Who is Coming to Class Today? The Challenge of an Emerging Catholic Evangelical Student Identity for Catholic Colleges and Universities

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Abstract

This paper begins with a typological discussion of students at Catholic colleges and universities. It focuses on those students who express a strong Catholic identity, recognizing that such students are a minority. The discussion describes this group as a manifestation of a more evangelical Catholicism and traces this development to changes in the wider culture. Such changes include a breakdown in religious socialization and the notion of the religious consumer in a culture of choice. A renewed missionary sense within Catholicism is also raised as an explanatory factor. Catholic colleges and universities can respond to some of the challenges posed by committed, evangelical students by considering a number of pastoral and academic options. The paper argues that Catholic colleges and universities should seek to better engage such evangelical Catholic students in the life of the institution.

A Typology of Catholic Students

It is possible to make a distinction between two types of Catholic students.[1] The majority group has a diminished sense of Catholic identity. While not hostile to religion, they do not display a strong commitment or interest in the topic. Moloney describes this group in the following terms:

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[1] Richard Gaillardetz, "Apologetics, Evangelization and Ecumenism Today," *Origins* 35:1 (2005). For a cautionary note about use of labels see, Cathleen Kaveny, "Young Catholics When Labels Don't Fit,'" *Commonweal*, 131, November 19 (2004): 19-21.

> We must admit to a period after the [Second Vatican] Council when the communication of the faith to a newer generation lost its way. A generation of young people emerged from that period—now parents of a newer generation—who "fell between the cracks." My experience as the Professor of Theology at Australian Catholic University (1994-1998) taught me a great deal about the profundity of content and the pedagogical skills that are nowadays used in the process of communicating the faith. However, we have lost a generation, and they are not to be found working at their Bibles, or attending seminars and sessions that are now increasingly difficult to run successfully. The task of recapturing the interest and enthusiasm of the present generation of young people demands extraordinary dedication and considerable skill.[2]

In many ways, Catholic higher educational institutions are prepared to meet the learning desires of such students, as they have been encountering them in large numbers for decades. In one sense they are an easy group with which to deal, because they place few demands on the religious identity of the institution. In another sense, as Moloney suggests, if an aim of Catholic higher education is faith formation, then dealing with this group is extraordinarily difficult, not because they are hostile to religion but because they are largely indifferent. Having identified this group of "lapsed" Catholics, the aim of this paper is to try to contextualize the experiences of the other group of students identified by Gaillardetz. This other group, as a whole, is much more committed to their Catholic faith development. This article will discuss some of the implications of the existence of this faith-filled group for Catholic colleges and universities. These students are indicative of what I call a more evangelical Catholicism.

An emerging small, and often vocal, group at many Catholic colleges is comprised of students who have a strong interest in what it means to be a Catholic.[3] This phenomenon has been noted in the wider literature. This type of young adult Catholic, identified here as *Core Catholic,* is distinguished by their involvement in wider Catholic networks and their readiness to identity themselves as Catholic.[4] Hoge and his colleagues used similar terminology in their classification of young adult Catholics to describe two types of religious expression: *Church*

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[2] Francis Moloney, *The Mix: Catalyst for Renewal*, May 2002, 21-25. D'Antonio and his colleagues express a similar sentiment in an American context. "Even if we avoid such comparisons with older generations and focus just on today's young adults, the evidence suggests that young adults are only loosely tethered to the Church." William D'Antonio, et al., *American Catholics Today: New Realities of Their Faith and Their Church* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007), 83.

[3] Gaillardetz, *Apologetics*, 9.

[4] John Fulton, et al., *Young Catholics at the New Millennium; The Religion and Morality of Young Adults in Western Countries* (Dublin: University College Press, 2000), esp. 9-13.

