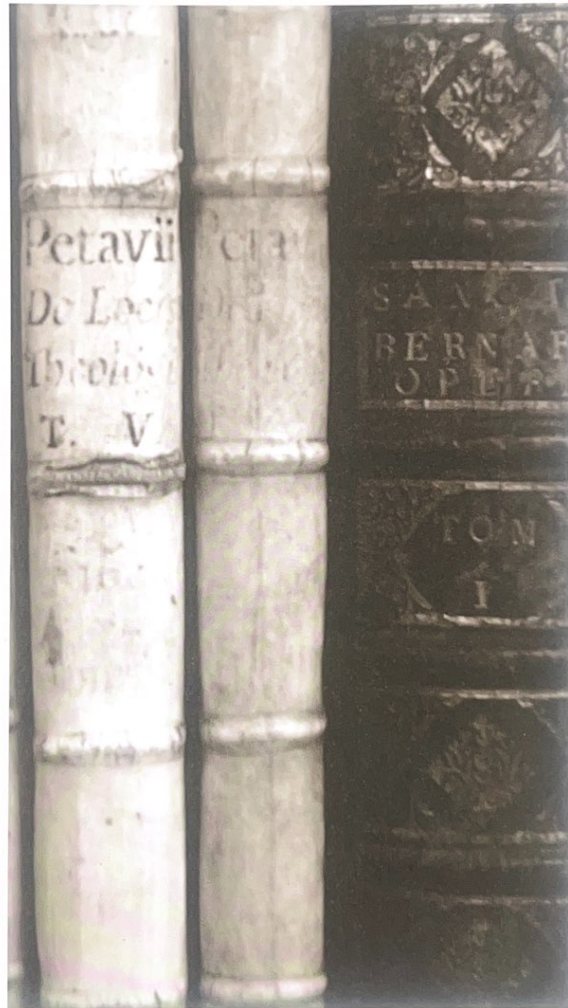


The Bishop John S. Cummins Institute for Catholic Thought, Culture & Action

VERITAS



Vol. 1 {2009} No. 2

Deepening Appreciation of the Beauty, Wisdom, Vitality, & Diversity of the Catholic Tradition

THE MISSION

The Bishop John S. Cummins Institute for Catholic Thought, Culture and Action seeks to deepen appreciation among all constituents of the campus community for the beauty, wisdom, vitality, and diversity of the Catholic Tradition. We do this by:

Fostering a conversation between the Catholic tradition & contemporary intellectual life.

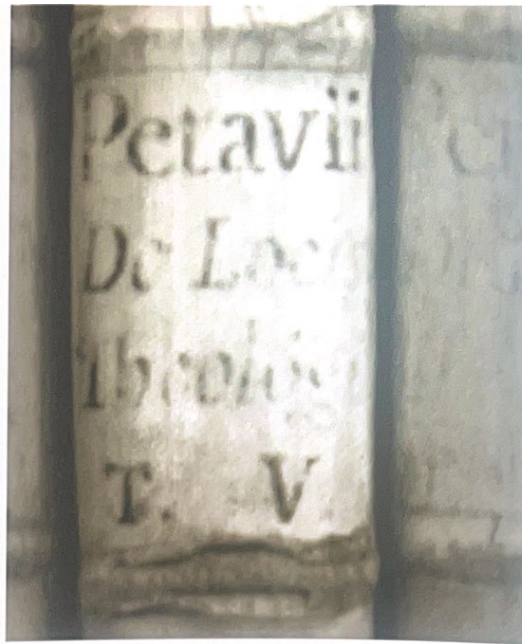
The Institute understands the tradition of Catholic higher education as one of providing a context in which *fides quaerens intellectum*, "faith seeking understanding," can take place. The Institute is a resource for integrating the search for faith and reason throughout the curriculum and the academy.

Promoting a sacramental understanding of reality and the vision that this world is "charged with the grandeur of God."

The Institute understands that Catholic faith is not about the intellect alone, but that it manifests itself also in rich and varied cultural expressions: in liturgy and ritual, in literature and art, in music and dance, as well as in our daily lives as a campus community.

Supporting all members of the community in leading lives that are respectful of human dignity and responsive to social justice concerns.

The Institute promotes the principles of Catholic Social Teaching and endorses initiatives developed by its representative groups and other members of the community that aim to inculcate habits of the heart and faith and zeal for transforming lives.



