

## Introduction

This issue of the *Journal of Catholic Higher Education* provides the perspectives of both senior and younger scholars on a variety of topics, often juxtaposing established and contemporary ideas in order to help the reader look at issues anew. We begin with the reflections of an emeritus president, author, and scholar whose writings on the Church and Catholic higher education have offered a unique vision and voice to contemporary thinking about the Church and the university. George Dennis O'Brien explores the parallels between the twelfth century monastic suspicion about the developing academic institutions that spawned our current university systems, and pop music's suggestion that the academy is not sufficiently equipped to contend with "life in its chaos or salvation." O'Brien argues that, indeed, when taken in its proper context, theology's presence in the curriculum in fact can address life's vicissitudes and be of service to the entire institution. He concludes with practical suggestions for developing a curriculum that addresses life's moral demands, as well as its failures.

Then, Matthew Gordley offers an example of integrating the concepts of contemplation and action into first-year courses that students can build upon when considering questions of ethics and social responsibility in their courses of concentration and majors. He describes a course focused on the use of parables in light of Jon Sobrino's writings as a means to invite students into dialogue about justice and mercy, as well as their own ethical standpoints. The parable of the Good Samaritan serves as an example of how the author guides students through a deepening understanding of mercy and helps them reflect on their own social prejudices and cultural presumptions. This parable is one of several the author cites in demonstrating how students are drawn into their own values and the values of the kingdom of God. He concludes with a reflection on the timeliness of the parables in light of ongoing systemic racism and a climate of prejudice, self-interest, and indifference.

The next article from a younger scholar presents an insightful view on a question that all Catholic institutions find fraught with challenges and sometimes controversies: How does an institution remain genuinely Catholic and generously inclusive and open to pluralism? Christopher Haw turns to the work of the Belgian political theorist Chantal Mouffe, whose critical theory offers a vision for interpreting and negotiating what some have termed the "crisis of pluralism." Haw argues that a

“centered pluralism,” based on Mouffe’s ideas can help steer an institution through the paradoxes presented by claims to inclusivity and genuine Catholic centeredness. The essay ends with reflections on James Allison’s approach to conflicts regarding interpretations of gender.

Over the past few decades, a number of scholars have published extensively on the history of Catholic higher education, especially concerning the ways that Catholic colleges and universities have responded and adapted to the changing dynamics in higher education in the United States. Missing from these volumes is a specific focus on the development of student affairs at Catholic institutions. Using newly researched archival material, Sandra Estanek provides a very welcome exploration of student affairs at Jesuit institutions of higher education. She focuses on four key events in the history and making of the Jesuit Association of Student Personnel Administrators (JASPA) and how these institutions have engaged with the changing standards and practices established at secular institutions in order to situate these into a Catholic and Jesuit context. What emerges from this discussion is a unique perspective on the relevance of JASPA and lessons about how the process of dialogue and adaptation can continue at Catholic institutions to be beneficial for a changing student population.

In the final article in this issue, Quentin Wodon provides a study of global trends in Catholic higher education between 1975 and 2016, and discusses the implications for the future. Interestingly, while many U.S. Catholic institutions of higher education continue to struggle with enrollments, that is not the case in many parts of the world, as overall enrollment has increased by an average of 3 percent per year since 1975. There has been substantial growth in Catholic institutions in Asia and Africa, even as population growth in some regions has declined. As well, the number of students receiving ecclesiastical degrees in Asia and Africa can be read as good news for the Church in many areas of the global south. The Americas is the one region experiencing a decline in growth. Finally, the author explores challenges higher education institutions face in the developing world, namely equity, quality, and employability, and he points to the special relevance of these challenges for the Church and Catholic institutions.

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