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# Vatican II, Evangelization and Catholic Higher Education

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It is rare to find members of Catholic colleges and universities aware of the late Holy Father's encouragement to them and his trust in them to take up the task of evangelization in *Christifideles laici*<sup>1</sup> and *Ex corde Ecclesiae*.<sup>2</sup>

Indeed, the very word, evangelization, is jarring to the solemnity of institutional autonomy or academic freedom and questions the staid emulation of the secular academy now so deeply embedded in Catholic higher education. But there it is, the culminating point of *Ex corde Ecclesiae*, prominently displayed as if on a lamp stand: "By its very nature, each Catholic university makes an important contribution to the Church's work of evangelization... all the basic academic activities of a Catholic university are connected with and in harmony with the evangelizing mission of the Church."<sup>3</sup>

What are we to make of this claim and this trust given to the universities? In the previous section, Pope John Paul II defines the notion of evangelization as follows:

The primary mission of the Church is to preach the Gospel in such a way that a relationship between faith and life is established in each individual and in the socio-cultural context in which individuals live and act and communicate with one another. Evangelization means "bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new... It is a question not only of preaching the Gospel in ever wider geographic areas or to ever greater numbers of people, but also of affecting and, as it were, upsetting, through the power of the Gospel, humanity's criteria of judgment, determining values, points of interest, lines of thought, sources of inspiration and models of life, which are in contrast with the Word of God and the plan of salvation"<sup>4</sup>

This passage provides us with a proper orientation to the meaning of "evangelization." As expected, it means "preaching the gospel," the very idea that may cause the academy alarm that

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1. "The entire mission of the Church, then, is concentrated and manifested in evangelization. Through the winding passages of history the Church has made her way under the grace and the command of Jesus Christ: 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation.'" Pope John Paul II, apostolic exhortation *Christifideles laici*, December 30, 1988 (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1988), 33.

2. "Beloved brothers and sisters, my encouragement and my trust go with you in your weighty daily task that becomes ever more important, more urgent and necessary on behalf of evangelization for the future of culture and of all cultures." Pope John Paul II, apostolic constitution *Ex corde Ecclesiae*, August 15, 1990 (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1990), 49.

3. *Ibid.*, 49.

4. *Ibid.*, 48. Pope John Paul II refers to the foundational document by Pope Paul VI, apostolic exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi*, December 8, 1975 (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1975), 18-19.

its mission is reduced to proselytism. But the gospel must be preached in a certain way, or with a certain end in view, namely that the dynamic relationship between faith and life is rightly and fruitfully established. We must recall that in the documents of Vatican II, a council celebrated for its absence of “anathema sit,” there is a condemnation of the split between faith and life, as the “serious error of our age.”<sup>5</sup> The error consists in two extremes of either withdrawing into a religious sphere separated from the daily life of the world (“otherworldliness”), or alternatively, engaging in worldly affairs as if religion has no bearing on temporal matters (“secularism”). Faith must be available, through personal assimilation and cultural embodiment, to “transform” and “renew” humanity. The Catholic university is uniquely positioned and endowed to overcome this split. Through its formation and preparation of the young for entry into society, the Catholic university can assist men and women to fashion a unity of faith and life so that they bring the good news into “all strata of humanity.” And through the academic way of life, after the manner of a Socrates or Augustine, the Catholic university can challenge and upset “humanity’s criteria of judgment” and explore the integral human good. The central place for evangelization in the vision for Catholic higher education accorded by Pope John Paul II reflects his commitment to implement the message of Vatican II, as already begun by his predecessor, Pope Paul VI.

I would argue, therefore, that our failure to understand or to respond to this urgent plea for evangelization by Pope John Paul II is proportionate to the failure to understand or implement the message of the Second Vatican Council. For “evangelization” is the heart of the message of Vatican II, sometimes stated as such, or couched in the rubric of “missionary mandate” or “lay apostolate.”

Pope John Paul II never tired of voicing his gratitude for Vatican II. The Council, he said, was “the gift of the Spirit to the Church,”<sup>6</sup> “the great grace bestowed on the Church in the twentieth century,”<sup>7</sup> and “what the Spirit is saying to the Church with regard to the present phase of the history of salvation.”<sup>8</sup> He made reference to his reliance upon its teaching and guidelines: it is “the authentic depository of the predictions and promises made by Christ to the apostles,”<sup>9</sup> a “treasure . . . in the guidelines offered to us by the Second Vatican Council,”<sup>10</sup> and a “sure compass by which to take our bearings.”<sup>11</sup> He frequently spoke of our need as a Church to steep ourselves in its teachings.