as *Choice Catholic* and *Core Catholic.*[5] For *Church as Choice Catholics,* religious allegiance is based on personal and somewhat idiosyncratic decisions which do not usually lead to strong commitment. *Core Catholics*, which constitute ten percent of the study sample, have a less individualistic approach to religious belief and practice, take papal teaching seriously (even if they disagree with it), pray daily, and regard weekly Mass attendance as a key marker of Catholic identity. Smith and Denton report a similar figure (ten percent) for young American Catholics who identified their religion as being extremely important in shaping their daily lives; by comparison, the figure for mainline Protestants was twenty percent and twenty-nine percent for conservative Protestants.[6] Carroll has coined the term *New Faithful* to describe a tendency among some young adult Christians to identify strongly with traditional religious positions.[7] "Contemporary traditionals" are similar to the new faithful but not identical. Whereas the new faithful tend to accept all Church teaching, contemporary traditionals do not.[8] Portier identifies a group among university students he calls evangelical Catholics. These students are not interested in any restoration of faith traditions; instead their zeal is directed toward a better understanding of their faith and a desire to share it with others.[9] Rymarz and Graham have found among some Catholic adolescents a strong familial pattern of religious belief and practice. This can be described as a tendency to closely identify with the beliefs of parents as opposed to more typical communitarian or less committed modes of religious expression.[10] The literature clearly identifies a new group of young Catholics who are enthusiastic about their faith and its traditions, and are fervent about

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[5] Dean R. Hoge, et al., *Young Adult Catholics: Religion in a Culture of Choice* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001), esp. 47-54.

[6] Christian Smith and Melinda Lindquist Denton, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 37-53.

[7] Colleen Carroll, *The New Faithful: Why Young Faithful are Embracing Christian Orthodoxy* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2004).

[8] David M. Whalen, "The Emergence of the Contemporary Traditionalist," *Review for Religious*, 61 November-December 2002, 585-593. For an overview of the attitudes of highly committed Catholic young adults see Dean R. Hoge, "Attitudes of Catholics Highly Committed to the Church: NCR Survey of U.S. Catholics," *National Catholic Reporter* September 30, 2005 and John A. Coleman, "Young Adults: A Look at the Demographics," *Commonweal* September 14 (1990): 483-490.

[9] William L. Portier, "Here Come the Catholic Evangelicals," *Communio* 31 (2004): 50-59, at 52-53.

[10] Richard M. Rymarz and John D. Graham, "Drifting from the Mainstream: The Religious Identity of Australian Core Catholic Youth," *International Journal of Children's Spirituality* 11(3) (2006): 371-383.

sharing their beliefs with others. While the degree to which members of this demographic embrace their faith differs, it is clear that there is a group that has a fervent interest in living their Catholic faith.

Understanding the Evangelical Catholic Student

The Evangelical Catholic student seems to have avoided what Kay and Francis call the drift from the churches.[11] How then should this group be viewed against the broader template of contemporary Catholic higher education? Rausch, speaking for many, articulates a concern about the impact of this "significant minority" of young Catholics:

> The energy and commitment of these young Catholics is an encouraging sign. Still their potential to advance the Church's mission will be lost if they prove unable to move beyond an uncritical triumphalism or retreat into a new Catholic ghetto. A restoration of the pre-Vatican II subculture is neither possible nor desirable. They need to find common ground with the larger group of young Catholics and with the mainstream Church if they are to realize an authentic catholicity and truly serve the Church.[12]

A number of points can be made to address the concerns articulated by Rausch. First, a characteristic of contemporary Catholicism is the lack of religious socialization of young Catholics. This can be contrasted with earlier generations when socialization was extremely evident and perhaps unreflective. This era, however, is long gone. There is no question that the Catholic world of the third millennium, in countries such as the United States, is different from the cultural expressions of Catholicism that were dominant more than fifty years ago. Indeed, many of the underlying attitudes that shaped preconciliar Catholicism are almost unimaginable to Catholics today.

An appropriate metaphor to describe the impact of the Council is to liken it to a revolution.[13] One of the characteristics of revolutions is that they change underlying structures and cannot be undone; there is no going back to earlier forms, no matter how ardent the desire. Those who wish to recreate a bygone world have no sense of the movement of history

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[11] William Kay and Leslie Francis, *Drift from the Churches: Attitude toward Christianity during Childhood and Adolescence* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1996).

[12] Thomas P. Rausch, *Being Catholic in a Culture of Choice* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2006), 117.

