



# *Saint Joseph's College*

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RENSSELAER, INDIANA

**WHO ARE WE? WHAT DO WE STAND FOR?**  
*Reflections on the Mission of Saint Joseph's College*

Bishop William L. Higi, D.D.  
Rev. Timothy McFarland, C.P.P.S., Ph.D.  
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FALL 2005 - OCCASIONAL PAPER - NUMBER ELEVEN

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**SAINT JOSEPH'S COLLEGE**

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## INTELLIGENCE AND FAITH

### *A United Endeavor that is the Basis for a Liberal Education at Saint Joseph's College*

Saint Joseph's College is a Catholic liberal arts college founded in 1889 and sponsored by the Missionaries of the Precious Blood. The College welcomes those from many religious traditions to come in good faith to teach and learn on its park-like campus in Rensselaer, Indiana.

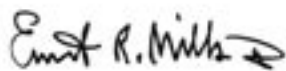
In this pamphlet the College has brought together materials which describe its mission and reflect on the purpose of a Catholic liberal arts college, including how that "purpose" is witnessed at Saint Joseph's College.

The three papers contained herein were commissioned by the Board of Trustees for their three scheduled meetings in the 2003-2004 academic year. Each one was presented and discussed at a Board meeting that year. The purpose was to enhance the awareness of every Trustee about the distinctive mission of the College, as the Board moved toward approval of a comprehensive strategic plan in the fall of 2004. The Board wanted its approval of this plan to be undertaken with as full an understanding of institutional mission as possible.

Salvation history is a dynamic dialogue of people and their institutions seeking God in ways consistent with His grace. We as a College seek truth with the abiding faith that the Son of God is Truth and thus that in teaching and learning we grow closer to Him.

Our hope is that readers will come away with an appreciation of how we at Saint Joseph's College attempt to continue, sixteen years into our second century, a tradition of excellence and commitment to a liberal education that is a united endeavor of intelligence and faith.

Sincerely,



**Ernest R. Mills III**  
President



**James E. Madden '64**  
Chairman of the Board

## MISSION STATEMENT OF SAINT JOSEPH'S COLLEGE

*The current Mission Statement of the College was enacted by the Board of Trustees on April 17, 1998.*

Saint Joseph's College (Indiana), a primarily undergraduate Catholic college, founded and sponsored by the Missionaries of the Precious Blood, pledges itself to a tradition of excellence and to a liberal education that is a united endeavor of intelligence and faith.

The College places exceptional emphasis on the education of the whole person. Its nationally known Core Curriculum complements up-to-date career preparation in the major. These academic programs enrich and are enriched by programs of spiritual development, residence education, and athletics.

The College serves a diverse student body composed of men and women of all races, creeds, and socio-economic backgrounds who can thrive academically, spiritually, and socially in this inclusive community.

To fulfill this Mission, the College pledges:

- 1) To form graduates who are competent professionals, capable of assuming leadership roles in the world, who will embody Gospel values in their personal lives and professional careers.
- 2) To conduct the Core Curriculum and, through it, all College programs within the conceptual framework and value commitments of "Christian Humanism" that stem from our Judeo-Christian and Graeco-Roman traditions and from our Vatican II inspiration.
- 3) To give witness in a special way, in all aspects of campus life, academically and existentially, to the Christian Humanist values of justice and love and its commitment to human solidarity and interdependence on national and global levels.
- 4) To add to the emphasis to educate the whole student – intellectually, physically, socially, and spiritually – an abiding concern to provide personalized and individualized care.
- 5) To steward all the resources of the College in truth, in loving justice, and with concern for the needs of the individual.
- 6) To extend personal and professional services as Church and public needs may require.

## VISION OF THE CATHOLIC COLLEGE IN *EX CORDE ECCLESIAE*

**Most Rev. William L. Higi, D.D.**

Bishop of Lafayette-in-Indiana

Pope John Paul II said that what it means for a college to be Catholic is a topic that should be close to the heart of every Bishop. It is close to my heart. Many times I've said: "Saint Joseph's College is one of the great blessings God has bestowed on the Diocese of Lafayette-in-Indiana." I know this institution deserves the honorable title of being a *Catholic* college. I propose to show, on the one hand, *why* that is my conviction and, on the other hand, *how* this Board of Trustees can maintain and enhance the Catholic nature of Saint Joseph's.

A Catholic college, first of all, must be a college, an institution of *higher* learning. That means that in the expression "Catholic college," the noun (college) expresses the essence of the institution, and the adjective (Catholic) expresses the specific difference between this kind of college and other varieties—state, technical, Lutheran, etc. If you look at Pope John Paul's document *Ex corde ecclesiae*, he made exactly the same point. The very first universities grew out of the medieval church's commitment to the search for truth. Saint Thomas Aquinas and the other great medieval professors engaged in tough, uncompromising debates with one another in their quest for truth. Free inquiry, but disciplined inquiry, *is* higher education. It always has been, it still has to be; and the Catholic Church has always tenaciously held that position, convinced as she is that *truth cannot be contrary to truth*. We are blessed that John Paul wrote about Catholic higher education. He understands it well from his years as a professor of philosophy.