ON THE COVER: LASSALIAN SPIRITUALITY LIBRARY COLLECTION
SAINT MARY'S COLLEGE OF CALIFORNIA CAMPUS

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LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

In his “General Argument” in *The Idea of A University*, John Henry Newman writes that the university “has the office of intellectual education; but the Church steadies it in the performance of that office.” Furthermore, he writes that “religious doctrine is knowledge.” It is with this understanding that Saint Mary’s College defines itself as a liberal arts, Catholic, and Lasallian institution of higher education. These three constitutive elements of Saint Mary’s College are to be understood as intersecting and enfolded. They are not separate and discreet elements with particular aspects of the College addressing each element. Rather, it is the intersection which provides the basis for the mission of Saint Mary’s College.

But what do we mean by each of these constitutive elements? What do we mean by a liberal arts institution which is Catholic? Father Thomas McElligott addresses this in his article in which he attempts to describe what it means to be Catholic, to describe what it is that is being promoted. Father McElligott teaches in the Theology/Religious Studies Department at Saint Mary’s College and is the Chaplain for the Saint Mary’s College Brothers’ Community. Brother Mel Anderson, FSC, former President of Saint Mary’s College, describes the evolution of the curriculum at Saint Mary’s College. The curriculum, certainly a core curriculum, should reflect the mission of an institution. We might ask at the end of these articles, does the curriculum at Saint Mary’s College make it clear that it is a Catholic college with the liberal arts as its heart and in the tradition of Saint John Baptist de La Salle?

The Governing Board of the Bishop John S. Cummins Institute for Catholic Thought, Culture and Action welcomes any responses you might have to this question as well as suggestions for the Institute as it looks for strategies to promote the Catholicity of Saint Mary’s College.

Brother Donald Mansir, FSC

CHAIR

SPIRITUALITY: THE WAY TO PROMOTE THE CATHOLICITY OF THE COLLEGE

REV. THOMAS J. McELIGOTT, S.T.L., PH.D

Melanie Morey and John Piderit use the word “crisis” to describe the lack of concentrated attention to the “catholicity” of the Catholic colleges in the United States. This paper addresses that topic and proposes that the best way to promote the “catholicity” of Saint Mary’s College comes down to addressing the question of spirituality, particularly Christian spirituality, and its specific articulation in the life and practice of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.

By “catholicity” I mean “the character of belonging to, or in accordance with, the Catholic Church”. As explained in the United States Catholic Catechism for Adults the proper adjective “Catholic” modifying “church” means that the Catholic Church understands itself to be universal, that is, “live[ing] in a diversity of cultures and languages because she is led by the Spirit of Christ to bring the Gospel to all peoples,” as well as “universal” by means of its worldwide system of diocesan, eparchial, and parochial structures, and its relationship with the Jewish, Muslim, and Buddhists communities. The bishops note that by “Catholic” the church understands that in it “all the means of salvation are found,” that it possesses “the fullness of faith, the Sacraments, and apostolic succession”; and, citing The Second Vatican Council’s decree *Ad Gentes*, that the church is missionary “by its

very nature.” While the church understands that it has “the fullness of the faith”, by the nature of the mystery of the triune God that faith is dynamic. The church then must remain open to new articulations of faith and to the development of doctrine. Its sacramental life and the apostolic succession of its bishops assure its members that it continues to be one with the ever deepening understanding of the paschal mystery of Christ’s dying and rising begun in the age of the Apostle and continued ever since through the developing understanding of the church.

In other words, the church’s understanding of itself as “Catholic” challenges it to resist the temptation common enough in any institution to focus only on the partial and the particular of its self-understanding and presence in the world.

The Greek *katholikos* originally meant ‘whole’ or ‘entire’ as opposed to that which is partial or particular....Catholicism is characterized, therefore, by a both/and rather than an either/or approach. It is not the product of a single reformer or historical movement in post-New Testament Christian history. It does not find its identity in a single doctrine, confession, liturgical text, or theory of biblical interpretation.

In its long history the institution that claims the name “Catholic” has, from time to time insisted on naming some form of the particular as the whole and entire of the Catholic Church. The challenge for the church in general and for those interested in protecting the “catholicity” of a Catholic college is to guard against the temptation to assume this posture. People at ev-

ery level of authority (and lack of it) have in the past and will in the future scream about orthodoxy, and heterodoxy, and every other kind of "oxy". Such challenges to the catholic nature of the church have gone on from New Testament times. It seems to me that to promote the "catholicity" of a College means to remain faithful to the always difficult to grasp "whole" and "entire" of the faith, articulated most recently in the decrees and constitutions of the Second Vatican Council.