In *Christifideles laici*, John Paul said “the lay faithful are invited to take up again and reread, meditate on and assimilate with renewed understanding and love, the rich and fruitful teach-

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5. Pope Paul VI, pastoral constitution *Gaudium et spes*, December 7, 1965 (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1965), 43.

6. Pope John Paul II, “Address to the Conference Studying the Implementation of the Second Vatican Council,” February 27, 2000.

7. Pope John Paul II, apostolic letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, January 6, 2001 (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2001), 57.

8. Pope John Paul II, encyclical *Dominum et Vivificantem*, May 18, 1986 (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1986), 26.

9. *Ibid.*, 29.

10. Pope John Paul II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 57.

11. *Ibid.*, 57.

ing of the Council.”<sup>12</sup> In *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, John Paul challenged the Church “to examine herself on the reception given to the Council,” and repeated his plea that the Council documents, having “lost nothing of their value or brilliance,” need to be “read correctly, widely known, and taken to heart.”<sup>13</sup> Indeed, Pope John Paul II concluded the apostolic letter repeating his now famous call to put out into the deep (“*duc in altum*”) because “a new millennium is opening before the Church like a vast ocean upon which we shall venture.”<sup>14</sup>

The missionary mandate (Mt. 28:19) accompanies us on this journey. Christ is at work today and we may rely upon him for our venture of faith. So in *Ex corde Ecclesiae* he says that his hope is that “these prescriptions, based on the teaching of Vatican Council II will enable Catholic universities to fulfill their indispensable mission in the new advent of grace that is opening up to the new millennium.”<sup>15</sup> He wrote *Ex corde* with an eye toward the Jubilee and the new millennium. To take part in the venture to which we are called as Catholic educators, we must have “discerning eyes” and a “generous heart.”<sup>16</sup>

Presuming upon the generous hearts of my readers, I wish to make a small contribution to the discernment we need to see and begin to act for the paramount aim of Catholic higher education—evangelization. In this paper I wish to make a summary of the teachings of Vatican II in order to highlight the notion of lay apostolate and to see how this provides the essential purpose and ultimate outcomes, if you will, of Catholic higher education today. I will also indicate how the thought and writing of Pope John Paul II on Catholic higher education, including *Ex corde*, amplify and apply this teaching and purpose. I will conclude with some brief comments about what this means for Catholic higher education at the present moment.

## Vatican II and evangelization

The mission, or gift of service [*munus*], of Catholic higher education, as evangelization, emerges through the notion of lay apostolate. We need to view this notion in the light of the dynamic relationship of the four major Documents of Vatican II—*The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (Lumen Gentium)*, *The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (Sacrosanctum concilium)*, *The Dogmatic Constitution on Revelation (Dei verbum)*, and *The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et spes)*. In addition, we must briefly consider some passages from *The Decree On the Apostolate of the Laity (Apostolicam Actuositatem)*, *The Decree On the Mission Activity of the Church (Ad Gentes)*, and finally, *The Declaration On Christian Education (Gravissimum Educationis)*. Arguably, the notion of lay apostolate, fully and properly understood, is the central focus of the entire Council. At the end of this paper, I provide a schematic of these seven documents exhibiting their relation to lay apostolate.

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12. Pope John Paul II, *Christifideles laici*, 14.

13. Pope John Paul II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 57.

14. *Ibid.*, 58.

15. Pope John Paul II, *Ex corde Ecclesiae*, 11.

16. Pope John Paul II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 58.

We must first of all consider the approach to the Church as “mystery” in *Lumen Gentium*.<sup>17</sup> Not reducible to a sociological complex or a political interest group, the Church is a “communion of life, love, and truth,”<sup>18</sup> “a sign and instrument of communion with God and of unity among all men.”<sup>19</sup> The Church is a “complex reality” which comes together from “a human and a divine element,” much like the mystery of the incarnation of the Word.<sup>20</sup> It is her mission to “reveal in the world, faithfully, however darkly, the mystery of her Lord.”<sup>21</sup> Indeed, the church must fulfill the command of Christ to spread the faith to the very ends of the earth. The mandate to preach the gospel (Mt. 28:18-20), to evangelize, gives rise to a work that constitutes more than proclaiming the gospel: “through her work, whatever good is in the minds and hearts of men, whatever good lies latent in the religious practices and cultures of diverse peoples, is not only saved from destruction but is also cleansed, raised up and perfected unto the glory of God, the confusion of the devil and the happiness of man.”<sup>22</sup> In other words, evangelization accomplishes renewal and transformation of culture. This requires entry into all “strata” of humanity and society.<sup>23</sup> Here emerges the critical role for the laity.