Here are three of the Holy Father's more important assertions in *Ex corde* about what is essential in order to conduct education at the level of *higher* learning:

Every Catholic university...possesses that institutional autonomy necessary to perform its functions effectively and guarantees its members academic freedom. (#12)

The church...recognizes the academic freedom of scholars in each discipline. (#29)

Catholic universities...are called to explore courageously the riches of revelation and of nature so that the *united endeavor of intelligence and faith* will enable people to come to the full measure of their humanity... (#5)

## WHO ARE WE? WHAT DO WE STAND FOR?

This last quotation has familiar words: “united endeavor of intelligence and faith.” These words express what the Pope thought is distinctive about the *Catholic college*. Note that this phrase is the fundamental designation the Trustees of this College put into the first sentence of our Mission Statement. I quote:

Saint Joseph’s College (Indiana), a primarily undergraduate Catholic college, founded and sponsored by the Missionaries of the Precious Blood, pledges itself to a tradition of excellence and to a liberal education that is a *united endeavor of intelligence and faith*.

We can then make a fairly strong argument that Saint Joseph’s College is the very kind of institution John Paul had in mind when he wrote *Ex corde*. The evidence for that bold assertion is not hard to find. In 1969 Saint Joseph’s College radically revised its approach to undergraduate education by introducing the Core Curriculum. In its deepest and most essential purpose, Core strives to bring all the highly developed disciplines that represent humanity’s contemporary search for truth into critical but enriching dialogue with the light of faith. Here’s the way Pope John Paul put it:

Aided by the specific contributions of philosophy and theology, university scholars will be engaged in a constant effort to determine the relative place and meaning of each of the various disciplines within the context of a vision of the human person and the world that is enlightened by the Gospel....(*Ex corde*, #16)

Students are led, semester-by-semester in the Core Curriculum, toward integration of their knowledge: within their major, between their major and other disciplines, and between secular knowledge and the light faith sheds on the human condition. Compare item #1 in our Mission Statement...

The College pledges... To form graduates who are competent professionals, capable of assuming leadership roles in the world, who will embody Gospel values in their personal lives and professional careers.

...with paragraph #23 in *Ex corde*:

They (the students) should realize the responsibility of their professional life, the enthusiasm of being the trained ‘leaders’ of tomorrow, of being witnesses to Christ in whatever place they may exercise their profession.

Because both *Ex corde* and Saint Joseph’s Core Curriculum grew out of one of the most vital threads in Catholic tradition, especially as newly formulated by the Second

Vatican Council, we should not be surprised at the large amount of agreement between them. Integration of knowledge, dialogue with contemporary culture, confrontation with injustice and false values, a critical role for philosophy and theology—all of these commitments stand forth as themes common to John Paul's letter and to the various documents the College has produced with regard to its Core Curriculum. (Critical dialogue with contemporary culture has also become a priority concern of the U.S. Catholic Bishops.)

There are, of course, some “norms” or regulations attached to the end of *Ex corde*. Theology is the “science of faith,” and as in any science, when fallible human beings work to extend and deepen understanding, mistakes will be made. The Church relies in those instances primarily on the self-correcting nature of disciplined inquiry. “The truth will out,” Cardinal Newman said. But there is also a clear role for me as Diocesan Bishop, for the sponsoring Missionaries of the Precious Blood, for the administration of the College, and for its theologians to be careful that nothing is represented as a teaching of the Catholic Church that is not such. What is a more positive concern—and both more important and of far, far more frequency—is that we all must see to it that “Catholic ideals, attitudes, and principles penetrate and inform” all the activities of Saint Joseph's College (see *Ex corde*, #14). People will define that differently and raise a variety of issues about what is and is not appropriate for a “Catholic” college. But one clear fundamental of Catholic identity is maintaining a critical percentage of Catholics in the student body and among the faculty and administration—Catholics who live their religion, ideally 24/7.

This makes campus ministry—pastoral ministry: including celebration of the Mass and other sacraments, retreats for students and faculty, and community worship—a matter of paramount importance. “If it looks like a duck, sounds like a duck, and walks like a duck...” You know the expression. My point is that a college is Catholic when its students and faculty engage Catholic practices.

What can this Board of Trustees do to enhance the Catholic nature of SJC? I have a short list of four essential things:

- 1) The Board needs to focus on the quality of the *Core Curriculum*. The goal should be to strengthen the interaction between Core and the majors, the integration of knowledge with the Gospel message. To assure quality the Board should find a way to fund faculty education. The doctoral level in all fields should be a goal.
- 2) It is important to establish and maintain high quality in and a vocal presence of *philosophy* and *theology* in the faculty.

## WHO ARE WE? WHAT DO WE STAND FOR?

- 3) At its meetings the Board needs to ask and then ask again: “how are things going in *campus ministry*?” Faculty development and campus ministry are key elements.
- 4) Ask and ask again: “how are we doing with the *percentage of Catholic* students and faculty?”