[13] Andrew Greeley, *The Catholic Revolution and the Second Vatican Council: New Wine, Old Wineskins* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004).

and cannot make much of a contribution to the discussion on the future of the Church. To disregard the past as if it has nothing to offer is, however, an equally myopic position. A necessary, but intellectually difficult, debate is how to articulate an intermediate position. In terms of the engagement with culture, the Church has not yet achieved the active discernment of cultural dispositions as posited by Gallagher: this is an intermediary position between innocent acceptance and hostility toward culture.[14] Those who express concern about a return to pre-Vatican II must acknowledge that some young Catholics—in an environment where there is little opportunity to express Catholic identity in a more traditional way—need to have their strong religious beliefs and practices affirmed. This is not a return to a preconciliar mentality but rather a response to a different social reality, one that is hardly comparable to the 1950s. Some students are, to use Greeley's metaphor, trying to at least regrow part of the rainforest of Catholic ritual, symbol, and metaphor that has been denuded in recent times.[15] The loss of plainchant, fasting, and many other practices has not assisted such Catholics who see their lives as a lifelong journey of faith. For some, participation in the Catholic subculture of the preconcilar era may have been an external social phenomenon with little personal significance. In contemporary culture, however, a Catholic who wishes to participate more fully in, for example, the sacramental life of the church, is most likely choosing to do so on the basis of conviction and belief. The fact that most other Catholics do not engage in such practices does not invalidate their choice.

This raises a deeper issue about how the contemporary Church deals with individuals who, to use the title of Rausch's book, choose to be Catholic in a culture of choice.[16] Rymarz argues that if we follow a communitarian model—characterized by low conflict with the wider culture, low sociological boundaries, and high levels of inclusion—then the Church is relatively successful in dealing with youth and young adults. If, however, a commitment model is followed—typified by strong interest in the tradition, powerful affective experiences, and high

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[14] Michael Paul Gallagher, *Clashing Symbols: An Introduction to Faith and Culture* (New York: Paulist Press, 1998), 118-121.

[15] Andrew Greeley, *The Catholic Revolution and the Second Vatican Council: New Wine, Old Wineskins* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004).

[16] Writing in the early 1980's, Dulles also raises this issue, "For some reason the Catholic Church seems unable to capitalize on the yearnings for religious commitment and spiritual experiences felt by so many of our contemporaries." Avery Dulles, *A Church to Believe In: Discipleship and the Dynamics of Freedom* (New York: Crossroads, 1982), 3.

boundaries—then the Church is less successful.[17] Those who fit into a communitarian sense of church do not generally provide much challenge or conflict. They are content with their current position, which could be described as low cost with high benefit. The Church, by providing a range of services such as educational institutions and an overarching sense of belonging, meets the needs of these Catholics very well.

For those who are, or who seek to be, more actively committed to the faith, the situation is more problematic. The commitment model has more in common with a discipleship sense of the Church as communion. It also overlaps with the new evangelization articulated by Pope John Paul II, in that those who are committed to the faith are much more likely to be involved in evangelization. What does the Church do to assist those who wish to strengthen their faith commitment beyond conventional levels? Does the Church meet the needs of those who want to express their faith in a supportive environment and who want to have contact with others who share their view? Labeling those individuals as outside the mainstream may not be helpful. The challenge for all Catholics, irrespective of subgroup or label, is to provide some type of formation and support program that addresses the needs and concerns of those who have chosen to be Catholic in the third millennium.[18]

To use the analogy of the religious consumer, it is reasonable to assume that such individuals will be more demanding than their more typical Catholic peers, and that this may place some strain on existing structures. Bouma expresses both the challenge and opportunity of this new type of religious consumer when he writes that this group is:

> . . . A cohort of religiously articulate young people who have a much more developed sense of their spirituality than previous generations. They will be more demanding and sophisticated consumers in the religious marketplace. The religious organizations that rise to this challenge will grow; those that keep insulting their market—as is the case for much of what passes for mainstream Christianity—will not.[19]

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[17] Richard M. Rymarz, "Communitarian and Commitment Models of Religious Identity," *Journal of Religious Education* 55(3) (2007): 54-60 at 57.

[18] For attempts to try and classify some of the Catholic sub groups see, Richard Rymarz, "Reform, Conservative and Neo-Orthodox- Distinctions in Contemporary Judaism: A Useful Lexicon for Catholics?", *Australasian Catholic Record* 79(1) (2002): 18-30.

[19] Gary Bouma, *Australian Soul: Religion and Spirituality in the 21st Century* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 208.