The laity have a special role to play in the mission of the Church: “The laity are given this special vocation: to make the Church present and fruitful in those places and circumstances where it is only through them that she can become the salt of the earth. Thus, every lay person, through those gifts given to him, is at once the witness and the living instrument of the mission of the Church itself ‘according to the measure of Christ’s bestowal.’”<sup>24</sup> This vocation is called “lay apostolate,” and it is said to be “sharing in the salvific mission of the Church.”<sup>25</sup> The laity are a witness and instrument primarily in the world, in secular activities, structures, and communities.<sup>26</sup>

The laity share in the three-fold mission of Christ, as priest, prophet, and king. We can not do better than to quote Pope John Paul II’s own summary of *Lumen Gentium*:

The lay faithful are sharers in the priestly mission, for which Jesus offered himself on the cross and continues to be offered in the celebration of the Eucharist for the glory of God and the salvation of humanity. Incorporated in Jesus Christ, the baptized are united to him and to his sacrifice in the offering they make of themselves and their daily activities.... Through their participation in the prophetic mission of Christ, “who proclaimed the kingdom of his Father by the testimony of his life and by the power of his word” (n.35), the lay faithful are given the ability and responsibility to accept the gospel in faith and to

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17. Pope Paul VI, dogmatic constitution *Lumen Gentium*, November 21, 1964 (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1964).

18. *Ibid.*, 9.

19. *Ibid.*, 1.

20. *Ibid.*, 8.

21. *Ibid.*, 8.

22. *Ibid.*, 17.

23. Pope John Paul II, *Ex corde Ecclesiae*, 48.

24. Pope Paul VI, *Lumen Gentium*, 33.

25. *Ibid.*, 33.

26. *Ibid.*, 36.

proclaim it in word and deed, without hesitating to courageously identify and denounce evil.... They are also called to allow the newness and the power of the gospel to shine out everyday in their family and social life, as well as to express patiently and courageously in the contradictions of the present age their hope of future glory even “through the framework of their secular life” (n.35).... Because the lay faithful belong to Christ, Lord and King of the Universe, they share in his kingly mission and are called by him to spread that Kingdom in history. They exercise their kingship as Christians, above all in the spiritual combat in which they seek to overcome in themselves the kingdom of sin, and then to make a gift of themselves so as to serve... the lay faithful are called to restore to creation all its original value. In ordering creation to the authentic well-being of humanity in an activity governed by the life of grace, they share in the exercise of the power with which the Risen Christ draws all things to himself and subjects them along with himself to the Father, so that God might be everything to everyone.<sup>27</sup>

The world, temporal society, is the place where the laity exercise their apostolate. So we must briefly examine the *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et spes)*. Called to make common cause with men and women of goodwill, Christians need to understand the trends of the modern world in light of the gospel and the Catholic intellectual tradition. The document looks to the human aspiration for greater freedom and participation as a good thing, the awareness of human dignity and concern for rights is another positive aspect of the modern world, and finally the trend toward greater communication and exchange among all members of the world is a sign of a longing for brotherhood. But along with these signs of human development there are also signs which contradict them—the development of new forms of servitude, opportunities for debasement, and increased divisions and hatreds. In his first encyclical letter, *Redemptor hominis*,<sup>28</sup> Pope John Paul II traces and elaborates on these themes from *Gaudium et spes*. A true Christian anthropology, a theocentric humanism, is the deep truth modern man needs to confront the challenges and fulfill his destiny. In light of the Christian anthropology, members of the Church will join in to explore ways to deal with five areas of special urgency: family and marriage, culture, economics, politics, and war and international cooperation. In light of the life and teaching of Christ, Christians can become involved in the common work of building a more just and humane world.

As explained in *Ad Gentes*, this activity takes on a missionary aspect and becomes a work of evangelization because the Christian acts as a leaven “even in the secular history of mankind.”<sup>29</sup> Missionary activity is “an epiphany, or a manifesting of God’s decree, and its fulfillment in the world and in world history.”<sup>30</sup> Missionary activity “wells up from the Church’s inner nature.”<sup>31</sup> Pope John Paul II again amplifies this notion in his encyclical letter *Redemptoris missio* wherein he speaks of the “‘Areopagus’ in the modern world” as the new sectors which must be of special

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27. Pope John Paul II, *Christifideles laici*, 14.

28. Pope John Paul II, encyclical *Redemptor hominis*, March 4, 1979 (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1979).

29. Pope Paul VI, decree *Ad Gentes*, December 7, 1965 (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1965), 8.

30. *Ibid.*, 9.