I wanted this presentation to be optimistic and upbeat—and truthful. However, the Kingdom of God has not yet fully arrived, so we can and must do better. Nonetheless I hope I have successfully pointed out how well the Mission Statement for this institution melds with *Ex corde ecclesiae*, as well as a few things we need to attend to in order to keep that adjective *Catholic* firmly placed before the noun *college*, when we talk about who we are and what we want this institution to be.

Finally, Saint Joseph’s has always been alert to various opportunities to serve the Diocese. I cannot conclude without expressing gratitude for the College’s work in our Diocese’s Ecclesial Lay Ministry (ELM) program. Please keep sending your theologians to assist with the academic formation of lay ecclesial ministers for the Local Church. It is, perhaps, the most significant expression of Diocese-College collaboration in the past 50 years.



**SJC COMMENCEMENT 2003:**  
*Avery Cardinal Dulles, S.J. and Bishop Higi*

## THE C.P.P.S. EDUCATIONAL APOSTOLATE

***Timothy McFarland, C.P.P.S., Ph.D. '78***

Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs

Associate Professor of Religion

Core Curriculum Coordinator

In our continuing efforts to provide opportunities for mission awareness to various constituencies of the College community, I have been asked to reflect on the uniqueness of an educational institution sponsored by the Missionaries of the Precious Blood. At the last Board meeting Bishop Higi offered reflections on *Ex corde ecclesiae* as it relates to Saint Joseph's College. What I will do in these reflections is offer a Precious Blood perspective on higher education and engage some of the Bishop's ideas.

### ***The C.P.P.S.***

The Missionaries of the Precious Blood are a "society for apostolic life." Immediately this distinguishes us canonically from "religious orders" such as the Franciscans, Jesuits, and Dominicans. We do not take the traditional vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience that characterize religious orders. Instead, we make a promise of fidelity to the Congregation, its members bonded together by the "bond of charity," which our founder St. Gaspar del Bufalo believed was stronger than vows. The traditional vows are subsumed in the "bond of charity." As an apostolic community, the apostolate (our mission) is what brings us together and our community sustains us in our mission. Unlike a religious order where the community takes precedence, the apostolate is our *raison d'être* and community life exists to support us in the apostolate.

*Can. 731 §1:* Societies of apostolic life resemble institutes of consecrated life. Their members, without taking religious vows, pursue the apostolic purpose proper to each society. Living a fraternal life in common in their own special manner, they strive for the perfection of charity through the observance of the constitutions.

§2: Among these societies are some in which the members, through a bond defined in the constitutions, undertake to live the evangelical counsels.

## WHO ARE WE? WHAT DO WE STAND FOR?

We were founded by St. Gaspar del Bufalo in 1815 in Italy for the purpose of preaching and renewing the clergy and people of the time, who had grown lax in the practice of the faith during the reign of Napoleon. This was primarily accomplished through preaching retreats and popular missions. Much of our ministry has been shaped in response to the “needs of the Church.” The 1994 Mission Statement of the Cincinnati Province challenges us “*to be flexible and responsive to changing needs.*”

In 1843, Fr. Francis de Sales Brunner and a small group of missionaries came to the United States at the request of Cincinnati Bishop Purcell to minister to German immigrants in western Ohio. At the request of Bishop Dwenger of Ft. Wayne to begin a Catholic college in north central Indiana, the Missionaries responded to the needs of the Church and established Saint Joseph’s College in 1889. Once again responding to the needs of the Church for Catholic education, the College established a presence in northwestern Indiana in the Calumet region with an extension campus in 1951, which in 1963 became a separate institution, now known as Calumet College of Saint Joseph (CCSJ) in Whiting, Indiana.

At present there are 526 members of the C.P.P.S. world-wide congregation ministering in 18 different countries. (There are two Bishops, 44 brothers, 459 priests, and 23 definitively incorporated students.) Among our apostolates are parochial ministry, education, foreign missions, chaplaincies, retreat preaching, renewal and reconciliation ministries, as well as support services. The educational apostolate is not a primary one for the C.P.P.S., although we do have elementary schools in some of our parishes. Internationally, the C.P.P.S. congregation sponsors high schools in Chile, Germany, and Spain.

### ***The C.P.P.S. Apostolate in Higher Education***

The Cincinnati Province of the C.P.P.S. sponsors two colleges. While the two colleges share some common values, the implementation of these values differs because of their student population. CCSJ enrolls a high proportion of non-traditional age students and is one of the most racially diverse colleges in the country. At CCSJ, issues of social justice permeate the curriculum, and the institution (as called for by the Mission Statement of the C.P.P.S.) strives “to reach out to the poor and marginalized.”

Here at Saint Joseph’s College, we have a more traditional-age student population, and our minority population is usually around 10%. Currently about 50% of our total student population is Catholic and very close to 42% of our full-time teaching faculty is Catholic.