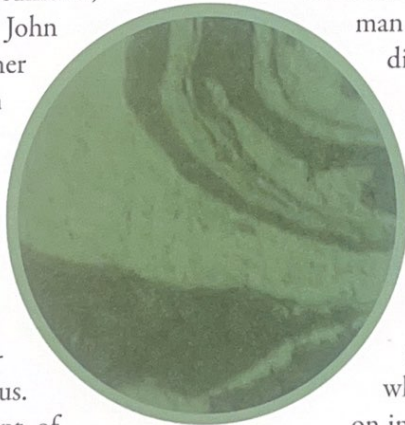
Such a stance causes multiply problems, of course. The discussions of the Bishop Cummins Board of Directors about "catholicity" based on their reading of some recent papal documents, the Melanie Morey and John Piderit text *Catholic Higher Education: A Culture in Crisis*, and John Henry Cardinal Newman's *Idea of a University*, made them acutely aware of the need, to make the Catholic identity of the College explicit and visible, clear and unambiguous.

The above cited statement of the American Bishops make it clear that there are certain unmistakable realities that identify one as Catholic but these must always be held in tension with the greater reality of the "whole and entire" that the word "Catholic" identifies. This will necessarily mean a constant return to the never ending debate about what is Catholic enough and what has oozed into the great wash of "fuzzy thinking," to say nothing of the cauldrons of "heresy".

The "how" to better articulate and promote the "catholicity" of the college brings me to the ter-

rifying abyss of the universe. I have Professor Ron Olowin to thank for this awareness. However we articulate and promote the "catholicity" of a college we can do so, it seems to me, only by facing who we are in this universe. We are a speck in a universe of trillions of galaxies, in which our own has 240 billion stars, each star of which has its own set of planets and whatever else there is. The catholicity of this fact places our discussion of being faithful to a tradition about the meaning of life, death, and resurrection into a light that is some 14 billion years old at one level, and infinite at another. We cannot ignore the cosmological reality, in a word, the scientific articulation of reality, at any level of our discussion of how to promote "catholicity." The not-

ed science writer Freeman Dyson, in a discussion of the work of biologist Carl Woese, says that we had better pay close attention to what is going on in biotechnology. The



domestication of high technology, which we have seen marching from triumph to triumph with the advent of personal computers and GPS receivers and digital cameras [will] soon be extend-

ed from physical technology to biotechnology... I predict that the domestication of biotechnology will

"HOWEVER WE ARTICULATE AND PROMOTE THE 'CATHOLICITY' OF A COLLEGE WE CAN DO SO, IT SEEMS TO ME, ONLY BY FACING WHO WE ARE IN THIS UNIVERSE."

dominate our lives during the next fifty years at least as much as the domestication of computers has dominated our lives during the previous fifty years.”

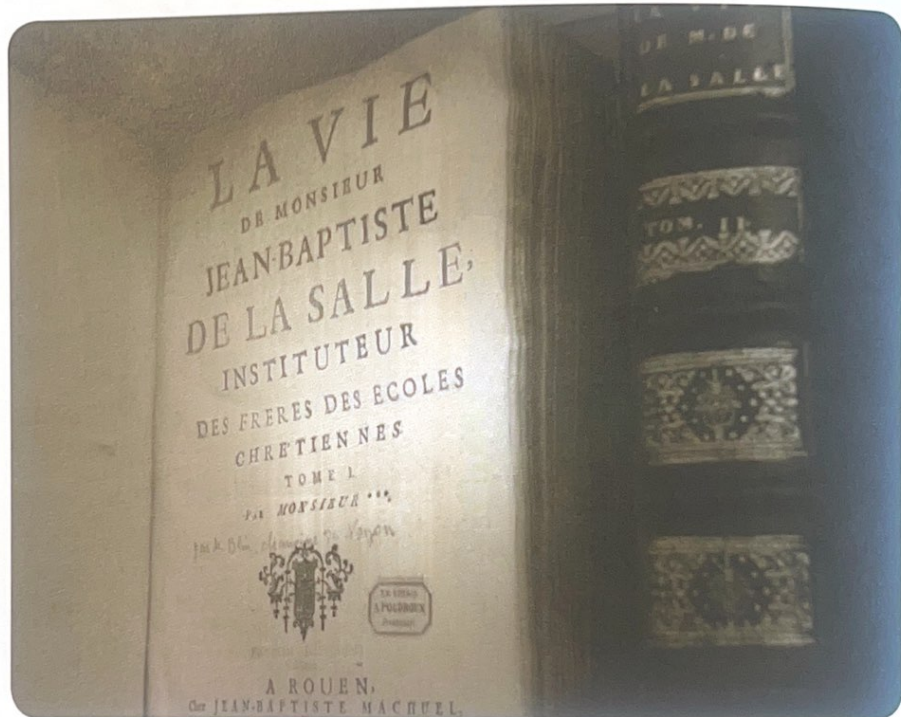
Suddenly the problem of “intelligent design” as a counter to evolution as an explanation of our origins pales into insignificance. Once domesticated, as was the computer, biotechnology will alter the way we live, and how we think about life.

