Church Life: A Journal for the New Evangelization

Church Life is published quarterly by the Institute for Church Life
University of Notre Dame
372 Geddes Hall
Notre Dame, IN 46556

Church Life explores the theological and pastoral roots of the New Evangelization, with particular attention to catechesis, liturgy, adult theological education, a spirituality of vocation, and the formation of ordained and lay ministers.

Manuscript submissions may be sent to tomalley@nd.edu.
Columns are 1,000 words, articles no more than 3,000 words, and more substantive essays 5,000-7,000 words.
For style, see The Chicago Manual of Style and the USCCB Style Guide.

EDITORIAL
Editor: Timothy P. O’Malley, Ph.D.
Assistant Editor, Art Editor: Carolyn Pirtle
Designer: Krista Seidl

DIRECTORS OF THE INSTITUTE FOR CHURCH LIFE
Director: John C. Cavadini, Ph.D.
Catholic Social and Pastoral Research Initiative: Brian Starks, Ph.D.
Notre Dame Center for Liturgy: Timothy P. O’Malley, Ph.D.
Notre Dame Vision: Leonard DeLorenzo, M.A.
Satellite Theological Education Program (STEP): Thomas C. Cummings, M.Div.
University Life Initiatives: Jessica Keating, M.Div.

© 2013 Institute for Church Life

This periodical is indexed in the ATLA Catholic Periodical and Literature Index® (CPL®), a product of the American Theological Library Association, 300 S. Wacker Dr., Suite 2100, Chicago, IL 60606, USA.
Email: atla@atla.com
COVER IMAGE
Christ in Majesty with Symbols of the Four Evangelists (ca. late 11th c.)
San Isidoro (Léon, Spain); courtesy ARTstor Slide Gallery (University of California, San Diego)

INSIDE IMAGE
Matt Cashore; Hesburgh Library Word of Life Mural, known as Touchdown Jesus (October 9, 2012);
©University of Notre Dame
Timothy P. O’Malley, Ph.D. is Director of the Notre Dame Center for Liturgy, an Assistant Professional Specialist in the Department of Theology at the University of Notre Dame, and editor of the journal Church Life.
In a series of lectures delivered at Yale University (later published as *Education at the Crossroads*), Jacques Maritain offered an assessment of the state of education in 1943. He described several misconceptions relative to the education in his day. The fundamental misconception for Maritain was developing an approach to education that does not consider toward what end education should be directed. While educational science can offer pedagogical insight to the teacher, it does not provide a vision of the sort of person that this education seeks to form. A school, for example, may be made up of a cadre of astute pedagogues, who each have distinct understandings of humanity’s ultimate purpose. For some, education is successful when a person is made a critical thinker, able to pierce beyond the power structures set up by human society. Others may argue that the end of an education is the creation of a young man or woman who enters into society ready to contribute in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. The government, partially responsible for setting the curriculum of this school, may offer other ends to consider, embodied in standardized tests and required curricula.
The existence of Catholic education remains an interruptive and thus evangelizing force to this limited vision of education. At the heart of Catholic education is the reality that Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the Word made flesh, the One sent from the Father, seeks to sanctify our humanity through love. Other forms of education may seek to promote goodness, kindness, and compassion, but a Catholic education seeks nothing less than the slow transformation of our humanity into an icon of self-giving love. In the science classroom, we gaze at the stars and discover the wonder of a creation that is being ever renewed, ever expanded, and we praise the Creator for the gift of this chaotic order. In the English classroom, the beauty of speech, of narratives that draw us into the drama of being human, slowly reveal to us the depths of the humanity that Christ came to save. In theology, that subject which epitomizes the strangeness of the Catholic school vis-à-vis non-religious forms of education, our reason learns to savor those salutary images found in the Scriptures, in Christian doctrine, in the social teaching of the Church, and in the life of prayer—and slowly, our vision of what constitutes reality is transfigured. Our education is not about us, it’s not about the future elite university that we will attend; it is about the transfiguration of our humanity in love. This cosmic and eschatological vision of humanity, transfigured through Christ, is the ultimate end of any education that calls itself Catholic. Education seeks to form human beings capacitated for gratitude.

Perhaps this is why the most important subject in a Catholic school’s curriculum is the Eucharist itself. Not simply theological instruction regarding what constitutes the Church’s robust Eucharistic teaching. Rather, that full, conscious, and active participation in the Eucharistic rites of the Church whereby every facet of our humanity is lifted up to the Father through the Son in the unity of the Holy Spirit. Our failures in the classroom, our being turned down by the college of our dreams, the broken family and friendships that mark the life of an adolescent are lifted up to the Father, offered as a Eucharistic sacrifice of love, and transformed with the bread and wine offered on the altar. Teachers at such schools (whose salaries are low and whose extra-curricular responsibilities are high) dare to perceive their work not as a series of tasks to be performed but a Eucharistic offering of self whereby their attention to grading, their answering of student emails, the failures and successes of teaching are integral to their vocation. The centrality of the Eucharist in the life of the school is a constant reminder that Catholic education does not exist simply to worship at the altar of success, of excellence, of technological innovation that drives an economy of consumption. Rather, Catholic education exists to restore all things in Christ, all aspects of being a student, of being a teacher, as we enter more deeply into the intellectual and spiritual richness of the Church.

Indeed, this is why the Catholic school cannot be separated from the educational mission of the parish. Schools focusing exclusively upon the educational aims implicit in contemporary pedagogy will cease meditating upon the vision of humanity presented by Christ, a memory constantly savored in the Eucharistic life of the parish. In the parish, our humanity is transformed not simply through intellectual formation—but cultivating critical thought, succeeding in standardized tests, or chasing down the latest educational fad. Instead, the entirety of human life is gradually lifted up to the Father through the Son in the unity of the Holy Spirit. Women and men discover alternative ways of being human, ones in which faith, hope, and love are the supreme virtues. The parish, and its practice of formation that begins at birth and concludes with death, is a source of constant refreshment to the Catholic schools, seeking to limit their educational aims.
Despite the rather robust vision of Catholic education outlined above, there remains a rather intractable problem. Those of us involved in Catholic education in parishes and schools alike can easily forget that while Catholic institutions may seek to restore all things in Christ, we do so only because we participate in the larger mission of the Church. That is, we do not form our students at Catholic institutions so that they might become faithful alums of our school. We do not want them to remember fondly that the highlight of their immersion into Christ’s life took place at the ages of fourteen or twenty-one. Rather, for our Catholic students, we seek to promote faith in the Church itself, because the Church is not simply Pope Francis, the bishops, those teachers who are charged with teaching theology. Instead, the Church is the Body of Christ, a sacrament that mediates divine love to the world through the glorious poverty of the preached Word, of the sacramental life of the Church. At times, such faith is difficult. Our leaders, both ordained and lay, may fail to carry out this self-giving love. The preaching, the sacramental life of the Church, may be performed in a perfunctory manner, which seemingly deadens the faith of those gathered into this Body. But we cannot dismiss the Church, because it is within this Body that we come to encounter Christ Himself.

Catholic educational institutions, therefore, have quite a mission to uphold. Not one composed by a committee of faculty, staff, and students. Not one handed down from a diocesan office. Rather, the mission is nothing less than the transformation of all humanity into an icon of Christ’s own love for the life of the world. Catholic education is concerned about the marginalized, those perceived by society and culture alike as unworthy of education, precisely because of the ultimate vision of reality in which it operates. We see reality, all of creation, as a gift to be savored.

Thus, this edition of Church Life contemplates the ultimate vision of gift that is to direct Catholic educational institutions. It does not attend to issues in educational policy or novel approaches to pedagogy developed in journals of educational philosophy. Instead, in this issue, the reader is invited to consider the telos, the ultimate aim of Catholic education as the renewal of humanity in Christ. In this way, it seeks not simply to make an argument relative to what constitutes Catholic education in parish and school alike. Rather, we hope that through this vision, those involved in the educational mission of the Church will discover that their own vision of their work will be transformed.

Thus, if we as Catholic educators really want to form our students in the mission of Catholic education, then we’ll teach them not simply a love for the intellectual life, for service, even for leading prayer services. Instead, we’ll teach them a love for the Christ who comes to us in bread once bread and wine once wine. We’ll show them that the Catholic school’s deepest identity is learned in the wise but foolish school of the Church in which intellect and power and prestige are burned away by Christ’s own love.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IV</th>
<th>MUSINGS FROM THE EDITOR</th>
<th>Timothy P. O’Malley</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>THE MORAL LIFE</td>
<td>Deacon James Keating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>EVANGELIZING CULTURE</td>
<td>Timothy P. O’Malley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>A NEW SONG FOR THE NEW EVANGELIZATION</td>
<td>Carolyn Pirtle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>LIVING GOD’S WORD LIKE THE SAINTS</td>
<td>Danielle Nussberger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>HOLY CROSS AND CHRISTIAN EDUCATION</td>
<td>Rev. James B. King, C.S.C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>THE PEDAGOGY OF FAITH</td>
<td>Gerard F. Baumbach</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
AN ICON OF THE PEDAGOGY OF FAITH: ENCOUNTERING CHRIST, THE ETERNAL WORD
Megan Shepherd

THOUGHTS ON A THEOLOGY OF TEACHING: “YOU GIVE THEM SOMETHING TO EAT”
M. Joseph Pedersen

LET THE CHILDREN COME TO ME: CULTIVATING THE CHRISTIAN IMAGINATION OF THE CHILD IN SECULAR MODERNITY
Jessica Keating

THE IDEA OF A CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY
Timothy P. O’Malley

BOOKS FOR THE NEW EVANGELIZATION
by Adam Booth, C.S.C.

ECHOES OF CHURCH LIFE
Daniel Hoover
Vittore Carpaccio,
Consecration of St. Stephen, detail (c.1511)
courtesy ARTstor Slide Gallery
(University of California, San Diego)
There is a great mystery to the diaconate that is revealed in the diaconal ordination rite. On the day of ordination very little is said about what a deacon should do; rather, the rite focuses upon who a deacon should become. This focus can cause some consternation in Western men who are trained to be active and to “get things done.” To become a virtuous man does not seem to be an inviting “work” because there is nothing to see upon its completion—no new ministry, program, or work of charity. And yet, to become a virtuous man is seen to be a centerpiece of diaconal identity and a major plea to the Holy Spirit from the bishop within the ordination prayers. The Prayer of Consecration makes it plain that the Church is not looking for another group of active men, men who do good works; the Church has those in many quarters. Instead, the Church is looking for a group of spiritual leaders, men who live from the inside out, regularly offering their hearts to Christ as places for Him to come and live His mysteries. The deacon must learn to lovingly endure this coming of Christ and, after doing so, witness to the effect that such an interior life has on the larger life of Church and society.
Obviously, all in Holy Orders are ordained to be men who participate in the ministry of Christ, whether bishop, priest, or deacon. All these men are to receive a share in the mystery of Christ. However, from the perspective of believers, the priest is more “useful” than a deacon. The priest can celebrate Mass, hear confessions, and anoint the sick. Of course, a deacon can witness marriage vows, baptize, preach, lead wake services, and preside at liturgical prayers and devotions like exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, but these are not assessed by the baptized as urgently useful. When a priest arrives, Mass can be celebrated, sins absolved, and sickness consoled or healed sacramentally. The priesthood fills the Catholic imagination. What part of the Catholic imagination is filled by the diaconal mystery?

To be honest, still in its infancy of restoration, the diaconate does not fill the imagination in any expansive way. When a deacon arrives to minister he does not bring anything with him so central as the capacity to forgive sins or celebrate the Eucharistic liturgy. There is a poverty to being a deacon. We know that in emergencies even lay people can baptize and preside at wake services, etc.

When a deacon arrives to minister, what then does he bring? The deacon brings the unique grace of his ordination, a permanent vulnerability to the servant mysteries of Christ. He carries this grace in his being. When a deacon arrives to perform a ministerial duty (baptize, counsel, pray with others), he is present among the people as one who serves (Lk 22:27). How? He serves primarily by being vulnerable to receive grace himself, being open to the reception of divine intimacy in his heart so that such intimacy may define his presence. The deacon becomes eager to say, “I have to give myself in Christ’s own self-gift. The power is Christ’s; the cooperation with such power is my gift to Him.” In the deacon, the Lord desires to be with His people in their need, and the deacon cooperates with this dominical desire by bringing a word of hope to all in the midst of the secular culture of work, health care, law, education, labor, and more. As Christ descends upon the deacon at ordination, He is also descending upon the culture through the diaconal ministry. In this way, Christ continues to wait on the tables of human need through the deacon’s receptivity to Christ’s own life, Death, and Resurrection. In this cooperation with grace, the deacon extends the presence of Christ so that in and through the sacrament of Holy Orders, Christ presides, in time, at the liturgy of charity.1 The deacon possesses no unique power by virtue of ordination but he does possess a share in the power of Holy Orders. He also possesses a mission: he is sent by the bishop at ordination as one open to being configured by the servant Christ. This servant chooses to love those in need and, in so doing, evokes from them the vocation that is theirs by baptism.

Our Western sensibility which highly esteems achievement might say, “Well that is not much.” But one can say it gets even worse. What a deacon truly brings to any occasion is his own poverty, his own dependency upon God to bear the fruit of his ministry. “I can do all things in Him who is my only strength and my only virtue” (Phil 4:13). A deacon sacramentally embodies the scriptural truth that “without Me you can do nothing” (Jn 15:5). To be a spiritually poor deacon is to be one who suffers a new desire and new habits. The new desire is one that longs for an interior vulnerability to Christ’s servant mysteries (Lk 22:27; Jn 13:14-15; Lk 14:15-23; Lk 10:29ff). The new habits are ones that invite a deacon to a life of continual receptivity to the grace of such mysteries. When a deacon arrives at a ministry, what arrives in him is this new desire to be vulnerable and a new life of habitual receptivity. These two realities identify the man as poor. This poverty is his wealth, however, for without such poverty his ministry would rest upon his own natural wit, strength, or skills. These natural endowments can only minister to a person’s pain for so long and then these attributes become exhausted, revealing their inadequacy for the
mission of serving the Church. Only the spiritually poor deacon will minister with effect until death.

When a man first approaches the diaconal vocation, he normally considers it as a function, a work to be done, a contribution to the needs of the Church. To consider and be attracted to function is not wholly wrong; there is service to be rendered. But, as we have learned from the liturgy, the most important “active participation” in ecclesial realities is interior. Only when one truly is open to God acting in him can the activities of a man’s body be a source of healing. The deacon is called to let grace take him up into the action of Christ the servant. This “taking up” is not a poetic description of a pious wish but the key to effective ministry. To be spiritually poor is the anthem of the deacon, a worship that flows from the liturgy of his ordination and is sustained by his service at the daily Eucharistic liturgy. This disposition to poverty secures a deacon’s role in the liturgy of charity. We are to become united to the Lord and “provide a space for the action of God.”

Further, the meaning of diaconal poverty can be understood within the context of his most singular liturgical role. It is the deacon who, even if in the presence of the Pope himself, is charged to proclaim the Gospel during the Eucharistic liturgy. This is his irreplaceable liturgical role and hence a key to his whole identity and mission: his voice must be one with the Gospel. What makes the deacon a spiritual leader in his diocese, and not simply a humanitarian, is his utter dependency upon his sharing in Christ’s own mission of being sent from the Father. This dependency is expressed by his fidelity to an ecclesially formed heart under the guidance of the bishop. Each deacon is invited to suffer the indwelling of God’s Word as his only word. This is experienced as a suffering because men favor their own opinions over the objective truth that is Christ. It is the deacon’s privilege to embrace the poverty of being subsumed in the Word, a spiritual poverty that calls him to listen to the Word and welcome its forming power. Having the Word of God as his only word means that the deacon is more disposed to be questioned by the Word than to pose questions to the Word. In this way, his presence among believers, and within society, disposes others to question themselves about the ultimate meaning of any secular value.

NOTES

1 See James Keating, A Deacon’s Retreat (NJ: Paulist, 2010), 64-70.


Deacon James Keating, Ph.D., is Director of Theological Formation in The Institute for Priestly Formation at Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska.
Each January, members of Congress, the Supreme Court Justices, and the executive cabinet assemble at the Capitol to listen to the President’s State of the Union address. In principle, the exercise is an opportunity for the country to hear from the President regarding the vision that will guide the nation over the upcoming year. In reality, the speech is often an occasion for partisan politics. Each proclamation of the President is lauded by that Commander-in-Chief’s political party through a standing ovation and a round of applause. At the same time, the opposing political party sits in silence, standing and applauding only when it would be inappropriate to not do so (references to the military, praise for a retiring member of Congress, etc.).
This comical partisanship is presently being played out through the reaction of American Catholics to the papacy of Pope Francis. Indeed, on August 8th, the National Catholic Reporter published a column (written by David Gibson) in which the author assembled quotes from various blogs to show how liturgical traditionalists and conservatives are unsettled by the papacy of Pope Francis. It is a piece written from the perspective of power politics. Conservatives, according to Gibson, now must endure the same heavy-handed approach that those on the left underwent during the papacies of John Paul II and Benedict XVI. The article implicitly argues that John Paul II and Benedict XVI were conservative Republicans, who courted the favor of those who held the same political ideologies. Now, Pope Francis, the papal equivalent to a Democrat, is once again attending to the Progressive political platform. Indeed, this narrative of political violence and revolution has overflowed into the online comment section of this article. Those who have commented are rejoicing that the right-winged, conservative party of Catholicism must endure the same minority status as progressives did during the previous two papacies. A non-Catholic reading such comments would inevitably be surprised to read in the Scriptures the Christian obligation to love one’s neighbor as an act of divine worship.

This culturally inscribed narrative regarding the papacy is reductionist, ideological, and for this reason, un-Catholic. Indeed, it is impossible to ignore that there is a distinctive style to Pope Francis, which is at the very least different than that of Benedict XVI (it should be emphasized that this is partially because they are different human beings). The political and bureaucratic trappings of the Vatican are falling away under the evangelistic style brought about through Pope Francis’ preaching and his descent into the margins of society (a “revolution” perhaps begun not through Pope Francis himself but through the rather humble action of Benedict XVI resigning the papacy in the first place!). Nonetheless, the function of the papacy is not to represent a certain political ideology, which is assumed to be correct by adherents to that platform. Rather, the Pope is a visible sign of unity among Catholics. As Lumen Gentium (the Constitution on the Church from the Second Vatican Council) makes clear:

> The Roman Pontiff, as the successor of Peter, is the perpetual and visible source and foundation of the unity both of the bishops and of the whole company of the faithful. Individual bishops are the visible source and foundation of unity in their own particular churches, which are modeled on the universal church; it is in and from these that the one and unique catholic church exists. And for that reason each bishop represents his own church, whereas all of them together with the pope represent the whole church in a bond of peace, love, and unity (L.G., §23).

The function of the papacy is not ideological, not political, but a visible sign of that love and unity made possible through Christ’s presence in the Church, a gift offered for the salvation of the world. When Pope Francis speaks about simplicity, he is not presenting a political platform palatable to American Democrats. He is instead preaching the heart of the Gospel, one that should perplex the world. When Pope Francis visits a juvenile prison, he is embodying for the world the reality that light shines into the darkness; that even in the darkest places of life, in suffering and sorrow, there remains the gift of hope. He is enacting the New Evangelization, one that does not remain solely concerned about ecclesial politics but the art of self-giving love transformative of human society and the cosmos alike.
The problem with the political party approach to the papacy is that it presumes that each Pontiff must enact a revolution, a new way of doing things, over the last Pope. Is it not possible, instead, that each papacy strives to enact this unity, this gift of self to the world, in a particular way and with particular gifts? In fact, there is a sacramental beauty to Pope Francis’ claim that the encyclical *Lumen Fidei* was the fruit of four hands: his own and those of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI. Is it not the case that the life of the Church is the fruit of hundreds of millions of hands throughout time—hands such as those of St. Francis de Sales and St. Robert Bellarmine and St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross—who have dared to embody self-giving love in the world?

There is no single way to be Catholic, to become a saint. And likewise, there is no univocal way to be a Pope. The particular histories, the theological and spiritual formation of each man who sits in the Chair of St. Peter, will continue to make their mark until the consummation of the ages. Not all that each Pope does will be perfect. Nor can we be sure what is lasting from a papacy and what will fade away. Rather, like the parable of the wheat and the tares, the wheat of a papacy can only be known at the end of time. A political party approach to the papacy, whether professed by those who call themselves liberal or conservative, refuses to acknowledge that God might be acting even in decisions that we find troubling. After all, there might be an abundance of wheat, where we see only weeds.

Thus, it seems necessary for the flourishing of American Catholicism that we cease professing the heresy of the political party approach to the papacy. Those who tend to love the liturgical papacy of Benedict XVI should admire the way that Pope Francis descends into the margins of society as an act of Eucharistic love (thus, in some ways, continuing the liturgical papacy). Those who look to Pope Francis’ actions as a commitment to the poor should read Benedict XVI’s discussion of the Eucharist as obligating us to a life of concrete love to those most in need. Our hope for the papacy can never be that we desire one Pope to be right, while the other is proved wrong. Instead, as Catholics, our hope is that each Pope, through his own gifts, in his own concrete time, might lead people to contemplate how our humanity is elevated in Christ. Not every Pope will succeed in this work in every way. But rather than rip apart the Pope for his ideological impurity (or praise him for his purity), let us rejoice that those who look upon Pope Francis right now may be moved to love Christ ever more deeply.

Timothy P. O’Malley, Ph.D. is Director of the Notre Dame Center for Liturgy, an Assistant Professional Specialist in the Department of Theology at the University of Notre Dame, and editor of the journal Church Life.
Duccio di Buoninsegna; Discourse After the Last Supper (1308-11); Museo dell'Opera del Duomo (Siena)

courtesy ARTstor Slide Gallery (University of California, San Diego)
I recently spent a year of my life as an elementary music teacher. When I began, I had no idea what I was doing. Although I had majored in music and had even gone on to graduate study, I had never taken a single course in music education. I had no theories to help me, no mentor to guide me. Yet, there I was, on the first day of school, standing in front of 22 kindergartners, teaching them about melodic direction and rhythmic duration (or, in kindergarten terms, “high-low” and “short-long”).
Over the following months, as I pored over books and websites looking for resources and ideas, I discovered new levels of admiration for the exceptional teachers of my past, and found myself longing for someone to teach me how to teach. I sought advice from more experienced colleagues at my school, and as I listened, I noticed a common thread of wisdom beginning to emerge: classes and theories and mentors are invaluable, but you really learn to teach by teaching. I believe that this holds true for many other fields as well—musicians learn to play by practicing their instruments, athletes gain dexterity and coordination by running drills, scientists perfect formulae through experiments of trial and error. We can study theories and analyze best practices, but in the end, we usually learn best by doing.

