

## **The “Open Circle” The Culture of Marianist Universities**

It is a pleasure and a challenge to open this gathering with some reflection on the culture of Marianist universities. It is a pleasure because the topic, as elusive as it can surely be, ought to be a fundamental personal and professional concern for each of us. It is a challenge because culture is like the atmosphere—all around us, affecting us constantly, but rarely the object of our direct attention. As a consequence, I think it is important to begin my remarks by reflecting on culture, both the wider culture of the United States, and then the more specific culture of the American university. With descriptions of those two cultures as a background, I will then turn to what I believe ought to characterize the culture of Marianist universities. Third, and finally, I want to return to the first part of my presentation, my description of the dominant US culture and its academic culture, and isolate some of the challenges and opportunities they pose to us who are committed to building a Marianist culture in our universities. In short, I will move from a consideration of dominant cultures to the Marianist vision to current challenges for Marianist universities.

### **The Dominant Cultures**

We are all familiar with various descriptions of our dominant North American culture. I wish to single out only three of its characteristics: individualism, tolerance and private religion. I am well aware that there are some subcultures in the United States—for example, the rapidly growing number of Hispanics—that do not reflect these characteristics—or at least do not reflect them to the extent that the majority of the population does. Nevertheless, all of us can be described accurately, I believe, as deeply affected by individualism, an attitude of tolerance and the privatization of religion.

I begin with individualism.<sup>1</sup> Over 170 years ago, a French visitor to our country, Alexis DeTocqueville, wrote extensively of the rugged individualism he saw everywhere he traveled. About a decade later, Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote his famous 1841 essay, “Self Reliance,” which celebrates individualism and describes religion as a personal choice best kept hidden in the private lives of individuals. He applauds people who can think for themselves, who do not depend on clergy or politicians to tell them what and how to think. Not everyone applauded this development. Later in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the brilliant religious thinker and convert to Catholicism, John Henry Newman, singled out what he called “liberalism” as the fundamental problem facing Christians. In his own words, liberalism is an anti-dogmatic principle that teaches

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<sup>1</sup> In the following paragraphs I draw freely from a section of a recently published article that I co-authored with the Purdue sociologist of religion, Jim Davidson, “The Mission of Catholic High Schools and Today’s Millennials: Three Suggestions,” in *Catholic Education: A Journal of Inquiry and Practice*, Vol. 6, No. 4, June 2003.

that truth and falsehood and religion are but matters of opinion; that one doctrine is as good as another; that the Governor of the world does not intend that we should gain the truth; that there is no truth; that we are not more acceptable to God by believing this than by believing that; that no one is answerable for his opinions; that they are a matter of necessity or accident; that it is enough if we sincerely hold that we profess; that our merit lies in seeking, not in possessing.<sup>2</sup>

In the wake of the cultural revolution of the 1960s, this individualistic approach to religion, or “liberalism” to use Newman’s vocabulary, is more widespread now in Western society than when Newman described it in 1845. Contemporary sociologists such as Robert Bellah, Robert Wuthnow and Wade Clark Roof—all of whom have described at length the individualistic and voluntaristic nature of religious life in America today—confirm my judgment about how widespread individualism is.

When I add the word “voluntarism” (not to be confused with volunteerism), I am emphasizing something other than the intellect. To emphasize the intellect in matters of religion presumes that there is a truth to be accepted, understood, and professed; to emphasize the will presumes that the most important movement takes place in the individual’s choice and desire. It is not a matter of recognizing and affirming a truth as much as it is a matter of desire and what one prefers. A nearly exclusive reliance on voluntarism is perfectly compatible with the billboards that still dot the highways of middle America: “Go to the church of your preference.” The question is not about what is true but rather about being comfortable. Both voluntarism and individualism also find expression in the now familiar response, “I’m spiritual but not religious.” We have the phenomenon today of many people, to employ still another memorable phrase, who are “believing without belonging”; that is, they have their own personal form of faith, but do not participate in a community of faith with a tradition of common beliefs, rituals and practices.

In recent years I have been reading a good bit of the writings of Charles Taylor. In the estimate of another leading philosopher, Richard Rorty, Taylor is one of the 10 most important philosophers writing today. According to sociologist Robert Bellah, two facts need to be remembered about Taylor. First, among widely read philosophers today, he is one of only two who is a practicing Catholic (the other is Alisdair MacIntyre). And second, he is “unusually knowledgeable about the social sciences..., and is primarily concerned with the intellectual, ethical and religious meaning of modernity.”<sup>3</sup> Taylor delivered the prestigious Gifford Lectures in 1999. Though not yet published, the theme of these lectures is summarized nicely in a short volume entitled *The Varieties of Religion Today* (Harvard University Press, 2002). Taylor shows why the Harvard religious psychologist and pragmatist philosopher, William James, whose own classic on religious experience was also presented as the Gifford Lectures a century earlier, remains so contemporary.