In the face of the realities science uncovers at every level of life, and the changes in our thinking and acting in light of those developments how can we better articulate and promote the “catholicity” of the Catholic college? The answer, it seems to me, lies in spirituality. Before your eyes roll completely to the back of your heads, I do not mean by the term anything even faintly resembling what Barnes and Noble, ‘Booksellers since the stone ages’ means by the term. In a recent trip to a nearby branch of the chain store I discovered that spirituality means consulting tarot cards. There is an entire book case dedicated to it. That is not spirituality.

Spirituality is the lived experience of faith. It is “the experience of conscious involvement in the project of life-integration through self-transcendence toward the ultimate value one perceives,” as Sandra Schneiders defines it. It is a personal, deliberately chosen way of living, involving the whole person, body, mind, and spirit, in the “ongoing project of life-integration pursued by consistent self-trans-

scendence toward ultimate value (*italics in the text*). For Christians that ultimate is “the triune God revealed in Jesus Christ whose life we share through the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

The lived experience of faith for us at Saint Mary’s College of California takes on the particular form of the way of life of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. The Brothers and their particular understanding of teaching as the specific way they engage in the apostolic work of salvation entrusted to the Church through Jesus Christ has guided and directed the life of the College from the time the Brothers accepted the invitation of Archbishop Alemany to take over the College. It seems to me that the “how” best to articulate our “catholicity” must consider the spirituality of the Brothers. That spirituality, like life itself, is in process. The Brothers personal lived



reality in the project of self-transcendence toward God in Christ Jesus, and our own pursuit of, or questioning of, and/or embrace of that ultimate value must be the place of meeting, and of conversation between the Brothers and the faculty and administration of the College, as well as with the staff that supports their work. It is in this holy place, often enough, I would hope, sitting around a table with a text in the seminar style that is one of the distinguishing educational models of this College, that we can provide a safe space for the honest conversation about Lasallian spirituality as the particular expression of the working out of the Catholic nature of Saint Mary’s College, and how all members of the college community participate in it.

I would suggest that an important text to begin this conversation is a document promulgated by the Saint Mary’s College Broth-

ers' Community as a statement of their understanding of the term "Lasallian." Like any statement composed from ancient sources, Scripture and the teaching of the Church, historical and formational texts, the documents on the life of the Brothers of the Christian Schools from the writings of St. John Baptist de la Salle to the present Congregational administration, and statements of local focus, the mission of Saint Mary's College as a school of higher education, this document concentrates in a few words ideas that need careful reading and conversation to understand. I append it to this paper and offer it as an important starting point for understanding our "catholicity" as Saint Mary's College.

Our conversation about "catholicity" can only take place within the present reality of 21st century life. We live in a post-modern or a post-post-modern age of which my references to the scientific understanding of life exemplify only one aspect. If we must be cautious not to make everything relative, neither can we ignore the immense problem of naming what is true and how it is true when we are specks in a trillion galaxy universe? It seems to me that our spiritualities, our personal, life-long engagement with reality in pursuit of what brings us beyond everything, in fear and trembling, in doubt and in hope, is one place at least from which to articulate and promote what is Catholic, the whole and the entire.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE LASALLIAN?

The Christian Brothers who live and work at Saint Mary's College of California recently developed the following statement. It represents our common understanding of what constitutes the Lasallian approach in higher education.

THE LASALLIAN APPROACH

The encompassing spirit of a Lasallian institution of higher education is inspired by the guiding principles of the Brothers of the Christian Schools and their founder, John Baptist de La Salle, a spirit fostering the development of the intellectual faculties enlightened by faith that seeks understanding.