Jesus knew this better than anyone. When His disciples begged Him, "Lord, teach us to pray" (Lk 11:1), He didn’t respond with a dense theological discourse on the nature of prayer or even with a definition of what prayer is. He taught them to pray by praying. “When you pray, say: Father, hallowed be your name” (Lk 11:2). We learn to pray by praying, and the liturgy is our school of prayer par excellence. In the celebration of the liturgy, we offer our prayer to the Father through the Son in the unity of the Holy Spirit. In the very act of joining our prayer to that of Christ, we learn to configure our prayer more authentically to His. Our prayer is formed in the very act of praying, and this is so because the words that we pray in the liturgy are not words to which any person can claim ownership or copyright. Therefore, we can fumble our way through the liturgical celebration, offering our prayer in the midst of distraction, confusion, even sorrow, and in that process, we are learning to pray. Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI explains the phenomenon this way:

[In the liturgy,]…words must precede our thought. It does not usually happen like this [in conversation] because we have to think and then what we have thought is converted into words. Here, instead, in the liturgy, the opposite is true, words come first. God has given us the words and the sacred liturgy offers us words; we must enter into the words, into their meaning and receive them within us, we must attune ourselves to these words; in this way we become children of God. We become like God. (General Audience, September 26, 2012)

Thus, the liturgy itself becomes our school of prayer, the locus where we lift up our hearts, imperfect, fearful, and distracted though they are, and offer them to God the Father united with the perfect prayer of Christ the Son. As we do so, “the Spirit too comes to the aid of our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit itself intercedes with inexpressible groanings” (Rom 8:26). Indeed, “the liturgy is…a participation in Christ’s own prayer addressed to the Father in the Holy Spirit. In the liturgy, all Christian prayer finds its source and goal” (CCC, §1073).

Within this participation of the liturgy, then, how is one specifically formed in this school of prayer? Benedict XVI speaks of the Scriptures and the words of the liturgy themselves as the primary means of entering into the prayer of Christ to the Father in the Spirit, yet there is one more fundamental layer often joined to these components of the liturgical celebration in which the faithful can give voice to their prayer in a unique and beautiful way: music. As then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger attests, “When man comes into contact with God, mere speech is not enough. Areas of his existence are awakened that spontaneously turn into song. Indeed, man’s own being is insufficient for what he has to express, and so he invites the whole of creation to become a song with him” (The Spirit of the Liturgy, 136). And again, the words to this song have been given to us.
The Paschal Mystery of the Incarnate Word of God provides the Church, the Bride, with the “definitive new song” of Christ, her Bridegroom; thus, at the liturgical celebration, during which we enter into the heavenly liturgy, the wedding feast of the Lamb, “the singing of the Church comes ultimately out of love. It is the utter depth of love that produces the singing. ... In so saying, we come...to the Trinitarian interpretation of Church music. The Holy Spirit is love, and it is he who produces the singing. He is the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit who draws us into love for Christ and so leads to the Father” (The Spirit of the Liturgy, 142).

We learn to play by playing, we learn to teach by teaching, and we learn to pray by praying. The prayer of the Church is suffused with song as, moved by the Spirit, she “responds to God’s love made flesh in Christ, the love that for us went unto death” (The Spirit of the Liturgy, 149).

Our participation in the liturgy is challenging. Sometimes, our voices do not correspond to the convictions of our hearts. At other times, we are distracted or preoccupied by the cares of the world. Christ always invites us, however, to enter into song, to rise above our own preoccupations, and to give our entire selves to the hymn of his Paschal Sacrifice for the honor and glory of the Most Blessed Trinity (USCCB, Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship, §14).
“Saint Mary Magdala, pray for us. All holy men and women, Saints of God, pray for us.” During the baptismal liturgy at the Easter Vigil, just before the water of new life in the Spirit is blessed, we sing these words as part of the Litany of the Saints. We implore the saints one by one, including the patron saints of the candidates for baptism, to pray for them and for all of us, that we might embrace the Christ who unites Himself to us through His salvific Death and Resurrection.
Pietro Perugino
The Crucifixion with the Virgin, Saint John, Saint Jerome, and Saint Mary Magdalene, detail (c.1482/1485); courtesy National Gallery of Art (Washington, D.C.)
We appeal to these holy women and men, because we know that they are examples to us in heeding the apostle Paul’s words, “...you too must think of yourselves as dead to sin and living for God in Christ Jesus” (Rom 6:11). The faith of these steadfast disciples grew out of their uniquely personal encounters with the Risen Lord and their subsequent proclamations of His Resurrection through their words and deeds that were conformed to Him.

“Saint Mary Magdala, pray for us.” It is right to call upon Mary Magdala during this Easter Vigil litany, because of her primary role in witnessing to Christ’s Resurrection. John’s Gospel tells us of Mary’s meeting with the Risen One. Weeping outside the tomb on Easter morning, she tells the two angels sitting where Jesus’ body should have been, “They have taken my Lord, and I don’t know where they laid him” (Jn 20:13). Mary’s grief at the loss of Jesus’ body is so acute, because she has accompanied Him all the way to the depths of Cross and tomb, thereby dying with Him, never imagining what it would mean to rise with Him. She desires to hold on to the only thing she has left, the wounded and broken body of her Lord.

When Jesus appears to her, she does not recognize Him at first. Mistaking Him for the gardener, she pleads with Him to let her know where His body has been taken. Only when Jesus speaks her name, “Mary,” does she know Him and address Him as her “Rabbouni,” or teacher. In her overwhelming love for Him, she clings to Him. But He commands her not to, for she cannot remain there with Him. She has another task to perform. She must go to the disciples and tell them that Jesus is going to the Father. Following Jesus’ instructions, she announces to His friends, “I have seen the Lord” (Jn 20:18). In calling Mary by name and beckoning her to move beyond the tomb, Jesus is claiming her as His own and gifting her with a new life born out of her sharing in His suffering and Death. Asking Saint Mary Magdala to pray for us, we seek to join her as cherished disciples of Christ who have followed Him to Cross and tomb through baptism and who have known Him, crucified and risen, in the breaking of the bread (cf. Lk 24:35).

Throughout our invocation of the saints, we recall their singular stories of death to sin and resurrection to life with God; we attest to the fact that our stories of death and rebirth are inextricably linked with theirs, because we are all bonded to one another in the Communion of Saints. As members of Christ’s Body, we are not only called upon to proclaim His Resurrection in word. Like Mary Magdala and the other holy disciples, we are made new in Christ’s image so as to be Christ for one another through actions that promote the peace and justice of God’s Kingdom inaugurated by the Incarnation. We are to pattern our lives after the blessed ones whom Jesus has welcomed into His Kingdom, because they hungered and thirsted for righteousness, willing to suffer persecution for the sake of it (cf. Mt 5:6, 10).
During the Easter Vigil’s exuberant celebration of the Paschal Mystery, we remember our baptisms, when Christ called us to Himself. Singing the names of our patron saints, we are identified as participants in their communion. For we are on the way to sharing in the fullness of the eschatological banquet that is theirs, as we hope to hear our Risen Lord greet us with these words: “Come you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, imprisoned and you visited me... whatever you did for one of these least brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me” (Mt 25:34-35, 40).

†

Danielle Nussberger, Ph.D. is an assistant professor in the department of theology at the University of Marquette, specializing in systematic theology, spirituality, and the theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar.
HOLY CROSS AND CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

BY REV. JAMES B. KING, C.S.C.

Photo: Carolyn Pirtle; Ave Crux, Spes Unica (August 2013); Basilica of the Sacred Heart, University of Notre Dame
Dear Friends,

This booklet is an attempt to distill the essential elements that typically characterize Holy Cross’ educational ministries across the globe, including at the University of Notre Dame. As noted in the text, while the concept of the “Notre Dame Family” has seeped deeply into the fabric of the University, the bonds that students, faculty, staff, and alumni experience here are ultimately the product of Blessed Basil Moreau’s original vision for Holy Cross education. That familial atmosphere first manifested itself at Notre Dame de Sainte-Croix, the first school Moreau founded in 1838 in LeMans, France, and though sometimes difficult to define, it is easily perceived wherever one encounters the community in the world today.

Virtually all religious orders have at some point needed to “rediscover” their founders, and in the last several decades, the legacy and writings of Moreau have been mined ever more effectively to reveal his practical pastoral genius and far-sighted educational philosophy. To some extent, Moreau’s influence has not been sufficiently appreciated because he left behind no lengthy, systematic treatment of his thoughts on Catholic education. Nevertheless, the charism he entrusted to the Congregation continues to strongly influence its own members and make the educational ministries where it serves distinctive.

We are deeply indebted to a number of people, both members of the Congregation and lay co-workers, who have reviewed and commented upon the text. We also hope these pages help others to better appreciate the legacy of Holy Cross’ founder and enrich their understanding of how our ministry is inevitably shaped by it at Our Lady’s University.

Yours in Notre Dame,
Rev. James B. King, C.S.C., Director of Campus Ministry
July 13, 2013, Anniversary of the Cause of Blessed Basil Moreau
Blessed Basil Anthony Moreau, the founder of the Congregation of Holy Cross, was born in Laigné-en-Belin, a small village about nine miles southeast of Le Mans, France on February 11, 1799, nine months before Napoleon Bonaparte took power and put an end to the French Revolution. The revolution began when King Louis XVI was forced to abdicate in 1789 amid popular discontent with a bloated and ineffective regime. Nobles gorged themselves at the public trough, oblivious to the growing wealth gap between rich and poor, and commoners grew increasingly restless as their taxes were raised to support royals’ lavish lifestyles. At the same time, historical notions that kings’ authority came from God and their personages were inherently divine in nature had been undermined by Enlightenment ideas that promoted individual rights, self-government, and skepticism about religion.
While many priests were themselves impoverished, the Catholic Church collectively owned a tenth of France’s land and enjoyed a host of legal and financial privileges accumulated over centuries, including freedom from taxation. Some clergy, especially among the lower ranks, initially supported the Revolution, hoping it would redress legitimate grievances, but the anti-clerical extremists who soon gained control went on the attack against the Church. Within a decade most of its property was confiscated, monasteries and convents closed, religious orders outlawed, and clergy required to take an oath of allegiance to the state. After assuming power at the end of the century, Napoleon permitted the Church to be reconstituted, though under more restrictive norms than had existed previously.

Many Catholics during that decade, particularly in rural areas, remained loyal to underground clergy who refused to take the oath. Small networks of peasants risked their own lives to shield and hide priests on farms and in forests where they lived under threat of arrest, deportation, beatings, and even the guillotine. They would gather together, sometimes in barns or cellars with friends standing watch, to celebrate the Eucharist and other sacraments clandestinely with clergy who surfaced at irregular intervals. With France’s government wracked by chronic instability and its people’s loyalties divided, the degree of religious persecution varied over time and region depending upon the sympathies of local authorities and whims of their superiors in Paris.

Basil was the ninth of fourteen children born to Louise and Louis Moreau, owners of a small wine shop. They were simple folk and pious Catholics, both likely illiterate. They ensured that their son was baptized by a priest who had refused to take the oath. The French educational system, administered almost wholly by the Church prior to the Revolution, including 321 schools in the Diocese of LeMans alone, had been virtually destroyed by the time Napoleon took power. While persecution against the Church generally abated as Moreau was growing up, resentments still simmered below the surface and occasionally spiked.

When he was ordained a priest a full generation later in 1821, his homeland and the Church were slowly recovering. Religious schools began to open again along with new secular ones, but his was virtually a lost generation. Young people of his age were left mostly uneducated and largely uncatechized. French civil servants well into the 19th century tended to be anti-clerical and used a variety of quasi-legal and bureaucratic means to impede the Church’s educational ministry. Instead of permanently settling the relationship between Church and state, the Napoleonic reforms continued to provoke difficulties for decades afterward, especially for Catholic religious orders still prohibited from directly owning land or property.

Moreau spent his childhood years watching the Church struggle to regain its footing and sustain itself against lingering discrimination that ranged from selective and subtle to nakedly overt. Those childhood memories left an indelible imprint upon him. He came to see his major purposes as a priest and educator: first, to re-evangelize adult Catholics so they understood the basic principles of their faith and, even more importantly, to provide the young with a first-rate
liberal arts education that would enable them to surmount anti-religious prejudice and so slowly transform civil society in the decades ahead.

As Moreau grew into his teens both very bright and exceedingly pious, his pastor keenly perceived within him a potential vocation to the priesthood. He quickly grasped complex subjects, whatever may have been lacking in his own early education, eventually becoming an excellent student in philosophy and theology. Yet as Moreau navigated his way through seminary studies, he increasingly saw possibilities beyond the needs and circumstances of his native region and petitioned his bishop to send him to a seminary for foreign missionaries. At this early age, he merely wanted to be sent, like the first apostles, to spread faith in Jesus Christ and his good news wherever he might be most useful. However, his superiors had already slated him for advanced studies and training as a seminary professor. Moreau dedicated himself to serving obediently in this role and became a popular instructor, respected not only for the clarity of his lectures but also for his personal piety and pastoral energy. He quickly developed a reputation throughout the diocese of LeMans as an excellent preacher, frequently called upon to assist at parishes and give retreats. Sixteen years after he was ordained a priest, Moreau became the founder of Holy Cross, whose members he sent out across France and as missionaries around the world.

The Congregation was provisionally formed through an “Act of Union” on March 1, 1837, essentially an informal agreement that sparked varying degrees of enthusiasm—and skepticism—among the signers. Holy Cross only gradually evolved into a full-fledged religious community in which everyone took the same vows. By this pact, Moreau succeeded in combining into a single association a small number of auxiliary priests he had founded two years earlier from among the diocesan ranks to preach parish missions and instruct youth with the Brothers of St. Joseph, a loose confederation of teaching brothers founded by Rev. Jacques Dujarié in 1820. Dujarié had nearly become a martyr during the height of the Revolution’s terror. He traveled in disguise to be ordained secretly in Paris, was protected by an underground network when a warrant was issued for his arrest, and spent several years moving stealthily from one rural hiding spot to another. But by the early 1830s, his health was failing, and the number of brothers had declined by almost half. He turned to Moreau for guidance and after several years demonstrated his trust in the younger man by relinquishing control of the brothers to him. Dujarié gave his blessing to Moreau’s proposal to merge the two associations into one and died a year later in 1838. One biographer states that as Moreau himself matured, “there burned within him an ardor which was ceaselessly aflame along with a compelling necessity to undertake and to resurrect projects lying on the verge of ruin and to bring into existence others which were destined to live.” (Catta, *Basil Anthony Mary Moreau*, Vol. 1, 142) The Association of Holy Cross, as it was originally named, was the ultimate manifestation of both tendencies.
He purchased land from a friend and located the entire enterprise in an area known as Sainte-Croix, which then lay on the outskirts of LeMans. It is rare for a religious community to be named after a neighborhood, and Moreau would have certainly chosen otherwise had it not been so entirely appropriate for his association to be closely identified with the cross of Jesus. Notre Dame de Sainte-Croix, the Congregation’s first school, was established there in 1838. A few years later, in 1841, Moreau founded a community of religious women named the Marianites, one of three sisters’ congregations that would eventually bear the name of Holy Cross. He might have become a prominent theologian had he focused upon developing his scholarship. Instead, he spent many years as a student and professor formulating a rich spirituality based upon imitating the person of Jesus that he ended up applying practically in the communities and ministries he established. As his vision of religious life evolved, it is no surprise that he dedicated each branch to a particular person in the Holy Family, whose virtues were to be imitated: the brothers to St. Joseph, the priests to Christ, and the sisters to Mary. Nevertheless, the ultimate purpose of his religious family was rooted in a commitment to evangelization and education, whether that meant leading former parishioners back to the Church in France or bringing them to the faith for the first time in foreign lands.

In 1857, Moreau published a short work entitled *Christian Education* that focuses upon the essential qualities of teachers and provides practical advice about how they should manage their classes and relationships with students. Although it may not be given the treatment Moreau may have originally envisioned, over the last several decades it has increasingly become a seminal source for understanding the educational charism that he bequeathed to Holy Cross, rendering a distinctive character to its educational ministries, which have grown to include more advanced and complex institutions of higher learning. The first sentence of Moreau’s small booklet states, “[Education] is the art of helping young people to completeness. For the Christian, this means that education is helping a young person to be more like Christ, the model for all Christians.” Moreau believed that life was essentially a personal, daily struggle for union with God, in which the Christian modeled himself after the Son’s example of fidelity. While none of us can be so perfect, the aim for the Christian was twofold: to reach one’s fullest potential in this world while remaining focused upon the ultimate goal of fullness in the life to come. Moreau’s experience as a theology professor taught him how to succeed in the classroom, but upon establishing Sainte-Croix he wanted it to be an institution where people also strove to imitate the ideal of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph and would be a sign of the true communion possible with God. As the years have unfolded and Holy Cross has delved deeper into the writings of its founder, a pedagogy emerges that accurately reflects the process by which a child gradually evolves into an adult.
It is a vision that takes young people from their earliest days of grappling with ideas and making sense of the world around them to preparing them for lifelong discipleship in a supportive environment that nourishes their gifts and fuels their desire for God. The five principles described here capture the recurring themes in Moreau’s writings that continue to shape the lives of students in Holy Cross educational institutions today, whether they are located in India or Indiana:

### MIND
Seeking understanding through the integration of faith and reason

### HEART
Discerning our personal vocation in service to the Church and world

### ZEAL
Enkindling the desire to use our gifts to boldly proclaim God’s Word

### FAMILY
Embracing Christian community as the context for lifelong formation

### HOPE
Trusting in the cross and God’s promise of the kingdom

Dove designed by Bruno Gätjens González from The Noun Project

Fire designed by Arjun Adamson from The Noun Project
“Even though we base our philosophy course on the data of faith, no one need fear that we shall confine our teaching within narrow and unscientific boundaries. No, we wish to accept science without prejudice and in a manner adapted to the needs of our times. We do not want our students to be ignorant of anything they should know. To this end, we shall shrink from no sacrifice.”

(Circular Letters of Father Basil Moreau, 36)

A Holy Cross education begins with a rigorous and full development of the mind. Moreau himself was a committed student who took his studies seriously and engaged energetically in intellectual controversies and debates. While a student and young priest, he was disciplined in his studies and motivated to do extra reading and linguistic studies in addition to assigned course work. He took the initiative to correspond with leading intellectuals, seeking both insights and opportunities for dialogue with them.

Moreau perceived early on that it was detrimental to both the Church and society if Catholics were to disengage from the scholarly questions and controversies of the age. He was a contemporary of John Henry Cardinal Newman and may have been familiar with his writings. Moreau would certainly have appreciated the cardinal’s observation that “Nature pursues its course, now coincident with that of grace, now parallel to it, now across, now divergent, now counter, in proportion to its own imperfection and to the attraction and influence which grace exerts over it” (Newman, The Idea of a University, 71). Both Moreau and Newman fully believed that grace and nature are complementary sources of God’s revelation and integral to human understanding. However, as the Industrial and Scientific Revolutions advanced, they recognized that the tension between the dogmas and interests of the Church and society were increasingly straining the traditional understanding that ultimate truth emanates from the Creator. While neither of their beliefs was shaken by new discoveries like the scientific theory of natural selection that caused others to doubt the very existence of God, they each recognized the danger of the trend since the onset of the Enlightenment to compartmentalize theology and rely solely upon human knowledge.
Consequently, Moreau, like Newman, intensified his efforts to promote the kind of Christian education that would more authentically and convincingly assert the Church’s conviction that true knowledge and understanding inevitably rested upon the integration of reason with faith. Moreau was known for quoting Bacon and Cicero alongside Aquinas and other theologians, and he added the first science course—a class in physics—to the seminary curriculum in LeMans in 1835. More than a decade before Charles Darwin published *On the Origin of Species*, Moreau welcomed the positive contributions of scientific learning to an extent that would still be provoking controversy within some quarters of the Church decades later, and nearly seventy years before the outbreak of World War I, Moreau foresaw that the tumults periodically rocking post-revolutionary France were but a prelude of worse things to come. “It is not hard to foresee an imminent and radical change in the destinies of all Europe, and even of the entire human race” (*CL*, 33). This need to prepare young people with the capacity to understand and deal with the societal conflicts that simmered below the surface of post-Enlightenment European culture and would eventually lead to World War I was integral to Moreau’s vision of Christian education.

As he fought for Holy Cross schools to gain acceptance and credibility, Moreau realized the students who graduated from them would need to be theologically articulate, intellectually proficient, highly skilled scholars and debaters who could hold their ground on others’ turf. It was simply essential for the next generation of Christians, including teachers and religious, to be conversant with modern theories and philosophies, even those they opposed. In fact, Sainte-Croix quickly evolved into a premier school for both primary and high school-aged pupils. Less than a decade after its founding, independent state inspectors ranked it ahead of its primary secular competitor, the Royal College of LeMans. This was despite local authorities’ persistent attempts to deny Moreau permission to teach subjects that would permit it to be accredited on an equal footing. He had witnessed the same battle throughout his childhood—a struggle which continues to this day in the Church’s attempts to refute a variety of ideologies fueled by secularism. In striving for academic excellence, a Holy Cross education seeks to develop students’ intellectual capacities within the context of a broad curriculum. Today, when the prevailing trend in higher education is toward reducing core requirements, the Congregation’s colleges and universities remain committed to providing a strong liberal arts foundation with philosophy and theology courses required for all students in order to equip them for wide, generous engagement with society and culture. That kind of intellectual formation also creates possibilities for more interdisciplinary study and integrative research, in contrast to a movement within many academic disciplines toward increasing specialization and fragmentation of knowledge.

From Moreau’s first victory at Sainte-Croix to the present day, the Congregation’s schools have been renowned for forming students academically according to the convictions he espoused. The University of Notre Dame is the premier Catholic research institution in the world. The University of Portland is one of the leading regional universities in the Western United States. Notre Dame College in Dhaka, Bangladesh, a country that is only 0.3 percent Christian, is widely accepted to be the country’s best college, a place where Muslim government ministers readily send their children. Even though Holy Cross College in Agartala, India was only founded in 2009, it has already earned a reputation for academic excellence, with its underprivileged students achieving success rates on a par with above-average peers at other colleges. St. George’s College (a K-12 school) in Santiago, Chile has for decades ranked among the
nation’s elite, and Lakeview Secondary School in Jinja, Uganda achieved a similar ranking, like Sainte-Croix, within several years of its founding in 1993.

Any fears Moreau may have had about science trumping religion in the post-Enlightenment era may seem primitive today as branches of knowledge and technological progress have mushroomed. He would naturally be surprised and shocked by the atomic bomb, moon landing, and cloning. He would probably be delighted with email and iPhones since so many of his problems with distant missions resulted from long lag times between the arrival of handwritten letters carried by clipper ships to France and America. But the speed and complexity of 21st century life would have undoubtedly given him an even greater appreciation for the need to educate and prepare Christians to resist the temptation to put ultimate faith in the promises of science. He would be just as insistent that Christians place themselves in the midst of the debate about how to use the things we produce not only for material or personal gain but ethically and spiritually, for the advancement of all people.
Human beings can absorb a boundless amount of knowledge and information, but if Christians fail to see themselves first as people with a vocation to open their hearts to Christ, then they cannot expect to change society. As the current *Constitutions of the Congregation of Holy Cross* state, “For the kingdom to come in this world, disciples must have the competence to see and the courage to act” (2.15). Competence can be acquired externally in many different ways, but courage is instilled over time by cultivating one’s heart and constantly directing its purposes beyond one’s self. It is a process that requires spiritual and vocational formation from devoted teachers and other role models. In discovering the truth of who we are as human creatures with social obligations, born with an innate desire to love and be loved, we are freed and empowered to become something better, more like the person of Jesus. By cultivating the heart, we develop in virtue, and acquire the steadfastness to stand in the face of opposition and derision for the sake of our most deeply held beliefs, and hew to a higher standard of justice.

Holy Cross’ founder purposefully dedicated a year of his life to work on cultivating virtue within himself at a nearby monastery. He undoubtedly felt the influence of a wise spiritual advisor who counseled him, “Our first rule must be to disregard what only tickles the ears; it is hearts that we must win.” As he progressed from being a professor and administrator to the founder of a religious community, Moreau became certain in his conviction that a Holy Cross education should enlighten the heart as well as the mind.