### *At Saint Joseph's College*

One significant way we fulfill the C.P.P.S. Mission here at Saint Joseph's College is through our campus ministry programs. We have three daily Masses and three on Sunday. There are opportunities for reception of the other sacraments as well. There is a very active student volunteer program with activities varying from work at soup kitchens to right to life activities. I am happy to report that with the assistance of a grant from the C.P.P.S. Peace and Justice Fund, in addition to funding from the SJC Strategic Plan, we recently purchased a nice used fifteen-passenger van to transport our students to various sites. During the past semester approximately 2000 person-hours were given in volunteer service by our students.

Kairos retreats have made and continue to make an impact on our campus, since we began these in 1986. There are currently three Kairos retreats held each year, in addition to two camping retreats, and two busy-student retreats. 166 of our current students have participated in Kairos retreats (this is 25% of our resident population), and 35 current faculty and staff have been on Kairos teams.

Our Core Curriculum attempts to integrate all the disciplines into a meaningful whole. Philosophy and theology are woven into the curriculum throughout all four years, rather than being relegated to a couple of courses, as would be the case in other Catholic colleges and universities. This reflects our more pastoral approach to faith in all aspects of one's education. In the senior year, we also have a lecture on "Reconciliation," where our students hear and discuss aspects of our Precious Blood spirituality and heritage.

The Precious Blood Mission Statement also challenges the Province to "call forth the gifts of the laity and work in collaboration with them." As Bishop Higi indicated in his statement, we have been working in collaboration with the Diocese on the Ecclesial Lay Ministry (ELM) program since its inception in 1997. We provide and supervise the academic component of the ELM program. The program has grown to the extent that we now enroll between 75 and 90 students each semester in ELM courses at six sites throughout the Diocese.

### *Some Practical Applications for Saint Joseph's College*

A number of the above statements could be said about any number of Catholic colleges and universities, but the question might be asked, "What is unique about a college sponsored by the C.P.P.S.?" Here are a few items to begin the discussion.

## WHO ARE WE? WHAT DO WE STAND FOR?

- 1) Part of the mission and heritage of the Precious Blood Congregation is a concern for the *“pursuit of justice ever mindful of the poor and marginalized.”* In our curriculum we try to build in components that will challenge our students to be mindful of the poor. Throughout the history of Saint Joseph’s College, we have had a tradition of providing a college education for first generation students and for those who might not have the opportunity for such an education. We have a history of working with students not only on the economic and social margins, but also on the “intellectual margins” to help them secure a college education. Something for us to think about—as our tuition keeps increasing—is how can we continue to reach out to the “poor and marginalized”?
- 2) People to whom we minister will often note that the C.P.P.S. men are “approachable,” “down to earth,” and “are right there with us.” C.P.P.S. men and women have lived in the residence halls with the students, and this is an important aspect of the ministry of presence that needs to continue.
- 3) The flexibility we describe in our C.P.P.S. Mission Statement has been lived out in our willingness to “pitch in” and do what needs to be done. This can be seen in many instances throughout our College’s history.
- 4) Reconciliation is also a key feature of our spirituality. On a macro-level, there is so much brokenness in our world, and through our Core program we try to help students build bridges to others. For example, in Core 1 we look at issues of race, gender and class with an eye to building bridges among peoples. Our Intercultural Studies (Cores 7 & 8) equip our students with an awareness of cultures other than their own. And in Core 9 we explicitly deal with reconciliation on both the macro and micro-levels.
- 5) Central to the Precious Blood spirituality is that Christ shed blood to give life to all. We are called and challenged to be life-givers and to respond wherever there is a need. This is a vision and challenge that needs to be, and is, shared with our students in the hope that they will take up the challenge in their lives following graduation. This in effect multiplies the impact of our charism as our graduates share the vision of the C.P.P.S. with others in the workplace and in their communities.
- 6) I asked several faculty and staff members what they saw as the unique features of the C.P.P.S. Here are a few of the items they mentioned:

## REFLECTIONS ON THE MISSION OF SAINT JOSEPH'S COLLEGE

- a. C.P.P.S. members go out to where people are; they just don't sit in the rectory or their rooms; they're out with the people.
- b. There is an ecumenical spirit fostered here, with the Missionaries helping to nourish faith in whatever way they can.
- c. In a very practical way, the presence and dedication of the C.P.P.S. in the classrooms, cafeteria, liturgical celebrations, social engagements, formal and informal gatherings, counseling sessions, retreats, and college committees accents and makes everyone acutely aware of the dignity of the human person that is so central to our Catholic faith.
- d. We communicate a sense of community. Even though ideas and lifestyles differ, there is a sense that we are a part of something greater than what we are just here at Saint Joseph's College.

### *Conclusion*

Theologian Fr. Robert Schreiter, C.P.P.S. noted the following key points in a 1994 presentation to educators at St. Gaspar School in Santiago, Chile.

