

at the graduate and professional level, but at the undergraduate level as well? Certainly that would be a perfectly valid and praiseworthy mission, but is there anything particularly "Jesuit" about it? And if outstanding professional preparation is your mission, how do Jesuit-trained alumni differ from those who have graduated from other institutions?

Or does the Jesuit view of education parallel the view of Cardinal John Henry Newman: that the true end of education is defined chiefly by its product of liberal learning? As Cardinal Newman put it in *The Idea of a University*: "... a university training is the great ordinary means to a great but ordinary end; it aims at raising the intellectual tone of society, of cultivating the public mind, at purifying the national taste, at supplying true principles to popular enthusiasm and fixed aims to popular aspirations, at giving enlargement and sobriety to the ideas of the age, at facilitating the exercise of political power, and refining the intercourse of private life...."

A true university education, Cardinal Newman wrote, "gives a man a clear conscious view of his own opinions and judgments, a truth in developing them, an eloquence in expressing them, and a force in urging them."

I have found all these ideas expressed in the recent literature of Jesuit higher education, yet the more I read, the more confused I become. A clear statement of mission is essential, but what is it? And who will develop it? Will it be developed by the Society, by each university or college, by each department, by each faculty member? Will this conference develop it? Can it? Should it?

Three Foundations of Jesuit Education.

Whatever task is selected, and whatever group is charged with making the selection, Jesuit education seems to me to offer three foundations of great significance.

The first foundation is the contribution of principled and committed professors who acknowledge and profess their commitment. This foundation can combat the disciplinary isolation and fragmentation that now characterize much higher education, both within the Jesuit and Catholic institutions and outside them. It can provide students with a distinct



moral dimension in their educational as well as a purely academic one.

If it is argued that such acknowledged assumptions are dangerous, I answer that in my view the greater danger from unidentified and unacknowledged assumption; which can lead to a shallow conclusion in which all questions of ultimate purpose or value are either meaningless or moot. All teaching and all knowledge involve some assumptions. We must ask, what are the minimal assumptions for a Jesuit university or college? Do, should and/or must all members of the faculty share them?

The second foundation of a Jesuit education is a student-centered learning community. This contrasts sharply with the "discipline-centered" environment found in most universities and many colleges today. Jesuits traditionally have created a learning environment where, at least in retrospect, the student can truly say, "The professors were on my side."

But what are the implications of this for faculty-student relationships? Does a real community of learning exist on most Jesuit campuses? I hope it does, but the reality is often far different from the ideal, as Cardinal Newman pointed out in his characterization of the Oxford he knew. "A university," he wrote in *The Idea of a University* when he discussed "Knowledge Viewed in Relation to Learning," is "according to the usual designation, an alma mater, knowing her children one by one, not a foundry, or a mint, or a treadmill...." But, he continued, knowledge "never will issue from the most strenuous efforts of a set of teachers with no mutual sympathies and no intercommunion ...with no common principles, who are teaching or questioning a set of youth who do not know them, and do not know each other, on a large number of subjects, different in kind, and connected by no wide philosophy, three times a week, or three times a year, or once in three years, in chilly lecture rooms or on a pompous anniversary...."

And in our current age, we must also ask, "How can the sense of community on our campuses be strengthened? How can bonds between the faculty and the students be nurtured? What is the minimum basis of belief that is required for the faculty to make a true Jesuit community of learning?"

The third foundation of Jesuit education is excellence in scholarship. Why? Because if



Christ is Lord, then all of creation is his handiwork. If Jesuit educators are to have any influence, either with the young or with their colleagues, they must speak as engaged scholars. Without this, they will be merely quaint critics of a bygone age. They can speak with influence only if they speak with the authority of the scholar. This is something that Pope John Paul II, speaking to U.S. Catholic educators a decade ago, urged upon all Catholic colleges and universities, but it is something that not all have yet achieved.

I realize, of course, that Jesuit scholars are pulled in many directions. They have obligations to their disciplines, to their departmental colleagues and academic institutions. They have obligations to their students that often go beyond classroom teaching and research. They have obligations to the Jesuit community, which may overlap only partially with their roles as scholar teachers. And it is a simple fact that it is easier for some to be more pastoral than learned, just as it is easier for others to be more learned than pastoral.