The Catholic intellectual tradition holds that the pursuit of truth "contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the meaning of human life and the purpose of God's creation" [Ex Corde Ecclesiae]. Zeal for the human and Christian development of students inspires the Christian Brothers and guides every member of the Lasallian educational community.

This community welcomes all who qualify for admission, drawn from diverse social, economic, and cultural backgrounds, and especially strives to include the economically disadvantaged.

The community of scholars in a Lasallian institution of higher education follows curricula and participates in activities which intellectually challenge, provoke wonder, enhance intuition, and foster congeniality and compassion, so that students might live informed and responsible lives, understanding the meaning of Christianity in the world today and sharing their faith, insights, goods and service with others, especially those in need.

THE INTELLECTUAL TRADITION AT SAINT MARY'S COLLEGE: EVOLUTION

BROTHER MEL ANDERSON, FSC

■ Prior to 1969 the curriculum of Saint Mary's College resembled what many Catholic institutions offered with the exception of its World Classics program required of liberal arts students for four years and for science and economics/business administration students for two. The College also sponsored an Integrated Liberal Arts program for a limited group of students who desired to follow a four-year liberal arts curriculum based on the Great Books of the Western World, following for the most part the footsteps of the liberal arts Great Books program at Saint John's College, Annapolis, MD. The only exception to the St. John's program was the inclusion of one segment of religious studies with adaptations to conform to the Great Books seminar approach.

"Saint Mary's College understands liberal education" the Bulletin of 1968-1970 announced, "as a process of intellectual and imaginative development through which the student learns to understand himself in relation to the physical universe, to other people and to God."

The Bulletin further notes that "As a Catholic College, Saint Mary's is in a special way concerned with the heritage of Christian values and the cultural tradition of Western Europe... it fulfills its religious and intellectual responsibilities best not by indoctrin-

ating in the limited sense but by attempting to free the student's mind from ignorance, narrowness and prejudice so that he (co-education did not commence until 1970) may seek and love wisdom."

The program of study "aims in particular at the fostering of intellectual and imaginative vitality and discipline. The student's mind is developed in the arts of reasoning, reckoning and observation through the activity involved in the acquisition of and clarification of the fundamental concepts of theology, philosophy, mathematics and sciences. Imaginative vitality is encouraged not only through the great works of the human imagination but through the effort to relate studies in various disciplines to one another and to the full context of human experience, aesthetic and emotional as well as intellectual."

Many alumni prior to 1969 saw the curriculum as foundational, providing principles and insight for living wisely, stirring the imagination, presenting a vision of scientific wonder, and enlarging the principles of economics and business leadership.

The Vietnam conflict, supported by mandatory induction, was the catalyst that prompted extraordinary changes in attitudes, civil rights, business, politics, social mo-

res and collegiate life. Given the influence of changes in higher education nationwide, and the efforts among faculty aided by the Academic Vice President of the time, and approved by the President, a change in the curricular status quo seemed inevitable. The Bulletin of 1968-1970 became obsolete after its first year of use.

The 4-1-4 calendar with its major changes in requirements and featuring "innovative courses, including travel courses to foreign lands" in the one-month January Term, was introduced for the Fall Semester, 1969. It was several years in the making through the campus political process, but in spite of its advance planning, more in theory than in practicalities, it was found wanting in both thought and experimentation prior to its introduction in the Fall, 1969. The two longer semesters of thirteen instructional weeks each, had been designed without requirements in philosophy, history, language, mathematics or science, but retained the World Classics program, renamed Collegiate Seminar with four courses over four semesters being required



for all students (a reduction of three and a half units for liberal arts students from the pre-1969 program) and two courses in Religious Studies, (a reduction of nine units in Religious Studies for all students.) The faculty eventually reintroduced some requirements, beginning with "Better Writing," given the generally poor performance

in composition by incoming students. Students were later required to choose courses from several areas of study (known as "area requirements"), including "ethnic and gender diversity study" to assure a more balanced educational menu. Some students could create their own curriculum but not without faculty guidance and approval. The Integrated Liberal Arts program underwent a name change to the Integral Program (to avoid confusion with ethnic studies) and while it adapted to the 4-1-4 calendar it remained essentially unchanged with the exception of eliminating the specifically religious studies element.

Students may and do enroll in philosophy, history, language, mathematics and the sciences to fulfill area studies. However, philosophy, that was once an integrating backbone requirement amounting to a total of 17 lower and upper division units, pre-

1969, became one among many selections in the area requirement category. The philosophy of Saint Thomas Aquinas, the thirteenth century Dominican philosopher and theologian was a major focus of philosophical investigation prior to Fall, 1969.