The unfolding of a Christian’s baptismal identity over time depends upon discovering the deepest stirrings of one’s heart. Moreau preached a sermon in 1833 in which he said, “What must we do to become perfect? Follow Jesus Christ, that is to say, imitate him; that is the commitment we made in baptism … following Jesus is the consequence of this sacrament of faith; it is the holy and irrevocable law of our vocation to Christianity, and we renew it by our religious promises.” It is possible to intellectually grasp and appreciate Jesus’ teachings,

“We shall never forget that virtue, as Bacon puts it, is the spice which preserves science. We shall always place education side by side with instruction; the mind will not be cultivated at the expense of the heart. While we prepare useful citizens for society, we shall likewise do our utmost to prepare citizens for heaven.” *(CL, 36)*
but they will never become the basis for our actions unless we are compelled by a desire to live and teach from the heart.

Holy Cross colleges and universities today continue to place a particular emphasis on the cultivation of students’ hearts through spiritual and vocational formation that builds on the initial grace of our initiation into the Church. This formation certainly centers upon the celebration of the sacraments—especially the Eucharist, which was Moreau’s lifeblood—but it is not confined to chapels and campus ministries. It also takes place in service learning centers, classrooms, and residence halls. Fr. James Connerton, C.S.C., the founding president of King’s College in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, put it quite succinctly when he said its goal was to teach its students “not only how to make a living, but how to live.” Moreau perceived the essential challenge that lay ahead for the Church as the sciences became divorced from their roots in theology, and he sought to shape young people in the conviction that their thirst for eternal life must guide their learning and behavior in this one. He had benefitted personally from educational opportunities that eluded all but a few among his peers. He had developed his intellect into a powerful means for communicating the gospel to disparate audiences from seminarians to poor country folk who could not sign their names, and he believed it was his mission to do the same according to each person’s abilities. He was convinced that Holy Cross schools should produce graduates who would be more than mere participants but Christian leaders and citizens wherever they found themselves later on.

More than a century after Moreau’s death, Pope John Paul II wrote that a Catholic university “enables students to acquire, or if they have already done so, to deepen a Christian way of life that is authentic. They should realize the responsibility of their professional life, the enthusiasm of being the trained ‘leaders’ of tomorrow, of being witnesses to Christ in whatever place they may exercise the profession” (Ex Corde Ecclesiae, §23). A truly Catholic education today, as in Moreau’s time, encourages students and faculty to see knowledge and truth as constituting a united and organic whole that is not merely an end in itself.

Moreau never turned on a computer or rode in an automobile, nor did he found a modern college or university. He would not live to see how his educational philosophy would need to be developed further for a much more complex world, and he did not attempt a more complete exposition about the essential harmony between faith and reason as did Cardinal Newman and later Pope John Paul II. However, he intuitively grasped that the empirical and theoretical knowledge acquired by brilliant minds could be applied for the benefit of the world only by citizens whose hearts incline toward God.

In Christian Education, Moreau wrote, “If at times you have a marked preference for certain people, it should be for the poorest, the most abandoned, the most ignorant, the least gifted by nature. If you surround them with the most assiduous attention, it is because their needs are greater and it is only justice to give more to those who have received less.” In 1844, six years after Sainte-Croix opened its doors and barely a decade after Frederic Ozanam had founded the Saint Vincent DePaul Society, Moreau encouraged his students to found one of its first local college chapters. A couple of years later when sections of LeMans were inundated by floods, he organized a relief drive and delivered supplies personally by rowboat. Moreau frequently found jobs for the unemployed and took in many of the poor children of the city at the request of city officials.
Consequently, it is not surprising that Holy Cross institutions have been known for instilling a commitment to service in their students and have been innovators in the creation of programs that provide them with multiple opportunities to engage in life-changing domestic and international opportunities. These continue to grow; some recent examples include an eleven-month extension program started in 2009 by Stonehill College for post-graduate students that quickly expanded to India, the Dominican Republic, and Honduras, as well as immersion experiences sponsored by Holy Cross College in Ghana and St. Edward’s University in Peru, Uganda, and India. These initiatives are characteristic of the spirit that Moreau inculcated in his Sainte-Croix charges, confident that a society increasingly dubious about the truths of the Church could be persuaded by the examples of those trained well to defend its teachings and fashion their hearts after the person of Christ, our first and greatest teacher.
Zeal was the term Moreau used to express the virtue that actualizes the development of our minds and the cultivation of our hearts for the good of others. It is the passion to act upon what we have witnessed and learned in classrooms and in our experiences outside of them. An education of mind and heart means to enkindle within students a burning desire to act boldly, like the original disciples afire with the Holy Spirit on Pentecost who set out to preach the Good News to all the world. As Moreau sent French men and women religious to America, so too do Holy Cross colleges and universities today emulate that spirit by instilling within students a passion for service, whether by volunteering at a local Catholic Worker house or spending a summer teaching in a Ugandan grade school.

He wrote in *Christian Education*, “Zeal is the great desire to make God known, loved, and served, and thus save souls. Apostolic activity is therefore the essential character of this virtue.” Zeal is what drives and motivates Christians, beginning with their baptism, to use their gifts and talents for the betterment of others. Zeal fuels us to overcome fear and sacrifice our preferences for the needs of our brothers and sisters when mere human logic fails and we find ourselves compelled to follow the truer impulses of our hearts. As Moreau said succinctly in the mid-1850s, “We are committed by our vocation to extend the reign of Jesus Christ in the hearts of all people” (*1855 Exercises, “Meditation for the Feast of the Patronage of St. Joseph”*).

While Holy Cross was young, still fledgling and uncertain of its future in France, Moreau began sending, generously and some might say recklessly, some of his most promising religious out to distant lands. Holy Cross’ first mission outside France was to Algeria in 1840, only three years after the Congregation was founded. That mission failed after a brief time; however, the first group sent to the United States arrived in 1841, established itself a year later in Northern Indiana, and became the University of Notre Dame, from which many schools, parishes, and other works would eventually be established. The same fruitfulness took hold in Canada just a few years later. Once Holy Cross religious reached Montreal, the community began to grow quickly and spread widely throughout the country. The first missionaries to East Bengal in the following decade struggled mightily, suffering numerous deaths, but eventually persevered. Today of nine Bangladeshi bishops, five are Holy Cross religious, and the community is proceeding with plans to establish a new college in the Diocese of Mymensingh.

By the mid-1850s, Moreau was receiving more invitations than he could possibly accept to send religious near and far. They came from Martinique, Haiti, Greece, India,
Scotland, Argentina, and Poland (where Moreau did send personnel, though the mission floundered within two decades), in addition to other French dioceses. No longer was Holy Cross such a shaky proposition. In 1857, the Congregation received its official approbation as a religious institute from Rome, and by then Moreau had clarified its threefold purpose as: 1) the perfection of its members through the practice of the evangelical counsels (the vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience); 2) the sanctification of others through preaching, particularly in rural areas and foreign missions; and 3) the Christian instruction and education of youth in schools and orphanages.

Ironically, Moreau, who had sacrificed his earlier dream of becoming a missionary and gave almost half his life to expanding Holy Cross, visited the foundations he supported in Canada and the United States only once, in the same year the community received Pope Pius IX’s approval. The young seminarian who burned with passion for reestablishing the Catholic faith in the parishes of Western France had grasped Holy Cross’ potential as an international apostolic community and seized upon multiple opportunities to increase its reach. That spirit embedded itself within the fabric of the Congregation and led it in the 20th century, long after Moreau’s death, to send religious to Haiti and to Central and South America, India, and Africa to found schools and parishes. Holy Cross religious of this era would readily grant the tension that exists to this day as a result of the missionary impulse to expand and embrace new missions even when the human and financial resources are lacking to sustain them.

Moreau was also faulted later, with some justification, for sending these brothers and priests out for teaching assignments and into parishes without adequate religious formation or supervision; however, he did not found the Congregation as an end in itself but as a means to go out and spread the gospel of Jesus Christ. He repeatedly stretched the community to the limit of its capacities because he could not bear to know that there were people uneducated and unformed in the faith. The Constitutions state that the “mission sends us across borders of every sort,” national, cultural, and linguistic (2.17), and the Congregation invites students, parents, parishioners, and co-workers to join in its apostolic work. Whatever the flaws in Moreau’s approach, Holy Cross began as a missionary community and has continued to serve the Church as one.

Fr. Edward Sorin, C.S.C., the founder of the University of Notre Dame, captured that spirit quite well in a letter to Moreau less than two weeks after he and seven brothers first arrived in the winter of 1842 at the property located adjacent to South Bend, Indiana. Sorin and his small band had stepped ashore in New York barely a year earlier, possessing little money or knowledge of the English language. Nevertheless, he boldly predicted, “Before long [Notre Dame] will develop on a large scale … it will be one of the most powerful means for good in this country.”

Throughout his life Moreau continued to come up with new ideas and ways to spread the gospel, and he did not hesitate to send out others to carry out that mission. Some of those efforts failed, while others have endured and prospered far beyond any reasonable expectations. At Sainte-Croix his pupils used atlases to track the religious men and women who crossed the Atlantic, and they devoured the letters and tales they sent back. Today, air travel allows students to cross an ocean within a day to do good in distant countries. Moreau’s zeal set an immediate example for Sorin and other missionaries, but the students currently being educated at Holy Cross institutions constitute the founder’s greatest legacy. They are the living testimonies to the endurance of his charism—to fuel young people with the passion for venturing out into the world to make God known, loved, and served.
Zeal is the hoped-for product of Christian education in the two most influential environments of a young person’s life: home and school. These places are where they spend most of their formative years, learning not just from parents and mentors but also from siblings, other relatives, and peers, about what to think and how to act. Moreau realized that he would never have become a priest but for the influence of his family, along with his pastor, who first recognized the stirrings of a vocation and arranged for his education. His approach contrasted dramatically with the typical 19th-century school, characterized by iron discipline, including corporal punishment, and little tolerance for even minor acts of misbehavior. If people associated with Holy Cross speak frequently today about the “family-like” atmosphere they encounter in our parishes and educational institutions, that is directly traceable to the combination of Moreau’s teaching philosophy and his ideals for community life. Modeling each group within the Congregation—priests, brothers, and sisters—upon the image of the Holy Family, applied also to their interactions with students and laity. Moreau cultivated an environment at Sainte-Croix in which both religious and lay faculty were called to be “spiritual parents,” and, in an unusual step for the time, of forming a parent advisory committee and a rough form of “alumni association” for graduates who remained devoted to Sainte-Croix. In short, he wanted its atmosphere to imitate the good Christian home in which he was raised.

In 1858, a former student who had graduated ten years earlier saw Moreau coming out of the school chapel. He wrote:

My heart was all a-flutter, like one who sees his aged father once more after a long absence, and I ran toward him … I let myself be caught up in his arms … For me Father Moreau was not an officer of the university who had been in command of the little regiment to which I had belonged, but he was a father who had admitted me within the inner circles of his beloved family and who loved me as a child over a long period of years … For them [priests and brothers], it is not enough simply to throw out a few lessons in literature or science like so much fodder, but they see in young men hearts to form and souls to save. (Catta, Vol. 1, 641-2)

Most constituents today typically identify that familial atmosphere as the distinguishing and most appealing feature of a Holy Cross apostolate. It is, however, an ephemeral quality, felt more easily by people who have experienced it than it is readily describable, even for those who have enjoyed a long association with the Congregation. Any attempt to articulate the spirit of Holy
Cross to someone who has not been educated in one of its institutions is like trying to explain the interior dynamics of one’s own family to an acquaintance.

While the concept of family was central to Moreau’s vision, relatively few people appreciate that the personal attention to students and close collaboration with the laity characteristic of the community’s ministries today, whatever their own particular qualities, is directly traceable to his pastoral genius. Moreau referred constantly to the “family” of Sainte-Croix in his addresses and correspondence and used the same term in reference to the community at Notre Dame long before he ever laid eyes upon it. Fr. Sorin, whom Moreau correctly identified as having the best potential for leadership among his first group of young priests, imitated the founder’s example and heeded Moreau’s counsel that priests and brothers not only teach students, but live among them in dormitories. Not accidentally, the most unique characteristic of Notre Dame for those who have actually attended the University (and not merely experienced it vicariously through its athletic program) is the community spirit and faith life that thrives within its residence halls. This way of living in Christian community originated with Moreau.

In 1844, he wrote in a short guide for teachers, “Our students are destined to live in the business and problems of the world. So they should not be made to live a type of life that they would have to abandon when they leave our institution. They should be trained in such a way that they may be everywhere what they were in school.” This concept of family would come to be the primary takeaway for students at Sainte-Croix and generations of students in Holy Cross educational institutions since—the feeling that alumni instinctively pick up on and value when they return as graduates, even after absences of many years. The term “Notre Dame Family” would be a cliché were it not such a palpable reality as it once was at Sainte-Croix. It is a model that all of Holy Cross’ colleges and universities have held to in some form. However, despite his fondness for students, Moreau did not encourage excessive familiarity in his teachers. Neither did he underestimate the difficulties of dealing with young people, but he urged instructors to be patient with them. It is startling, given the standard practices of the day, to read the following excerpt in Christian Education:

> Teachers must keep their vigilance within reasonable limits and not imitate those who are always in a state of great alarm, often over some childish prank which they are unable to evaluate correctly. Those who are too vigilant are unaware that a great talent of a good teacher is often to pretend not to notice what he or she does not want to be obliged to punish. An indulgence prudently managed is worth much more than outbursts and the punishments which follow them. Always avoid this embarrassing vigilance. It is revolting to students and unbearable for teachers.

Loving the child and sparing the rod while resisting the temptation to act like a buddy would be good ABC’s for any teacher’s manual or simply good advice for parents today. The language may be archaic, but the general principles are translatable to both primary schools and college classrooms and dormitories. Moreau recognized the need to maintain a deliberate balance between firmness and leniency in dealing with students. He intuitively understood the difference between being a teacher-mentor and a hovering ninny; good teachers avoid fighting small battles and liberate their students to soar rather than quashing their spirits. Ultimately, Moreau was an educational pragmatist who relished being around young people and, unlike some teachers, chose to be amused rather than irritated by their smaller follies. His generosity and kindness infused Sainte-Croix with a familial spirit that made it unusual for its era, both a school and a home. He loved students; they knew it; and it changed how they lived once they left school walls behind.
Next to the Chapel of Christ the Teacher at the University of Portland stands a bell tower erected in 2009. The Congregational motto, “Ave Crux Spes Unica” or “The Cross Our Only Hope” is carved across the entrance at its base. Atop its peak stands a cross with a small glass globe in the middle that causes it to cast both light and shadow simultaneously. It captures the central paradox of the cross that catapults Christians into another reality—the conviction that the Son of God died willingly, even for the sake of those who persecuted and abandoned him, in order to bring us through darkness to glory.

When Moreau wrote in 1849 that “Jesus Christ should be our model since our likeness to the Divine Master is the foundation of our journey to eternal glory” (CL, 36), he expressed simply the heart of the Christian’s call. Striving for completeness means spending one’s life as a citizen of this world, imitating the person of Christ as the gateway to citizenship in heaven. On this bedrock principle, all faith and thus all human hope rests. A Christian is compelled, then, to be zealous for union with God and direct his or her thoughts and actions accordingly. While anyone can navigate his own path without formal or substantial instruction in the faith, as was true of Moreau’s parents, some leaders, lay, religious, and clergy must be capable of articulating and teaching the message. The work of education is essential to the life of the Church and its apostolic mission of going out to all the nations proclaiming the gospel as Jesus instructed his disciples to do in his final commission.

Eighteen hundred years later, Moreau looked upon the spiritual wreckage of his native France and felt called to become an educator in the faith. As his vision and heart expanded, he followed the apostolic example of sending out missionaries to give their lives over to the founding of parishes and schools. He expected instructors, whether religious or lay, to cultivate excellence in the classroom, be models of zealous virtue, and fashion a second home for their charges. He wanted those young people, as would any Catholic educator, to carry their formation with them and be battle-ready for the challenges to their faith that they would inevitably face in the wider world.

Still, the first four principles of mind, heart, zeal, and family, important though they are, would have little
distinctive Christian purpose apart from hope in the cross of Christ. They constitute the foundation of an education in the faith, but a person’s capacity for lifelong discipleship is hard to predicate from exam results or résumés, no matter how well formed he or she may be. Moreau prayed that students would remember what they were at Sainte-Croix—and other Holy Cross schools—and live the same everywhere, but ultimately, he could only hope that they would persevere in faith once they graduated and entered upon their long journeys back to the Father.

One does not have to be a Christian to believe that adversity does, or at least can, make people stronger and prepare them for harder challenges in the future, but no education in the faith is complete without an understanding of how the cross is much more than a burden once carried by Jesus. It was for Moreau “a treasure more valuable than gold and precious stones” (*CL*, 34). In both light and shadow, the cross is Christ’s gift to us, our only hope. Moreau’s trust the cross is the essential component of his legacy, and its influence can be found in the final section of the Congregation’s *Constitutions*, written more than a century after his death:

> We must be men with hope to bring. There is no failure the Lord’s love cannot reverse, no humiliation He cannot exchange for blessing, no anger He cannot dissolve, no routine He cannot transfigure. All is swallowed up in victory. He has nothing but gifts to offer. It remains only for us to find how even the cross can be borne as a gift. (8:118)

From its foundation in 1837, the Congregation has faced a litany of crosses—financial crises, political unrest, religious persecution, deaths of religious from disease, natural disasters and violence, and the waywardness of others. As the father of Holy Cross, Moreau experienced many of these trials personally, but through them all, both congregational and personal, he always encouraged the community to see the hand of Divine Providence. He firmly believed the Lord’s choicest blessings come through the crosses we bear out of love for him and love for others. The paradox of the cross is a hard truth to accept but even more necessary to model and teach.

Yet none of us does that alone, including those whose mission lies in Christian education. A line in Holy Cross’ *Constitutions* reads, “And, as in every work of our mission, we find that we ourselves stand to learn much from those whom we are called to teach” (2.16). Christians spread hope, and religious, like those in Holy Cross, have a special obligation to embolden others to pick up their crosses. Yet we, too, draw strength from the family spirit in our institutions and are better disciples when humble enough to admit that we have a lot to learn from students and co-workers of all ages. For all our learning, we seek a deeper wisdom. We yearn to look out upon the world like the awestruck shepherds who gazed in wonder at Mary’s newborn son and, during more difficult times, to emulate the friends who stood by her decades later as she stared at his cross, willing herself to trust in God’s promise.
The educational process itself requires a particular type of dying to self. Whenever we have to shed old ways of thinking, viewing, or perceiving the world around us and ourselves, a conversion of both heart and mind must take place. The contemplation of new ideas and needs beyond our comfort zones requires a sacrificial willingness to put at risk everything that we think we already know. We need to have hope in that process to stick with it, to believe that what is born of questioning beliefs previously taken for granted will lead us to a new and better understanding of our vocation as citizens in this world and for the next. The charism of education in the faith that the Holy Spirit entrusted to the Congregation of Holy Cross through Blessed Basil Moreau combines a form of pedagogy that mirrors a person’s natural human development and moral formation with the call to Christian discipleship. It encourages believers to embrace the cross of Jesus while progressing through this world toward the light of God’s kingdom. Whether through the recognition that time is always shorter than we think or the lasting effects of Moreau’s own missionary impulses, Holy Cross religious today are still formed with the sense of urgency found in Christian Education: “Hurry then; take up this work of resurrection, never forgetting that the special end of your institute is, before all, to sanctify youth. It is by this that you will contribute to preparing the world for better times than ours.”


Ave Crux Spes Unica!
THE PEDAGOGY OF FAITH

BY GERARD F. BAUMBACH, ED.D.
This text originated as an address given to the Theology Department faculty members of the Catholic high schools of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend as part of the Institute for Church Life Catechesi Tradendae Study Day (March 5, 2012).

Blessed be God!

During my Dad’s final years of life, he was unable to communicate through the gift of voice. A victim of Alzheimer’s disease, Dad’s voice suddenly departed a few years before he died. Other family members, already Dad’s advocates, became Dad’s voice in new and distinctive ways. His own vocal expressions were gone but Dad, child of God, was not.

I am convinced that Dad communicated during his last years through the gift of sight. On the day he died, his eyes scanned the room where he lay, focusing intently on each of the family members gathered around his bed. Dad, even in the moments leading up to physical death, continued to “speak” to us. He continued to proclaim the goodness of God. In today’s language, we might identify him as an emissary of the New Evangelization.

Faith in God, the one true God of all who reveals himself to us, is faith that enables us to proclaim in word and action, in thought and look, in Gospel and glance, the goodness and love of God. Such faith enables us to communicate by speaking up for one another as mutual disciples with shared beliefs. Whatever our life circumstances and whatever misgivings we may have about God, family, or students, we can remain confident in hope and sure in faith. Faith in a self-revealing God is faith in a God who calls and who yearns for our response. The Catechism of the Catholic Church asserts that “faith is a personal adherence of the whole man to God who reveals himself. It involves an assent of the intellect and will to the self-revelation God has made through his deeds and words” (CCC, §176).
We trace much of our pedagogical role to the Apostles and to the disciples among whom Jesus walked, taught, and lived. We do so as a Church of Word and Sacrament with an almost overwhelming responsibility to secure and hand on the faith we cherish. Now called to live in a spirit of “New Evangelization,” we begin with what I would call “self-evangelization,” despite certifications gained or degrees earned. We examine and reflect on our lives, though “at present,” St. Paul tells us, “we see indistinctly, as in a mirror, but then face to face” (1 Cor 13:12). The wise catechist examines one’s own heart and soul before doing catechetical surgery on those of another.

God’s love for us runs so immeasurably deep that he becomes one with us in Christ Jesus. This is a saving and liberating love, a “yes” to a love that will never end. This loving God and Father of all offers us the irresistible opportunity to explore and explain faith, and even more, to embrace and live faith. Such is the opportunity and challenge before the Catholic high school teacher serving the ministry of catechesis.

How might we continue to promote the pedagogy of the faith as we serve as “teachers of religion” in the life of the Church? Here is what the Fathers of the 1977 Synod on Catechesis, with particular attention to children and youth, stated about “the specific nature of the pedagogy of faith” in their Message to the People of God, offered two years before Catechesi Tradendae and two years after Evangelii Nuntiandi:

“In all catechesis one must always unite indissolubly and in an integrated manner:

- Knowledge of the word of God;
- Celebration of faith in the sacraments;
- The profession of faith in daily life.

Pedagogy of faith therefore has this specific characteristic: an encounter with the person of Christ, a conversion of the heart, the experience of the Spirit in the ecclesial community.”

Pope John Paul II, a participant in the 1977 synod, affirmed in Catechesi Tradendae that catechesis was “a central care in [his] ministry as a priest and as a Bishop” (CT, §4). He asserted that “the definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch, but also in communion, in intimacy, with Jesus Christ: only He can lead us to the love of the Father in the Spirit and make us share in the life of the Holy Trinity” (CT, §5). Later, the Catechism would offer clear reminder that “We must believe in no one but God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.” (CCC, §178).

John Paul II reminds us that “pedagogy of faith is not a question of transmitting human knowledge, even of the highest kind; it is a question of communicating God’s revelation in its entirety” (CT, §58). Identified as “active pedagogy in the faith” by the General Directory for Catechesis, catechesis offers a broad sweep that is challenging in its breadth and perhaps even off-putting in its scope. After all, it would be so much simpler to focus solely on the demands of a textbook with its summary-type sidebars of faith statements.