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<sup>2</sup> *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (Notre Dame Press, 1989), pp. 357-358.

<sup>3</sup> Robert Bellah, “New Time Religion: A Review of *Varieties of Religion Today*,” in *Christian Century*, May 22-29, 2002, pp. 20-24.

For James, authentic religion resembles closely the “I’m spiritual but not religious” approach just mentioned above. He has little use for churches and organized religion; instead, he focuses on the religious experience of individuals, “the feelings, acts and experiences of individual men in their solitude.” Those who seek God through churches experience God, James tells us, “second hand,” as a “dull habit.” Thus, the real locus of religion is the individual, not the community. To be sought above all are first-hand experiences instead of reciting traditional formulas or performing boring rituals. In James’ own words:

The word “religion,” as ordinarily used, is equivocal. A survey of history shows us that, as a rule, religious geniuses attract disciples and produce groups of sympathizers. When these groups get strong enough to “organize” themselves, they become ecclesiastical institutions with corporate ambitions of their own. The spirit of politics and the lust for dogmatic rule are then apt to enter and contaminate the originally innocent thing; so that when we hear the word “religion” nowadays, we think inevitably of some “church” or other; and to some persons the word “church” suggests so much hypocrisy and tyranny and meanness and tenacity of superstition that in a wholesale undiscerning way they glory in saying they are “down” on religion altogether.<sup>4</sup>

Needless to say, James has trouble appreciating any emphasis on community, tradition and liturgy. As Taylor explains, “what James can’t seem to accommodate is the phenomenon of collective religious life, which is not just the result of individual religious connections, but which in some way constitutes or is that connection.”<sup>5</sup> And at the heart of that connection is the realization that the Church is a sacramental communion. It should be obvious that James is tone deaf to much that is characteristic of Catholic religious traditions.

If individualism is a pervasive characteristic of contemporary culture, a second pervasive characteristic is the attitude of tolerance. The first European settlers of this country fled Europe to secure religious asylum from the oppression of the Catholic Church. They immigrated to America precisely to secure religious freedom. They themselves came from different Protestant traditions. Representing a considerable religious pluralism within Protestant Christianity and embodying a strong sense of self-reliance among themselves, these immigrants learned to practice tolerance so that they could avoid the bloody repression they had experienced in Europe. They believed that everyone in the new commonwealth should be accorded civil rights and that no one should be coerced in any matter of personal belief, especially that of religion. The religious wars of Europe in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries led these immigrants to believe that if there were to be social peace, religion would have to be viewed as “private” or at least as “non public.” And as we know, the founders of the United States eventually ruled that there was to be no established religion.

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<sup>4</sup> William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (Penguin Books, 1982), pp. 334-335.

<sup>5</sup> Taylor, *The Varieties of Religion Today*, p. 24.

To continue my narrative, by the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, the separation of Church and State morphed into the separation of religion, at least in any public form, from the rest of society. Still, a very large percentage of people in the United States, unlike in Europe, continue to describe themselves as religious. But observers debate how deep that religion is. One person rather flippantly observed, religion is like “a swimming pool in which all the noise comes from the shallow end.”<sup>6</sup> Beginning with John Locke, thinkers first developed their ideas about tolerance to help people deal peacefully with religious differences, a role the practice of tolerance still plays. In more recent years, people invoke the practice of tolerance as they face a multitude of cultural differences, often subsumed under the now familiar word, “multiculturalism.” In his most recent book, Jesuit social ethicist David Hollenbach states that

there are many indications in the United States today that tolerance of diversity occupies the place held by the common good in the thought of Aristotle, St. Thomas and Ignatius of Loyola. Tolerance, not the common good, has become the highest social aspiration in American culture.<sup>7</sup>

To support his claim, Hollenbach cites the work of sociologist Alan Wolfe’s 1998 study, *One Nation After All*, which explores what the American middle class really thinks about public morality. There is good news and bad news. The good news is that instead of a war between cultures, Wolfe found something close to a consensus on what is most highly valued by the middle class. The highest good is now tolerance. The bad news is that the highest good is tolerance. Wolfe says that an 11<sup>th</sup> commandment should be added to the biblical decalogue: “Thou shalt not judge.”<sup>8</sup>

In describing individualism and tolerance in the ways that I have, little needs to be said about the third characteristic, the privatization of religion. It is easier for an individual than a community to be private, especially a community that numbers thousands of people. The first Christians worshipped in catacombs and private homes. Once Christianity became the established religion of the Roman Empire, Christians built basilicas and churches. At the center of the still existing medieval towns of Europe cathedrals dominate the skyline. The new cathedrals of our cities are office buildings and banks. These tall buildings now dwarf the cathedrals, like St. Patrick in New York City, making them practically invisible. But even less visible in our society than those near invisible cathedrals are the external practices of religion. In any major city, one can pass on the street thousands of people and never know what religion, if any, they profess and practice. Religion is now an individual and private matter.

