

## **On the Catholic and Jesuit Identity of John Carroll University**

**1. The Catholic Character.** The Catholic character of John Carroll University is centered on its relationship to the Word of God. For the Catholic the term *Word of God* signifies that the self-revelation of God within human life climaxes in Jesus as the Christ. It is Christ who manifests that “God is with us, to liberate us from sin and death and to raise us to eternal life” (Vatican II, *Constitution on Revelation*, #4). Whatever enhances the human ability to recognize in word and deed the dynamics of the reality of mystery as embedded in all human activity is in the widest sense a catholic moment. Therefore, for the believer the Catholic character of John Carroll University dwells within all human knowledge and wisdom, within all human technology and professional skill, and within all artistic creation and human compassion. But there is a particular care for the treasury of wisdom, meaning, beauty, and ethical commitment that is part of the Catholic intellectual and cultural tradition.

Those who are also part of this educational community in its search for wisdom, meaning, and beauty but who stand within other religious and ethical traditions share intimately in this enterprise. In this most inclusive sense, then, John Carroll University is a community of faith; that is, it is an educational community that commits itself to an ecumenical and inter-religious right to ask and to pursue questions that are ethical and religious, questions that lead us to appreciate the mystery that also constitutes human life.

John Carroll is also Catholic in its engagement with the world. Just as Jesus the Christ has no meaning if he is isolated from his human culture so, too, believers have no

meaning if they are isolated from their human culture. Certainly, the gospel celebrates the grace, forgiveness, and reconciliation with God and one another that characterizes our faith. But the gospel also invites us to be part of the life and development of all human reality, especially in its age-old struggle for truth, justice, and peace. All the John Carroll community shares this mission of engaging the world as searchers of truth, teachers of justice, and mentors for peace.

Finally, John Carroll University is Catholic in its radical commitment to forging a community that is faithful to the asceticism of authentic dialogue with others, faithful in its mutual respect for the inherent dignity of all peoples, and faithful in the practice of a Eucharistic-inspired hospitality that welcomes all God's people.

In short, John Carroll University desires to create an environment where the tradition and culture of Catholicism profoundly and creatively influence its search for wisdom and understanding and its formation for service. However, as a university community, it welcomes other approaches and expects and honors the right to question as the enduringly best human way to appropriate for oneself both the culture and tradition of Catholicism.

**2. The Jesuit Character.** The Catholic character of John Carroll University is intimately bound to the Ignatian spiritual heritage and the Jesuit tradition of interpreting that heritage. From its inception the Society of Jesus has embraced the ministry of the Word as central to its apostolic identity and pastoral mission. That commitment means that Jesuits see themselves as among those who sustain the command of Christ to “go into the entire world and proclaim the good news to all creation” [Mark 16:15]. The ministry of the Word developed early in the Jesuit culture into a diversity of creative

enterprises, chief among these being the schools. For the early Jesuits the schools were not simply places of educational process but communities where all inquiry led to a reverence for the creation of God and a fuller understanding of the God of creation. All knowledge became part of God's word, an insight into the humanity of Christ, and the foundation for a society of humane learning and professional competence. That dimension of the Jesuit tradition endures today at John Carroll in the rich variety of intellectual disciplines and skills that constitute the environment of the contemporary university.

Fidelity to the word of God inspires service to the world that God so loved that he sent his only Son. The contemporary Jesuit commitment to a faith that expresses itself in scholarly research and teaching and in works of justice and solidarity flourishes in a climate of ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue. In the contemporary university the motivations for this commitment are religiously and philosophically diverse but ought to be no less generous, no less profound, and no less graced than the educational commitment to service of the early Jesuits. Today commitment to the works of truth, justice, and peace binds the faculty, staff, and student body of John Carroll University to an essential characteristic of its Ignatian heritage and Jesuit tradition.

The Jesuit character of John Carroll University dwells in its community, whose members dedicate themselves both to scholarly work and teaching and service: service within the Carroll community, service to the community beyond Carroll, and service to the future generations of our world. Within the Jesuit tradition the phrase *cura personalis* has been used to cover a multitude of relationships between students and the educational and professional personnel within the schools. What the phrase means is the ability to

adapt the total educational experience to the talents, needs, and personalities of the students. It is a student-centered commitment. It is a commitment with a tradition that originated in the personal experience of Ignatius Loyola and, more than any other inspiration, linked his personal experience to the founding of the Society of Jesus. Today the vision and value of helping people ought to frame all activity at John Carroll University. This vision and value should manifest itself in a mutual openness among faculty, staff, administrators, and students. To that end, the Ignatian heritage and the Jesuit interpretation of that heritage should create a climate of trust in which every member of the community feels that she or he can pursue her or his dream, ask her or his deepest questions, and fulfill her or his professional and spiritual ambitions. Only in such a climate can service be embraced as both personal fulfillment and a commitment to others.