Many of these structures took shape in an era when religious socialization of Catholics and the interconnection of home, parish, and family were strong. These conditions no longer exist, and so new structures will form. In the future, the Catholic community may be smaller, reflecting the movement from a Church of obligation to a Church of choice, of personal conviction. This will occur, not as a matter of policy but as a consequence, as the chains that bind many to the Catholic tradition become weaker and weaker.[20]

In the future, few Catholics may be part of church groups because of religious socialization or societal pressure. One example of this is the composition of Catholic student groups at secular institutions. It is unlikely that anyone joining these groups now does so because it is something their parents did or it is an activity of the majority of their peers. Rather, it can be assumed that those who approach these groups will be in a distinct minority. But, their engagement in them will be a result of serious interest in learning more about and strengthening their faith. This is not a mandate for these groups to become ideological or partisan, but it does require them to have something positive to offer on the basis that those who express interest are sincere.

This notion is consistent with a "faithful remnant" view of the Church.[21] Here, a few individuals hang on in spite of the overwhelmingly secular nature of the surrounding culture. In general terms, such groups may exclude others and turn their attention inward, manifesting a type of Catholic quietism that focuses on personal piety rather than engagement with others.[22]

In response to this, consider the example of the university Catholic student group. No one is being excluded; it is just that only a relative few want to join.[23] The predicament the Church faces is a widespread lack of interest in strengthening religious commitment. The figures for reception of sacraments, for example, bear this out. As Dixon points

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[20] Another way to conceive of the movement is the classic position of Troeltsch, which saw religious groups move through a cycle of church to sect to some type of mystical community. In these terms the Church is moving from church to sect. Ernest Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches, vol 1.* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1931).

[21] Jason Byassee, "Being Benedict; The Pope's First Year," *Christian Century*, 2006, April 18th, 2-8. Douglas J. Hall, *The Future of the Church* (Toronto: United Church Publishing House, 1989).

[22] Pope Paul VI addresses this concern directly: see Paul VI, *Apostolic Exhortation, On Evangelization in the Modern World*: *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (Washington DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1975), 31.

[23] Portier, *Catholic Evangelicals*, 62-63.

out, the figures for reception of the sacrament of marriage among Catholics is falling quite dramatically and now appears to be the exception rather than the norm.[23a] Kavanaugh goes as far as to link Catholic marriage and celibacy as two radically countercultural choices.[24] Unlike the sacraments of initiation and confirmation, marriage typically occurs well after school years. Those who wish to marry in a Catholic service cannot be carried along by the crowd, as often happens at confirmation.[25] It involves making a deliberate, adult decision to be involved. Most do not. The issue is not whether people are being excluded but rather, to reiterate and recast an earlier question, why should a couple choose to marry in a Catholic service? The power of familial tradition is weakening and will continue to do so. Leaving this aside, then, what other reasons would make this decision plausible?

Most young adult Catholics are content with their current, relatively loose affiliation with the Church and see no reason to increase their level of commitment. The social networks in which they move largely eschew religious fellowship of any serious nature. Attempts to recruit them to faith-based organizations are often fruitless. D'Antonio and Pogorelic, for example, in their analysis of the *Voice of the Faithful* (VOTF) movement note that the demographic profile of membership is heavily slanted to those well over the age of fifty.[26] Few Generation X or Generation Y Catholics are members. They note that VOTF is a liberal, reform-minded group. It would be a mistake to see the lack of interest of younger people in groups like VOTF as a reflection on that organization alone. Youth and young adults are scarce in many Catholic organizations. The fundamental question is: how can this demographic reality be rectified?

[23a] Robert Dixon, "Mass Attendance Trends Amongst Australian Catholics: A Significant Challenge for the Catholic Church," *South Pacific Journal of Mission Studies,* 2004, 28(2), 133-143.

[24] John F. Kavanaugh, *Following Christ in a Consumer Society* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 25th Anniversary Edition, 2006), 163-168.

[25] For many, religious rituals have lost religious meaning in contemporary western culture. These actions now have symbolic meaning. I think this analysis can be applied to reception of sacraments for many Catholics, especially those sacraments associated with the elementary school years. For a fuller discussion of this idea see E. Thomas Lawson and Robert N. McCauley, *Rethinking Religion: Connecting Cognition and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), esp. 31-41, 60-77.