31. *Ibid.*, 6.

concern and attention of lay people today.<sup>32</sup> The Church seeks to overcome the split between faith and culture.

The scope of this work and apostolate is vast. Pope John Paul II and Paul VI both refer to the *Decree On the Apostolate of the Laity (Apostolicam Actuositatem)* which sets out key areas such as family, youth, professional life, politics, and international relations.<sup>33</sup> A broader and more intense apostolate is necessary to meet the challenge of the present day, which again is stated in terms of an exaggerated autonomy of temporal affairs, or secularism which involve a “departure from the ethical and religious order” in the name of autonomy.<sup>34</sup> In an important passage in *Gaudium et spes*, the Council fathers distinguish true and false autonomy of temporal affairs, seeking to avoid otherworldliness and secularism: “created things and societies themselves enjoy their own laws and values which must be gradually deciphered, put to use, and regulated by men.”<sup>35</sup> The sciences and arts must be allowed to unfold according to their different methods. “But if the expression, the independence of temporal affairs, is taken to mean that created things do not depend on God, and that man can use them without any reference to their Creator, anyone who acknowledges God will see how false such a meaning is.”<sup>36</sup>

Lay apostolate requires a wise combination of knowledge of the secular disciplines with a keen sense of the origin and end of all things in God, i.e., a theological context and perspective. But ultimately the lay person must achieve in their own person and work the unity of faith and life. The Church must be present to these groups and involved in the various activities and projects of the world today, or else modern man will be turned away from God by an excessive preoccupation with technology and mastery.<sup>37</sup> The Council fathers say that the principal duty of men and women is “to bear witness to Christ, by their life and their words, in the family, in their social group, and in the sphere of their profession.”<sup>38</sup> This is called “the apostolate of the laity.” As John Paul II says with very poignant words, the importance of this apostolate is made clear: “On a continent marked by competition and aggressiveness, unbridled consumerism and corruption, lay people are called to embody deeply evangelical values such as mercy, forgiveness, honesty, transparency of heart and patience in difficult situations. What is expected from the laity is a great creative effort in activities and works demonstrating a life in harmony with the Gospel.”<sup>39</sup> The terms of the challenge are familiar—we must achieve unity of faith and life and bring the faith or the gospel to culture.

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32. Pope John Paul II, encyclical *Redemptoris missio*, December 7, 1990 (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1990), 37.

33. Pope Paul VI, decree *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, December 18, 1965 (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1965), 7, 11-14.

34. *Ibid.*, 1.

35. Pope Paul VI, *Gaudium et spes*, 36.

36. *Ibid.*, 36.

37. Pope Paul VI, *Ad gentes*, 11. See also Pope Paul VI, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 7.

38. *Ibid.*, 21.

39. Pope John Paul II, post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Ecclesia in America*, January 22, 1999 (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1999), 44.

## Contribution of Catholic higher education

How will such a vision be implemented and come to pass? Such a vision requires the special mission and resources of Catholic higher education. In *Gaudium et spes* the challenge to the laity is said to be the development of a “well-formed Christian conscience” so that they may “see that the divine law is inscribed in the life of the earthly city.”<sup>40</sup> The task requires as well the development of technical and professional competence. What is demanded of the lay person is a “vital synthesis” of “humane, domestic, professional, social and technical enterprises” with religious values, under whose “supreme direction all things are harmonized unto God’s glory.”<sup>41</sup> In the spirit of Maritain’s notion of “integral humanism,” John Paul II concludes *Christifideles laici* with an articulation of “a total integrated formation for living an integrated life.”<sup>42</sup> Of what does such an integral human education consist?

The first element and the foundation for this education must be “living by faith in the divine mystery of creation and redemption.”<sup>43</sup> Obviously, the foundation for such formation and education is the knowledge of revelation through scripture and tradition, since “sacred tradition and sacred Scripture make up a single sacred deposit of the Word of God, which is entrusted to the Church.”<sup>44</sup> Sacred scripture must be part of the education for lay apostolate as it is said: “access to sacred Scripture ought to be open wide to the Christian faithful.”<sup>45</sup> Indeed, it is through the “word of the living God” that we are formed as a community.<sup>46</sup> And we recall that “only meditation on the word of God” can we bring others to Christ and “make sound judgments on the true meaning and value of temporal realities.”<sup>47</sup>

The second element in the education for lay apostolate would be the study of theology, ethics, and philosophy. Although called “solid doctrinal instruction,”<sup>48</sup> such a study must be animated by the vital dialectic between faith and reason. Pope John Paul II sets out the vision for “an integral education” when he writes that “faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth.”<sup>49</sup> He says further that faith and reason each contain the other<sup>50</sup> and that one without the other is “impoverished and enfeebled.”<sup>51</sup> Unpacking these ideas will provide very fruitful direction for the education of lay people for their apostolate. It is also useful to look back to the pioneers commended by John Paul II (Newman, Maritain, Gil-

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40. Pope Paul VI, *Gaudium et spes*, 43.