Precious Blood spirituality equips the educational project with a grander vision beyond what is rationally and technically possible. Against the rampant individualism of culture, Precious Blood spirituality aims at finding meaning in interdependent communities and solidarity. Precious Blood spirituality is a spirituality of hope that is committed to imagining and constructing an alternative vision that improves life. It is a hope to transform the world by being in the world and working from within to bring about the values of the Kingdom of God and a reconciled humanity.

As the number of C.P.P.S. members engaged in full-time ministry on campus continues to decline, as it has been doing in recent years, the challenge is to provide opportunities for all members of the College community to gain and to live a greater awareness of the Precious Blood heritage.

## THE “LOCAL THEOLOGY” CREATED AT SJC IN 1999 TO 2004

*John P. Nichols, S.T.L., Ph.D.*

NEH Distinguished Teaching Professor

Professor of Philosophy

### *Introduction*

In the short version, the concept of “local theology” simply means doing theology that recognizes its own particular point of view. All theology is “faith seeking understanding,” as St. Anselm’s classic definition has it, but “local theology” owns up to its bias. Its search for deeper understanding of faith takes place from within one particular socio-cultural context. Although some of its conclusions certainly have universal validity, the search begins from inside *a* particular culture, albeit one that connects with the heritage of centuries of traditions of the universal church (the diachronic dimension) and enters into dialogue with other contemporary searches that start from different socio-cultural contexts (a synchronic dimension).

The eminent Dominican theologian, Edward Schillebeeckx, argued that the biggest change in Roman Catholic thinking that occurred at the Second Vatican Council was its full embrace of the “historicity” of the human condition and therefore of faith and theology. Local theology is one of the manifestations of that change, and one of Father Schillebeeckx’s students—in addition, an outstanding SJC alumnus—has “written the book” on local theology: Robert J. Schreiter, C.P.P.S., *Constructing Local Theologies* (Orbis, 1997). Father Schreiter’s primary application of the concept of local theology relates to the inculturation of Christianity on various continents. Local theology can however have secondary applications to such religious phenomena as the special charisms of religious orders and the distinctive mission statements of institutions of higher learning.

Saint Joseph’s College’s local theology is not set in concrete, but it is carved in brick in the lobby of the Core Education Center. A plaque next to this brick sculpture announces its theme and its intent as follows (and please note that this was a faculty project):

A group of members of the faculty of Saint Joseph’s College designed and raised the funds for a brick sculpture to be installed in a most prominent location in the gallery of the new Core Building, for the purpose of recalling to all future users of the edifice some of the essential

elements of the CHRISTIAN HUMANIST worldview that initiated and still animates the Saint Joseph's College Core Curriculum. The sculpture embodies both the Judaeo-Christian and the Liberal Arts traditions of the institution, and it does so in an art form that reaches way back into the history of humanity to such monuments as the Ishtar Gate at Babylon (c. 4000 B.P.), in a deliberate attempt to dedicate this building and its resident Core Curriculum to a specific mission with a completely obvious tone of permanence.

### ***What Is the SJC Context?***

We begin, because local theology is aware of context, by taking a look at some of the *facts* of our situation. The students at this College are to a large degree from the Midwest, belong to a middle-level economic group, are traditional-age college students, divide themselves almost equally according to gender, and exhibit a fair amount of diversity in race and religion. Since 1969, the faculty have structured the entire undergraduate experience for these students, all eight semesters of it, as an interaction between a general education Core and the major selected by the student. The documents from Vatican II strongly influenced this, as did the global outlook of the sponsoring Missionaries of the Precious Blood.

The Missionaries of the Precious Blood are a congregation that strives to live a community life, not with the ties of traditional vows, but on the basis of a bond of *charity*. Analogously, the faculty at SJC constitute an academic community bonded together in the search for *truth*. The various disciplines that make up the 21st century college are regarded as distinct lines of inquiry, with different methods and objects of study, but which can nevertheless talk with one another—much to the benefit of college-level inquiry. Therefore, both students and faculty members, by learning and teaching in the College's Core Curriculum, enjoy (and are challenged by) a degree of academic community and collegiality unseen almost anywhere else in this country.

### ***What is the Mission of SJC?***

From the facts of our situation, we now turn to our goals and the existing steps designed to attain them. According to the opening sentence of its Mission Statement, "Saint Joseph's College is a primarily undergraduate Catholic college that pledges itself to a tradition of excellence and to a liberal education that is a united endeavor of intelligence and faith" (Board of Trustees, April 17, 1998). The "united endeavor" pledge comes directly from John Paul II's *Ex corde ecclesiae* (#5). The College selected that formula for its Mission Statement, in order to make commitments both to a

## WHO ARE WE? WHAT DO WE STAND FOR?

special character of academic life, as well as to put that academic life at the service of building the Kingdom of God on Earth. The values of the Kingdom—truth and life, justice and love, equality and dignity—are eminently congenial to deep-felt concerns of both faculty and students, no less than of all contemporary men and women. Placing itself firmly within the Catholic Church and its centuries of traditions (a series of local theologies!), Saint Joseph’s engages all of its methods of inquiry in a collaborative search for truth:

...faith casts a new light on everything and makes known the full ideal which God has set for humanity, thus guiding the mind towards solutions that are fully human (*Gaudium et spes*, #11).