Newman had said that “liberalism” reduced religion to just a matter of opinion. For a growing number of persons in North America, religion is not only a matter of

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<sup>6</sup> Sarah Coakley, “Deepening Practices: Perspectives from Ascetical and Mystical Theology,” in *Practical Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life*, eds. Miroslav Wolf and Dorothy C. Bass (Eerdmans, 2002), p. 81. Coakley is citing the remark of Anglican Theologian W.H. Vanstone who was referring to the Church of England.

<sup>7</sup> David Hollenbach, S.J. *The Common Good and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 24.

<sup>8</sup> See Hollenbach, especially pp. 24-30.

personal opinion, but also largely a matter of indifference. An *Atlantic Monthly* correspondent by the name of Jonathan Rauch recently wrote that “apatheism”—which he defines as “a disinclination to care all that much about one’s own religion, and an even stronger disinclination to care about other people’s” is in its modern flourishing in America. He insists that many “apatheists” are believers who believe in God, but they just don’t care that much about God. He celebrates the rise of “apatheists” as nothing less than “a major civilizational advance.” Why? Because, according to Rauch, when people care too much about religion, be they atheists or theists, they do not control their passions, and do harmful things to others. The privatization of religion now becomes apathy about religion.<sup>9</sup>

Allow me now to turn to universities and their culture. I note that unlike the wider US culture which is quite religious (even though that religion is privatized and uneven in depth), the culture of the academy, like that of the media and the ruling elite, is quite secular. Distinguished sociologist of religion, Peter Berger, recently looked back over his long career and noted that of the two key ideas he had had about the shape of Western culture—the social construction of knowledge and secularization—that only one of them had turned out to be true. He once wrote that if India is the most religious country in the world and Sweden the least, then the United States is a nation of Indians ruled by Swedes.<sup>10</sup> In higher education in general, religion is not only privatized, it simply is not an object of serious study; it is, for all practical purposes, simply absent. Those few religious studies departments that now exist at some of our nation’s secular universities are typically small, under-financed, and without prestige. Whether Catholic colleges and universities are now where mainline Protestant universities were at the turn of the last century—that is, just on the brink of a rapid move to secularization—is a topic I will consider in the Fall of this year in a lecture I will give at the University of Dayton.

In the meantime, it would do us well here to recall the immense diversity among colleges and universities in the United States. Among the nearly 4,000 of them, one finds all kinds and shapes, from colleges to community colleges to technical institutes to comprehensive universities to research universities. Most of the published criticisms of the state of higher education in the United States seem to me to be aimed at research universities, which constitute at most 10% of the total number of institutions, but produces 75% of the doctorates awarded annually. The criticisms of these institutions are by now well known: research is more valued than teaching; undergraduates are taught mainly by graduate students; faculty prefer as few classes as possible and to be left alone to do their research; faculty care about their discipline, not their institution; and administrators are bureaucrats and fund-raisers, rarely intellectual leaders. I take some consolation in noting that few of these criticisms would apply to our own institutions. However, other criticisms might, as we shall see when we, as leaders of Marianist universities, confront several challenges described in the last part of this presentation. We all need to heed the lament of the late Ernest Boyer who in 1996 wrote:

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<sup>9</sup> Jonathan Rauch, “Let It Be,” *Atlantic Monthly*, May 2003.

<sup>10</sup> See my review of George Marsden’s three books on the secularization of the academy in *The Journal of Law and Religion*, XVI, No. 2 (2001), reprinted in *Catholic Education*, VI, No. 4 (2003), pp. 516-529.

What I find most disturbing...is a growing feeling in this county that higher education is, in fact, part of the problem rather than the solution. Going still further, that it's become a private benefit, not a public good. Increasingly, the campus is being viewed as a place where students get credentialed and faculty get tenured, where the overall work for the academy does not seem particularly relevant to the nation's most pressing civic, social, economic, and moral problems.<sup>11</sup>

The general attitude of students coming into American universities does not make our task any easier. One of Sandy Astin's latest national surveys of first year students informs us of what we already know: most students are more interested in being financially well-off than in developing a meaningful philosophy of life. One has only to compare the starting salaries of various majors to realize that except for those entering the teaching profession (which ironically, I would argue, is the greatest of all the professions), those with professional degrees will be paid more than nearly every other major, especially those with degrees in the liberal arts.