41. *Ibid.*, 43.

42. Pope John Paul II, *Christifideles laici*, 59; see also Pope Paul VI, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 29.

43. Pope Paul VI, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 29.

44. Pope Paul VI, dogmatic constitution *Dei Verbum*, November 18, 1965 (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1965), 10.

45. *Ibid.*, 22.

46. Pope Paul VI, decree *Presbyterorum ordinis*, December 7, 1965 (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1965), 4.

47. Pope Paul VI, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 4.

48. *Ibid.*, 29.

49. Pope John Paul II, encyclical *Fides et Ratio*, October 15, 1998 (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1998), introduction.

50. *Ibid.*, 17.

51. *Ibid.*, 48.

son, and Stein) precisely in their efforts to connect the dynamic interplay of faith and reason with the formation of the laity for their special role within the Church. Certainly, Newman, Maritain, and Gilson were forerunners of Vatican II in their interests in the life of the laity in the Church and in their educational concerns for finding a proper balance between faith and reason.

The third element is said to be “general culture along with practical and technical formation.”<sup>52</sup> Although this component may vary according to circumstances, clearly basic cultural literacy and ability to engage the culture and communicate in it are essential to lay apostolate. Science and technology are an important part of the modern world and the aspiration toward greater mastery. In addition, Pope John Paul II said that the modern age is especially an age of social communications, and that this is the first *areopagus* for evangelization. So too, practical and technical training depends in large measure on the profession chosen for achievement by the students.

Fourth, the lay apostle needs to have a knowledge of “social teaching especially, its principles and conclusions, as will fit them for contributing to the progress of that teaching, and for making correct application of these same principles and conclusions in individual cases.”<sup>53</sup> Pope John Paul II, in speaking of the education for lay apostolate, states that lay people need “an exact knowledge of the Church’s social teaching.”<sup>54</sup> The importance and role of the family needs to be the hallmark of this social teaching. But also, the political context for all social action must be understood. In *Gaudium et spes*, the Council fathers say that “there is no better way” to establish political life than by encouraging “an inward sense of justice of good will” and by consolidating basic convictions about the “true nature of the political community and the aim, proper exercise, and limits of political authority.”<sup>55</sup> In other words, political philosophy is a very important part of the education for lay apostolate. Given the importance of dialogue and the trends toward greater international solidarity and cooperation, the lay apostle must be knowledgeable of diverse cultures, regions, and religions.

We have thus drawn from the documents of Vatican II, with the help of Pope John Paul II, the guidelines for Catholic education today, if we are to take seriously lay apostolate as the outcome or fundamental aim of Catholic education.

The unity of faith and life must be lived out in charity. In *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, the Council fathers said the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, “communicate and nourish that charity which is the soul of the entire apostolate.”<sup>56</sup> This phrase no doubt alludes to the famous book, *The Soul of the Apostolate* by Dom Chautard, in which he explains how apostolate must be the fruit and overflow of interior life, an interior life centered on the Eucharist: “Our Lord wanted to institute this Sacrament in order to make it the center of all action, of all loyal idealism, of

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52. Pope Paul VI, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 29.

53. *Ibid.*, 31.

54. Pope John Paul II, *Christifideles laici*, 61.

55. Pope Paul VI, *Gaudium et spes*, 73.

56. Pope Paul VI, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 3.

every apostolate that could be of any real use to the Church.”<sup>57</sup> Chautard said “the living memorial of the Passion revives the divine fire in the soul of the apostle when its seems on the point of going out.”<sup>58</sup> He draws the necessary conclusion or law of apostolate if you will: “the efficacy of the apostolate almost invariably corresponds to the degree of Eucharistic life acquired by a soul.”<sup>59</sup>

The apostolate of the laity requires “intimate union with Christ in the Church” chiefly by “active participation in the sacred liturgy.”<sup>60</sup> It is interesting to go back and read the famous line from the document on liturgy: “The liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; it is also the fount from which all her power flows. For the goal of apostolic endeavor is that all who are made sons of God by faith and baptism should come together to praise God in the midst of his Church, to take part in the Sacrifice and to eat the Lord’s Supper.”<sup>61</sup> The source and summit of Christian life is directly linked to apostolate in the second sentence. So the source and summit of the life of the Church must frame for us an “apostolic goal,” that is, the Eucharist must send us forth to draw things to Christ and to renew the world in the Spirit. In receiving the sacred Body and Blood of Our Lord, must we not desire to serve him in love? We must be apostolic.

