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## Chancellor's Update

### What Happened to Our Colleges?

Many Catholic octogenarians and septuagenarians in the United States remember when they were investigating colleges that they might attend. While academic excellence was available at many public and private colleges, these young Catholics believed that they also wanted to expand and enhance their knowledge of the Catholic faith.

Catholic colleges also wanted to inform potential students of that opportunity. One interviewer told a group of visiting aspiring candidates, “You feed, nurture and protect your body, you exercise your mind, you nurture your soul by Baptism and First Holy Communion, but why do you stop your soul at age 11 after Confirmation? You can treat you soul equally by expanding your knowledge of the Catholic Faith at a mature level.”

That interviewer’s assessment of the soul was in agreement with Church teaching. “According to Thomist doctrine...the human or rational soul is the ultimate interior principle vivifying the human body and rendering man capable of performing all his vital acts...The human soul is integrally simple, has no part outside of part; otherwise ideation, judging, and reasoning cannot be explained; is spiritual since its operations are spiritual, as knowing the spiritual, the abstract, and the universal, reflecting on itself, enjoying spiritual things, exercising freedom; internally immortal since God will not annihilate it. Scripture clearly teaches its immortality. The human soul...is created by God and...infused into the body at the first instant of the latter’s existence; created ‘to God’s image and likeness’ since, similar to God, the soul is a spirit endowed with intellect and free will. The union between soul and body is substantial, resulting in one complete substance, which is a human person if we except the body and soul of Christ. Scripture informs us that the human soul will be judged after death, will be consigned to heaven or to hell, and on the Day of General Judgment re-united with its body, the composite thenceforth to enjoy the Beatific Vision or to suffer the torments of the damned, for eternity.” (The New Catholic Dictionary, New York, The Universal Knowledge Foundation, 1929)

Many graduates of these Catholic colleges were so pleased with the experience and the results of their academic education that they would not hesitate to recommend their colleges to relatives and friends. However, during and after the late 1960s as they became aware of activities of their *alma maters*, they noticed a change occurring in spiritual, cultural and moral things, first slowly and then more blatantly. Required Theology courses, such as Dogmatic Theology, Life of Christ, Sacraments, God and Creation, were replaced by Sociology of Religion, Education for Peace and Justice, Philosophy of Religion and Religions of the World and others. Some Universities offered courses and degrees in Evolutionary Biology. Some Catholic parents, hoping to

help their child be educated and remain a practicing Catholic in a secularized and more rapidly becoming pagan world, sacrificed to send the child to a prestigious Catholic University, only to see the child graduate with no religion and no morals. Eventually the octogenarians and septuagenarians had to ask themselves, “What happened to my College?” Unbeknownst to many Catholics, a significant event had taken place in 1967, which only became known in 2017, a year of many significant anniversaries.

Fifty years ago many colleges were openly speaking about expanding curriculum and dormitories, and achieving better academic prestige. Corporations and Foundations were willing to fund educational activities through grants, and politicians were discussing federal aid to education. In July 1967 a group of leaders from some well-known Catholic Universities met in Wisconsin to discuss how to achieve their goals to better serve Catholics and others in the modern world. The formal ‘Land O’Lakes Statement: The Nature of the Contemporary Catholic University’ stated its purpose: “To perform its teaching and research functions effectively the Catholic university must have a true autonomy and academic freedom in the face of authority of whatever kind, lay or clerical, external to the academic community itself.” Catholicism should be perceptibly present and effectively operative, especially by the presence of scholars in theology. Theology should bring its own insights to bear upon problems of modern culture. Any religion or philosophy was welcome because it boasted no theological or philosophical imperialism. The undergraduate was geared to modern society with a basic understanding of the actual world in which he/she lives today. The student can fulfill himself using the intellectual resources presented to him. So the University has no boundaries and no barriers. In order to draw knowledge from all traditions of mankind, there must be no outlawed books or subjects. (Ed. Note. Previously, certain books, if considered dangerous to faith or morals, were censored.)

Within the university community the student should be able not simply to study theology and Christianity, but to express his /her Christianity in a variety of ways. The students and faculty can explore together new forms of Christian living, of Christian witness, and of Christian service. Students will be able to participate and contribute to a variety of liturgical functions, creatively contemporary and experimental, and will find the meaning of the sacraments for themselves.

The Land O’Lakes Statement had 26 signatories of which 12 were Jesuits and 4 were affiliated with Notre Dame University, accounting for 61 % of the signers. Regarding schools in attendance, 6 were prominent Jesuit schools in addition to Notre Dame University. (For further reading, see Chancellor’s Update, July 2017.)

Eventually, most Catholic colleges and universities in the U.S. shed their legal ties to the Church and handed their institutions over to independent boards of trustees. Some formerly Catholic colleges changed their affiliation to private or independent.

Until the Church leaders resume teaching about Christ’s redemption on the Cross, emphasizing the vertical beam of Faith and Morals, they are wasting their time teaching social justice on the horizontal beam.

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