More faculty than we would like to admit are disappointed with what they have found in the academy. For how many of our faculty does Julius Getman speak when he recalls that he entered the academy expecting that "universities provided an opportunity for caring relations, a sense of community, an atmosphere in which ideas were shared and refined, an egalitarian ethic, and a style of life that would permit time for family, friends and self-expression"?<sup>12</sup> Naïve expectations, we might think—but nonetheless accurate for a number of people who think about an academic career. One of the articles given us in preparation for our meeting reports that in smaller institutions like our own two disturbing trends stand out: first, the growing corporatization of the university; and second, the increasing autonomy and individualism of the faculty.<sup>13</sup> Add still one other factor—the lack of money and the consequent absence of various opportunities for both faculty and students—and we have described some of the major strains and disappointments of the institutions in which we serve.

### **The Vision of a Marianist University**

I think it is best not to dwell too long on the downside of the larger culture and that of the American universities. A careful diagnosis, nonetheless, needs to precede any effective prescription for a cure. I now turn to a description, if you will, of one educational prescription for what ails our dominant culture: the vision of a Marianist university. Many of us know that mission well. Samuel Johnson once remarked that we need to be reminded more often than instructed. Consider the next few minutes as salutary reminders of the distinctiveness and importance of our mission.

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<sup>11</sup> Ernest Boyer, "The Scholarship of Engagement," in *Journal of Public Service and Outreach*, Vol. 1:1 (Spring 1996).

<sup>12</sup> John B. Bennett, "The Academy and Hospitality," in *Cross Currents*, Spring/Summer 2000, p. 32.

<sup>13</sup> Lawry Finsen, "Faculty as Institutional Citizen: Reconvincing Service and Governance Work," in *A New Academic Compact*, Linda McMillan and Jerry Berberet, eds., (Bolton, MA: Anker Pub. Co, 2002) p. 71.

In 1999, a two-year process of consultation and discussion at all three of our institutions resulted in the publication of *Characteristics of Marianist Universities*. I think it is a very good document. The introduction forges close relationships between four realities often left separate, or worse, opposed: spirituality and education, and faith and the intellectual life. The authors of the booklet were convinced, and I believe rightly, that in a Marianist university, how we conceive of the spiritual life shapes how we approach education. They also believed that the Catholic faith and the intellectual life can and should nourish each other. In the meantime, many academics, especially since the amazing growth of modern science over the last two centuries, drive a wedge between what we really can discover and know through science on the one hand, and what we can only believe through religion on the other.

John Henry Newman argued that no such wedge should divide and oppose science and faith. He once said that the truths of revelation and those of science can not contradict each other, since both come from the same source, namely God who both creates and redeems. Second, he also said that the truths of revelation and the truths of science do seem to contradict each other. Third and finally, he said that sometimes science is wrong and sometimes revelation is not understood properly, and that scientists and theologians therefore need the time and the “elbow room” to continue their research and deepen their conversation so that they can arrive at a clearer understanding of the full truth. This “catholic approach” to knowledge, if I may call it that, is quite different from that espoused by the fundamentalist preacher Billy Sunday who proclaimed, “When the Word of God says one thing and scholarship says another, scholarship can go to hell!”<sup>14</sup> The authors of the CMU booklet wrote about the complementarity of faith and the intellectual life precisely to confront this false dichotomy.

That booklet highlights five characteristics of Marianist education: it educates in order to form people in their faith; it provides an education that is integrated; it carries out this mission in the spirit of a family; it helps people learn how to serve and work for justice and peace; and finally, it helps people learn how to deal with change, and even to effect change. This afternoon, we are examining in particular the idea of our campus culture.

I wish to say only three things about that culture: it supports, it integrates and it challenges. It supports by genuinely welcoming all who are a part of the community. Our three campus communities enjoy different degrees of diversity among students, faculty, academic programs, financial resources, geographical location and size. Despite these differences, visitors to Marianist universities repeatedly observe a strong community spirit, a welcoming spirit that makes most people feel at home immediately. I say “most” because we still face challenges of learning how to welcome either different and or greater forms of diversity. One has only to think of the challenge we face in welcoming African Americans to a dominantly white campus at the University of Dayton, or figuring out how to work with a predominantly Hispanic student body at St.