If we turn to section 8 of *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* we find a beautiful statement about the renewal and restoration of the world through the Eucharist:

Even when it is celebrated on the humble altar of a country church, the Eucharist is always in some way celebrated on the altar of the world. It unites heaven and earth. It embraces and permeates all creation. The Son of God became man in order to restore all creation, in one supreme act of praise, to the One who made it from nothing. He, the Eternal High Priest who by the blood of his Cross entered the eternal sanctuary, thus gives back to the Creator and Father all creation redeemed. He does so through the priestly ministry of the Church, to the glory of the Most Holy Trinity. Truly this is the *mysterium fidei* which is accomplished in the Eucharist: the world which came forth from the hands of God the Creator now returns to him redeemed by Christ.<sup>62</sup>

The “coming forth” and “return” is a variation of St Thomas Aquinas’ account of the structure of *Summa*, called in Latin the “*exitus/reditus*.” All things come forth from God, rational creatures return to God through reason and virtue, law and grace. The incarnation of Christ redeems man, body, and soul. The coming forth and return is reiterated in a key section of *Gaudium et spes* on the proper autonomy of secular affairs; the world is good and has a “proper

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57. Jean-Baptiste Chautard, *The Soul of the Apostolate* (Trappist, KY: Abbey of Gethsemani, 1946), 184.

58. *Ibid.*, 185.

59. *Ibid.*, 186.

60. Pope Paul VI, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 4.

61. Pope Paul VI, constitution *Sacrosanctum concilium*, December 4, 1963 (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1998), 10.

62. Pope John Paul II, encyclical *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, April 17, 2003 (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2003), 8.

autonomy” deriving from its creaturely status. False autonomy asserts that created things do not depend on God, and that man can use them without any reference to their Creator. The proper framework for apostolate is to understand the proper origin and end of creation in the Creator God. Without the creator, the creature is lost and becomes unintelligible.<sup>63</sup>

The Eucharist therefore leads us to a deep affirmation of the goodness of God’s creation. Father Vann says that Thomas Aquinas is the Doctor of the Eucharist because he is “the expounder of this great affirmation: all things are good in themselves though evil has damaged and twisted them.”<sup>64</sup> To restore what is damaged by sin; to straighten what is twisted and perverted by human willfulness—that is the effect of the Eucharist; that is the challenge to the lay faithful to bring to the altar God’s good creation, now wounded by sin, but redeemed by the sacrifice of Christ. This is lay apostolate.

A brief look at the document on Christian education (*Gravissimum Educationis*) would complete our effort to see the connection between the role of the Catholic university in evangelization and the thrust of Vatican II. The document opens with a reference to the Council’s care for the importance of education “in the life of man and how its influence ever grows in the social progress of this age.”<sup>65</sup> The very conditions of the new era (i.e., growing awareness of human dignity, the movement for an active participation in economic and political life, new leisure, and new means of communication) make it both “easier” and more urgent to achieve this education. Attempts are made “everywhere” to promote “more education.” To fulfill its mandate for evangelization the Church has a role in the “progress and development of education.”<sup>66</sup> The true end of education is the formation of the human person “in the pursuit of his ultimate end and the good of the societies of which, as man, he is a member, and in whose obligations, as an adult, he will share.”<sup>67</sup> Young people must be helped to “acquire a mature sense of responsibility.”<sup>68</sup> Such education should not only achieve the mature sense of their own responsibility but also cultivate awareness of the gift of faith and the opportunity to witness to the hope within them.<sup>69</sup> The Church is responsible for announcing the good news to all men and is bound “to provide an education by which the whole life of man is imbued by the spirit of Christ and to promote the temporal good.”<sup>70</sup> Catholic education should orient “the whole of human culture to the message of salvation” so that knowledge is illumined by faith.<sup>71</sup> Such an education prepares students to work for the welfare of the world and to live “an exemplary apostolic life” and be a leaven in society.<sup>72</sup>

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63. Pope Paul VI, *Gaudium et spes*, 36.

64. Gerald Vann, O.P., *The Divine Pity: A Study in the Social Implications of the Gospel* (London: Fontana Books, 1956), p.118.

65. Pope Paul VI, declaration *Gravissimum Educationis*, October 28, 1965 (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1965), introduction.

66. *Ibid.*, introduction.

67. *Ibid.*, 1.

68. *Ibid.*, 1.

69. *Ibid.*, 2.