**Conclusion.** The Catholic and Jesuit character of John Carroll University is a single reality. It represents a commitment to a Church within the world, serving the human search for truth and value and for justice and solidarity. It also represents a reverence for the transcendent vision that Christ preached and lived as the final best expression of human fulfillment. This Catholic and Jesuit character inspires and guides the intellectual, professional, and ethical labors that make John Carroll a university.

# Notes

## **Notes on the Catholic and Jesuit Character of John Carroll University.**

This statement has been in process for over a year with faculty, staff, student, alumni, and Jesuit community participation. In Appendix I to this statement there is a summary of the initial questions, which engaged fifty plus faculty and staff who volunteered first to discuss them, second, to review the draft of responses, and then to suggest corrections and further additions to this initial report.

Following this faculty/staff participation, the Jesuit community reviewed the results and made a set of suggestion, which are included as Appendix II. Then following these suggestions, there was an email survey of about 200 plus alumni; these results can be found in Appendix III. Finally, with the assistance of both Campus Ministry and the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs, we also sponsored a set of conversations on these three questions about the Catholic and Jesuit character of John Carroll University.

This statement was put on hold while the wider community at John Carroll had an opportunity to review the Vision, Mission, Core Values and Strategic Initiative Statement, which was recently published in Volume 11, Issue 2 of the *John Carroll University Magazine*. Now we can offer this final draft of the statement. While the entire John Carroll community was generous with its time and talents in preparing this statement, the following were especially helpful: Ryan Daly, Laurie Frantz, Becca Machusick, Dr. Patrick Rombalski, Dr. Nicholas Santilli, John Scarano, Thomas Schubeck, S.J., and W. Jared Wicks, S.J.

### **Further Reading.**

#### **A. Essential.**

*The Vatican Council II Documents*, edited by Austin Flannery, O.P. Northport, New York, Costello Publishing Company, 1975.  
Look especially at the “Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation,” #4. This is the contemporary starting point for discussion about the word of God. On service and community cf. “The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World.”

Alice Gallin, O.S.U, editor, *Ex Corde Ecclesiae, Documents Concerning the Reception and Implementation*. Notre Dame, 2006. This is an indispensable collection of material on the role of the Catholic university today.

John W. O’Malley, S.J. *The First Jesuits*. Cambridge, 1993.

#### **B. Helpful**

James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language*. Oxford, 1961.

Stephan Bevans, SVD and Roger Schroeder, SVD, editors, *Word Remembered, Word Proclaimed*. Nettetal, 1997.

Michael J. Buckley, S.J. *The Catholic University as Promise and Project: Reflections in A Jesuit Idiom*. Washington, 1998.

Paul G. Crowley, S.J. *In Ten Thousand Places, Dogma in A Pluralistic Church*. New York, 1997.

Avery Dulles, S.J. "Faith and Revelation," in *Systematic Theology*, Vol. I. edited by Francis Schussler Fiorenza and John P. Gavin. Minneapolis, 1991, pp. 91-128.

Philip Endean, S.J. *Karl Rahner, Spiritual Writings*. Maryknoll, 2004.

Howard J. Gray, S.J. "The Experience of Ignatius Loyola: Background to Jesuit Education," in *The Jesuit Ratio Studiorum. 400<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Perspectives*, edited by Vincent J. Duminuco, S.J., New York, 2000, pp. 1-21.

Nicholas Lash. *Easter in Ordinary, Reflection on Human Experience and the Knowledge of God*. Notre Dame and London, 1988.

John W. O'Malley, S.J. "How the First Jesuits Became Involved in Education," in *The Jesuit Ratio Studiorum, 400<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Perspectives*, edited by Vincent J. Duminuco, S.J. New York, 2000. pp. 56-74 and "From the 1599 Ratio Studiorum to the Present: a Humanistic Tradition?" pp. 127-144.

Ladislas Orsy, S.J. *The Church: Learning and Teaching, Magisterium, Assent, Dissent, Academic Freedom*. Wilmington, 1987.

Sandra Schneiders, *The Revelatory Text, Interpreting the New Test Mamet as Sacred Scripture*. Collegeville, 1999.

David Tracy, "Approaching the Christian Understanding of God," in *Systematic Theology*, Vol. I, edited by Fiorenza and Gavin, pp. 131-148.