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<sup>14</sup> Quoted by Joseph Loconte, “Faith, Dogma, and Academic Freedom,” in *Books and Culture*, May/June 2003, p. 31.

Mary's University in a region still controlled by an Anglo leadership that needs to move towards a pluralistic culture, or, in the case of Chaminade, where diversity is so richly evident, the challenge may well be to establish a strong unity. Whatever the particular challenge for each campus, a spirit of welcome is clearly present on all of them.

Second, I stress that we offer an integrated education. This means that on Marianist campuses we do whatever we can to overcome what typically in higher education is found to be separated, and sometimes even opposed. I have already mentioned spirituality and education, and faith and the intellectual life. To them I add the unfortunate division between faculty and administration, faculty and support staff, students and faculty, the humanities and the sciences, study and service, research and teaching, the liturgy and the laboratory, the campus and the wider community, and finally, the head and the heart. We could explore each of these unfortunate "disconnects," but that would take more time than we have. I will return to three of them in my concluding section.

Third, on Marianist campuses education flourishes when challenges are embraced. The CMU booklet strikes a note of realism when it warns us about romanticizing the idea of community. Permit me to quote it: "It must be...recalled that friendliness and hospitality are genuine expressions of a process that necessarily includes conflict, division, and all manner of human suffering and failure" (par. 38). Parker Palmer distinguishes between competition and conflict. He describes competition as secretive zero-sum game played by people determined to win. Conflict, on the other hand, is "open and sometimes raucous but always communal, a public encounter in which it is possible for everyone to win by learning and growing."<sup>15</sup>

I used to think that a peculiar weakness of Marianist culture was its fear of conflict. I now see that fear almost everywhere, and not just among us. Nevertheless, a real danger persists within cultures that emphasize acceptance, community and love. Such cultures typically marginalize if not exclude people who challenge and disagree. Just as deep friendships weather periods of strain and disagreement, so strong communities do not fear challenges. Even more, healthy communities should welcome challenges, especially when they ultimately strengthen the mission. And for university communities, an essential part of that challenge must be an integral part of the intellectual life. Dialogue, about which so much is written today, is impossible and pointless unless there are at least two meanings: *dia-logos* (two meanings). When dialogue is carried on as it should be, those who think differently are not thrown apart (*dia-bolos*, to be thrown apart), nor do they necessarily come together in agreement, but they do grow in real understanding of and genuine respect for each other.

### **Three Challenges**

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<sup>15</sup> Parker J. Palmer, *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998), p. 103.



In the first part of this talk, I spoke of individualism, tolerance and the privatization of religion. In this concluding section, I want to return to these three characteristics of the dominant culture and pose them as key challenges to the Marianist culture of our universities.

First, individualism is not to be confused with individuality. One acquires individuality in and through one's relationships. In that sense, individuality and community depend on each other. Individualism is thinking only in terms of oneself, apart from the community. Individuality provides the necessary identity to be a part of a community without being swallowed up by it.

Robert Putnam, the Harvard sociologist of "Bowling Alone" fame, speaks of the social capital that people create by working together, by building relationships of trust and cooperation. He distinguishes two types of social capital: bonding social capital and bridging social capital. Bonding social capital tends to bring people together in the groups from which they come. Bridging social capital brings people together who are not typically found together—people, for example, from different socio-economic classes, from different religions and races.<sup>16</sup>

In higher education today, we speak much about diversity. "Diversity," social theorist Philip Selznik writes, "is not self-justifying. It should be good for the community. Therefore, a claim to the recognition of differences is subject to scrutiny and may be rejected. We do not believe that Mafia "families," juvenile gangs, or extremist political or religious sects are examples of desirable diversity. A threshold standard of morality must be met."<sup>17</sup> At the University of Dayton, we speak of "diversity in community." I think this phrase says that the diversity we want should strengthen the community and help us carry out our mission better. The diversity we should want is not primarily a certain percentage of women or African Americans, though such "benchmarks," to use corporate jargon, can be helpful. What is more important is that in the midst of working for greater diversity, we actually strengthen and challenge the community and thereby deepen the mission.

I think that our Catholic identity and mission is often seen as an obstacle to creating a greater diversity on our campuses. It appeared normal and acceptable fifty years ago that vowed members of the Society of Mary occupied all the leadership positions at the university. Now it would seem to be not only an exclusion of the gifts of lay colleagues, but also intolerably sexist. With lay presidents now at all three institutions and also with more women assuming key positions, we now are less vulnerable to those criticisms, though other challenges remain.

We are blessed to have a Marianist tradition, stemming from Fr. Chaminade himself, of collaborating closely with the laity. Moreover, we are among those few orders

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<sup>16</sup> Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000).