70. *Ibid.*, 3.

71. *Ibid.*, 8.

72. *Ibid.*, 6.

Specifically, through the Catholic university the Church ensures a “public, enduring and pervasive influence of the Christian mind in the furtherance of culture.”<sup>73</sup> Its students will be formed to be outstanding in their training and “ready to undertake weighty responsibilities in society and witness to the faith in the world.”<sup>74</sup> Such a project must achieve the integration of faith and reason. The university respects the autonomy of the disciplines<sup>75</sup> and strives to be true to the principles and methods of each discipline. And yet at a Catholic university there is an aspiration that “there may be a deeper realization of the harmony of faith and science.”<sup>76</sup>

The Council recommends the tradition of the doctors of the Church on faith and reason, especially the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas. John Paul II similarly commends Thomas Aquinas in his encyclical on *Fides et ratio*: “Saint Thomas is an authentic model for all who seek the truth. In his thinking, the demands of reason and the power of faith found the most elevated synthesis ever attained by human thought, for he could defend the radical newness introduced by Revelation without ever demeaning the venture proper to reason.”<sup>77</sup> He also makes reference to Pope Paul VI, quoting an important passage from his allocution:

Without doubt, Thomas possessed supremely the courage of the truth, a freedom of spirit in confronting new problems, the intellectual honesty of those who allow Christianity to be contaminated neither by secular philosophy nor by a prejudiced rejection of it. He passed therefore into the history of Christian thought as a pioneer of the new path of philosophy and universal culture. The key point and almost the kernel of the solution which, with all the brilliance of his prophetic intuition, he gave to the new encounter of faith and reason was a reconciliation between the secularity of the world and the radicality of the Gospel, thus avoiding the unnatural tendency to negate the world and its values while at the same time keeping faith with the supreme and inexorable demands of the supernatural order.<sup>78</sup>

I think we can see here a fitting conclusion to our study of Vatican II and lay apostolate and Catholic higher education. Vatican II, as we have seen, balances a respect for the world and its structures with the supernatural perspective of faith. It is precisely the radicality or newness of the gospel, made available through baptism, which gives the laity their participation in the office of Christ as priest, prophet, and king. The “secularity” of the lay member of the church is the distinctive attribute noted by the Council. But such secularity must be matched by, formed by, the radicality or newness of the gospel. Catholic higher education can avoid those extremes of the negation of the world and the marginalization of faith through paying attention to the mission of evangelization and the outcome of producing men and women who can be lay apostles.

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73. *Ibid.*, 10.

74. *Ibid.*, 10.

75. See Pope Paul VI, *Gaudium et spes*, 36.

76. Pope Paul VI, *Gravissimum Educationis*, 10.

77. Pope John Paul II, *Fides et ratio*, 43, 78.

78. Pope Paul VI, apostolic letter *Lumen Ecclesiae*, November 20, 1974 (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1974), 20.

## Catholic higher education at the present moment

Catholic universities must set forth their vision for an integral education for lay apostolate and fulfill the trust given to them by Pope John Paul II for evangelization. We have instead accepted and exacerbated the split or divergence between faith and life, faith and reason, and faith and culture. A few lessons we may learn from the documents of Vatican II as a context for reading *Ex corde Ecclesiae* concern three points: (1) *communio* and the unity of faith and life, (2) curriculum and the unity of faith and reason, and (3) integration and the unity of faith and culture.

*Communio and the unity of faith and life:* The university must be first of all a true community rooted in faith, “ecclesial faith” as Pope Benedict would put it to American educators.<sup>79</sup> The importance of hiring to mission is not only a matter of the statistical count of Catholics on the faculty or students recruited. There must be a faithful community gathered around the Eucharist. Out of this faithful communion springs the community of “joy in truth” that marks the university. The community itself is the first “sign” of God’s presence in the world.<sup>80</sup> Around the sacrifice of the Mass and the word of God the community finds its bearings. At the very outset of the encyclical *Fides et ratio*, Pope John Paul II says that the young have no point of reference for their lives because the teachers have given up: “this time of rapid and complex change can leave especially the younger generation, to whom the future belongs and on whom it depends, with a sense that they have no valid points of reference. The need for a foundation for personal and communal life becomes all the more pressing at a time when we are faced with the patent inadequacy of perspectives in which the ephemeral is affirmed as a value and the possibility of discovering the real meaning of life is cast into doubt.”<sup>81</sup> We owe to the students to provide the points of reference embedded in our heritage and way of life. The professors are the first models and witnesses of the unity of faith and life. Their position at the university is an apostolic venture.