Yet unless Jesuit scholars are, and are perceived to be, every bit as distinguished and academically involved as their lay colleagues, they will remain largely uninfluential as scholars and as teachers. Without a commitment to scholarly excellence, they will be unable to demonstrate "a concern to show the full meaning of the human person regenerated in Christ," as urged by Pope John Paul II, and unable to achieve the synergy between intellectual excellence and moral excellence toward which St. Ignatius aspired.

But is universal excellence realistic? Must choices be made? Probably no single Jesuit institution now qualifies as among the very top 20 or so U. S. institutions in terms of scholarly excellence. It is appropriate, I think, to ask why not and also to ask whether an appropriate goal might be one superb Jesuit institution.

The Task.

The task of Jesuit institutions is education. On this we can readily agree, but we must also ask what this education's characteristics might be. Is the aim to inspire potential new Jesuits? Is it to inspire practicing Catholics or to reaffirm the Christian faith? Is the aim to provide intellectual sophistication and moral maturity? Do you want alumni and alumnae who are



creative and compassionate? Competent and committed? And if so, to what end? Social justice? Do you want your graduates to be liberally educated or professionally skilled? Do you have other goals? Or should the products of Jesuit education be all of the above?

And having decided upon your aim, you must ask how it can best be achieved. Can it be achieved through the curriculum? Charles Eliot's elective system at Harvard marked the end of a prescribed set of courses at most institutions, including Jesuit ones, eventually. Can coherence now be restored?

Can your aims be achieved through the use of mentors, who serve as friends of the students and models of what graduates might be? Can they be achieved through special "events" such as guest lecturers or programs on a particular topic or theme? Can they be achieved through the humanities and the performing arts, which seem best able to reach students across disciplinary lines? Can they be achieved by stressing the objectivity of the topic and the subjectivity of the process involved?

And you must decide where the debate on the "what," "how" and "why" of Jesuit education will take place. At large meetings like this one? In individual Jesuit houses? On individual campuses?

The second task is the renewal of professional practice. Such renewal is needed in medicine, in law, in business and in government, for there are immense problems in each of these fields. How can Jesuit institutions offer new models for professional practice? Partly, I suppose, through personal professional practice, partly perhaps through influencing the whole profession, partly through the examination of the societal implications of the professions: for example, the relationship between medicine and public health. We must also ask where this task begins.

The third task is a quest for coherence--within the disciplines, between the disciplines, in life at large. Can the Jesuit presence in higher education bring us to a new world view, such as that put forward by the French Jesuit Pierre-Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955)? Unbridled specialization is higher education's mortal sickness, leading to atomistic narrowness and



incoherence. In the memorable words of John Donne, "'Tis all in pieces, all coherence gone" ("The First Anniversarie"). Or as T.S. Eliot asked in "The Rock":

"Where is the life we have lost in living?

Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?

Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?"

The achievement of coherence is clearly a personal goal, yet we can perhaps examine the basis for such reordering. For Jesuits, the implications of the incarnation of Christ are immense. How different would your teaching be had that event never happened? Coherence comes from integrated lives. As Alfred North Whitehead wrote: "Education has but one aim: life, in all its richness and manifestations." Therefore the end of education is abundant living, in teacher and student alike.

Can the means be the curriculum? Perhaps, but perhaps it can also be achieved through personal example, and perhaps by grace in scholarly insight. Most would conclude that it is too narrow to teach, say, the Christian view of the novel or of biology, even though Christ the King is encountered in experience and in history and represented in creation. But how do the implications of the incarnation influence your teaching? Should they be known from your teaching? What is the proper balance between ideology and instruction?

Can Jesuits in higher education achieve something of a new renaissance here, providing models of "committed integrity" as they grapple with scholarship and contemporary society?

If Jesuit education is to be as distinctive, as empowering and as enriching in the 21st century as it has been since the 16th, your order will need to answer these questions and consider the implications of the answers. You will be undergirded in this by the three fundamentals that have given strength to Jesuit education for 450 years, while seeking to enrich them with new meaning suited to our current age.

Jesuit education, for all its other strengths, has always been characterized by its adaptability. Cardinal Newman once said that to live is to change and to be perfect is to have changed often. That is precisely what the Society of Jesus has done for more than 450 years.