Let the faithful incorporate the findings of new sciences and teachings and the understandings of the most recent discoveries into Christian morality and thought, so that their practice of religion and their moral behavior may keep abreast of their acquaintance with science and of the relentless progress of technology...

Those involved in theological studies... should be eager to cooperate with people versed in other disciplines by pooling their resources and their points of view. Theological research, while it deepens knowledge of revealed truth, should not lose contact with its own times, so that experts in various fields may be led to a deeper knowledge of the faith (*Ibid.*, #62).

Students at Saint Joseph’s—traditional age, middle class, Midwesterners, about half of them first-generation college students—are very interested in using a college degree as a gateway to upward mobility. This is a worthwhile human intention, so the College fully embraces it in its Mission Statement; but the secular aspect of that project can also be transformed by placing it at the service of the Kingdom. Therefore we make another pledge in the Mission: “To form graduates who are competent professionals, capable of assuming leadership roles in the world, who will embody Gospel values in their personal lives and professional careers.” This crucially important goal (#1 in the second half of the Mission Statement) commits the College to doing exactly what the two previous citations from *Gaudium et spes* recommended.

Saint Joseph’s College has taken on itself the same goal of assuming a leadership role in American higher education, both as a Catholic institution and as a liberal arts institution that happens to have created one of the best general education programs in the country. Saint Joseph’s is very well known and respected in

higher education associations such as the following: National Endowment for the Humanities, Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education, National Humanities Faculty, American Association for Higher Education, Association for General and Liberal Studies, and (most emphatically) the Association of American Colleges and Universities. The College is known, in these associations, for its academic excellence and for its promotion of Christian and humane values.

Father Schreiter suggests that a local theology is often embedded in a *root metaphor* that lives in and guides thinking in a culture. Our brick sculpture in the Core Building probably comes closer than anything else on campus to functioning as a prominent local-cultural symbol for the “Christian Humanism” that almost everyone is aware of as the overarching conceptual framework and source of values for the Core Curriculum. The sculpture is entitled “Transformations,” and it symbolizes two of them, both from the Eucharistic liturgy.

A brief summary of the local theology carved into the sculpture would go like this: The Incarnation of the Son of God is asserted as the central event in the evolution of the cosmos between the Biblical Alpha and Omega. The Eucharist is presented as a prolongation of the Incarnation in time and space, transforming multitudes of human beings (and the cosmos) into other Christs—“for Christ plays in ten thousand places, lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his, to the Father, through the features of men’s faces” (Gerard Manley Hopkins). In the Eucharist, *two* transformations are celebrated. In the first, human beings collaborate with gifts of the Earth, wheat and grapes, to transform them into bread and wine; in the second, the Holy Spirit transforms these gifts into the Body and Blood of Christ. All around the Eucharistic elements in the sculpture are the traditional symbols for the Seven Liberal Arts, the Trivium to the right, the Quadrivium to the left. The overall interpretation of the piece, then, goes like this: “By virtue of the Incarnation and the continuing gift of the Spirit, building the Earth is building the Kingdom of God; working to promote truth and justice and human dignity—education—is an endeavor that the Spirit of Jesus transforms into ‘bringing all things under the headship of Christ’” (Ephesians, 1:10).

### ***What IS the “Local Theology” of SJC?***

Many of the components of our local theology—facts of our context, goals established by the Mission Statement, and root metaphor—have already been mentioned. Now it is time to pull all of this together and relate it to the living reality of the day to day operations of the College.

## WHO ARE WE? WHAT DO WE STAND FOR?

Between 1999 and 2004, three different groups of the faculty, representing different disciplines and different religious faiths, developed a document entitled “Christian Humanism at SIC.” The document was discussed and then adopted by the whole Faculty Assembly. The first principle or the affirmation from which all else in that document flows is the now familiar pledge to “excellence and to a liberal education that is a united endeavor of intelligence and faith.” What will advance our understanding of the distinctive manner in which theology as a “science” functions *locally*, in interaction with all the other disciplines, are the following five comments that the faculty placed in this document to clarify the meaning of this first principle:

- 1) What is truly unique about the undergraduate experience at Saint Joseph’s College is the interaction between its Core Curriculum and the major(s) selected by each student. Thus, the “united endeavor” commitment in the Mission Statement refers to the *dialogue* that goes on between disciplines in Core and between the majors and Core, the “common academic experience” the College has institutionalized for all students and for about 75% of the faculty.
- 2) Saint Joseph’s College clearly intends to create an undergraduate environment where excellence is pursued in a comprehensive range of disciplines, including theology as “the science of faith.” A Catholic college must be catholic (i.e., universal) in its pursuit of truth, and this pursuit here is a community endeavor. Faculty members are certainly not expected to be masters of every discipline, but they are expected to be actively open to insights from disciplines outside their specialty and to be able to track issues, intelligently and critically, across disciplinary frontiers. In this way, they model for students the interdisciplinary and integrative ways of knowing that are set up as student learning outcomes.
- 3) The Christian Humanist commitments of our academic community neither distract nor detract in any way from the pursuit of truth according to each discipline’s own standards. The faculty commits itself to “best practice” in every discipline and consequently regards academic freedom as a privilege earned by competence in a field.
- 4) Though partial in its grasp of reality and thus calling out to colleagues for complement, every discipline is “privileged” by its own special and distinct intentionality. No mode of knowing is invalid, superfluous, or sufficient by itself. Theology needs the help of other disciplines to

pursue a deeper and more contemporary understanding of faith and, in turn, offers perspectives on the work of the other disciplines that cannot come from the disciplines themselves.

- 5) There will be apparent contradictions! Patience is the counsel of both strong faith and robust trust in human reason, for “truth cannot be contrary to truth.” Cardinal Newman came up with a marvelous pair of three-verb characterizations of the way disciplines interact: they “complete, correct, and balance” and “respect, consult, and aid” one another. Those verbs well express the intended *modus vivendi* of the Saint Joseph's College academic community.

To organize the *content* to which this catholic approach to knowledge is applied, the faculty adopted a frame of reference which Father Charles Curran worked out as the “horizon” of Catholic moral theology. The following are five “facts of life” for a Christian and therefore specify the human condition from the point of view of the New Testament: creation, sin, incarnation, redemption, and resurrection. With this in mind, those same faculty members as above came up with the following local definition of the “Christian Humanism” that is referred to in the College's Mission Statement as “the conceptual framework and source of value commitments” (Item #2) for conducting all of our academic and student life programs:

As Humanists, we are committed to upholding and promoting the dignity and value of each and every human being. As Christians, we recognize human dignity raised to its highest level in Jesus the Christ; through the incarnation and resurrection, we understand the human openness to infinite goodness, infinite knowledge, and infinite love through our relation to God. Christian Humanism, then, is the pursuit of all that is genuinely human for the purpose of increasing the common good and renewing creation as God's Reign on Earth. Christian Humanism **sacralizes** *the intellectual life*.

### ***The Final Word: INTEGRATION***

Pope John Paul II, from his years of experience as a philosophy professor in Poland, has gifted the Church with genuinely inspiring and challenging letters on Catholic higher education: *Ex corde ecclesiae* (1990) and *Fides et ratio* (1993). In both of these documents, the assertion is made that the Catholic college is in the unique position in the contemporary intellectual world of being able to tie together *all* the knowledge that humanity gains:

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I wish to reaffirm strongly the conviction that the human being can come to a unified and organic vision of knowledge. This is one of the tasks which Christian thought will have to take up through the next millennium of the Christian era. The segmentation of knowledge, with its splintered approach to consequent fragmentation of meaning, keeps people today from coming to interior unity. How could the Church not be concerned by this? It is the Gospel which imposes sapiential task [to integrate knowledge]. (*Fides et ratio*, #85)

The primary goal of the Core program is to integrate—integrate what all these different disciplines can tell us about humanity, the world, and God; integrate what goes on in Core with what students learn in their majors; and integrate academic growth and development with the programs in student life. To what purpose? We should cite the full sentence from which we have excerpted the “united endeavor” principle:

...Catholic universities...are called to explore courageously the riches of revelation and of nature so that the united endeavor of intelligence and faith will enable people to come to the full measure of their humanity, created in the image and likeness of God, renewed even more marvelously after sin in Christ, and called to shine forth in the light of the Spirit (*Ex corde ecclesiae*, #5).

The preliminary condition of integration, however, is *dialogue*, and as we have learned from centuries of ecumenical projects, dialogue often begins in confrontation and disagreement. To paraphrase what Einstein said about simplifying, “Integrate as much as possible, but no more than that!” Sometimes, that is, we encounter theories and positions that resist integration. Yet the challenge is still to continue the dialogue. Pope John Paul saw the Catholic college as the forum in which faith enters into frank, open, and sustained dialogue with contemporary culture:

By its very nature, a university develops culture.... It is open to all human experience and is ready to dialogue with and learn from any culture. A Catholic university shares in this, offering the rich experience of the church’s own culture. In addition, a Catholic university, aware that human culture is open to revelation and transcendence, is also a primary and privileged place for a fruitful dialogue between the Gospel and culture (*Ex corde ecclesiae*, #43).

Because science advances, history marches on, and the world changes, bringing faith and the Gospel into dialogue with contemporary culture must mean continuously

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drawing forth from the Scriptures, Christian traditions, the Magisterium, and an intense liturgical life, fuller and deeper meaning. As the Italian bishops said at the time of Vatican II, “*Non basta conservare!*” It is not enough simply to conserve or preserve. Theology too, as the “science of faith,” and especially a local theology sensitive to context, creates new knowledge, new insights, and new connections.