[26] William D'Antonio and Anthony Pogorelic, *Voices of the Faithful: Loyal Catholics Striving for Change* (New York: Crossroads, 2007), 67-90.

Maintaining a bygone era is also not a position that is consistent with contemporary missiology.[27] Such an attitude can lead to a fragmentation from the larger Church that is counter to the call for an outward-looking faith. As Paul VI points out in *Evangelii nuntiandi*, evangelization is central to the Church's mission and identity and a task that brings with it new challenges in contemporary culture:

> We wish to confirm once more that the task of evangelizing all people constitutes the essential mission of the Church. It is a task and mission which the vast and profound changes of present day society make all the more urgent. Evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize.[28]

People, especially young adults at college, are unlikely to join a group they see as surviving only as a historical remnant of something that was once much greater. The whole thrust of evangelization is outward-focused. It is directed toward the wider culture, to bring Christ to society. Its aim is outreach and the transformation of culture, not just individuals. It is misguided to believe that young adults who show high levels of religious commitment are focused on themselves and are not interested in getting involved in wider issues such as social justice. In fact, those who are involved in a broad range of social justice initiatives are much more likely also to report high levels of the traditional variety of religious commitment.[29]

The promise of involvement in loving communities and forming lasting, significant human relationships, if clearly expressed, may persuade those on the periphery to associate at a deeper level. This is especially so if they see the church as having something to offer that they cannot get somewhere else. People who choose to remain or become members will be comfortable with a community where they can practice what it means to be a Catholic—to be part of this conversation. Being Catholic will become more counter-cultural. It will also be more descriptive as the label will bring with it more characteristic beliefs and practices that befit a group that has established sufficient boundaries around itself to distinguish itself from the wider culture. In this view being Catholic may lead one to

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[27] Hunter has written extensively on religious groups that create a sheltered enclave as a survival mechanism. This is an increasingly difficult endeavor in pluralist cultures. James Hunter, *American Evangelicalism: Conservative Religion and the Quandary of Modernity* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1983).

[28] Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 5.

[29] Michael Mason, et al., *The Spirit of Generation Y: Young People's Spirituality in a Changing Australia* (Melbourne: John Garrett Publishing, 2007), 127.

criticize some aspects of surrounding culture. This is not a retreat to a view that sees the wider society as hostile and in opposition to the Church's mission. It is, however, a more balanced view of the interaction between culture in general and the culture of the Church. In recent history, perhaps no one has been more influential in establishing a positive and dynamic view of the intersection between culture and the Church than Romano Guardini. Yet he acknowledges that this exchange is neither one sided nor uncritical. Krieg notes, "Guardini was aware, too, that the Christian faith must at times be critical of a specific culture in which it exists."[30] What is needed is a sense of balance and strong self-identity.

The Second Vatican Council urged Catholics to reexamine all aspects of their lives, on both a personal and institutional level. One result of this process was that the Church became less proclamatory and more dialogic. A more evangelical Catholicism is undoubtedly proclamatory. It requires, at the least, a certain confidence in the message being proclaimed. This is not a simplistic attitude but one that resonates with the experience of the first Christians. There is directness and encapsulation about this, but this need not be seen as reversion to a preconcilar mindset.

Meeting the Challenge: Some Suggestions on Academic and Pastoral Responses

What, then, can Catholic colleges and universities do to help the spiritual and intellectual development of evangelical Catholic students? A helpful distinction can be made here between academic and pastoral responses. The guiding principle is to better engage evangelical Catholic students and to encourage them to see themselves, not as tangential to the concerns of the university, but as having legitimate interests that are being addressed. This relationship needs to be seen as a reciprocal exchange. The educational institution has something specific to offer evangelical, highly committed Catholic students. The students in turn respect this outreach and bring with them their experience, expectations and, especially, their desire to deepen their Catholic faith.