We wisely take another look at Catechesi Tradendae: “Very soon the name of catechesis was given to the whole of the efforts within the Church to make disciples, to help people to believe that Jesus is the Son of God, so that believing they might have life in his name, and to educate and instruct them in this life and thus build up the Body of Christ.” (CT, §1). Years later, the Catechism will quote Catechesi Tradendae in stating that “Catechesis is an education in the faith of children, young people, and adults which includes especially the teaching of Christian doctrine imparted, generally speaking, in an organic and systematic way, with a view to initiating the hearers into the fullness of Christian life” (CCC, §5, quoting CT §18; italics in original).
Key to the pedagogy of the faith is forming what is to be an eternal relationship with Christ the Savior. It is key to our pedagogically-informed catechetical service and witness. This is no limited agenda, easily accommodated by a 38-minute class session four or five times a week. As committed teachers of the faith, we approach the hopeful horizon for catechesis with enthusiasm and a healthy dose of savoir-faire—that extraordinary blending of who we are, what we know, and how we communicate the faith. So we take heart as we accept with humility the treasure we receive and renew with vigor our commitment to the treasure we hand on.

With these remarks as prelude, I now propose four points for consideration regarding the pedagogy of faith:

**Point 1:**
The pedagogy of faith calls us to embrace and hand on the Word of God in a time of turbulence and tumult, a time ripe for the New Evangelization.

**Point 2:**
The pedagogy of faith calls us to affirm that Christ is at the center of our lives, present with us as we catechize.

**Point 3:**
Faith-filled catechists teach that Jesus Christ redeems us and invites us into His redemptive presence through the gift of the Eucharist.

**Point 4:**
Faith-filled catechists promote both orthodoxy and orthopraxis for the good of the student, the school, and the entire Church.
Point 1:
The pedagogy of faith calls us to embrace and hand on the Word of God in a time of turbulence and tumult, a time ripe for the New Evangelization.

Turbulence and tumult are all too common within our country and our world. Surrounded by daily doses of news bites that worry, challenge, and even frighten us, we strive to maintain a vibrant faith. A daily advertising blitz suggests to impatient and impressionable young people, “you can have it all.” But what is “all”? For us, “all” is identified by the hope we share in Christ.

We teach with gentleness and care that this young and injured century remains secure as we resist surrendering to turbulence and tumult. “Hope does not disappoint,” St. Paul tells us, “because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the holy Spirit that has been given to us” (Rom 5:5). Augustine wrote to Laurence the wisdom-seeker that “love cannot exist without hope nor hope without love, nor can either exist without faith.”

The strong voice of the catechist invites excessive uncertainty and lingering confusion to taste wisdom and goodness at the table of faith and reason. I am reminded of the third letter of John, which exhorts us to “love in truth” and “walk in the truth” (3 Jn 1:1, 3), for we are “co-workers in the truth” (3 Jn 1:8). In all of this, the school is a type of rock, a foundation in faith whose structure is firm and whose teaching by and from faith benefits from an enriching “catechetical pedagogy” (GDC, 244). The 2008 Synod on the Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church aids our applying fresh layers of mortar to the foundation already built on “the Word of God,” identified by one author in a 2008 USCCB Catechetical Sunday resource as a “phrase [that] refers to

- The pre-existent Word, the Second Person of the Trinity, the Son of God,
- God’s Word at creation, through whom everything that exists came into being,
- Jesus Himself, the Word that became flesh and dwelt among us,
- Sacred Scripture, God’s inspired Word,
- Church Tradition, which faithfully echoes the Word of God to every generation.”

None of us stands alone as we teach. We are, in a way, “with God” in the catechetical moment, for God invites us into the life of the living Word. God is the master of self-disclosure. As one directory notes: “God’s self-communication is realized gradually through his actions and his words. It is most fully achieved in the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ. The history of this self-revelation itself documents the method by which God transmits the content of Revelation as contained in Sacred Scripture and Tradition. This is the pedagogy of God. It is the source and model of the pedagogy of the faith.”
Confident in our mission to “go into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature” (Mk 16:15), we do not yield to subtle or explicit pressure. For this is our work, the work of all of us, the entire Church. We recall Paul’s great letter about the Church to the Ephesians in which he exhorts them to hold fast to that powerful union of “one body and one Spirit, as you were also called to the one hope of your call; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all” (Eph 4:4-6). These “seven unities” engage us in witness to the world. Indeed, we are not a renewed 21st-century school corporation united or bound together by a seven-columned corporate flow chart. We are the Church of the ages. No wonder we ask of ourselves, what will Christians of succeeding generations say or know of us?

We are led, energized, and brought together in our catechetical mission by our chief catechist, our bishop. Indeed, all of us are called to enact the catechetical mission, a branch of the sacred vine given to the Church in Christ Jesus. It is together that we “speak the truth, each one to his neighbor, for we are members one of another” (Eph 4:25). We share a bond in faith and teach foundations in faith rooted in the Trinity. Whether from within the environs of the school or far from our usual educational setting, we seek Christ who calls us to himself, even when we resist, for we are stewards of the word of God, “24/7.”

Point 2:
The pedagogy of faith calls us to affirm that Christ is at the center of our lives, present with us as we catechize.

Catechesis is no ordinary conversation. We encounter Christ and, through the goodness of God and the gifts we have received, enable our students to do the same as maturity and education in faith take root. I am thinking here of Catechesi Tradendae 19. As noted already, each of us likely can stand for some new evangelizing of our own, some extension or revisiting of the conversion, or turning, of the heart. Even for those of us baptized as infants, a heart bereft of ongoing conversion can become a muscle wearied by routine over time.

I believe that we are experiencing in this day in the life of the Church a turning toward Christ and one another. Although this turning involves heightened interpersonal interaction, it may be challenging for some of us, and for our students as well, for a sense of isolation can capture the human spirit. The type of conversion of which I am speaking challenges all of us to dig deeper for baptismal meaning and understanding as we act as advocates for faith professed, celebrated, and lived. This is especially pertinent for promoting intellectual understanding and for rejoicing as students build linkages to Catholic Social Teaching and other ways of witnessing to our Catholic tradition. We speak not about Christ but speak Christ, the One whom we encounter each day. Indeed, “Christ, the first evangelizer” (NDC, 1), calls us to himself. No wonder the National Directory for Catechesis states that “Catechesis aims to bring about in the believer an ever more mature faith in Jesus Christ, a deeper knowledge and love of his person and message, and a firm commitment to follow him” (NDC, 19).

Jesus is the catechetical master of savoir-faire. When referring to Christ’s teaching through His life as a whole, Pope John Paul II notes in Catechesi Tradendae:
I am not forgetful that the majesty of Christ the Teacher and the unique consistency and persuasiveness of His teaching can only be explained by the fact that His words, His parables and His arguments are never separable from His life and His very being. (§9)

The mystery of the Incarnation moves us to the way of the paschal mystery of Jesus’ passion, death, resurrection, and ascension, through which the work of our salvation is won for us by Christ (cf. Jn 1:14). From the sacred emptying of the womb of the Blessed Virgin to the sacred emptying of a tomb hewn from rock, we are invited into a sharing of love that words describe weakly and inadequately. We enter into the Paschal Mystery through God’s love given in Christ, now guided by the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church.

Why this emphasis on a tomb? Why do we catechists find fullness in seeming emptiness? Why do we sometimes sense that we are swimming against the current, going against conventional wisdom when working with young people? We find our answer in the Cross of the One who asks not so much “Where are you?” but rather the loving and inviting question, “Who are you?”

We humbly declare to the Savior of all, “I am your catechist, Lord, in your service.” We accept this graced role with a good dose of humility, for Jesus is “the unique Teacher because His teaching is not merely a collection of abstract truths but the Truth itself, ‘the communication of the living mystery of God’” (NDC, 8; quoting CT, §7). In the words of the General Directory for Catechesis, “In the school of Jesus the Teacher, the catechist closely joins his action as a responsible person with the mysterious action of the grace of God. Catechesis is thus an exercise in ‘the original pedagogy of the faith’” (GDC, 138). Now that is a persuasive pedagogy! No wonder Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI proclaims with simple beauty in his first encyclical the words of 1 John 4:16: “God is love.”
Point 3:
Faith-filled catechists teach that Jesus Christ redeems us and invites us into his redemptive presence through the gift of the Eucharist.

We read in the Gospel of Mark, “After John had been arrested, Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God: ‘This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel’” (Mk 1:14-15). The Kingdom of God, present in the Lord Jesus and given witness by His words, His signs, and His works, is here. Signs of the Kingdom, especially in the ultimate sign of Eucharistic celebration, surround us. For Jesus Christ not only redeems us but also invites us into His redemptive presence through the gift of the Eucharist. His “multi-dimensional” pedagogy of signs, words, and works continues to inspire us and summon us to Himself.

In the Catholic high school we listen for echoes of faith resonating among our students amid the local culture of the school. As we listen, we may hear the voice of St. Cyril of Jerusalem, whispering in our ears his words to candidates for baptism in the fourth century: “Prepare your heart for the reception of teaching and the fellowship in the holy Mysteries.” Later on during Lent Cyril would offer this charge regarding the giving over of the Creed: “This summary I wish you to commit to memory, word for word, and to repeat among yourselves with all zeal, not writing it on paper but engraving it by memory on the heart. . . . Keep it as a provision for the way throughout the whole course of your life . . . .”

From what I have experienced during my 40 plus years as a catechist, the essential binding force for catechists and for those whom they teach is that of the “holy Mysteries,” particularly the Eucharist. Reliance on this sacrificial memorial enables us to enter into the Paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ, strengthening us for Christian witness.

The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School points out, “The essential point for students to understand is that Jesus Christ is always truly present in the sacraments which he has instituted, and his presence makes them efficacious means of grace.” While some students might wish that the experience of the Sacrament would conclude with the final verse of a recessional hymn or quick movement to the next school activity, what is expected of us and of them is what I would term “Eucharistic mystagogy.” Lesson plans can change and class activities can take on new meaning when Eucharistic mystagogy becomes an expectation for high school catechesis.

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults tells us that “[mystagogy] is a time for the community and the neophytes together to grow in deepening their grasp of the paschal mystery and in making it part of their lives through meditation on the Gospel, sharing in the eucharist, and doing the works of charity.” There are obvious similarities here to what was said earlier about gaining knowledge of the word of God, celebrating faith in the sacraments, and professing faith in daily life.

Eucharistic mystagogy is less about “doing” as time-consuming activity than it is about “transforming” as life event. It is about living and cherishing each moment as the time of kairos, “now” time, transforming time. Awakened and anticipated through the fiat of Mary, the divine gift of the Incarnation, and the prophetic work of John the Baptist, this is time without an “off switch.” It is time that welcomes during its full duration—longer than a 38-minute class period and greater than a lifetime—a rich, compelling, and sustaining pedagogy of faith for our students.

But what, we may ask, does mystagogy have to do with the pedagogical formation of the catechist? Do the terms mystagogy and pedagogy share only the Greek root agogos, meaning “leader”? I would argue that in
matters of faith both have to do with God’s continuing presence among us. The catechist in this instance welcomes a mystagogical role as one of guiding and walking with the learner, uncovering doctrinal truth, meaning, and mystery through the experience of the sacraments. For this carrier of the Gospel is more than a practitioner, more than one pursuing measurable ends to “easily-scored” eternal mysteries.

For the Catholic high school student, the walk of daily life is a walk sustained by “the power to walk in newness of life,”19 experienced each day in the hallways of your schools and in narrow and broad hallways of life beyond the classroom. Mystagogy promotes faithful participation in this transforming time offered in “the eucharistic sacrifice, the source and summit of the Christian life” (Lumen Gentium, §11).

Point 4:
Faith-filled catechists promote both orthodoxy and orthopraxis for the good of the student, the school, and the entire Church.

As noted earlier, the term “pedagogy of faith” incorporates a harmonizing of essential elements of catechesis: “an encounter with the person of Christ, a conversion of the heart, the experience of the Spirit in the ecclesial community” (MPG, 11). What might we make, then, of what some might describe as a dualism between content and method, between orthodoxy and orthopraxis? How might our Christian identity be handed on? Again, we turn to Catechesi Tradendae: “It is useless to play off orthopraxis against orthodoxy: Christianity is inseparably both” (CT, §22). And later:

The irreducible originality of Christian identity has for corollary and condition no less original a pedagogy of the faith. . . . The science of education and the art of teaching are continually being subjected to review, with a view to making them better adapted or more effective, with varying degrees of success. There is also a pedagogy of faith, and the good that it can do for catechesis cannot be overstated. In fact, it is natural that techniques perfected and tested for education in general should be adapted for the service of education in the faith. However, account must always be taken of the absolute originality of faith. (CT, §58)

Properly understood, both content and methodology are rooted in the living faith of people formed in faith. A vibrant “content-method” coupling often is rooted in family, and I urge catechists and teachers everywhere to rely on and renew family communication on behalf of their students. I probably learned more at home from my mother about Catholic faith and life than from
any other source. I remember watching her venture out weekly with another parishioner to visit Catholics struggling with the life of faith. While my late mother knew that she enjoyed the support of the parish and Catholic school, she also knew that local support was no substitute for parental responsibility. She modeled for me both the message of faith and approaches for handing on the faith with vigor.

What is my point in sharing this anecdote? To affirm the importance of content is to affirm the importance of the experience of people coming to faith. To affirm the importance of sound catechetical approaches is to affirm the importance of the experience of people coming to faith. Said differently, to deny either is to deny the benefits to be derived from both.

Several catechetical benefits accrue to the school when Eucharistic mystagogy becomes a partner in the content-method conversation. Emerging from the experience of the Eucharist, mystagogy builds links between mystery and methodology. With its fundamental reliance on reflection on the sacred mysteries, mystagogy demands that content and method “get along.” It does so by a catechetical probing of both divine and human methodology.

A mystagogical perspective sets a sacramental context that frees up the individual’s and community’s gifts of multiple intelligences for understanding, thereby offering a predisposition to methodologies that otherwise might be overlooked. For example, the six tasks of catechesis identified in the catechetical directories and the understanding of catechesis proposed within the RCIA offer multiple perspectives for a comprehensive approach to catechesis. The grounding or starting point is anticipation and experience of the sacraments.

Catechetical methodologies enliven the entire catechetical enterprise when applied with mystagogical awareness. Just think of all that can be probed when linking the experience of the sacred mysteries to “learning through human experience, learning by discipleship, learning within the Christian community, learning within the Christian family, learning by heart, making a commitment to live a Christian life, learning by apprenticeship,” and “learning through the witness of the catechist” (see NDC, 29). As the National Directory for Catechesis asserts, “Religion teachers in Catholic schools not only teach the Catholic faith as an academic subject but also bear witness to the truth of what they teach” (NDC, 54, 9c).
Conclusion

We have now probed four points regarding the pedagogy of faith:

**Point 1:** The pedagogy of faith calls us to embrace and hand on the Word of God in a time of turbulence and tumult, a time ripe for the New Evangelization.

**Point 2:** The pedagogy of faith calls us to affirm that Christ is at the center of our lives, present with us as we catechize.

**Point 3:** Faith-filled catechists teach that Jesus Christ redeems us and invites us into His redemptive presence through the gift of the Eucharist.

**Point 4:** Faith-filled catechists promote both orthodoxy and orthopraxis for the good of the student, the school, and the entire Church.

The pedagogy of faith invites us into God’s own way of catechizing through his own self-communication and especially in the gift of the Incarnation. “The action of the Holy Spirit in the Church continues the pedagogy of God. The Holy Spirit unfolds the divine plan of salvation within the Church” (*NDC*, 28a). This powerful unfolding nourishes and sustains the Church as faith steps lively in this age of New Evangelization.

A living catechesis rooted in God’s loving self-disclosure relies on and benefits from a variety of ways and means of learning as it “carries out [the] complete work of initiation, education and teaching” (*NDC*, 28; quoting *GDC*, 144). To the benefit of the pedagogy of the faith, mystagogy bridges initiation, education, and teaching as we view in adolescent eyes and hear in maturing voices Truth come alive. Students savor sweet understanding of the Word of God and offer with confident fortitude the humble fervor of Christian witness. This rich pedagogy fosters doctrinal clarity and living doctrinal application as we remain ever mindful of “God’s own original methodology of faith: his gradual Revelation of the truth that is Christ” (*NDC*, 55).

Our students are living examples of an enduring Catholic identity that the entire school and diocese celebrates, cherishes, and exemplifies. This is no disconnected identity, for “the Church draws her life from the Eucharist.” As emissaries of the New Evangelization, we seek to enable our students to swell in faith, to rouse and support them during crises of adolescent identity, and even at times to carry them to the table of the Lord in the Eucharist. As we do this, we need not worry about filling Christ’s shoes (or, actually, sandals). He fills ours, and then he carries us as our catechist, our teacher, the One who “passed on to [his disciples] his pedagogy of faith as a full sharing in his actions and in his destiny” (*GDC*, 140).

Hear this, all you peoples!

Give ear, all who inhabit the world,

You of lowly birth or high estate, rich and poor alike.

My mouth shall speak wisdom,

my heart shall offer insight. (Ps 49:2-3)

Blessed be God!

---

Gerard F. Baumbach, Ed.D. is Emeritus Faculty at the Institute for Church Life at the University of Notre Dame and Director Emeritus of the Institute’s Echo Faith Formation Leadership Program.
NOTES


5 Cf. GDC, 238.


8 NDC, 28; Cf. Dei Verbum §15.


10 See GDC, 140; NDC, 28.

11 NDC asserts that “The incarnation of the only Son of God is the original inculturation of God’s word” (21A). I would propose that catechists apply to the local environment the assertion of the NDC that “inculturation involves listening to the culture of the people for an echo of the word of God” (NDC, 21C).


14 Footnote that follows “instituted” reads: “Sacrosanctum Concilium, 7: ‘Christ is present in the Sacraments with his own authority, so that when one baptizes it is Christ himself who baptizes . . . .’ ”


16 Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) (International Committee on English in the Liturgy, Inc. (ICEL) ©1985), 244; cf. NDC, 35D.

17 Cf. MPG, 11.


AN ICON OF THE PEDAGOGY OF FAITH

THE RAISED HAND

BY LUKE SLONKOSKY, M.A.

Christ and the Apostles (c. 4th century); Catacombs of Domitilla (Rome)
You can tell a lot by the timing, posture, and movement of a raised hand. The quick and sudden, midsentence hand raise often catches my attention and I anticipate a thoughtful inquiry into my lecture. The slow, slouching, ninety-degree elbow raise frequently precedes the request for the bathroom and freedom from the current attack of information and instructions. The shaking, waving, over-eager, over-achiever hand raise almost always offers to write on the board, deliver the mail, pass out the tests, clean up after projects, email the class, and bring in cupcakes. All of these examples are caricatures of our students, and yet each of these students is in our classrooms this year, and will be every year.

I offer this image of a raised hand to share a reflection I had during my third year of teaching. It occurred to me that I had gradually altered my approach to raised hands. When I began teaching, I naively called on each and every hand that was raised, and gave my absolute best, most exhaustive answer to each question and comment. My lessons often ran over the allotted time. My re-written tests and unit plans reflected the reality that I was not covering all of the material, and was definitely not going to get through the textbook by May. More importantly, I feared the questions and I feared my lack of answers. I feared the consequences of my students’ responses to my answers. I feared the lack
of control that instantly occurred whenever I paused or concluded a verbal instruction or explanation. No matter how many times I finished with “does that make sense?” or “does that answer your question?”… I did not make sense, I did not answer their question.

I had become so focused on answering a question, I had neglected to respond to the person. I was trying to give an answer, instead of being a teacher.

Yes, teachers give answers, but we live an example that answers the unspoken question asked by every student in every classroom, every day of school: Can you love me unconditionally? Can you love me when I ask the stupid question? Can you love me when I ask you to repeat your instructions? Can you love me when I ask you a challenging question, when I stump you, and when I ask the controversial question that asks you make a judgment or share your opinions or beliefs? Our first answer to their raised hand happens in our mind and heart moments before we verbalize a response.

My third and fourth years of teaching were increasingly more joy-filled and productive because I took the time to reflect on the questions that were asked during class, and tried to figure out what they revealed, and who they revealed. I used to be concerned about what questions I asked; now I wanted to focus on inspiring questions from my students. I wanted to see their hands go up.

“Are you thinking or tired?”

I frequently interrupted my quiet classroom with an obtrusive “Are you silent because you are checked out, or are you thinking?” Augustine suggests we “must in our discourse make trial of everything that may succeed in rousing him, and as it were dislodging him from his hiding place” (First Catechetical Instruction, 43).

I responded to my lethargic students by injecting lectures with analogies and stories and specifically stories from my childhood, stories that I loved to tell and stories that contained characters and choices that actually happened and could be examined closely for pieces of truth and images of good and evil. Some stories worked, some did not. When I look back on the ones that worked, I found that they each contained what Flannery O’Connor described as “an action that was both totally unexpected and totally believable, both in character and beyond character” (Mystery and Manners, 111). I did not go looking for this in my stories, I just started with the stories I found most compelling and worked backwards to find lesson plans that needed stories. To rouse the students from their hiding places, I called on everyone in the room as much as I could. I no longer waited for a raised hand, and I refused to acknowledge a shouted question or comment that barged into the discussion bypassing the established rules of conduct.

As my lessons improved, classroom energy increased, and chaos ensued. I immediately began a war to reclaim the value of raising your hand. Detention numbers rose quickly and so did student frustration, but in the end I think I won some sort of victory. I created an atmosphere in which respect was rewarded and the need for timing, poise, and presence increased. Every year a new group of students would argue that I was ruining all the fun by not allowing their spontaneous jokes to make everyone laugh. I responded with, “Great comedians can create their own timing…you will become even funnier if you can make us laugh after being called upon.” Chris, Meghan, and George will probably never be on Saturday Night Live, but they regularly made D-period laugh, and they also learned decorum.
Now of course, in the movie version of this story, my students learned to respect me and each other, and never again spoke out of turn, and passed this tradition on to the next class, and slowly every classroom in the school was changed, and a future Nobel laureate would recall this valuable lesson in a moving acceptance speech. I did not live the movie version, but I did keep fighting the battle.

A raised hand is just one of many small details in the icon of the pedagogy of faith. A raised hand gives me reason to pause and examine how I look at my students when they raise their hand, how I speak to them, and ultimately, how I love them, and love God.

If I want to live this pedagogy of faith, and teach according to this pedagogy of faith, then I must recognize the moments of this pedagogy of faith. Perhaps I have identified the most obvious one—a raised hand—but much like the mysteries of faith that continually reveal greater depth and understanding of God's love, a raised hand is a mystery revealing not only a student in search of a factual understanding of information, but is a person asking for an answer of unconditional love.

†

Luke Slonkosky, M.A., is the Assistant Director of the Echo: Faith Formation and Leadership Program at the University of Notre Dame.
AN ICON OF THE
PEDAGOGY OF FAITH

ENCOUNTERING CHRIST, THE ETERNAL WORD

BY MEGAN SHEPHERD, M.DIV.
Within the Catholic high school, formation often becomes fragmented. Differences in staffing, resources, and approaches to ministry lead to a lack of integration among different dimensions of the spiritual life. Students study religion in class, go on retreats, celebrate Mass and earn service hours often overseen by different departments or staff members.

Yet, “it’s all curriculum.” What happens on the athletic field, in conversations on retreat, during class sessions, in afterschool activities, or while in prayer all contribute to the development of young men and women of faith.

This holistic vision of formation guided the restructuring of our campus ministry department at a Chicago high school. In restructuring, we made the decision to lay everything on the table and ask first: “How can we best serve the needs of our students? How can we focus on ministering to people rather than administering programs?”