<sup>17</sup> Philip Selznik, *The Communitarian Persuasion* (Washington D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2002) p. 48.

of religious that have both men and women as vowed members. In fact, the Daughters of Mary were founded before the male branch, the Society of Mary. The centrality of Mary in Marianist spirituality surely should help us find prophetic ways to address the many issues that in recent years research on gender and gender roles have raised. Would it not make sense for the University of Dayton, especially given its International Marian Research Institute, to explore the role of Mary in relationship to current gender studies? Would it not make sense for Saint Mary's University to explore the relationship of the Virgin of Guadalupe, her role in Hispanic culture, and her value for the entire Church? And would it not make sense for Chaminade University to explore the role of Mary in Eastern cultures and religions, where the presence of the feminine is so differently conceived than it is in Western cultures?<sup>18</sup>

While these are exciting and worthy suggestions to explore, we must admit that the public image of Catholicism is hardly positive when it comes to supporting diversity. It appears to be by nature unduly authoritarian. The Jesuit Thomas Reese, now editor of *America* magazine, quoted a person, who as a Vatican employee, offered five "don'ts" for surviving there:

Don't think  
If you think, don't speak  
If you think, and if you speak, don't write  
If you think, and if you speak, and if you write, don't sign your name.  
If you think, and if you speak, and if you write, and if you sign your name, don't be surprised.<sup>19</sup>

Nor do most living in western liberal democratic cultures feel much support when someone like Cardinal Ratzinger claims that democracy appears to cause relativism, which he considers the greatest threat to the Church today. He recently told a group of eighty bishops that relativism is "presented as a position defined positively by the concepts of tolerance and knowledge through dialogue and freedom."<sup>20</sup> I believe that relativism is in fact a great danger in western societies, but it need not be seen as the necessary product of the practices of tolerance and dialogue.

But what about a more difficult issue related to our university communities? We speak regularly of our Catholic and Marianist identity, and indeed we should. However, how many of our faculty and students should be Catholic? I have heard it said that it doesn't matter. I have heard it said that this question is not the one to be asked. Some may think the fewer the Catholics the greater the flexibility and openness. Others speak of a 'critical mass,' or that even a majority of the faculty should be Catholic. Others note

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<sup>18</sup> See the article I co-authored with Una Cadegan, "Mary of Nazareth, Feminism, and the Tradition," in *Thought*, Vol. 65 (1990), pp. 169-189. The Catholic Press Association named it the "Best Scholarly Article" of 1990.

<sup>19</sup> Thomas Reese, *Inside the Vatican: The Politics and Organization of the Catholic Church*, (Harvard University Press, 1996), p. 164.

<sup>20</sup> Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, "Relativism: The Central Problem for Faith Today," *Origins*, October 31, 1996, p. 311.

that some Jews, Muslims, Buddhists and non-believers on our faculties contribute more to the Catholic and Marianist mission than do some Catholics and Marianists! Having said all that, I still believe that one of the questions we have yet to face squarely is how the Catholic and Marianist identity and mission ought to qualify the diversity we welcome and sustain. In other words, how important is it that all members of the community, whether they are Catholic or not, identify, at least in some ways, with the Catholic faith, with Catholic traditions, with Catholic approaches to general education and the linking of the humanities with the professions?

As some of you know, I have used the image of the “Open Circle” for a Catholic university—a “circle” that constitutes the core beliefs and principles that embody the distinctive religious and intellectual mission of the university, and “open” so that people of other faiths and traditions are welcomed into that community, challenging it and supporting it in the process. Among those who constitute the circle are those for whom Catholicism is not only a rich intellectual tradition, but also a faith for which they would lay down their lives. We need not just professors but also witnesses. Intellectuals who are committed to the faith set church-related institutions apart from secular institutions.<sup>21</sup>

My reference to a “process” leads me to my second challenge. I earlier discussed the widespread practice of tolerance in our culture. In its most deplorable form, it appears to be indifference, as in the case of the author who praises “apatheism.” Some students simply utter the single word “whatever” when they want to indicate either that they do not care about something or are annoyed. The Harvard political theorist Michael Sandel speaks about “deliberative” tolerance, that is, an attitude of engagement rather than indifference, or the “whatever” refrain. Sandel bases his preference for “deliberative” tolerance on his conviction that “we can know a good in common that we cannot know alone.”<sup>22</sup> I prefer the word “engagement” to deliberative tolerance. The challenge I wish to pose is whether Catholic and Marianist traditions can actually increase the quality of our diversity? Can a case be made that the Catholic tradition, rightly understood, enriches diversity and sustains it at a deeper level than if we were to practice only tolerance? I think we need to meet this challenge since, at least in my experience, arguments for diversity typically either do not at all refer to the religious mission of our institutions, or assume that a specific religious mission makes diversity (whatever that might mean for a particular campus) harder to achieve.