It is remarkable, upon reflection, how the faculty of Saint Joseph's College *anticipated* what the Pope wrote in *Ex corde* and *Fides et ratio*. The Core Program, its goals and modes of operating, were invented, after all, in the 1970's and 1980's, under the direct inspiration of the 1960's documents from Vatican II (i.e., well before John Paul's 1990's documents). We do in our academic programming exactly what is called for in the papal letters we've been citing. In fact, our Core Curriculum actually *forces* faculty and students to do all that! More precisely, this is our goal, our vision of undergraduate education, and we acknowledge that we are “pilgrims” on this quest, just as the whole Church is. We strive to do better, sometimes failing to achieve our aspirations, but also learning how to do ever better.

Nonetheless, a dream begins to take shape—seemingly immodest, yet based on the facts. Much of what is contained in the documents from Vatican II matured in Catholic colleges and universities well before the Council was convened. The Church does its thinking in these institutions, and this serious faith-related thinking led to the decrees of Vatican II. Therefore, here at Saint Joseph's we might very well take as one of the desired outcomes of the dialogue between Gospel and culture that we conduct all through our academic programs, the preparation of a modest contribution to Vatican III!

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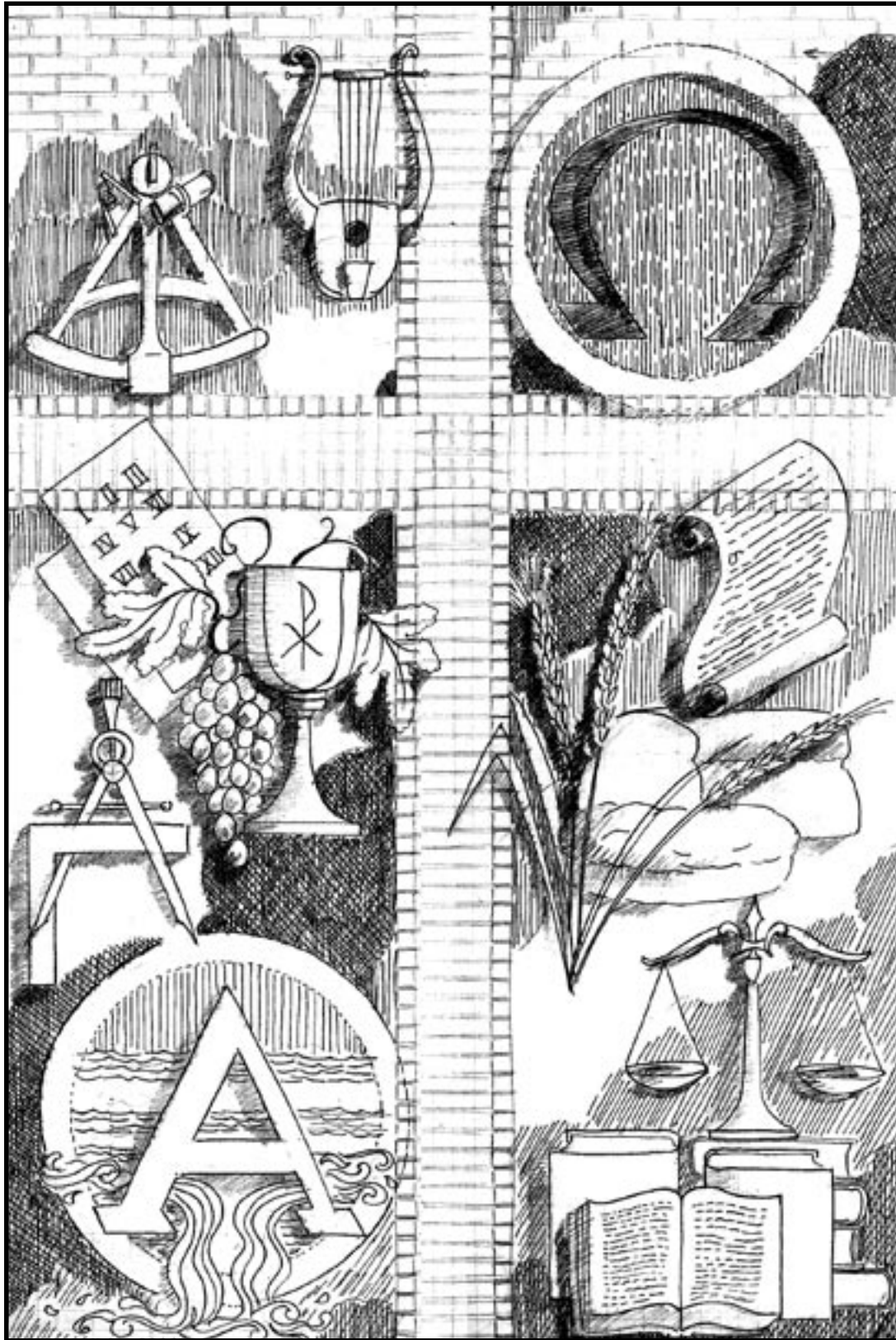
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