Our response was to move from two separate departments of Pastoral Ministry and Community Service to create the Department of Formation and Ministry. Guided by a Director, the rest of the staff served as class-level chaplains. We were each responsible for the pastoral formation of one class as we worked to integrate their religious studies courses, service commitments, liturgical celebrations, retreats, and leadership training. We also had a faculty chaplain who oversaw the spiritual formation of staff and faculty.

This transition provided us the opportunity to re-envision how we approach each year of formation and develop new strategies to minister to the specific needs of each class of students. As the Sophomore Chaplain, I had the opportunity to engage with the Religious Studies department as they moved from one semester to a full year of Scripture studies. Viewing all of our ministry efforts with sophomores through the lens of “Christ, the Eternal Word” provided a holistic vision for connecting their studies, retreats, leadership, liturgy, service commitment, and reflection.

At the beginning of the school year, we joined together in a sophomore class liturgy to share the vision for the year, celebrate in thanksgiving around the table of the Lord, and bless the Bibles that would journey with them throughout the year.

This is the reflection I shared with the sophomore class at that liturgy. I offer it to you as an “icon” of the pedagogy of faith.

---

**Encountering Christ, The Eternal Word During Your Sophomore Year**

*Holy Family Church, Saint Ignatius College Prep, Chicago, IL August 31, 2007*

This year, you have the privileged opportunity to grow in your relationship with the eternal Word, Christ Jesus. Through your religion course you will study the Scriptures, the holy Word of God, which constantly reveals more and more of God to us. On your retreat you will have the opportunity to share in conversation, activities, and prayer with your classmates and retreat leaders—an opportunity to see Christ in one another. And in your service commitment this year you have the opportunity to imitate Christ through your service to
the poor and the marginalized. This year is a blessed opportunity, but as of right now it is only that—an opportunity. It is up to you to take advantage of this gift.

This year you will study the Scriptures, the revelation of God’s self to us. These pages contain the stories of holy men and women over the years who have encountered God and been transformed by grace. The Hebrew Scriptures share the story of the people of Israel beginning with Creation, the fall of Adam and Eve, the Exodus from Egypt, the entrance into the Promised Land, and the struggle of the Israelites to establish a lasting kingdom. In the stories of the prophets, we hear the struggles of the people to be faithful in their everyday lives, and of the holy prophets sent by God to speak the unpopular and difficult truth of their shortcomings. The Psalms offer songs of praise and thanksgiving, lament and petition—the emotions of our human lives.

These words of Scripture are so much more than words. This Bible is not just another book; it is the Word of God, the Word that was spoken from the very beginning of time. This Word, the eternal Word, is Jesus Christ. The Gospel of John doesn’t begin with stories of the baby Jesus at Christmas. Instead, the story begins at the very beginning of time itself: “In the beginning” (Jn 1:1). These are the first words in the Bible (Gn 1:1) and the author of the Gospel of John repeats them to remind us that from the very beginning, Christ was present.

As Christians, we read the Old Testament—the Hebrew Scriptures—with this understanding: that Jesus is present in each moment, story, relationship, and event. Rooted in our belief in the Eternal Word, Jesus Christ, we read the stories of the Old Testament with new eyes, eyes that see God working in the world in relationship with people. People like us who make mistakes, fall into sin, make destructive decisions—but also people who are capable of love and compassion, hope and joy.

Despite all of the darkness in the world—sin and death, pain and suffering—our faith holds fast to the belief that Jesus Christ has triumphed over death. In the Gospels we find the story of this amazing grace: the life, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. There are also letters written to the early Christian communities as they begin to live a life of faith in Jesus Christ. We see the light of Christ shining forth over the years. And through study and prayer, we can see that same light shining forth in our world today.

Take a look around you at your classmates and your teachers. Think of your parents, and friends. Jesus Christ is right here in our midst. The Eternal Word—the Son of God—became human, just like us. The glory of God—the light of the world—took on flesh, a body that would suffer and die.

In the letter of St. Paul to the community gathered at Philippi, we hear him encouraging believers to model the selflessness of Jesus Christ. Not the selfishness that was as much a part of the world then as it is today, but a radical commitment to serving others.

The Eternal Word shared in the glory of God yet freely chose to enter into the reality of our human existence. And not just hovering around the edge or finding a nice comfortable niche somewhere, but fully embracing the reality of life and of death. Jesus Christ is the Eternal Word. He became human, became a servant, giving up everything for us—even to the point of death. And through His Death, He brought us all to eternal life.

At Saint Ignatius College Prep, we often use the expression “men and women for others.” Jesus Christ is the model for us to follow. He was a man for others with every thought, word, and breath from His first to last. As you begin your sophomore year, strive to become men and women for others in imitation of Jesus Christ. I challenge you to take advantage of every opportunity this year to learn more about Jesus Christ: through your Scripture class, your service commitment, your retreat, and your prayer.
Class:
In your religion class, keep your mind and heart open to the Word of God. Don’t let it become just another class to sit through. While all learning can transform your mind, this course can transform your heart and soul as well. As you read the Scriptures, think about all of the millions of people who have shared these stories with you. Let their faith inspire you. Treat your Bibles with the reverence they deserve. They are the holy words of God. Ask for the Holy Spirit to guide you as you journey through the pages of sacred Scripture this year.

Service:
Why do we serve? To feel good about ourselves? Because it is required? Because there are people in need? At the heart of why we as Christians serve is Jesus Christ. Out of love for us, Jesus became human and put His entire life at the service of others, even to His Death. If our God loves us so much that he is willing to die for us, how can we do anything BUT love and serve others in return?

Jesus gave us the perfect example of being a man or woman for others—complete selflessness. That is why we ask you to commit during your sophomore year to 20 hours of service at one service site that will stretch you out of your comfort zone and challenge you to serve people who are different from you: people who are poor, marginalized, hungry, sick, aged, homeless, or disabled. In building relationships through your service, our hope is that you see Jesus Christ in the people you serve, as they will see Christ in you. Our God became a servant, and so we are called to serve one another.

Retreat:
Your Sophomore Retreat will be a unique opportunity to step out of your comfort zone, build new relationships with your classmates and upper-class leaders, and to spend some time in conversation with God. Yes, you will pray on Sophomore Retreat. You will have a lot of fun, too—but one of the reasons we take you away from the daily rhythm of school is to provide you with the time and space to quiet your heart and mind for prayer. The theme of Sophomore Retreat is Lux Vitae ~ The Light of Life. We will spend two days reflecting on how the light of Christ shines forth in our lives. Your retreat might be in a few weeks, or a few months. I challenge you to take advantage of the opportunity of those two days to stop and examine yourself, your life, and your relationships with others, but especially with God.

Prayer:
This year, be sure to talk to God about what is on your mind and heart. Prayer can be as simple as talking with God about your day or praying the Examen for 15 minutes before you go to bed. You can ask God for help; thank God for the gifts you have been given; and also take time to just listen.

You begin your sophomore year with the opportunity to learn more about Jesus in the Scriptures, experience Jesus in your classmates on retreat, and model Jesus’ service to others. As St. Paul says to the Philippians: “Have among you the same mind that is also yours in Christ Jesus” (Phil 2:5). Your teachers, friends, upperclassmen, parents, and God are waiting to join with you on this journey of discovery and growth in relationship with Jesus. Let us encounter Christ, the Eternal Word together this year.

Originally from Pittsburg, PA, Megan Shepherd is the Associate Director of Notre Dame Vision, a summer conference program for youth and adults in youth ministry. She worked in parish and high school campus ministry in Chicago and New York for over fifteen years.
THOUGHTS ON A THEOLOGY OF TEACHING

“YOU GIVE THEM SOMETHING TO EAT”

BY M. JOSEPH PEDERSEN, M.A.
When I found out that I got a job teaching high school theology, I began to ask all of the teachers I knew what advice they had for me. I heard all kinds of things about classroom management and lesson plan preparation. However, the one piece of advice that has stayed with me came from a professor at Notre Dame.
“I’m going to be a high school theology teacher, Professor. Do you have any advice for me?”

“Jesus told his disciples, ‘You give them something to eat.’”

“Pardon?”

“Jesus told his disciples, ‘You give them something to eat.’”

“…”

I’ve thought more about this puzzling piece of “advice” than any other. In the ninth chapter of Luke (and the sixth of Mark), Jesus goes out to a deserted place. When the people follow Him, but turn out to be hungry, the Apostles ask for Jesus to send the crowds away. Jesus says instead, “You give them something to eat” (cf. Lk 9:13 and Mk 6:37). Of course, they have no money to be able to pay for the food that it would take to feed the multitudes. Nevertheless, Jesus tells them to sit the people down and feed them. In the end, it is Jesus who performs the miracle, who blesses the food, and gives it to those gathered. Jesus asks the disciples to give the people something to eat, though, of course, there was no way for them accomplish this task on their own.

I’m not sure, but I think that this may have been what my professor was telling me. My teaching will never be my own work. Jesus will speak to the heart and enlighten the mind. Jesus will perform the miracle of education. Though, like all miracles, this one comes through simple, humble, and sinful vessels. I still have to show up. I still need to wake up before dawn each day, still need to grade papers on the weekends and go to basketball games on the weeknights. Jesus says to the teacher, “You give them something to eat.” “You give them an education.” Then he provides all that the teacher needs to accomplish that mission.

The first question to ask may be: what is the purpose of education? In this context, I’m thinking particularly of Catholic education. The ultimate answer must be salvation. It is difficult, though, to see a direct, replicable line from education to salvation. The proximate, more directly attainable goal, however, is to build character. As teachers we can help our students to be good. We can teach thoughtfulness, discipline, respectfulness, and hard work. Much lower down on the totem pole of goals is worldly success. I wouldn’t be any more proud if my former student is busted for corporate embezzlement than if he gets nabbed for purse snatching.

In order to accomplish this mission, though, there is a prerequisite for the teacher. Remember that Christ is asking his Apostles, not the crowd, to change. We cannot pretend that the formation of a good teacher is limited to his or her classroom. Simply being an effective conveyor of information is not nearly enough. The educator him or herself must be formed. To be a good teacher, the teacher must be good. In Fr. Richard Tierney’s work, Teacher and Teaching, he says that the teacher “must himself be a man of character. He must tower over his pupils in soul power. The frog can scarcely teach the young mocking-bird to sing” (7-8). Put another way, one cannot feed others with that which he or she does not have to give. Continual personal formation and conversion are essential to the teacher’s ability to form young people.

I do not want to minimize the importance of the intellectual and practical skills that are necessary to be a teacher. Knowledge of classroom management, mastery of content, and adept delivery, in short, sound pedagogy, is critically important. While essential and necessary, for Catholic education, they are fundamentally secondary. Catholic education has a larger goal that is only served by educators who are able to help their students to be good.

Christian education is never simply a transfer of facts or skills—the Pythagorean theorem or how to diagram
a sentence. Education, at its most fundamental level, teaches the truth. By doing this, it teaches Christ, who is the Truth. Wherever there is truth to be found, we find Christ. In mathematics, the sciences, social studies, or language arts, Christ, who is Truth and Wisdom, is there. Christ is present in each classroom, because teaching the truth means teaching Christ. And in teaching this truth, we feed our multitudes.

Two Visionaries of Christian Pedagogy

While there have been many visionaries within the Church explaining a uniquely Christian understanding of education, two of these provide particularly valuable perspectives. Jean-Baptiste de la Salle (1651-1719) is the patron saint of educators. John Bosco (1815-1888) is the patron saint of schoolchildren. While both were founders of education orders, they have different visions of how one carries out the task of education, and they provide valuable counterpoints to each other. The reason that one is the patron of teachers and the other the patron of students becomes readily apparent through their writings and educational philosophies.

Jean Baptiste de la Salle

Jean Baptiste de la Salle’s work in education began in 1679 in France, but this Lasallian model has spread to over 1000 educational institutions across the world in more than 80 countries. In his work *The Conduct of Christian Schools*, de la Salle laid out very specific guidelines for how his schools were to be run. De la Salle was a schoolmaster, not a friend, for these students. He demanded discipline in every aspect of the school’s life. “Care will be taken that they do not assemble in a crowd in the street before the door is opened and that they do not make noise by shouting or singing. They will not be permitted to amuse themselves by playing and running in the vicinity of the school during this time nor to disturb the neighbors in any manner whatsoever” (61).

Jean Baptiste de la Salle desired discipline in his schools. I think about one particular student of mine who came from a broken family, got into drugs and alcohol early, but was as smart as anyone in his class. When he was talking with me about why he was making poor decisions and getting bad grades, he came to the conclusion, “No one ever showed me.” We, the adults in his life, never showed him how to work hard to get a good grade. We never showed him that studying and learning can actually be a fulfilling experience. We never showed him that making the right choice can actually bring more happiness than doing what brings pleasure for the moment. We never showed him that the discipline that de la Salle desired could actually help him in the long run. Educators (along with parents, of course, the primary teachers) have this responsibility to show our students what it means to be disciplined, steady, and faithful. It may seem, when reading de la Salle’s works, that he was asking his teachers to be distant or unfeeling. He wasn’t. He was asking his teachers to feed their students character and truth. He wanted the teachers to feed by showing.
In many of his regulations for the educators at his schools, he desired that the educators enforce discipline through their example. One of the traits that he asked new teachers to guard against was familiarity. “To cure familiarity quickly,” he wrote, “there is only one thing to be done: teachers in training must neither talk to the students nor allow the students to speak to them, the Supervisor being sure that these new teachers speak to their students only in cases of great necessity. They are not to speak from their place in the classroom. They are not to speak in a loud voice, and must never laugh with the students” (260). Every aspect of the school day was prescribed down to the manner in which the boys would dip their pens in the ink and what the inkwells were to be made of. Doesn’t exactly sound like fun, but fun was certainly not his purpose. While some of these instructions are historical relics and not central to de la Salle’s message, they are emblematic of his larger concern. The children that de la Salle was educating were truly children of the street. He wanted to take these “urchins” and turn them into faithful and productive members of society and the Church. He needed to root out stubbornness and replace it with docility, pettiness with magnanimity, and ignorance with knowledge. All of this takes careful instruction and discipline. The educators teach this through their own example.

This means, of course, that the discipline that de la Salle required was not meant solely for the students. Teachers need to allow themselves to be fed by the same truth with which they feed their students. It is “through their witness and behavior” that the teachers mold their students, according to de la Salle. In his work, The Spirituality of Christian Education, he says to his teachers “you . . . must devote yourselves to reading, prayer, to instruct yourselves thoroughly in the truths and the holy maxims you wish to teach, and to draw down on yourselves by prayer the grace of God that you need to do this work according to the Spirit and the intention of the Church, which entrusts it to you” (57). The teacher is constantly to be a model to the students in action and belief. One thing I learned very quickly was that my students really wanted to know if I believed what I taught them. When they found out that I did, I had tremendously more credibility. Even though some of the things I had to tell them were difficult to hear, they desired to know the truth. A wise woman once told me that truth has its own gentle persuasion. De la Salle recognized this fact. But it is not simply about how we interact with our students. We are also models outside of the traditional classroom setting—interacting with colleagues, in prayer (or not), or in the daily tasks of life. The students don’t often realize how much we see of their lives from up at the front of the classroom, but the opposite is also often true. Only by being good can we help the students to desire that as well. For de la Salle, it was through their witness of faith that his teachers were to feed the students.
John Bosco

John Bosco provides a very different, but ultimately complimentary, model of education. Working in the mid- to late-19th century in Italy provided a very different context than de la Salle’s. John Bosco’s primary concern was not discipline. His overarching desire was that “the boys should not only be loved, but realize that they are loved.” He did not want his priests and brothers to be interacting with the students as aloof professors or statue-like role models. In his “Letter from Rome,” written to one of the members of his new order, Don Bosco lamented the state of the relationship between the leaders of the school and the students and the division and discontent which it fostered: “the superiors are seen precisely as superiors and not at all as fathers, brothers and friends.” He went on to explain that the only way to build up this trust again was by “a friendly relationship with the boys... Affection can’t be shown without this friendly relationship, and unless affection is seen there can be no confidence.” He made the very practical point that it is this which will allow the educators to be better with the students: “This love enables superiors to bear with weariness, annoyance, ingratitude, or the troubles, failings and neglect of the boys.”

That teachers need to love their students is true, but is an idea that has become almost trite. What does he really mean by this? Bosco wanted us to realize that our students are not simply names on a roster, a blur of faces as the years roll by. Their education cannot be formulaic. It is all too easy to give into the “weariness, annoyance, ingratitude, troubles, failings, and neglect” of our students. By truly loving them, the educator guards against this temptation. In a paper about her own life story, one girl wrote the following: “Before I knew it I had the reputation of a slut. Boys would come to me if they wanted action and girls stayed away from me because they weren’t into that kind of stuff. This made my depression even worse. To cope with everything I was dealing with I started cutting myself. I told myself I didn’t care what other people thought of me, but truthfully I did care and it hurt me so much to go to school every day and have people calling me a slut, and knowing what they said was true.” This is just one example of the dozens of stories I hear from the young people I teach. How can I respond to this with anything other than the love and compassion that Don Bosco called for?

In Mark 10 we read a story of Christ as a teacher. He encounters a rich young man who asks Jesus to teach him how he might inherit eternal life. Part of the way through the story it says, “Jesus looked at him and loved him.” Jesus is helping us to realize that teaching also means truly looking at a student and loving him or her. Don Bosco recognized this reality as well. They are both teaching us to see each student sitting in front of us as an unfathomable mystery. Every teacher needs to recognize the depth and profundity of that mystery if he or she is able to truly teach students well. This is part of acknowledging the humanity of the young people who sit in front of us. Teenagers in particular are susceptible to conflating the feelings for a particular teacher with the feelings for the subject that the teacher teaches. If he hates his math teacher, very often he will end up hating math. If she loves and respects her history teacher, she will end up loving history. (In this the theology teacher has a special responsibility because he or she represents not only an academic subject but also faith and God Himself.) Each student carries an inner life, of which I can only ever be witness to a tiny fraction. Inevitably, the moment that I think I know a student is the moment that I’m told of his abuse or her struggle with an eating disorder. By seeing the student as a mystery, we can respond to them better. We can show them the love of God better. We can be less impatient with their failings. Ultimately, we can be better ourselves, and through that witness, help them to be better as well. In all of this, in our love and compassion, we feed our students.
Just as de la Salle was right in his call for structure and discipline, Don Bosco was right when he stated that our students need to be loved and know that they are loved. We need to hold onto both of these visions. One of these will probably come more naturally than the other to a given teacher, but neither can be discounted. When Christ asks us to give our students something to eat, we must give the food of our witness and the food of our love, our discipline and our companionship, our steadiness and our compassion.

Christ in the Classroom

Looking across my classroom can sometimes be a disheartening experience. The wall decorations, once bright and square, are looking decidedly droopy. The white boards are dirty, and the bookshelves are disheveled. Not only that, but Ben is gazing blankly out of the window again. Shannon, whose thumb clearly needs its daily workout, will not stop clicking that pen. Tim raises his hand, for a change, during the most important part of the lecture, only to ask if he can go to the bathroom. Adam is apparently working on his stand-up routine for his neighbors. And if Lisa rolls her eyes one more time, or sighs that loud sigh of hers, I might just walk out of the building right now, get in my car, and not look back. I think that most teachers have had an experience like this, and it’s in these moments that we learn whether or not we are good teachers. Can I be patient when I want to lose my temper? Can I be kind when the students are not? Can I be generous, loving, joyful, and compassionate? Can I continue to be disciplined myself? Can I continue to recognize that these beautifully imperfect students are still infinite mysteries and beloved by God, even when they are less than beloved by me? Can I continue to respond to God’s call to feed these students even when I feel that I am utterly unequal to the task?
There is a particular passage from the Jewish Talmud, written on the wall in the classroom of a Jewish colleague, which describes well the task of a teacher. The Rabbis tell the students who study the Torah, “You are not obligated to complete the work, but neither are you free to desist from it” (Pirke Avot 2:21). The work of the teacher is never finished. There will always be more papers to be graded, more lesson plans to be written, and more students’ stories to hear. There is a relentlessness to teaching that not even a summer break can alleviate. It is tempting to give in to a quiet despair, convinced of the fact that we will never finish this task. And, in fact, we won’t. Still, we are not free to desist. Christ told his penniless Apostles, “You give them something to eat.” Every day we will show up with energy, love, and lesson plans, confident that even though we’re being asked to do the educating, it’s Christ who does the feeding.

†

M. Joseph Pedersen, M.A. was a Catholic school teacher in the Twin Cities after graduating from the Echo: Faith Formation Leadership Program, and is currently a seminarian for the Congregation of Holy Cross.
LET THE CHILDREN COME TO ME

CULTIVATING THE CHRISTIAN IMAGINATION OF THE CHILD IN SECULAR MODERNITY

BY JESSICA KEATING, M.DIV.
Recently I was talking to a mother of two young children, who explained that she drops her youngest son off at childcare while she attends Mass because “he is too young to get anything out of it.” Implicit in her remark is the assumption that the child, particularly the young child, neither possesses within himself a hunger for God nor is capacitated for worship—that his age prevents him from meaningful participation in the liturgy. Moreover, she clearly envisions worship in terms of its utility. It exists in order for us to “get something.” Cast in therapeutic and/or moralistic terms, worship functions either to meet one’s subjective needs, to make one “feel good,” or to make one a generically “better person.” Such a view, both of the nature of the young child and of worship, though deeply misguided, structures the Catholic imagination in the United States.

The narrative that this mother articulates sharply contrasts my experience with Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGS), a catechetical model developed in Rome in 1954 by biblical scholar Sofia Cavalletti and Montessorian Gianna Gobbi. Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is rooted in the conviction that the young child possesses the profound capacity to enter into a deep and meaningful relationship with Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd. As a level one catechist, I have the delight of spending my Tuesday mornings in a specially prepared environment called an atrium with sixteen four- and five-year-old children, encountering the Word of God with them. Walking into the atrium every Tuesday morning, I feel a bit like a giant. Chairs and tables come up to my knees, shelves to my waist. In this place of quiet joy, Annie prepares the altar, carefully placing the white cloth over the oak altar and arranging the candles, the chalice, and the paten. Here Caroline chooses a holy card for the prayer table, while Mark works with the Good Shepherd materials, tenderly moving the Good Shepherd and his flock in and out of the sheepfold. Here Maggie works with the Nativity diorama, gently moving the shepherds toward the manger, and John intently prepares the cruets, attentively pouring water and wine from one delicate vessel to another. In the atrium the child’s work becomes opportunity for deep contemplation, which penetrates the child’s inner life. Here Laura affectionately kisses the crucifix at the end of each atrium session and says, “I love you, Jesus.” Here, in this inauspicious little space, eight children, heads thrown back and arms reaching upward, elatedly sing the “Celtic Alleluia” for a full ten minutes at the end of the Liturgy of Light. Each week in the atrium, children encounter with joy and wonder the mysterious beauty of Christ incarnate, crucified and risen. The atrium thus serves a kind of counter-narrative to the dominant narrative first described, a contestation of its assumptions and distortions of both the nature of the child and the nature of worship, and of the child’s capacity to engage in worship.
I. Crisis of Incarnation

Assessing the modern religious crisis in 1979, Sofia Cavalletti observed that we are currently experiencing a crisis of Incarnation. In *The Religious Potential of the Child*, Cavalletti states that “for the most part it is not God who is denied, but Christ Who is rejected; there is a diffuse acceptance of the existence of a vague divine person but we do not accept God-made-man.”¹ This rejection of the Church’s creedal confession cannot simply be dismissed as a secularist attack from forces outside the Church; rather, this crisis of Incarnation is alive and well among the faithful. In quite telling statistics, the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life reports that 30 percent of self-identified Catholics believe in an impersonal God and only 60 percent believe in a personal God. Even more concerning, less than half of self-identified Catholics are absolutely certain that the God they believe in is one with whom they can have a personal relationship.²

Vague deistic sentiment shapes the religious landscape in the United States, a phenomenon which ultimately functionalizes God, cultivates a disposition of ingratitude, and domesticates the imagination.³ The mystery of God and God’s creation is no longer an object of deep wonder, but a flat, positivistic reality. Not only is the fact of the Incarnation denied, but the vision of God that has permeated the American imagination forecloses the very possibility of the Incarnation.