When our successors gather here in the year 2089, for the 300th anniversary of



Georgetown, I wonder what Jesuit higher education will be then. Will there, I wonder, be more or fewer Jesuit institutions? Will there, perhaps, be none? Will there instead, perhaps, be institutions that will then be described as having "Jesuit origins": universities like Harvard, Yale and Princeton, which, though they were Christian in foundation, now owe no allegiance to any particular doctrinal view?

I believe the answers you develop during the course of the next few days may well determine the character of Jesuit higher education for the coming century. Beyond that, I believe they may have substantial significance for all of higher education. I say that because I believe that Robert Bolt was right when he commented, in his preface to "A Man for All Seasons: "...it is with us as it is with our cities--an accelerating flight to the periphery, leaving a center which is empty when the hours of business are over."

I wonder if that is not a malady of the present academy: the loss of a center when the hours of business are over, lacking something that goes beyond disciplinary subtlety, noisy academic freedom and personal gratification.

You have set yourselves a formidable agenda. First, what is the mission of Jesuit higher education? Is it to be a Jesuit presence, a pale influence, or something more? Is it to be a professional school, or a liberal arts institution? Is it to be some or all of these, developing in different ways in different places? Who decides? And how is the decision made?

Once that crucial issue of mission is decided, three questions emerge. First, what is to be the particular goal of education? Is it now meaningful and possible to talk about education that will provide a living synthesis of faith, culture and professional practice, and if so, what particular model should be adopted, and how will it be achieved? Second, can the Jesuit universities offer the renewal and perhaps the redemption of professional practice, in both an individual and a corporate sense? Third, can these same institutions contribute to the quest for coherence, both within the disciplines and in the wider sense of human understanding?

Of these things, all education--not just Jesuit education--now stands in need, and I see no group with quite the advantages of the Jesuit community in achieving them. Consider again the strong foundation from which you begin. You have a dedicated faculty. You have a



student-centered community. You represent a tradition of scholarly excellence. You have a healthy pragmatism in educational method and, not least, a security of personal grounding and conviction that follows knowledge as a worthy end and not as a source of personal gain, rejecting alike the seductions of unfettered professionalism and the emptiness of intellectual sophistry.

If the Society is to succeed in this difficult quest, there must, I presume, be some integrating principle to its activities, and I ask myself what it is. It seems to me that the heart of it was expressed very well by Cardinal Newman when, in *The Idea of a University*, he examined the "Bearing of Theology on Other Knowledge":

"All we see, hear, and touch, the remote sidereal firmament, as well as our own sea and land, and the elements which compose them, and the ordinances they obey, are His. The primary atoms of matter, their properties, their mutual action, their disposition and collocation, electricity, magnetism, gravitation, light and whatever other subtle principles or operations the wit of man is detecting or shall detect, are the work of His hands. From Him has been every movement which has convulsed and refashioned the surface of the earth...and so in the intellectual, moral, social and political world, Man, with his motives and works, his languages, his propagation, his diffusion, is from Him. Agriculture, medicine, and the arts of life are His gifts. Society, laws, government, He is their sanction."

A century later, Newman's words still have a powerful ring. But are they just florid Victorian prose, or are they to be taken seriously in all the complexity and ambiguity of our own generation?

Cardinal Newman's style is certainly Victorian, but the idea that he embodies is not his alone. It goes back to St. Paul, who described the principle behind his own teaching in an equally remarkable passage:

"Now Christ is the visible expression of the invisible God. He existed before creation began, for it was through him that everything was made, whether spiritual or material, seen or unseen. Through him, and for him, also, were created power and dominion, ownership and authority. In fact, every single thing was created through, and for, him. He is both the



first principle and the upholding principle of the whole scheme of creation" (Col. 1:1517).

This surely is a conviction upon which our present society divides. If there is a guiding strategy for all the Jesuits' efforts, it must presumably be the principle Paul enunciated. If his audacious claim is correct, the map of knowledge has a new orienting compass. It is systematic mining of that unique lode, the particular implications of that unique event and the personal exemplification of that unique relationship that have, over the centuries, represented the great strength and unifying power of Jesuit higher education. And it is that same principle that is surely the hope of Jesuit education and may indeed inspire all education now and for the future, here and elsewhere.