An Academic Response

Tertiary educational institutions are in a pre-eminent position to provide an enriching academic experience for more evangelical Catholic

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[30] Robert A. Krieg, "A Precursor's Life and Work," in *Romano Guardini: Proclaiming the Sacred in a Modern World,* ed. Robert A. Kreig (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1995), 36.

students, as the academic enterprise is germane to the work of any university. To frame a theological context for outreach to evangelical Catholic students, more attention should be paid to a changed cultural context. What is needed now, in broad terms, are ways to strengthen and reinvigorate the view that belief and strong commitment are not untenable positions. The need for this reappraisal is one of the founding assumptions of what Dulles has called postcritical theology.[31] This arises out of an awareness that the fundamental relationship between the wider culture and the Church has changed, largely in terms of a disproportionate power relationship, where the Church lacks the capacity to engage with the culture on an equal footing. The Church has lost its privileged position and become one voice among many; to be heard, it must articulate its message with power and conviction. A prevailing current cultural norm is that many have a wide range of loose affiliations and are in little danger of unfounded over-commitment to any one of them. However, the sense that religious beliefs can be firmly held by reasonable people must be strengthened. Dulles put it well when he wrote, "Our contemporaries, well aware that religious tenets are capable of being questioned, need to be shown how firm religious commitments may nevertheless be responsible."[32]

The more committed Catholic student would be interested in, and benefit from, structured courses that include the goal of developing a deeper understanding of the faith tradition. In this context, learning would be seen as complementing catechesis.[33] Programs, for example, which focus on a specialization in Catholic studies, would be one way of meeting the demands of evangelical Catholic students. To run such programs requires ongoing commitment and institutional support. Colleges and universities that offer this option should be aware that the enrollment

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[31] Avery Dulles, *The Craft of Theology: From Symbol to System* (New York: Crossroad, 1995), 3-17.

[32] Dulles, *Craft of Theology,* 6. It can only be noted here but this attitude can be contrasted with other recent approaches that place great emphasis on some type of critique. Groome, for example, in his *Shared Christian Praxis* argues that educators need to employ, among other things, a "hermeneutic of suspicion" in relation to "the Christian Story/Vision." Thomas H. Groome, *Sharing Faith: A Comprehensive Approach to Religious Education & Pastoral Ministry. The Way of Shared Praxis* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991), 232. Groome does name other hermeneutics, such as of retrieval and of creative commitment, that could be given more emphasis as a way of balancing an undue emphasis on suspicion, especially when Shared Christian Praxis is used in the classroom.

[33] Catechesis here is understood as a dialogue between believers that is directed toward a closer communion with Christ. For an elaboration of this idea see, Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation, *Catechesi Tradendae*, 1978, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_16101979_catechesi-tradendae_en.html

in these courses could be relatively small and reflective of a cohort of students whose needs and interests are different from the majority. Many Catholic colleges and universities, by contrast, run large-enrollment courses with some type of theological dimension. These courses have their purpose and often must be taken to meet graduation requirements. They are often conducted by theology or religious studies departments and include a diverse range of students, including a large number of communitarian Catholics. To cater to this diverse group, teaching often derives from a phenomenological or experiential presumption. Such a perspective, though, does not always meet the needs of students who are more interested in exploring the Catholic tradition as a catechetical moment and not as a detached phenomenon. To accommodate these needs, what is being proposed here is a more sequential and intense focus on what Dulles has called a coherent presentation of Catholicism.[34]

It is important to emphasize that courses such as these should not lack the academic rigor that characterizes university instruction at its best. The content of these programs should be set by competent professors and approved in the conventional way. What Catholic colleges and universities can offer to their more evangelical students is a bold, challenging, and demanding presentation of what the tradition has to offer, based on a more expansive, in-depth presentation of the Catholic experience. This is intended as a course of study that meets all the demands of quality teaching and learning, not as a way to confirm prejudices. If evangelical Catholic students are not provided with this type of educational option, then there is a danger that their views will not develop beyond a certain level, or that they will seek further enrichment in places that do not meet the standards of respected scholarship.

A Pastoral Response

A supportive community is vital for sustaining religious plausibility.[35] It also fulfils a human need to be associated with others who share similar beliefs and goals, and with whom one feels comfortable.[36] The notion of grassroots supportive communities has long been associated

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[34] Avery Dulles, *A History of Apologetics* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), esp. 1-11.

[35] Kavanaugh, *Following Christ*, 147.