II. Turn to the Child

Given the reality of the truncated imagination of most Americans, we turn to the child for several reasons. First, the child has a rich and splendid imagination. By this I do not mean the capacity for make believe and fantasy. Rather, the child has an incredible ability to marvel at the glory of the God and creation. He does not possess by nature the flattened, positivistic imagination characteristic of contemporary Americans. Second, the young child is not by nature inclined toward engaging God as a vague and abstract concept. The three-to-six-year-old child does not deal in abstraction. Rather, her intellect is profoundly relational and concrete.

Third, God has placed “a marvelous love” within the heart of the child, and the child loves gratuitously (Ps 16:3). Between the ages of three and six, the child experiences a keen sensitivity for love and protection, exigencies that cannot be met in the abstract. Hans Urs von Balthasar commented that “the child can grasp the gift of all existence only with the concreteness of its relationship[s] of love.”⁴ This is why, according to Balthasar, parental “love is not at first separable from God.”⁵ Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus provides descriptive exemplification of this exigency for love in her autobiography, *Story of a Soul*. She recalls, “God was pleased all through my life to surround me with love, and the first memories I have are stamped with smiles and the most tender caresses. But although He placed so much love near me, He also sent much love into my little heart, making it warm and affectionate.”⁶ The child loves with an abundant, overflowing love; she clings to God in love, seeking “Jesus for the sake of Jesus.”⁷

Finally, the child possesses within himself a unique vocation. Each child is a “carrier of God’s secret.”⁸ Indeed, the psalmist exclaims, “You formed my inmost being; you knit me in my mother’s womb” (Ps 139:13); and the Lord tells Jeremiah, “Before I
formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you” (Jer 1:5). This vocation must be allowed to take shape, bringing to light and fruition the gifts God has bestowed upon the child.⁹ Developmentally, the young child inhabits a privileged period of becoming, in which he labors to form his personality according to the law of God written on his heart (cf. Rom 2:15). The young child possesses an inner sense which drives him toward perfection.

Describing the formation of one’s spiritual disposition, German philosopher and martyr Saint Edith Stein explained:

[T]he basic faculties which exist originally are unique in degree and in kind to each human soul. It is not inanimate material which must be entirely developed or formed in an exterior way, as is clay by the artist’s hand or stone by the weather’s elemental forces; it is rather a living formative root which possesses within itself the driving power (inner form) toward development in a particular direction; the seed must grow and ripen into the perfect *gestalt*, perfect creation. Thus envisaged, formation of the spirit is a developmental process similar to that of the plant. However, the plant’s organic growth and development do not come about wholly from within: there are also exterior influences which work together to determine its formation...just so, in the soul’s formation, exterior factors as well as interior ones, play a role.¹⁰

Stein establishes three points that are critical for our discussion of the child. She notes that each person possesses a unique spiritual disposition. Thus when we encounter the child, we encounter one whom God intimately knows, whose spiritual disposition is not inanimate material awaiting the formation by another. We encounter the child who, as one made in the image of God, already possesses a distinctive spiritual character. Thus Stein affirms that the spiritual substance of an individual is in fact “a living formative root” which bends toward God. In other words, there exists in each human person “an inner ontological tendency... toward the divine.”¹¹ To be sure, the goal, or *telos*, of the Christian life is to live a life “hidden with Christ in God” and each person possesses a driving power toward this particular end (Col 3:3). Stein also explains that the development of the spirit toward perfection, like the growth of a plant, is not merely an interior process, but is profoundly influenced by exterior conditions. Because the young child inhabits a privileged time of becoming, her inner form is both immensely powerful and incredibly vulnerable to her exterior environment. Thus special care must be taken in the religious formation of the young child.
III. The Child
The Inner Structure of the Child

In the early twentieth century, physician, scientist, and educator Maria Montessori began to observe the great mystery of the child, an endeavor that eventually yielded the educational method that bears her name. Explicating all that she observed about the nature of the child would be impossible, so I will examine three aspects which are essential for the present discussion about the religious formation of the child.

In *The Child and the Family*, Montessori observes that “[t]he child, like all human beings, has a personality of his own. He carries within himself the beauty and dignity of a creativity that can never be erased and for which his spirit, pure and sensitive, exacts from us a most delicate kind of care.”¹² Like the artist, the child engages in the great task of self-creation, a task which requires a mind distinct from that of the adult. Montessori calls this mind the absorbent mind. Contrasting the mind of the child to that of the adult, Montessori explains that the adult acquires with her intelligence what the “child absorbs with his psychic life.”¹³ The adult is a vessel; “impressions pour in, and we remember or hold onto them in our mind, but we remain distinct from our impressions, as water remains distinct from the glass.”¹⁴ The child, however, “merely by going on with his life…undergoes a transformation. The impressions not only penetrate the mind of the child, but form it.”¹⁵ Montessori compares the mind of the child to soft wax—everything in his or her environment makes an impression upon the mind.¹⁶

Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus beautifully articulates the fertile absorbency of the young child’s mind that Montessori expounded, as well as the child’s capacity for intimacy with God. Thérèse exclaims:

> Ah! How quickly those sunny years passed by, those years of my childhood, but what a sweet imprint they have left on my soul! I recall the days Papa used to bring us to the pavilion; the smallest details are impressed in my heart! I recall especially the Sunday walks when Mama used to accompany us. I still feel the profound and poetic impressions that were born in my soul at the sight of the fields enameled with cornflowers and all types of wild flowers. Already I was in love with the wide open spaces. Space and the gigantic fir trees, the branches sweeping down to the ground, left in my heart and impression similar to the one I experience today at the sight of nature.¹⁷

In Thérèse, we can observe the “brilliance of the child’s way of seeing things”; the child’s intelligence burns with love.¹⁸ Saint Thérèse speaks of the fire burning within the child’s mind and heart, its impressionability and tenderness. Her recollection highlights the child’s particular aptitude for wonder. Even as an adult, Thérèse felt the impressions made on her heart as a child—they formed her spirit in a particular direction. The beauty of the created world, acting as an icon, lifted her soul to God.
Montessori also observes that the child passes through several periods of intense sensitivity. Sensitive periods refer to periods of time in which the child, based on her vital exigencies, is attracted to certain things in her environment and not to others. Commenting on the relationship between the child’s inner structure and the external environment, Montessori observes that sensitive periods “show us that a child’s psychic development does not take place by chance, that it does not originate in external stimuli but is guided by transient sensibilities, that is, by temporary instincts intimately connected with the acquisition of specific traits.”

The inner structure of the child is such that he is able “to choose from his complex environment what is suitable and necessary for his growth.” Thus such periods allow the child “to come into contact with the external world in a particularly intense way,” such that “everything is easy; all is life and enthusiasm,” all is permeated with joy. These periods of unique acquisitive potentiality are followed by a period of integration before the next period of intense sensitivity begins. Thus Montessori concludes that the child moves “within this fair fire of the soul, which burns without consuming” from “conquest to conquest in a constant rhythm that constitutes its joy and happiness.”

Once a sensitive period has passed, the opportunity for natural acquisition is forever lost. This is not to say that one cannot acquire these traits at a later time in life, only that such acquisition occurs through the application of the will and not as a spontaneous fact. For instance, an adult can certainly learn a new language, but only through the self-conscious application of the will and after years of arduous work, and even then the new language is not a part of the being of the adult in the same way as his native language. The new language always remains distinct from the inner being of the adult. The young child, however, has a particular affinity for language. She absorbs not only particular vocabulary but indeed the very structure of language. The child achieves this incredible feat with great joy, absorbing the linguistic impressions with peculiar alacrity into her unconscious mind. Rather than laboriously studying the language’s rules, grammar, or vocabulary, the small child, “directed by a marvelously grand mysterious power” absorbs language spontaneously.

Interestingly, Montessori observes that “children... seem to pass through a period that is particularly sensitive to religion,” noting that the young child seems to “be very close to God.” Sofia Cavalletti and Gianna Gobbi confirm Montessori’s initial observations, remarking that while adults are prone to believe that the spiritual life and the drive toward perfection are foreign to the child, in reality “God moves freely in the world of childhood. Children thirst to know Him and to draw closer to Him.” At a tender age, the child is extremely receptive to the God of love and protection. When this spark is fanned even the youngest child cries out “That’s it! That is what my nature points to and seeks.”

Though Montessori did not write extensively on the religious education of the child, she did note that the church appears to be the telos toward which her method is directed. She noticed that the silence cultivated in the school “which had prepared the child to recollect himself now became that inner recollection to be observed in the house of God.” In Teaching Doctrine and Liturgy, Cavalletti and Gobbi argue that the reason religious education receives so little explicit treatment in Montessori’s work is due to the fact that the method itself is “impregnated with the faith,” that it is shot through and through with a sacramental imagination. Indeed, describing an infant immersed in a sensitive period for language Montessori employs explicitly religious language: “A divine command is breathing upon this helpless being and animating it with its spirit. This inner drama of the child
is a drama of love. It is a great reality unfolding within the secret areas of his soul and at times completely absorbing it. These marvelous activities wrought in humble silence cannot take place without leaving behind ennobling qualities that will accompany the child through life.\textsuperscript{31}

Montessori observes that the inner life of the child has a certain “immediacy with God” which is present within the child, “unfolding within the secret areas of his soul” long before the child can engage in discursive reasoning; indeed, the inner structure of the child bends toward this love.\textsuperscript{32}

A third constitutive aspect of the inner structure of the child emerges in Montessori’s observations. Closely related to the previous two aspects, she observes that the child incarnates in himself everything he sees and hears. While the adult merely remembers an environment, the child adapts to it, absorbing the environment into his very being.\textsuperscript{33} The child has a “special kind of vital memory that does not remember consciously, but absorbs images into the very life of the individual.”\textsuperscript{34} Returning to the example of language, when a child learns a language he “speaks it according to all its complicated rules and exceptions, not because he studied and remembers it by means of ordinary memory”; rather, it “forms a part of him.”\textsuperscript{35} Language may be said to be incarnate in the child. Indeed, the child can never unlearn his native language. As already mentioned, the child does not remember the sounds or rules of language the way an adult does; rather by way of a “vital memory” that “does not remember consciously” the child incarnates language.\textsuperscript{36} This language now forms the child’s “mental flesh” and becomes an essential aspect of the child’s interpretive apparatus.\textsuperscript{37}

The Child as an Icon of Christ

The interior structure of the child serves as an icon of Christ. An ever-present reminder to the adult of his position before the Father, the child reminds us of the type of humanity on which we must gaze as we strive toward perfection.\textsuperscript{38} Applying Matthew 25 to the child, Montessori writes, “we can see that Christ appears to men also under the guise of the child.”\textsuperscript{39} The child reflects the mystery of Christ, and in the child we glimpse something of the divine reality.

Scripture speaks of childhood, not merely as a passing biological phase, but as the very heart of what it means to be human. The psalmist likens his trust in the \textsc{Lord} to “a child quieted at its mother’s breast; like a child that is quieted is my soul” (Ps 131:2). Drawing on the intimate relationship between a mother and her suckling child, a relationship in which the utter dependence and receptivity of the child and the total gift of the mother is not a source of contention or competition, but the deepest expression of love, the psalmist indicates by way of analogy the contours of his relationship with the \textsc{Lord}.

The child also figures prominently in Isaiah’s prophetic eschatology. His vision of the peaceable kingdom is envisioned in terms of the young child: “a little child shall lead them ... The suckling child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder’s den (Is 11:6, 8). The young child guides creation toward its perfection, and his protection and joy are markers of the reconciled world. Indeed, Christ holds up the child as a model, saying in Mark 10:14-15: “Let the children come to me, do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.” Jesus proclaims that the disposition of the child is necessary to inherit the Kingdom. It is clear that the psalmist, Isaiah, and Jesus
do not, according to Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger (later Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI), regard childhood “as a transient phase of human life that is a consequence of man’s biological fate and then is completely laid aside. Rather, it is in ‘being a child’ that the very essence of what it is to be a man is realized, so much so that one who has lost the essence of childhood is himself lost.”

Ratzinger and Balthasar agree that Christ’s emphasis on “being a child,” indicates a profound analogy between the nature of the human child and his “own most personal mystery, namely, his Sonship,” which “is inseparable from his being a child in the bosom of the Father.” The one who is Lord and Messiah is also Son, and His Sonship is rooted in his total openness to the Father, “the total relativity of his existence,” His “pure openness,” His pure receptivity. The Son turns eternally toward the Father, and gazes on His countenance, such that the “I” of the Son is eternally derived from the Father’s “Thou.” This “I” does not strive for exclusivity and independence from the Father, but remains totally open to the love of the Father.

The “distinctive consciousness” of the child reflects Christ’s radical openness to the Father. The young child experiences profound receptivity and openness to divine love, and this positions him to participate in the inner life of Christ in a unique way. Unfortunately scriptural representations of children, particularly children and Jesus, often undergo a sort of reduction such that the child becomes merely a quaint and romanticized image of bygone innocence, and Jesus is often depicted as a kind of quasi-divine babysitter; His assertion that the Kingdom of God belongs to children is sentimentalized rather than understood as a serious statement about the particularity of the child or Christ’s divine Sonship which is nearing its consummation on the Cross.

Long-time Catechesis of the Good Shepherd catechist Rebekah Rojcewicz reminds us that when Christ calls us to be like the child, He “is calling us to something far more serious and involved than merely trying to emulate a few of their easily observable characteristics.” The uniqueness of the child is more than the sum of her characteristics, and indeed one must resist the temptation to commodify these traits and cut them lose from their ontological moorings. Thus when Christ holds up the child as a model, He is calling us to emulate the child’s mysterious relationship with God, which is an icon of His most personal union with the Father. We are to inhabit, as Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus did, what Ratzinger calls the “brilliance of the child’s way of seeing things.” Christ is calling us to take up the position of the child in her radical orientation toward love.

Richard Cosway; Christ Blessing Little Children (undated); Courtesy Yale Center for British Art
IV. Catechesis of the Child

The development of the child, though directed by “transient sensibilities,” requires external nourishment. Saint Edith Stein’s comparison between spiritual development and the growth of the plant provides an apt analogy. A seed contains in itself a “driving power toward development in a particular direction.” A cornflower seed will not produce a daffodil or rose. Rather, the perfection of the cornflower seed is to grow and ripen into a cornflower plant. However, the seed cannot actualize of its accord, but requires certain conditions: the right amount of rain, fertile soil, enough sunlight. If it does not receive these things from its environment it cannot develop as it ought.

In Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, the young child encounters the parable of the mustard seed. During the course of the presentation, the catechist invites the child to ponder the mysterious power than enables the seed to grow. Often children will say that rain and sunshine make the seed grow, which is true indeed. But then the catechist might ask, “If we planted a rock in the soil and watered it and made sure it got sunlight, would it grow?” Among other things, this question is designed to lift up the mystery of life and to cultivate a sense of wonder. There is something special about the seed; it contains the mysterious power of growth. The child, however, knows that without the right conditions the seed will not develop.

Traditional Catechesis

Keeping this parable in mind, we consider the catechesis of the young child. The inner structure of the child disposes him to development in a particular direction, and she requires an environment that with the most tender care facilitates her religious formation. Though the young child has “from his very origin... something like an incontrovertible faith-instinct, and this instinct provides an incalculable ‘capital’ for the education of the child in Christian faith,” most three-to-six-year-olds are not formally catechized; if they are, the catechetical models employed are typically shaped by educational paradigms that have their roots in 18th and 19th century models of instruction. Such pedagogies exclusively instruct the cognitive dimension of the child. However, education—and particularly religious education—must address the whole child.

While the Church has the rich tradition of affirming the dignity of children as children of God, inviting infants to the waters of baptism and children to the Eucharistic banquet, she typically does not begin formal catechesis of her children until age six. Moreover, traditional catechetical efforts are often didactic and goal-oriented, focusing more on the adult who imparts information than on the religious life of the child. God is often presented in childish terms, the underlying assumption being that the small child is not capable of “rising to concepts that transcend the senses.” This type of catechesis tends to be arid and, regardless of how it is dressed up with coloring sheets, word searches, and connect-the-dot saints, it does not permeate the inner life of the child.
The Inner Logic of Catechesis of the Good Shepherd

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd proceeds from a twofold conviction. The first is that being Christian is first and foremost “the encounter with an event, a person,” with the face of Love. Thus catechetical strategy must facilitate the child’s concrete encounter with the Person of Christ, who is “the way” to the Father (Jn 14:6). Sofia Cavalletti points out that the second structuring principle of CGS emerges from the conviction that “[c]ertain exigencies exist in the innermost depths of the child,” exigencies for love and protection, which must be satisfied. She asserts that “if the Christian message is presented in such a way as to satisfy the [vital exigencies], the child will appropriate the message with a vital impulse, and will then be capable of reliving it in his everyday experience.” In other words, the child will make flesh the Christian faith. Thus, far from imposing something foreign to the child, her encounter with the God who is Love corresponds to her deepest exigency, to love and to be loved. With the psalmist, the child cries out “God, you are my God whom I seek; for you my flesh pines and my soul thirsts; in the shadow of your wings I shout for joy” (Ps 63:1).

In *The Feast of Faith*, then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger writes, “We are in such urgent need of an education toward inwardness. We need to be taught to enter into the heart of things.” In the atrium, the child encounters the very heart—the essential reality—of the faith: the mystery of the God-made-man, the person of Jesus Christ. Here the living formative root of the child’s inner form encounters an environment which facilitates the soul’s formation in a particular direction. Here the Word of God is sown in the tender, absorbent heart of the child. Here, Cavalletti points out, the little child “freely unfolds her potentialities,” working joyfully toward her perfection.

Thus, unlike traditional catechetical models, Catechesis of the Good Shepherd presents the whole Christian message to the whole child. In the atrium the child engages the essential reality of the Christian faith: Christ incarnate, crucified and risen. Rooted in Montessori’s observations about the child and guided by her educational pedagogy and following the rhythm of the liturgical year, the aim of CGS is not for the child to learn a lot of facts about God; rather, the purpose is to help the child to enjoy God and develop a living relationship with God. In the atrium, the child begins to live the reality of the Christian faith in an environment saturated in prayer and contemplation, which is the basic precondition for understanding, for appropriation of the gift of Christ. Indeed, Ratzinger insists that the only way to understand Jesus Christ is by participating in his prayer, for “[w]here there is no relationship with God, there can be no understanding of him.” This relationship, which engages the whole child, forms and directs the child’s imagination.
Incarnational Catechesis: The Good Shepherd

The young child’s relationship with God is remarkably rich and utterly lacks the functionalism that marks the teenager’s relationship with God. In the atrium, the child’s “intelligence of love” meets the Author of love; the mystery of the child meets the mystery of God. The young child encounters the Sign of signs—the person of Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, which coordinates with the child’s vital exigency for love and protection. Indeed, it is this face of God that the child most deeply desires. The parable meets the child’s psychological and developmental needs, but it is also a central text from a doctrinal standpoint. It introduces the child to the essentiality of the Christian faith, focusing on “the mystery of the person of Christ and His relationship with us, a relationship that is at once personal...and communal.” Thus the Good Shepherd parable provides the lynchpin for all the works in the atrium: the Eucharistic presence, baptism, and the infancy and paschal narratives.

The child first encounters the Good Shepherd through hearing the Word of God proclaimed. After reverently proclaiming the Word, the catechist introduces the material: a model sheepfold, ten two-dimensional sheep, and a two-dimensional figure of the Good Shepherd. Utilizing the material, which is introduced only after the solemn reading of the Word, the catechist recapitulates the proclamation, unfastening its wrappings, as it were, and assisting the child in reflection. The parable of the Good Shepherd emphasizes intimacy between the Shepherd and His sheep. The sheep know His voice, and the Shepherd knows and calls each one of them by name and walks ahead of them. Slowly and with great care, the catechist moves the Shepherd and the sheep, one by one, out of the sheepfold, highlighting the love of the Shepherd for his sheep—He leads them and protects them; He lays down His life for them.

The materials are now available for the child’s personal work. The intelligence of the three-to-six-year old child is quite literally formed by the work of her hands. If it is indeed true, as Sofia Cavalletti and Gianna Gobbi assert, that the “senses are the windows of the intellect,” then the catechesis of the child must engage the senses, particularly the hands. The materials employed in the atrium serve to concretize the proclamation, allowing the child to meditate on the sweetness of Scripture, and thus grow in rapport with the Person of Christ. The materials assist the child in the absorption of the essential realities proclaimed in the intimacy and quiet of his soul. Gobbi points out that the materials are not intended “to lead to the formulation of concepts but to a vital encounter with a real Person,” such that the child, both in the Scriptural proclamation and its concretization in simple and essential material that aid in his work of personal appropriation, encounters the beauty of Christ, the Good Shepherd, the Sign of signs. This encounter with the world of signs permeates the child's inner life, arousing a sense of awe and wonder, dispositions that tune the child's soul to God's love.

The arousal of wonder and awe occurs through the acquisition of the language of Christianity, the language of signs that facilitates a particular depth of vision. In the atrium the child not only absorbs the grammar of faith, but a way of interpreting the world. The language of signs cultivates vision which capacitates the child to encounter the richness and depth of meaning of the world with a profound sense of wonder. With utmost facility the child absorbs this language that, because of its pluriformity of meaning, opens “ever wider horizons of the real.” Cavalletti and Gobbi both note that the multi-dimensional nature and concreteness of the child’s intelligence and his capacity “to see the invisible within the visible” enable him to appropriate the sign with great ease and allow him, with relatively little effort, to penetrate “the veil of signs and ‘see’ with utmost facility their transcendent meaning, as if there were no barrier between the visible
and the Invisible.” It is thus, Saint Augustine observed, that the Holy Spirit, who “prompts us externally...by means of signs” instructs the child “to be inwardly turned toward Him.” Because signs are multivalent and evade exhaustive explanation, they invite the child into sustained contemplation of the mystery of God. Signs draw the child into this interior dialogue with God and provide the language that capacitates him to engage with mystery. As a result, like any spoken language, the language of signs becomes incarnate in the child, forming a constitutive part of her interpretative apparatus.

Thus, Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is incarnational in two ways. First, it is intentionally and explicitly Christocentric. The child is not catechized into the anti-incarnational vagueness that pervades the American religious imagination; rather this catechetical method is shot through with the Incarnation. Cavalletti explains the explicit christocentricity of CGS, observing that “from the Incarnation onward a particular bond was established between man and God that was sealed in the flesh of his Son.” In the parable of the Good Shepherd that child encounters Christ, receiving the gift of the Shepherd’s love with joy and gratitude. The child does not respond to the parable in an academic way, but vitally and spontaneously, resting in the love of the Shepherd. This prayerful response to the Good Shepherd that forms the child’s understanding is unremittingly incarnational. The child’s object of contemplation is the incarnate Son of God, who, “presents us with a concrete vision of the life of the Trinity” and from whom “we may never withdraw our gaze.” It is in the child’s appropriation of the parable in prayer that the incarnational mystery imprints itself on the soft wax of his intelligence.