So, my first challenge is that we need to confront squarely the individualism in our culture and despite it find ways to promote the common good, a process that deepens the sense people have of themselves as members of a caring community. My second challenge is that we need to go beyond mere tolerance, and face squarely how being Catholic and Marianist need not limit our diversity, but can actually be a way to a richer and deeper diversity. The third challenge is related to the second: how can we be more publicly Catholic as a university, and still avoid on the one hand sectarianism and on the other indoctrination?

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<sup>21</sup> See my article, “Academic Freedom: American and Catholic,” *Origins*, 28:35 (February 18, 1999), pp. 614-623.

<sup>22</sup> Michael Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice*, (Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 183.

Those charged with public relations and selling the university to a wider audience—I am thinking here mainly of enrollment management people and university relations and development people—feel this tension the most. While they want to communicate accurately the religious mission of the university, they also don't want to turn away from the university people who could become wonderful contributing members once they become a part of it. I remember overhearing an undergraduate tour guide at the University of Dayton say to a group of visiting students and their parents, "This University is Catholic, but don't worry, they won't bother you. You can ignore them if you want." Certainly we have religious freedom on our campuses; people can ignore, if they want to, the outreach of campus ministry and take no more than the required courses in theology, and among them those that appear the least Catholic. Would it not be better if the tour guide had spoken of the special opportunities that a Catholic university offers, such as an opportunity to explore major religious and ethical questions from perspectives of a two thousand year old tradition of living, loving and sustained reflection, or had explained the opportunity to explore thoughtfully many religious traditions, or had suggested that attending such a university would allow them to deepen and critique their own understanding of God and God's role in their lives?

Allow me to touch upon a still deeper challenge, one that is often felt but rarely expressed. For Catholics, the Eucharist is central to the Christian life. At its best, the Eucharist builds the community, deepens a sacramental sense, provides rich ancient texts for reading and interpretation, enacts rituals, and performs music and song to enhance prayer. Some Catholic women feel arbitrarily excluded from the priesthood and, as a consequence, find participation in the Eucharist painful. Some non-Catholics feel excluded because they do not feel they can receive communion. I grew up feeling this pain deeply. My father, a truly wonderful man, was a Methodist. My mother, a Catholic, raised my four siblings and me as Catholics, and with the full support of my father, put us all through twelve years of Catholic education. Yet my father was not invited to receive communion when he attended Sunday mass with us.

In view of this painful experience, which continues for many of us today, I believe that we need to face the challenges of finding ways of making this central religious ritual, that is, the Eucharist, less divisive for our faculty and students who come from different Christian denominations and other religions. We could face the challenge of greater inclusion in two ways. First, we need to open up this conversation with non-Catholic colleagues. A local Catholic community cannot unilaterally decide to have open communion for those non-Catholics who would like to partake. But we can do more than we seem to do to find ways to underscore the commonalities Christians do have, to include in appropriate ways non-Catholics in reading texts, in offertory processions, in receiving blessings at the time of communion, and through more informed preaching that recognizes the gifts of other denominations and other religions. I would also encourage us to celebrate on occasion and at appropriate times non-eucharistic liturgies, as we will do in the coming days. Depending on the diversity we have on our particular campuses, we should seek to hire faculty from other religious traditions who wish to engage the Catholic tradition and together with Catholics face the major issues affecting our society.

Fr. Chaminade never faced this challenge of religious pluralism. Vatican II only began to address it. Catholic parishes do not need to deal with it. But our university communities must deal with it and should do so openly and thoughtfully. The challenge of religious pluralism is great, the pain of many is evident, and the opportunity to contribute to religious dialogue and understanding is most needed.

Second, we need to think about the Eucharist, with its sacramental, artistic, musical, dramatic and literary dimensions as a key to at least some of the integration we seek to effect in our intellectual lives and our curricular emphases. I have seen very little exploration of the intellectual consequences of Catholic approaches to the celebration of the Eucharist. Those approaches, of course, draw upon Jewish traditions, and have been also influenced by Roman mystery religions. Personally, I think that some profound insights into the shape that general education should take at a Catholic university can be found in the practice of the Eucharistic.