[36] Mark McCrindle and Mark Beard, *Seriously Cool, Marketing and Communicating with Diverse Generations* (Baulkham Hills: McCrindle Research, 2006).

with Catholic communal life.[37] The more evangelical and committed Catholic students are aware that they are a distinct minority at most Catholic universities and colleges. This can lead to feelings of isolation and can be countered by establishing supportive groups, which encourage students on their religious quest while reminding them that they are a part of a global community of believers where a range of views are considered valid. Encouraging supportive groups, through campus ministry and other pastoral initiatives, may help to overcome the sense that some evangelical Catholics have of being on the periphery of campus life and may help them to think more in terms of their place in the wider collegiate community. The goal is for evangelical Catholic students to have ownership of their place in the university.

Evangelical Catholics students, in particular, are interested in developing faith commitment and if this can be done under the auspices of campus-based social networks, then the university is demonstrating that it can provide for the needs of more committed students. Ongoing fellowship groups produce abundant, strong, affective, and joyful experiences. These positive experiences help replace feelings of isolation with more affirming emotions. Walker pointed out that joy is the "fundamental trait of the Christian ethos."[38] Any group, certainly a religious community, flourishes when its members are joyful and when they feel that their needs are being addressed.[39] Pastoral, supportive, campus groups should aim to provide communal experiences that are affirming, positive, and joyful.[40] This type of emotional affirmation, which is apart from cognitive development, is critical in nurturing mature adult faith.

Collins develops the idea of collectively generated emotional energy to explain why some social movements are more successful than others

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[37] Historical examples of this type of fraternal support abound. McGivney, for instance, when founding the Knights of Columbus was actually aware of the need to provide younger Catholic males with peer support to help nurture their faith and to assist their sobriety. It was when he added the provision of low cost life insurance that he had a formula that has made the Knights the largest Catholic fraternal association in the world. For a discussion of the thinking of McGivney in this area, see Douglas Brinkley and Julie Fenster, *Parish Priest: McGivney and American Catholicism* (New York: William Morrow, 2006), esp. 27-56.

[38] Adrian J. Walker, "Rejoice Always: How Everyday Joy Responds to the Problem of Evil," *Communio* 31 (2004): 200-235, at 201.

[39] Milton J. Coalter, et al., *Vital Signs: The Promise of Mainstream Protestantism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 112-113. Julia Diun, *Quitting Church: Why the Faithful are Fleeing and What to Do About it* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2008).

[40] Reginald Bibby, *Unknown Gods: The Ongoing Story of Religion in Canada* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1993), 213.

in encouraging members to become more deeply involved.[41] Put simply, groups that give members strong, collective experiences of shared joy or provide strong, reinforcing, affective messages are more likely to attract new members and to retain existing ones. They do this by providing a chance for physical assembly, a focus of attention, and a shared experience of mutual concern.[42] In these circumstances a feeling of group solidarity develops which has some similarities with what Durkheim called "collective effervescence."[43] One of the factors that negates emotional energy is if the focus of the group is too broad. This results in feelings of solidarity becoming dissipated. Undergraduates today are saturated with choices about how to use their time and what groups to join. The groups that are being proposed here, as a way of supporting more evangelical Catholic students, must be mindful of this challenge, and should focus on offering different and more attractive means of involvement to those students who are seeking to enrich and deepen their religious commitment. This group should not be the only focus of campus ministry, but their particular needs should be recognized.

Conclusion

Catholic colleges and universities must be more proactive in meeting the needs of the minority of students who wish to deepen and strengthen their religious commitment. These students will often display what I have termed a more evangelical expression of Catholicism. This makes them demanding, which may be manifested in many ways. They may be interested enough to enroll in more focused courses that explore the Catholic tradition; they may complain about the standard of the liturgy on campus, or quarrel with professors on theological points. These are all signs of life and engagement. This engagement must be kept within the framework of collegial community, and at times may need to be redirected. It is, however, preferable to little or no engagement. The presence of students with high levels of religious commitment can strengthen the identity of Catholic universities and colleges. The challenge is to harness this energy and to direct it toward the collective good of the institution.

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[41] Randall Collins, "Social Movements and the Focus of Emotional Attention" in *Passionate Politics: Emotions and Social Movements,* eds. Jeff Goodwin, et al. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001), 27-44.

[42] Goodwin et al, *Passionate Politics*, 28.

[43] Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (New York: The Free Press, 1995 [1912]), esp. 34-47.