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is also incarnational in its pedagogical structure. The three-to-six-year-old child takes in information and makes meaning through the body, particularly the hands, such that these sense impressions are “engraved on [the child’s] soul in an indelible way.” The material and works of the atrium are designed to aid contemplation of the kerygmatic proclamation, and facilitate the child’s appropriation of the mysteries announced. Thus the methodology coordinates the child’s vital exigency, her great need and capacity for relationships of love and protection, with the reality of the Incarnation. Again, the child does not respond to the parable of the Good Shepherd in an academic way, but vitally and spontaneously, and the parable imprints itself indelibly on the soft wax of his intelligence.

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is uniquely positioned not merely to teach the child about God, but to facilitate the child’s living relationship with Jesus Christ. This catechetical method stands in stark contrast to standard conceptions of catechesis of the young child which, if it occurs at all, often only instructs the cognitive dimension of the child or is reduced to mere entertainment. The three-to-six-year-old inhabits an incredibly fertile period for catechesis. CGS offers a particularly compelling method in that it recognizes the child’s capacity to enter into a loving relationship with Jesus Christ and pedagogically facilitates this mysterious encounter, thereby helping to form the child’s religious imagination in a way that promotes growth in true discipleship.

Jessica Keating, M.Div. is the Director of University Life Initiatives at the University of Notre Dame and a Catechesis of the Good Shepherd level one catechist.
NOTES


2 Weddell, Sherry. Forming Intentional Disciples: The Path to Knowing and Following Jesus (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 2012), 43.


5 Ibid., 19.


9 Ibid., 126.


14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.


17 Thérèse of Lisieux, Story of a Soul, 29-30.


19 Montessori, The Secret of Childhood, 42

20 Ibid.

21 Ibid., 40.

22 Ibid.


24 Montessori, The Absorbent Mind, 22.

25 Ibid., 23.


28 Ratzinger, On Conscience, 32.

29 Montessori, Discovery of the Child, 295.

30 Cavalletti and Gobbi, Teaching Doctrine and Liturgy: A Montessori Approach, 125; see also 24-5.

31 Montessori, Secret of Childhood, 43.

32 Balthasar, Unless You Become Like This Child, 16.

33 Montessori, The Absorbent Mind, 22.

34 Ibid., 57-8.

35 Ibid., 58.

36 Ibid.

37 Ibid., 22.


39 Montessori, Secret of Childhood, 106

40 Ratzinger, The God of Jesus Christ, 71.

41 Ibid., 72.

42 Balthasar, Unless You Become Like This Child, 10-11.

44 Ibid., 208.

45 Balthasar, *Unless You Become Like This Child*, 10.


47 Ratzinger, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 75.


49 Balthasar, *Unless You Become Like This Child*, 42.


51 Montessori, *Discovery of the Child*, 296.


54 Ibid.


57 Ibid., 27.

58 Ibid., 56.


61 Ibid., 76.

62 Ibid., 65.


65 Gobbi, *Listening to God with Children*, 20.


67 Gobbi, *Listening to God with Children*, 69; see also Cavalletti, *Religious Potential of the Child*, 43.


69 Gobbi, *Listening to God with Children*, 62.


71 Montessori, *Discovery of the Child*, 298.
Those privy to conversations in Catholic higher education in the last twenty years are well aware of the contentious status of discourse regarding Catholic identity among these institutions of higher learning.\(^1\) Does the Catholic identity of such schools relate primarily to the prominence of theological and philosophical education in the curriculum? Is it ensured through an emphasis on tangible Catholic practice and visible iconography on campus? To what extent does Church teaching inform who is invited to campus, either for awards or for other lectures? Does one cultivate the Catholic character of a university by establishing faculty and student quotas, ensuring the presence of religiously like-minded faculty, staff, and students alike? If Catholic identity is a contentious term, might it be more profitable to nurture a robust conversation regarding Catholic intellectual tradition?\(^2\)
Photo: Michael Fernandes; The interior of the Kresge Law Library at the University of Notre Dame Law School (May 2012); Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons under Creative Commons
Such queries are not simply the result of Catholics, who succumbed to the secularization of higher education in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As Monika Hellwig summarized the situation of modern-day Catholic higher education in the United States:

We are the heirs and trustees of a great intellectual and cultural tradition founded on Catholic faith and enhanced by grace and by many centuries of testing for fidelity and authenticity. It is a trust not only for the benefit of the Church but also for the benefit of the world. The Catholic universities play a key role in bearing this trust with its treasury of classic deposits and its long-developed approach to life and learning. The conditions for fidelity to our trust have changed a good deal in the twentieth century. If we are still moving experimentally and are not always clear and successful in what we are doing, that is not from ill will or unconcern, but due to the uncharted nature of our situation.

Indeed, Catholic universities throughout the United States are encountering a variety of unique challenges. For many small, Catholic liberal arts colleges, there is the constant threat of under-enrollment; of an endowment too small to provide tuition assistance, hire faculty, and renovate decaying buildings. Such schools might wonder if their commitment to Catholic education, including the promotion of the liberal arts, might mean the end of their existence. On the other hand, nationally recognized Catholic universities (with endowments that are the envy of their smaller peers) are striving to join the elite bodies of higher education in the United States, emulating the ambitious research agendas of peers such as Harvard and Yale, Stanford and Duke (to name but a few). Of course, this ambitious goal comes with the concomitant challenges of maintaining a focus on undergraduate teaching and formation, keeping Catholic particularity central to the university’s mission and hiring practices, while simultaneously attracting faculty with enough standing to receive research grants. The quest for survival and flourishing alike necessitates the articulation of fundamental principles, which may guide a diverse number of Catholic institutions not simply in maintaining such identity in the face of a variety of influences but offering a peerless educational experience. That is, Catholic higher education in the United States must not simply respond to external stimuli, being constantly on the defensive about its status vis-à-vis other institutions. Instead, it must embody a sacramental, incarnational approach to learning grounded in the fullness of Catholic tradition.

In this essay, I seek to offer some small contribution to the ongoing discussion regarding Catholic identity in higher education through elucidating four core principles, which should be intrinsic to Catholic higher education today. First, Catholic higher education is grounded in the person of Jesus Christ. Second, it operates out of an epistemological humility, grounded in theological education. Third, it seeks to respond to forms of secular reason, which reduce education to what is pragmatic and useful alone. Fourth, Catholic higher education is constantly interrupted by the witness of the saints, a recognition that intellectual knowledge and the cultivation of research are not the ultimate telos of humanity. These principles may serve as guides for Catholic colleges and universities alike, seeking to articulate what distinguishes a Catholic education from other institutions of learning.
Catholic Higher Education and Jesus Christ

In his *The Catholic University as Promise and Project: Reflections in a Jesuit Idiom*, Michael J. Buckley, S.J. offers a critical assessment of the mission statements of three Jesuit colleges and universities in the United States. He writes:

All three frame general statements about education within the Jesuit or Judeo-Christian or Catholic tradition or identify the university as Jesuit or Catholic. They embrace the service of faith and the promotion of justice... However, there is not much beyond this level of formulaic generality, bland prose, and second-hand slogans. When one has left deference and set phrases behind, they do not indicate how this Catholic tradition and Jesuit orientation tell significantly and uniquely upon the educational core of these institutions, upon the content of its curriculum, its priorities in research, and its academic atmosphere.\(^5\)

Buckley’s assessment of Catholic mission statements is congruent with James T. Burtchaell, C.S.C.’s sobering treatment of the religious disestablishment of American higher education in the United States, one in which general humanistic ideals come to replace particular religious claims in the strategic mission of colleges and universities.\(^6\) The transformative quality of higher education, spoken about in quasi-religious terms, and the promotion of justice through the university’s educational mission gradually come to replace precise doctrinal or ecclesial language guiding the mission of the university. Religious higher education in the United States largely moved away from such doctrinal claims, viewing them as sectarian, intellectually irresponsible, and inappropriate for participation in the American *polis*. Indeed, lost in the process was not simply affiliation with particular ecclesial creeds and bodies but rather the slow reduction of a religious tradition to morals and then mores, no longer capable of functioning as an intellectual and spiritual icon to the idolatrous gods of state and academy alike.\(^7\) Schools both Catholic and Protestant who have succeeded in keeping their religious tradition central, while also engaging in the intellectual work of the modern university, have made theological reflection on Christian doctrinal claims central to their mission and vision.\(^8\)

Buckley proposes a specific medicine for those institutions that have fallen into the habit of reducing religious language to generality and second-hand slogans. Simply, the heart of Catholic higher education may be discerned in the person of Jesus Christ. He writes:

For the Christian, the wisdom and the revelation of God is above all in Christ... It means that if one wants to apprehend something of the incomprehensible mystery that is God—what God thinks and judges and directs, one can find this revealed above all in Christ... If one wants to determine what is a completely human life... one will find that above all in Christ. Christ is the revelation of God; Christ is the revelation of the human being. It was for Blaise Pascal, mathematician and philosopher, scientist and contemplative to put this Christian conviction so starkly: “Not only do we understand God only through Jesus Christ, but we understand ourselves only through Jesus Christ. We understand life and death only through Jesus Christ. Out of Jesus Christ we do not know what life is, nor death, nor God, nor ourselves.”\(^9\)

Thus, the Catholic university for Buckley does not promote knowledge or the transformation of the world apart from this Christological foundation. Indeed, much of the life of the contemporary university will include engagement with literature, methodological apprenticeship into scientific inquiry, learning the fundamentals of sociological analysis, etc. For Catholics, this
cultivation of human experience in all of its richness is ultimately oriented to the salvation of our humanity in Christ: "...we bring all of that human promise and beauty, pathos and sorrow, intricate structures and biological drives, massive disagreements and debates about political interactions and economic forces to a theological inquiry into what it means to hear the great promise of the Gospel: 'I have come that they might have life and have it more abundantly' [Jn 10:10]." The liberal arts are foundational to a Catholic education, not simply as a historical precedent arising first in the monastic schools and later developing within the universities. Rather, the liberal arts seek to develop the fullness of our humanity; the very humanity that the Word assumed to transform in love.

Of course, there is a further consequence to the centrality of Jesus Christ and the doctrine of the Incarnation to the educational mission of Catholic higher education. Brian Daley, S.J. writes:

This paradoxical faith in the simultaneous distance and nearness of God, as realized in the person of Christ, has important consequences for culture, and for the work of education. First of all, it is a ringing affirmation of the accessibility of truth with—in history, of the presence—what George Steiner calls the "substantiation"—within our limited human categories of a source of meaning that can be apprehended but never exhausted, contemplated but never wholly controlled. Christian faith in the Incarnation of the Word is the intuition that order and purpose and intelligibility have been and can be discovered dawning within human history, despite the ambiguity and absurdity that constantly swirl around us. It is in principle opposed to philosophical nihilism, to doctrinaire relativism and materialism, to theories of art and literature and history that deny in principle the possibility of finding abiding meaning in human gestures and words, because it is convinced that there is a transcendent reality that continues to reveal itself within human categories in a mysterious way. At the heart of a Catholic university is that search for truth, which we know to be possible because it is the Word, the one who imprints traces of divine order upon the universe, who becomes flesh. Catholic higher education is rigorous, because it knows that it is possible to discover reflections of divine beauty through the sophistication of mathematical formulae; to see such beauty in the creation of forms of art, which elevate our imaginations to perceive creation anew; to learn forms of critical argumentation that move the human being away from simply gazing at the shadows on the walls of a cave, to looking with rigor upon reality as it is.

Such work is indeed difficult. In the theological classroom, I often encounter students who have embraced strong forms of social constructionism, which do not allow them to make ethical judgments about what is true and good in human life. They refuse to “judge” those who have participated in mass genocide, because these dictators must have thought such mass killings were acceptable (and who am I to judge the validity of other people's actions?). Such ways of thinking, reducing all human knowledge to personal perspective alone, eliminates the possibility of encountering truth. In this case, the result of a well-intentioned relativism, divorced from seeking truth, is the elimination of any ethical categories from human discourse. A Catholic education is rigorous and realist enough to know that it is often difficult to discern such truth by creatures embedded in time and space. Yet, it is sufficiently optimistic to hope that such authentic knowledge is possible because the world was created as ordered in love. The Catholic university is a midwife, guiding students to seek the true, the good, and the beautiful through the rigors of attuning the student’s intellectual, ethical, and aesthetic dispositions.
Lastly, Jesus Christ is at the heart of a Catholic education not simply as the objective manifestation of divine love in space and time but as a person to be imitated in love. Again, turning to Daley:

One of the most challenging—and potentially embarrassing—aspects of Christian faith is that it calls us not simply to acknowledge Jesus as God made human, not simply to “get with the program” and prepare the world for God’s Kingdom, but also to imitate Him: to let His way of acting and His mode of self-understanding become our own. In the Gospels’ portrait of Him, Jesus did not simply preach deliverance to the “little ones” of Israel. He consciously chose to act and live as such a “little one.” Jesus repeatedly calls on His disciples to join Him in this same attitude of freely chosen humility, obscurity and service.14

The persistent temptation of Catholic universities is to adopt language of excellence, of success, of ostentatious displays of wealth and athletic conquest, which are part and parcel of academic life in the modern academy. Such language is ultimately inadequate. For indeed, the presence of a crucifix in the classroom is more than a marker of Catholic identity. It is a visible and sacramental reminder that the way of self-giving love, of sacrifice, of humility, is pivotal to this encounter with truth. The undergraduate learns to empty herself of supposed accolades bestowed in high school, as she undertakes the painful process of learning to write clearly according to standards, which she had never previously imagined possible. A faculty member empties himself when he learns that the way to teach a student to seek truth is often through the painful gift of self in the classroom or office hours as an act of love. The entire university enters into the humility of Christ when it ceases to proclaim its own superiority vis-à-vis other institutions. This commitment to embodying an imitation of Christ should manifest itself in the entire life of the university:

“Modesty, truthfulness, a clear-sighted emphasis on the university’s human and educational purposes have to be cultivated publicly and concretely, on an institutional level, by the institution’s leaders.”15

The Epistemological Humility of Theology

To a certain extent, the humility necessary for undertaking a Catholic approach to learning in the university has already been described. The student and the faculty member alike give themselves over to the difficult process of seeking the truth in love; of recognizing the possibility that the assumptions he or she enters with may distort reality rather than reveal it. Yet, something needs to be said about the role of theological education in the curriculum of the Catholic university as pivotal to this epistemological humility. In his magisterial The Idea of a University, John Henry Newman writes:

…if you drop any science out of the circle of knowledge, you cannot keep its place vacant for it; that science is forgotten; the other sciences close up, or, in other words, they exceed their proper bounds, and intrude where they have no right. For instance, I suppose, if ethics were sent into banishment, its territory would soon disappear, under a treaty of partition, as it may be called, between law, political economy, and physiology… The case is the same with the subject matter of Theology; it would be the prey of a dozen various sciences, if Theology were put out of possession; and not only so, but those sciences would be plainly exceeding their rights and their capacities in seizing upon it. They would be sure to teach wrongly, where they had no mission to teach at all.16

Although most Catholic universities continue to offer theological education (sometimes under the category of religious or Catholic studies), there is a constant threat to remove theology proper from the circle of sciences
within the University and instead teach religion as a historical phenomenon *alone*. Yet, theology is more than the history of religious ideas or practices, a phenomenal comparison of various religions throughout the world, or an examination of the Bible as a piece of literature fundamental to Western culture. Instead, theology is most clearly defined as faith seeking understanding.  

Yet, what is meant by understanding? Joseph Ratzinger in his *Introduction to Christianity* notes, “...understanding means seizing and grasping as meaning the meaning that man has received as ground. I think this is the precise significance of what we mean by understanding: that we learn to grasp the ground on which we have taken our stand as meaning and truth; that we learn to perceive that ground represents meaning.” The central beliefs of Christianity grounded in that revelation of divine love offered in Christ is what theology seeks to understand. Theology seeks to see reality anew through the lens of the doctrines of creation, the Incarnation, Christ’s death and resurrection, and the Church. Theological inquiry within the context of the Catholic university deals with reality, yet one infused with the light of divine love. Because the subject matter of theology is revelation, then the theologian receives the data of his or her science from the Church:

In some ways, the theologian here is no different than the scientist, the sociological researcher, the modern English literature professor who receives the canon of texts, of ideas, of methodological approaches as the ground for his or her research. Likewise, the theologian draws from the wealth of academic disciplines, of historical methodology, of philosophical hermeneutics, to engage in his or her craft; theology is an *intellectual discipline*. The difference is that the subject of theology radically disrupts the circle of knowledge of such human sciences, re-orienting the source of all knowledge toward a transcendent source: “The awareness of a transcendent presence at the heart of human activity has gradually disappeared from culture and morality... Without the religious dimension, culture and morality become hollowed out, formalistic, shallow... The vocation of the Catholic university in our time is, against all odds, to keep the disparate elements of our culture together with an integrating transcendent perspective.”  

Thus, a way of re-interpreting theology as the “queen of the sciences” is to see theological education within the Catholic university as providing the proper orientation for all knowledge as directed toward that ground, which sheds light on the fullness of what it means to be human. Theology does not impinge upon the methods of other sciences; the methodologically sound theologian does not seek to teach the evolutionary biologist how to conduct research. But the very fact that the evolutionary biologist teaches within the context of a university, which sees more to reality than what is visible to the eyes, necessarily requires epistemic humility on the part of the biologist. He or she cannot claim that human beings are in fact meaningless creatures, a product of sheer chance rather than any divine order. Such a claim would impinge upon the province of both theological inquiry, which seeks to understand the origins of human beings as created in the image and likeness of God. In such a case, the evolutionary biologist would be inserting his or her own malformed theology into sci-
entific inquiry. The presence of theology in a university curriculum educes an epistemic humility from faculty and students alike, who come to guard against usurpations of forms of inquiry against one another.

Strikingly, another aspect of epistemic humility promoted by the presence of theology within the curriculum of the Catholic university is the narrative of salvation, upon which theology depends. Human beings are not simply sometimes mistaken, as one discovers in the art of writing, of engaging in scientific research, of composing a piece of music. Instead, the theological anthropology of the Catholic university recognizes that human beings are sinful. We can allow the effects of pride to become an obstacle to perceiving truth. We can consider our own theory to be not simply an adequate explanation of a phenomenon but the only intelligible interpretation of a text. Such sin is in fact is debilitating for all human knowing, destructive of further insight within the community of the university. Bernard Lonergan, commenting on this fact, writes:

Just as insight can be desired, so too it can be unwanted. Besides the love of light, there can be a love of darkness. If prepossessions and prejudices notoriously vitiate theoretical investigations, much more easily can elementary passions bias understanding in practical and personal matters. Nor has such a bias merely some single and isolated effect. To exclude an insight is also to exclude the further questions that would arise from it, and the complementary insights that would carry it towards a rounded and balanced viewpoint...the incomprehension, isolation, and duality rob the development of one’s common sense of some part, greater or less, of the corrections and the assurance that result from learning accurately the tested insight of others and from submitting one’s own insights to the criticism based on others’ experience and development.21

As Lonergan writes elsewhere, “Corrupt minds have a flair for picking the mistaken solution and insisting that it alone is intelligent, reasonable, good.”22 Catholic theology constantly interrupts the work of the university, reminding students and faculty alike that they may love not only the light of truth but the darkness of their own phantasms. The narrative that the theologian seeks to contemplate informs the other disciplines in a humble recognition that scientific inquiry in whatever field (including and especially theology) may be informed not by an impartial searching for truth alone but a human heart bent toward its own desires.

**The Problem of Economic Pragmatism in Education**

In John Henry Newman’s *Idea of a University*, the Catholic educator addresses the rationale for a liberal education vis-à-vis concerns directly related to vocation. He writes:

I am asked what is the end of University Education, and of the Liberal or Philosophical Knowledge which I conceive it to impart: I answer, that what I have already said has been sufficient to show that it has a very tangible, real, and sufficient end, though the end cannot be divided from that knowledge itself. Knowledge is capable of being its own end. Such is the constitution of the human mind, that any kind of knowledge, if it be really such, is its own reward.23

The Liberal Education of the university, according to Newman, does not seek to form better Catholics, to lead to an increase in vocations to religious life, or to prepare one for a lucrative professional career.24 Instead, Liberal Education creates the gentleman, who has “a cultivated intellect, a delicate taste, a candid, equitable, dispassionate mind, a noble and courteous bearing in the conduct of life;—these are the connatural qualities of a large knowledge.”25 A Liberal Education forms the person in specific intellectual habits, which indeed will have an ef-
fect on society as a whole. Again, Newman states,

…a University training is the great ordinary means to a great but ordinary end; it aims at raising the intellectual tone of society, at cultivating the public mind, at purifying the national taste, at supplying true principles to popular enthusiasm and fixed aims to popular aspiration, at giving enlargement and sobriety to the ideas of the age, at facilitating the exercise of political power, and refining the intercourse of private life. It is the education which gives a man a clear conscious view of his own opinions and judgments, a truth in developing them, an eloquence in expressing them, and a force in urging them. It teaches him to see things as they are, to go right to the point, to disentangle a skein of thought, to detect what is sophistical, and to discard what is irrelevant.26

Thus, a University education seeks to teach human beings to perceive reality as it is through the cultivation of the intellect in such a way that the social and cultural life of the nation is transformed in the process. Higher education seems not simply to form a person for a career but to develop dispositions of thought for the good of humanity.

Of course, as anyone would know today, the primary purpose of a university or college degree in the popular imagination has become not the cultivation of knowledge for its own sake but the gaining of a diploma that serves as a passport into potentially lucrative employment. Students wonder why they must take a course in philosophy, in English literature, in mathematics, in sociological theory, and theology, since such classes have nothing to do with their future career. Indeed, the liberal arts in the university often seek to counter this mentality not through a defense of knowledge for its own good but with the promise that such courses are ultimately "useful." The pre-medicine student who studies theology will have an edge on his or her medical school application. The student entering into a deep analysis of the Great Books will learn valuable intellectual habits for law school.

Of course, university educations are not cheap investments. Catholic colleges and universities, in particular, are very expensive. In the academic year 2011-12, the average cost of such an education was $26,300.27 Indeed, it would be economically unjust for such institutions to avoid the question of whether or not the student might have gainful employment following graduation. But, the danger of an economically pragmatic approach to higher education is ultimately its telos. If the entire purpose of a university education is entrée into a career, then the student is reduced to nothing more than a cog in the economic machine. The university curriculum which ceases to be concerned with a liberal education will gradually focus only on those disciplines which enable students to fulfill their role as workers in American society. The formation of the entire human being, of the intellectual and aesthetic dispositions intrinsic to human flourishing, is sacrificed at the expense of economic pragmatism. The university becomes nothing more than a business, offering diplomas that receive economic value according to the degree to which they enable the student to climb the social ladder and to participate in an economy of consumption.