Though all philosophy requirements were jettisoned, the Collegiate Seminar program retained a number of philosophical and theological texts that are currently read by all students, such as, *The Confessions* by Augustine, *The Gospel of Mark*, selections from *The Summa Gentiles* by St. Thomas Aquinas, *Revelations of Divine Love* by Julian of Norwich and *The Uses of Knowledge* by Cardinal Newman.

The two course Religious Studies requirement devotes one course to the Bible and its Interpretations, or Biblical Literature which is a prerequisite for upper division Religious Studies courses. The other required course is selected

Catholic Imagination, Christian Ethics, Judaism, Islamic Beliefs and Practices and so forth. Students may take more than the two required courses, if their schedules permit and interest draws them to do so.

The World Classes program that had been arranged in chronological order from the ancient Greeks to the Moderns underwent a short-lived adjustment when the 1969 change to Collegiate Seminar occurred. Some faculty attempted to design the program around themes and juxtaposed modern works with the classical texts, under the pretext of relevancy. When alumnus Tom Slakey, Ph.D. who was a tutor at Saint John's, became Academic Vice President in 1971 he persuasively argued that themes, such as Domination and Submission, Poverty, War, Man and Government, and so forth, prejudiced the conversation and that contemporary or relevant readings were something that students should do on their own while saving the best and most influential books ever written for the seminar program. The program reverted to its traditional chronological format when the Seminar Governing Board chose Frank Ellis, Ph.D., as chairman early in the 1970's. There is little doubt that the chronological ordering of the texts provides thoughtful students with a development of ideas thus contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of particular eras as well as providing different approaches to major philosophical efforts in addressing a number of the perennial questions about how we learn, decide and give meaning to life.

As His Holiness John Paul II

"THE CALL TO THE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY AND THE CHRISTIAN BROTHERS OF SAINT MARY'S COLLEGE IN PARTICULAR IS BOTH CLEAR AND STRONG."

from among a number of courses such as, Reformation, Challenge of Modernity, *The Gospel of Mark*, *Apocalypse and Eschatology*, *Christian Spirituality*, *Sexuality, Marriage and Family—A Catholic Perspective*, *The*

perceived as a growing secularism and skepticism within Catholic higher education he became seriously engaged in developing an Apostolic Constitution on Catholic Universities. The title of the document was taken from the first three Latin words of the document, *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* (From the Heart of the Church.) After at least ten years of conversation among leaders of Catholic colleges and universities worldwide, the bishops and cardinals, His Holiness was satisfied that he had heard all that was necessary. The Apostolic Constitution was released by the Vatican on September 25, 1990, containing two parts, the first citing the Catholic university's "Identity and Mission" and the second entitled "General Norms" an application of the principles outlined in part one for "all Catholic institutes" of higher studies.

The self-summary of the Introduction and Part One of the document is found in a listing of the four essential characteristics of the Catholic university, namely, " (1) A 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 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 goals which gives meaning to life."

Theology, "*Ex Corde Ecclesiae*" in particular singles out, " plays a particular role in the search for a synthesis of knowledge be-

tween faith and reason. It serves all other disciplines in their search for meaning, not only by helping them to investigate how their discoveries will affect individuals and society, but also by bringing a perspective and an orientation not contained within their own methodologies."

The document also includes a Christ-centered section on The University Community, that strongly encourages the need for developing a community of scholars, composed of both religious and lay persons of both sexes and both Catholics and Non-Catholics. "The collegial community is seen as seeking an unparalleled competence in content, objectives and results within the framework of a coherent world vision. Christians among the instructors are called to be witnesses and educators of authentic Christian life, which evidences an attained integrations between faith and life, and between professional competence and Christian wisdom."

The second part of the Apostolic Constitution, which generated considerable commentary and some resistance from Catholic University leaders during the years of internal discussion is titled General Norms, " that are to be applied concretely at the local or regional levels by episcopal conferences and other levels of Catholic hierarchy," while considering the statutes of a diverse array of institutions of higher education, the precepts of Canon Law, complementary church legislation, and as far as possible and appropriate, civil law.

The call to the Catholic community and the Christian Brothers of Saint Mary's College in particular is both clear and strong. The Catholic institution of higher education is to be undeniably Catholic and evangelistic. The words, "undeniably Catholic" and "evangelistic" must be interpreted with