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Letters to the Editor: On Catholic Intellectual Tradition

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Letters to the Editor

On Catholic Intellectual Tradition

First, I should introduce myself. I am a graduate of a Jesuit undergraduate institution (USF, 2000, theology/history), I was a volunteer high school teacher at a Jesuit high school in Micronesia (Ponape Agriculture and Trade School, 2001-2002), graduate of a Jesuit law school (Seattle University, 2006), and now I am the associate director of the office of research services at Saint Louis University. I value my education and the distinct nature and purpose of Jesuit Institutions of higher learning. I find the breadth and depth of my education, combined with the moral dimension (I even did the Spiritual Exercises at El

Retiro in the summer of 2000 to cap off my undergraduate studies), to have provided me with the structure and guidance I need to try to live a full and useful life. While I agree with the question posed in the latest issue of *Conversations* was the right question, I found it odd that the full range of the Catholic Intellectual Tradition (CIT) as it now thrives in our Jesuit universities was not tapped to answer it.

To make this brief, the problem was the narrow focus of the choice of authors that you chose to write about the transmission of the CIT. Out of the 17 articles, nine of the authors were in theology, campus ministry, or Catholic studies pro-

grams, two were in philosophy, two were from other disciplines, and four were students. Forgetting the professional schools (as you have already done an issue about them), it had a very modest representation of faculty voices from Jesuit universities. The social sciences and the hard sciences were almost completely left out and, while the humanities did do most of the heavy-lifting, they were primarily represented by two disciplines.

As an undergrad I took a class taught by a mathematician titled "Infinity and Chaos in Science and Religion" where Father Coyne, S.J., was a guest speaker. It was a class that opened

my mind to how we conceive God. I have subsequently met many faculty members who have taught in the sciences who give amazing voice and life to the CIT. I am curious though, and this is not an attack on the issue or you, but do the sciences fit as snugly in the CIT as the humanities? My immediate answer is "yes," but as I reflect a moment on all my education at Jesuit institutions the answer doesn't seem so firm.

In no way do I mean this letter to be accusatory or to imply you are not doing an incredible job with *Conversations*. Rather it just made me think about my experience in Jesuit education and how the sciences fit in. This is made even more poignant to me as in my present job in the research office at SLU I deal day-in and day-out with the scientists and I see how they are both living within and helping to shape the CIT.

I think a worthy discussion to start is how the scientists at Jesuit and Catholic research institutions are part of the Catholic Intellectual Tradition and how they have and are transforming society. ■

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Graduation procession at Rockhurst University.