Catholic universities must find a way to remain counter-cultural relative to this economic pragmatism in education. Prescribing a way out of this reduction of the human person, Gerald McCool writes:

The ideal of the integrative mind…preserves education from a number of distortions. Faith in the presence in the world of a creating and redeeming God is a protection against a narrow, this-worldly secularism or a despairing resignation to an unintelligible
universe. Conviction that the human person has a
divine call to wholeness is a defense against a nar-
row professionalism in education or the tyranny of a
single discipline or a single method. Interdisciplinary
cooperation is neither a sacrilege nor an imposition.
Fidelity to an old and coherent tradition frees the
educator from slavery to the present or to the imme-
diate future.28

Catholic higher education must be concerned that stu-
dents will receive gainful employment at the conclusion
of their time in school. But even more so, such institu-
tions must continue to hold up a vision of the human
person that moves beyond the apotheosis of scientific
inquiry for the sake of technological innovation. Stu-
dents at Catholic universities take courses in the arts,
in philosophy, in economic theory, in theology, in the
social sciences, because they are seeking to adopt a ho-
listic view of what it means to be human. The Catholic
university maintains funding for these programs as a
way to ensure that the great treasury of learning and the
monuments of the human condition do not disappear
through the heresy of economic pragmatism. Faculty
members traverse the boundaries of disciplines, not
because it is in vogue in the academy to do so, but be-
cause all knowledge is ultimately one. Those of us who
teach at the university do so with passion, precisely
because we believe that the search for knowledge is a
form of wisdom that elicits wonder. Such a curriculum
and pedagogy refuses to reduce the student to a future
employee (who donates excessive quantities of money
to the university), but seeks to cultivate the student as
a thinker, one with an acute aesthetic sensibility, who
wonders at the world.

The Witness of the Saints

At the conclusion of this piece, it seems wise to raise one
important point: it is not necessary for salvation within
Christianity to pursue a college degree. Salvation within
Christianity ultimately seeks to promote holiness, not
intellectual prowess or a commitment to activism.
Though Catholics are quick to quote John Henry New-
man in assembling an argument for the function of the
university in the world, they are less prone to turn to his
sermons on the hiddenness of holiness. He preaches:

There are many reasons why God's saints cannot be
known all at once;—first, as I have said, their good
deeds are done in secret. Next, good men are often
slandered, ridiculed, ill-treated in their lifetime; they
are mistaken by those, whom they obliged to with-
stand sin in their days, and this raises about them a
cloud of prejudice and dislike, which in time indeed,
but not till after a time, goes off. Then again their
intentions and aims are misunderstood; and some of
their excellent deeds or noble traits of character are
known to some men, others to others, not all to all.29

The university seeks to promote dispositions that en-
able men and women to be leaders in society, in intel-
lectual life, and in politics. When women and men are
acknowledged for their work in this regard, even on be-
half of the Church, this is by no means evidence of their
sanctity. It simply means that the university has formed
the student in the proper natural habits, which enable
“success” within society.

Of course, the Catholic university is not a seminary,
a program for formation in religious life, a school of
ministry for lay students, even an extension of previous
religious education. The modern-day university, with
students drawn from a variety of traditions, cannot have
as its primary focus the formation of saints. Nonetheless,
the Catholic university separates itself from its secular
peers insofar as it forms its students in those disposi-
tions that point toward holiness, in that which makes genuine holiness possible. The Catholic university does not simply admire those who have joined the pantheon of business, political, and economic success. It rumi-
nates upon the memory of the saints, who present to the world a radically distinct vision of what constitutes a successful human life.

Presently, emerging adults (generally of college age) are not discovering the early twenties as a time in which the search for holiness is central to their identity. As Chris-
tian Smith et al. have discovered:

…we as a society are failing our youth in crucial ways…
it may not be too strong to suggest that we are failing
 to equip teenagers and emerging adults with the basic tools for good moral reasoning. We are failing to teach them how to deal constructively with moral, cultural, and ideological differences. We are failing to teach them to think about what is good for people and in life. We are failing to equip our youth with the ideas, tools, and practices to know how to negotiate their romantic and sexual lives in healthy, nondestructive ways that prepare them to achieve the happy, functional marriages and families that most of them say they want in future years. We are failing to teach our youth about life purposes and goals that matter more than the accumulation of material possessions and material comfort and security. We are failing to challenge the all-too-common need to be intoxicated, the apparent inability to live a good, fun life without being under the influence of alcohol or drugs. And we are failing to teach our youth the importance of civic engagement and political participation, how to be active citizens of their communities and nations, how to think about and live for the common good. Catholic universities have an obligation to form students to perceive that excessive alcohol consumption is not simply dangerous for one’s physical well-being but also destructive of relationships, a giving over of oneself to a loss of control that often leads to sexual violence. It must form women and men who care deeply for one another, willing to offer the self in love to the dormitory neighbor in need; for solidarity begins with learning to care deeply for members of a particular community here and now. It must offer a vision of human flourishing, not connected with physical beauty or athletic capacities alone. That is, Catholic higher education has a responsibility to point toward a way of life informed by humble self-gift; a Eucharistic disposition of love that extols the hiddenness of holiness.

Residence life remains a central way of forming students in natural dispositions that might serve as the basis of such future holiness, at least for those interested. The presence of holy women and men in such dorms serves as a persuasive, puzzling sign regarding the attractiveness of holiness. The frequent celebration of the Eucharist in the dorms is a constant reminder that Catholicism seeks to form humanity not in the Machiavellian art of power and prestige but the humility of Eucharistic caritas. The presence of women and men in the dorms who meditate upon God’s Word, who devote themselves to the rich devotional life of Catholicism, slowly evangelizes a community.

Likewise, the entire life of the university should testify to the world that there is a different vision of humanity being proclaimed. Service to the community and the world at large is not simply a way to increase status among our peers; it is a concrete commitment to let love spill over beyond the bounds of the university to the world. The refusal of the university to take advantage of its student athletes, to reduce them to gladiators existing for our entertainment and the increasing profits of the school, will be a salutary stumbling block for
other universities who treat their athletes as property. Indeed, this concrete commitment to love, to charity, will mean passing by opportunities for success, for excellence, for worldly recognition. But the university’s wariness of operating according to such short-term visions of success, over the long run, will be the true marker of Catholic identity.

In the end, as we noted at the beginning of this section, the raison d’être of the Catholic university is not to provide an education that saves; no education can do this. After all, there is an array of well-educated human beings (some of whom graduated from Catholic schools) whose moral qualities are severely lacking. But, the formation that the University offers must not lead students away from the possibility of this salvation. We cannot turn a blind eye toward vice, toward injustice, toward all that reduces human flourishing to economic and athletic success alone. Instead, a Catholic higher education will continually point away from itself, away from markers of accomplishment and prestige, to a vision of humanity transformed in love.

†

Timothy P. O’Malley, Ph.D. is Director of the Notre Dame Center for Liturgy, an Assistant Professional Specialist in the Department of Theology at the University of Notre Dame, and editor of the journal Church Life.
NOTES


7 Ibid., 836.


9 Buckley, “The Catholic University as Promise and Project,” 17.

10 Ibid., 19.


14 Daley, “Christ and the Catholic University,” 9

15 Ibid., 10.


17 For an account of theological education at the undergraduate level in particular, see Mark McIntosh, *Divine Teaching: An Introduction to Christian Theology* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008).


26 Ibid., 134-35.
27 This statistic may be found on the website of the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities: www.accunet.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3797#Tuition (accessed August 22, 2013).


Deacon James Keating wrote *Resting on the Heart of Christ* shortly after becoming a member of the Institute of Priestly Formation (IPF), following a thirteen-year teaching career at the Pontifical College Josephinum. Drawing on this extensive experience, he wrote the book as reflection on the “vocation and spirituality” of the seminary professor (*Resting*, 33). To continue the conversation with those still teaching in seminaries and those providing spiritual direction to seminarians, the IPF has hosted two conferences whose talks have now been edited by Keating and published in two volumes entitled *Seminary Theology: Teaching in a Contemplative Way* and *Seminary Theology II: Theology and Spiritual Direction in Dialogue*. It is appropriate to consider these works together in review, as a sustained initial sounding, followed by collected diverse echoes.

Keating’s original book is intended as “a book of spiritual reading” (*Resting*, 25), rather than a strictly academic treatise. The frequent move from assertion to the posing of meditative questions (set off from the main body of the text) will surely be helpful in allowing those of his readers who are seminary theologians to use this book as an occasion for reflection about their own praxis. More fundamentally perhaps, this feature models for his readers the type of spiritual-reflective pedagogy Keating seeks to promote.

The book seeks to draw out the consequences of the call of seminary theologians to be “not simply teachers in a prosaic sense but spiritual formators” (Ibid.). For Keating, the function of seminary theology is to be at the service of
pastoral desire (37). His first main chapter begins with a consideration of what it means to do theology in a seminary context, which in large part consists of developing a contrast between seminary theology, which is ordered to “a deeper appropriation of the spiritual reality,” and university theology, with its “more secular and ‘professional’ goals” (35).

Keating maintains and seeks to promote an appreciation of these two fields as each having their own proper genius. He names the two approaches prophetic-critical theology and contemplative theology respectively, which aptly captures the difference and the place both have within the Church.

From theology itself, Keating turns to the identity of the seminary theologian. Relying on Cardinal Dulles’s concept of postcritical theology, something of a synthesis is developed between ‘narrow’ understandings of those two modes, wherein academic integrity and critical objectivity is not sacrificed to make room for personal and affective contemplation but enriched, even “fulfilled” by it (81). The ordering of the goods is stated clearly in Keating’s third chapter: “the critical approach to learning would serve the contemplative approach, and the contemplative would nourish and order pastoral ends” (87). He advises keeping before us “the face of the parishioner” as a key text of seminary theology (89). While one might add a nod to the non-Catholic who stands in needs of the Church’s evangelical activity, this is helpful as an end to orient one’s vision. The seminarian does not engage the Tradition to master it for its own sake, or even for personal or spiritual enrichment, but for the sake of serving his future parishioners. In the second volume of conference proceedings, Fr. Peter Ryan, S.J. will draw out some more developed consequences of this compelling insight of Keating’s.

Keating then offers a reflection on two models of study appropriate for the seminary theologian: a receptive model akin to praying with an icon and an active model akin to Ignatian imagination. A reader who gives these reflections the pondering time they deserve will find them rich in their capacity to spark fruitful reflection on what takes place when one engages in theology. This reviewer found the reflection on Ghirlandaio’s Last Supper particularly beautiful, in which the Beloved Disciple lays his head by Jesus’ heart. Beauty is not only a feature of Keating’s prose, but also of his attractive vision that intellectual striving may have a terminus of loving rest. May all our writing display an irenicism appropriate to a people moving towards resting on the heart of the Prince of Peace!

In his fourth chapter, Keating seeks to develop a pedagogy that takes beauty and goodness as seriously as truth, building on insights from teaching adult learners in other contexts. This application of these insights demonstrates further the wisdom of the Vatican II Council Fathers’ call that seminary formation should attend to “the newer findings of sound… pedagogy” (Optatam Totius, §11). Keating encourages classes that are both beautiful and truly loving, in approaching one’s students with genuine charity. The character and prayerfulness of the professor matters as the seminarian is being formed to be “the dean of the school of prayer that is the parish” (130). This image of the parish as a school drives many of Keating’s reflections and may help seminarians connect their experience in the seminary with the parish life for which they are preparing.

Grounded in an image of the seminary classroom as a place where people of faith welcome the personal God of Truth, Keating has some helpful advice for how explicit prayer can be incorporated both into classroom time and a seminarian’s required preparation. These suggestions should help a seminarian reflect on how the content being learned is informing
his walk with God, with the stated hope that seminarians able to thus engage theological content will form “a generation of priests able to identify and welcome God in events that appear to be ‘only secular’ in nature” (143).

Following this is an intriguing chapter which draws some lessons from liturgy for seminary teaching. Notable are the invitation to integrate silence into the classroom, as inspired by its place in the Liturgy of the Word, as well as a consideration of what full, conscious, and active participation looks like for a student in a classroom. The final chapter considers what one would hope a contemplative method of teaching theology might “yield in the life of the parish priest” (171). An important point of this chapter is the need to let spiritual formation truly be the integrating pillar, not restricted to “the private conversation of the internal forum” (174). The aim—one that should truly undergird all that happens in a seminary—is that the seminarian learn to live “in communion with [Christ’s] pastoral charity” (179).

The book ends with an appendix written with a seminarian as its intended audience, encouraging them to appreciate how intellectual formation can enliven their spiritual lives, and exhorting them to become “intellectuals... in a way that leads to God” (205). It is something that many students of theology, including those who are engaged in teaching, would do well to remember.

In this book, Deacon Keating asks a very important question: how can intellectual formation be order towards a pastoral zeal that is grounded in contemplative love? The posing of the question and the soul-searching it should occasion among those responsible for forming priests is gift enough for readers of this slim, inexpensive volume. In addition to asking the question, Keating provides an engaging and compelling vision of seminary intellectual formation that maintains academic rigor while ultimately being grounded in love. The vision is a productive and fruitful one, as evidenced by the two subsequent books of conference proceedings.

In fact, this vision is so attractive that I think Keating’s ideas may be welcomed by a broader audience than he himself might suspect. He writes provocatively at one point that “mystery has been banned from the university” (108), and at various places in his work displays a somewhat pessimistic attitude towards the possibility of positive reception of his ideas in university theology departments. Such departments are, of course, incredibly (and richly) diverse places, but I think there is cause for considerably more optimism. Having received my own education in theology at the University of Notre Dame whilst engaged in seminary formation, I experienced many classes taught by professors who were concerned that the material we were learning would be directed toward deeper faith and more keenly directed zeal. It is my conviction that universities can form their students in the mystery of self-gift in their own way (which will be different than how a dedicated seminary undertakes this). Unfortunately, Keating has encountered in the academy an approach to theology “torn from its moorings in faith... having become merely a course of study in history, politics and sociology” (45). This surely exists, but the good news is that I have also encountered faith-filled engagement with the humane sciences that built up my ability to keep in front of me the human face of the parishioner and find the divine in the apparently secular, to address two of his desiderata. I hope that those working in a university setting will be able to set aside the occasional polemic in this work, which is really quite incidental to the substantial positive contribution that this book could make to their reflections on their scholarship and pedagogy.
In many ways, the two volumes of *Seminary Theology* (*STI* and *STII*) provide answers to Keating’s central question, from the perspective of differing theological disciplines or approaches to spiritual direction. As with most conference proceedings, some papers will interest some readers more than others. Given their number, there is not space in this review to consider each in detail. I will dwell longer with those papers that occasioned more serious reflection on my part, by which no critique of the others is intended. One unfortunate feature of these books is the disappointing presence of many small typographical errors. I would encourage readers not to judge the quality of the scholarship by the quality of the editing.

The first article by Deacon Keating summarizes what he had written in *Resting on the Heart of Christ*. Next up is an article by Fr. Thomas McDermott, O.P., which is an elegant reminder of the importance of inspiring a lifelong love of learning in a diocesan priest. The article states that lifelong learning is vital for the pastoral fruitfulness of a priest, as well as a “means to holiness” (*STI*, 37). It also presents a telling analysis of why priests often neglect this. Fr. Thomas Lane’s article on teaching Scripture explains the relationship between the necessary teaching of historical-critical approaches to Scripture (and gives practical solutions based on the Church’s documents on how to overcome some seminarians’ reluctance in embracing these approaches) and the prayerful response to Scripture one desires in priests. One helpful suggestion is to teach *lectio divina* in an introductory class on Scripture. The endnotes furnish a useful bibliography on the trajectory of the Church’s thinking on the historical-critical method. Dr. Perry Cahall’s article draws some lessons concerning pedagogy from the practice of the Church Fathers. Drawing on *Dei Verbum*, Cahill starts from a relational approach to Revelation and concludes with an intriguing invitation to the seminary theologians to adopt ‘witness’ as their primary identity.

I found Dr. Margaret Turek’s article entitled “Balthasar’s approach to a theology of God the Father” (*STI*, 97) the most engaging of the volume. In her tour-de-force exposition of Balthasar’s approach to the “all-powerful powerlessness” (104) of God the Father, Turek demonstrates how engagement with difficult theological sources can lead a seminarian to “contemplative beholding of God’s Paternity” and from there “to demonstrate an attitude of service toward the laity ‘to the point of a total gift of self’” (116). Her writing is almost poetic; the sources she commands vast and complex; the challenge she extends to seminarians breath-taking: you are “called to take such a risk, to hazard such self-abandonment” (117).

Dr. John Gresham’s article covers the important topic of “contemplating Christ in the classroom” (125). This article has some helpful suggestions about how to integrate critical and contemplative work by having students in a Christology class take a devotional title for Christ from a litany and not only study its biblical and historical background but also make it their prayer. The result is
to be a meditation presented to the class integrating both elements. Developing a facility for this kind of integration could do wonders for the seminarians’ preaching. Fr. Dennis Billy closes the volume with some concluding remarks, summarizing each article and offering some thoughts for going forward.

Seminary Theology II: Theology and Spiritual Direction in Dialogue by Deacon James Keating, Ph.D. (ed.)

Omaha, NE
The Institute for Priestly Formation Publications, 2011
$13.95

The second volume of Seminary Theology (STII) seeks to put teachers and spiritual directors in dialogue, featuring articles from authors in both fields. Fr. Todd Lajiness’s short article seeks to draw some lessons from Dei Verbum for establishing a dialogue for intellectual and spiritual formation. His basic thesis is that “theology is a transformative encounter with a person, not with a principle or idea” (STII, 17). This material would be familiar to people who had read the earlier volume, but may be helpful to those approaching this book first, which is presumably the intention in putting it at the start of the book. Fr. Earl Fernandes has contributed a very helpful article on how spiritual formation can develop the virtues needed to approach theology contemplatively, using the Desert Fathers as his chief source. His notions of telos (the ultimate end – the Kingdom of God) and scopos (the immediate goal – purity of heart) provide a good framework for approaching these questions. He has practical suggestions for spiritual directors and professors, advising the latter to learn the art of judicious reflection questions from the former. Msgr. Gerard McCarren’s article draws lessons from the liturgy for seminary pedagogy, expanding richly on the already meaty fifth chapter of Keating’s Resting book. A nice touch is his application of a directive from the Rule of St. Benedict to treat practical tools as vessels of the altar to encourage professors to develop in their students a reverence toward the mundane parts of their disciplines.

Father Raymond Gawronski, S.J. has provided an introduction to an Ignatian approach to spiritual direction as spiritual fatherhood. This will be helpful to those professors unfamiliar with what exactly goes on in spiritual direction as well as its undergirding conceptual
framework. Noteworthy is his insightful use of a comparative religions perspective to elucidate the art. Fr. Daniel Trapp, a seminary spiritual director, examines the notion of “affective maturity” (97) and offers suggestions to professors for how to aid seminarians’ growth in this respect. An intriguing suggestion arises from structuring some of his thinking around the munera of priesthood. Trapp points out that professors often think about the pastoral applications of their subjects and calls for the same thoughtfulness about the implications for priestly sanctifying and teaching. Fr. Peter Ryan, S.J. offers a nice example of how a seemingly obtuse philosophical distinction (between the finis cuius gratia and the finis cui) has real implications for spiritual formation. His insistence that we are to “seek first the kingdom of God” (124) has the potential transform the zeal for personal holiness—with which men today often enter the seminary—into a zeal for the cure of souls. His model ‘pep talk’ on spiritual maturity (138-40) would make excellent reading for anyone engaged in formation. Fr. Steve Wlusek draws parallels between the work of the professor and the director that should influence how the former undertakes work in a seminary. The focus on attentive listening as a pre-requisite for effective teaching is an especially insightful point. Fr. Dennis Billy once again closes the volume drawing out some commonalities among the papers.

Both volumes of *Seminary Theology* contain many gems. One theme for future consideration for the IPF would be how intellectual formation can help students reflect theologically on their existing and future ministerial experiences. In the meantime, these books would be a valuable addition to the shelves not just of seminary formators but of anyone involved in the theological enterprise who cares about forming students to be citizens of heaven.

Deacon Adam D.P. Booth, C.S.C. graduated with an M.Div from Notre Dame in 2013 and is currently serving in Holy Cross and St. Stanislaus parishes in South Bend, Indiana.
My chaplain in college performed the same remarkable action each Sunday. At the conclusion of Mass, having turned his microphone off, he would kiss the altar and very quietly say, “Thank you, Jesus.” What made this simple action so powerful was the absolute love, tenderness, and confidence with which he spoke. It inspired in me the thought and commitment, “He knows Jesus so intimately. I want to know Jesus like that.”
Johannes (Jan) Vermeer; *Christ in the House of Martha and Mary* (1654); Scottish National Gallery; Courtesy Wikimedia Commons
The call of each baptized person is to evangelize (cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, §15), and our mission of transforming the world must begin with us coming to know the God who is Love (cf. 1 Jn 4:8, 16). Growing up, I heard many people talk about the importance of a personal relationship with God, but they rarely explained ways of achieving one. My chaplain modeled through his life that he was madly in love with Jesus. Preaching through a lived friendship with Jesus is an especially effective way of spreading the Good News of Christianity because it is something many people have never witnessed.

How can we grow in this friendship? One way is to approach Jesus' humanity and earthly life. The nativity is usually portrayed with a shining, Caucasian, perfectly clean, three-month-old baby Jesus, a glowing Mary nearby, and St. Joseph shoved back into some dark corner. What was the reality, though? Joseph and Mary's human plans were crushed when Caesar called a census. Joseph took his very pregnant wife on a long trip, she unexpectedly went into labor, they could not find a place to stay, and they ended up in a smelly barn. If Joseph was back in a dark corner, who was helping his bride give birth? One of the magi? I don't think so! Have we ever realized that a slimy, gooey, baby Jesus was most likely birthed into the callused hands of his carpenter foster father? A baby was born, fragile and dependent, just like every person who has ever lived—yet that baby was also God.

Meditating on Jesus' humanity helps our souls grapple with the mystery of human nature becoming united with the divine nature through the Incarnation (cf. Jn 1:14). An equally efficacious way of growing in intimacy with Jesus is by acknowledging His presence. Throughout each day, calmly and faithfully, we can acknowledge the fact that God is with us. We can grow in awareness and faith that Jesus reigns within the depths of our soul. The great friends of Jesus, the saints, constantly express how essential this practice is in life. St. Francis De Sales taught that all prayer should begin with acknowledging the presence of God. Saints Teresa of Ávila and John of the Cross defined the highest form of personal prayer, contemplation, as resting with the indwelling presence of God. St. Augustine wrote, “God is closer to me than I am to myself” (cf. *Confessions*, III, 6, 11). All four of these saints are Doctors of our Church.

These practices are great, but even after many years of being devoted Christians, we can find that we are following Christ simply because we have realized that it is the right thing to do. Gradually, people often continue to walk with Christ out of habit and obedience, and cease to choose Him out of love. This is a very dangerous pitfall, one in which we might be shocked to find ourselves. However, we can strive to avoid it or rise from it by intentionally taking extended time alone with Jesus. We should spend days in a row alone with Him, allowing Him to nurture and possibly challenge us. Is there a healthy, long-term relationship that does not find itself in need of this treatment?
If we combine these practices of mediating on the life of Christ, acknowledging Jesus’ presence with us each day, and taking extended alone time with Him, we will find that we have developed a strong friendship of the greatest value. At the end of His life Jesus did not say, “I am your King—bow before Me!” He said, “I call you friends” (Jn 15:15). He was revealing the truth that we do not have a dominating God, but one who is humble and relational. Jesus lived, suffered, died, and rose so that we could be united with Him, yet there is something in us that doubts that He cares about each of us as an individual, as a friend. It is hard to imagine that we are worthy of that friendship, but we must receive it so that we can share it. Preaching should not be limited to specific moments of oration but should be a constant overflow of the fruits that come from a life lived in love with Jesus.

†

Daniel Hoover, M.A. is the Pastoral Associate at St. Mary Magdalen Parish and directs a lay ecclesial community for young adults in Wilmington, Delaware. Read more from Daniel at www.dhoov.blogspot.com.