*Curriculum and the unity of faith and reason:* The dynamic interplay of faith and reason must characterize the curriculum of a Catholic university. This means that philosophy and theology provide the fundamental structure and animating content of the education. Authentic Catholic theology must be offered with no fear of watering it down. In addition, the curriculum requires a philosophy “consonant with the word of God” to complement the study of theology.<sup>82</sup> As we noted above, St Thomas Aquinas should be the model for the dynamic formation curriculum. The unity of faith and reason is a model or template for the achievement of western culture as such, and some access to this achievement and its principles are important for Catholic

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79. Pope Benedict XVI, “Address to Catholic Educators.”

80. Pope Paul VI, *Ad Gentes*, 15.

81. Pope John Paul II, *Fides et ratio*, 6.

82. See my article, “Aquinas, Thomism, and a ‘Philosophy Consonant with the Word of God,’” *Seminary Journal* 11, no. 1 (2005): 47-55.

higher education today.<sup>83</sup> The plea for integration of knowledge and the encouragement of interdisciplinary studies should be viewed in the light of the formation for lay apostolate and the fragmentation of culture. A concern is expressed in *Gaudium et spes* about the influence of scientism, materialism, pragmatism and the deformation of education; they express the aspiration for a humanistic education achieved in “synthesis” of wisdom, the whole truth, a synthesis based upon the “whole human person,” a blending of sciences and morality and doctrine.<sup>84</sup> All of this serves the renewal of life and culture of fallen man. Catholic education “strengthens, purifies, and restores” culture in Christ.<sup>85</sup>

*Integration and the unity of faith and culture:* The integration requires a capstone course of some kind to facilitate that “synthesis” of professional knowledge with the theological principle. The faculty must be the chief models for this. Faculty development is required so that all faculty may place their discipline within a Christian worldview, as called for *Ex corde Ecclesiae*: “University teachers should seek to improve their competence and endeavor to set the content, objectives, methods, and results of research in an individual discipline within the framework of a coherent world vision. Christians among the teachers are called to be witnesses and educators of authentic Christian life, which evidences an attained integration between faith and life, and between professional competence and Christian wisdom. All teachers are to be inspired by academic ideals and by the principles of an authentically human life.”<sup>86</sup> Clearly, the faculty at a Catholic university are the means of its success. As the decree on Christian education states: “Teachers must remember that it depends chiefly upon them whether the Catholic school achieves its purpose.”<sup>87</sup> A recent sociological study of Catholic higher education underscores the pressing need for faculty development if universities are to maintain a sense of mission.<sup>88</sup> The notion of lay apostolate and evangelization based upon the documents of Vatican II should be the foundation of any program for development.

The challenge by Pope John Paul II for Catholic universities to participate in the evangelization of culture could provide an opportunity for them to discover their true energy and splendor. For the Catholic colleges and universities that now struggle for maintaining their existence,

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83. “This intellectual structure was, to be sure, not only very highly differentiated; it was also fearfully imperiled and fragile. But this particular moment has continued to live in the memory of Western Christendom as something exemplary, a paradigm and model, a standard which ‘really ought’ to be met. [We] still actually respond to the coercion of that guiding principle which was formulated by Thomas. Thus we simply cannot succeed in living, without uneasiness, in terms of a worldliness wholly divorced from all supramundane calls. It is likewise impossible for us to live, without uneasiness, in terms of a ‘religionistic’ religiousness wholly divorced from all obligations toward the world.” Josef Pieper, *Guide to Thomas Aquinas* (Munich: Kosel-Verlag, 1986), chapters 10 and 11. See also Christopher Dawson, *The Historic Reality of Christian Culture* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961) and *The Crisis of Western Education* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1961).

84. Pope Paul VI, *Gaudium et spes*, 56-62.

85. *Ibid.*, 58; cf. passages cited above from *Lumen Gentium* and *Ad Gentes*.

86. Pope John Paul II, *Ex corde Ecclesiae*, 22.

87. Pope Paul VI, *Gravissimum Educationis*, 8.

88. Melanie M. Morey and John J. Piderit, *Catholic Higher Education: A Culture in Crisis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 103-105; see review by Rev. McDermott in *Fellowship of Catholic Scholars Quarterly*, Summer 2008, pp. 59-61.

the integrity of the evangelizing mission provides a framework for establishing priorities for re-structuring and re-allocation. For those colleges and universities that continue to see an increase in student enrollment and donations, the challenge continues to be that of fidelity to the Church and to see that the notion that unity of life and faith, or the internal coherence of Christian witness, is the primary value at stake in the educational arena, and not worldly success.

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## VATICAN II AT A GLANCE