### **Conclusion**

I want to conclude with some words of further encouragement. The Marianist vision of higher education draws upon a very rich spiritual tradition. I have already mentioned the Marianist traditions of lay collaboration and the place of Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and how they can help us address contemporary challenges. I wish now only to mention two others. First, Marianist religious orders are international. More than ever we are learning what it means to be Marianist in India and Africa, Korea and Latin America, Japan and China. It is not the same thing as being a Marianist in North America. Just as in the last few years our three university communities have begun to share ideas, resources and personnel, and just as now we are about to launch officially the Association of Marianist Universities, we need to learn more than we have how to draw on the Marianist international spiritual experience and wisdom — a resource that the vast majority of American universities simply do not have.

Eighty-five percent of the 230 or so Catholic universities in the United States are located east of the Mississippi. Our three Marianist universities, however, are located in three very different parts of the United States, and in three very different cultures. Only one university among all Catholic colleges and universities has a majority Hispanic student population and is the natural bridge to Latin America. Only one has an International Marian Research Institute and a Research Institute that annually does 50 million dollars of research that enriches doctoral engineering programs,<sup>23</sup> and only one

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<sup>23</sup> To be more specific, and limiting myself to the Marianist University I know best—the University of Dayton—the challenge as I see it is twofold: how to increase the number of professors in the Research Institute, the sciences and engineering faculties who have a deeper grasp of Catholic intellectual and ethical traditions, and how to integrate the work of the scholars in the International Marian Research Institute more into the University’s Religious Studies program, especially at the graduate levels, and into the life of the University as a whole. The New Engineer program on the undergraduate level seeks to incorporate into its required curriculum issues of ecology, sustainable design, and an ethical vision rooted in Catholicism. How to make more explicit such perspectives in the work of the Research Institute, given its close relationship with Wright Patterson Air Force base and its need to work more closely with both the Engineering and

exists in all of Oceania, and perfectly situated itself to mediate a Catholic vision to Pacific islanders and to be the place of dialogue between the East and the West. These are the University of Dayton, St. Mary's University and Chaminade University. Together we need to draw on those rich diverse local embodiments of the Marianist vision of higher education to shape an even more dynamic and inclusive understanding of who we can be.

Second, from their earliest history, Marianist communities have organized themselves around the so-called three offices of temporalities, religious life and education. These three offices are on-going responsibilities that are brought into a unity through the director of the community. In organizing themselves in this way, Marianists draw upon a long tradition within Christianity. For centuries, authors have written about the three offices of Christ: his priestly, prophetic and kingly office. Friedrich von Hugel, a historian and theologian of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, wrote at length about the mystical, intellectual and institutional dimensions of the Church. He argued that, when the Church is most healthy, an irreducible creative tension continuously plays itself out among these three elements. Although Von Hugel was born a few years after Chaminade had died and knew nothing about him, he nonetheless provides a fascinating intellectual commentary on the three offices.<sup>24</sup> I suggest that a rich Marianist culture of a Catholic university keeps in balance the religious (mystical), the intellectual and the institutional dimensions, and it rests upon the president to integrate them continuously.

We need to overcome individualism, but not crush individuality; learn how to engage our differences in a spirit of genuine respect for each other; and to celebrate the Catholic faith in ways that make it more inclusive and richly intellectual for all those who live and work in our university communities. These are the challenges I see facing us. We have a very rich tradition to draw upon to meet those challenges. Thomas Jefferson once claimed that "the earth belongs to the living and not to the dead." Such a view discards tradition and places all hope in the hands of the current generation. Edmund Burke more wisely claimed that society is "a partnership, not only between those who are living, but between those who are dead, and those who are to be born."<sup>25</sup> That link, and a living link at that, is our tradition. May we have the courage and the wisdom to develop that Marianist and Catholic tradition for ourselves and for all those who will come after us.

James L. Heft, S. M., Chaminade University, June 2, 2003.

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Science faculties, remains a constant challenge. Greater progress in meeting such challenges would, I believe, make the University of Dayton in these areas a national leader in Catholic higher education.

<sup>24</sup> See my article, "Truths and Half Truths About Leadership," in *Catholic School Leadership*, eds. T. Hunt, T. Oldenski, SM, and T. Wallace (Falmer Press, 2001). In that article, I describe how the Christian tradition provides valuable insights for leaders: that they are part of a larger community and long tradition of wisdom; that the moral and intellectual dimensions are linked and both important; that there are multiple forms of leadership; that not just personal integrity but social justice are requirements; and that people are fragile, and are to be handled with care and respect. Concerning a richer understanding of the three offices in the Marianist tradition, John Henry Newman also has much to say in the preface he wrote to his *Prophetic Office in the Church*.

<sup>25</sup> See Selznick, *Op. Cit.*, p. 116.