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## Describe, Don't Prescribe

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tions have blazed a trail. They can serve as our hiking companions and guides if we choose to follow their paradigm. Hiking that trail requires us to turn away from the material and personal rewards that are foundational to traditional leadership paradigms. It invites us to trust and walk a path of Ignatian values as we build other-centered organizational structures and systems based on love and compassion.

Traditional leadership paradigms can encourage strategically positioning one's unit within the organization to serve its own interests, defending its turf. Leading in love means designing and enacting systems to transcend self-interest, seeking only that which is best for the mission and the development of students. Leading in love requires that we refuse to perpetuate any injustices of previous systems, instead, naming them and facing them compassionately to help heal the wounds they have caused on our campuses. It requires that institutional reflection and discernment be built into the institution's annual processes. A leadership paradigm grounded in love also calls us to openness to those of other faith traditions who desire to support the institution's mission

because they believe in that mission. Leading in love means the weight of decision-making and decisions made must be carried willingly for the benefit of others rather than felt as a burden of position. It also means that compassion toward all others must be the basis for interactions, even as some others work against the leader, the mission, or each other.

As leaders, we are often face the choice to either trust the earth our feet are on or let fear drive our behavior. Acting out of fear increases the likelihood that we will resort to ineffective paradigms of leadership, ignoring the possibility of God working through ourselves and others as they work for mission. If we truly trust the earth our feet are on, we engage ourselves and others in a process of questioning and discernment. Then and only then can we follow in Ignatius' own footsteps further up the trail. Then and only then, no matter what, we will base our actions on love, as we stay open to find God in all things. ■

*Scott A. Chadwick is vice president for academic affairs at Canisius College.*

## DESCRIBE, DON'T PRESCRIBE

### *What would Cardinal Newman say?*

By Wilburn T. Stancil

**O**ut and about speaking in churches as I frequently do, a common question I often receive is this: What is it like for a Protestant to teach theology and religious studies at a Catholic university? While the question reveals a lack of knowledge of both the diversity of our Jesuit universities and the commitment of the Catholic Church to ecumenism, I do understand the bewilderment inherent in the question. My response generally centers on the convergence of my own values and principles with those articulated in the mission of Rockhurst University. And even though that mission is grounded in a theology and tradition that is clearly Catholic and Jesuit, many of the values and principles are humanistic in nature and shared by people of good will.

The religious aspect of a university's mission statement is usually related to the founding vision of the uni-

versity or to the tradition of the founding denomination and/or religious order. Sometimes that relationship is held too loosely, resulting in loss of stability; sometimes it is held too tightly, resulting in loss of flexibility. In recent years, writers such as George Marsden and James Burchaell have documented the drifting away (mostly out of neglect) from the religious mission of many prominent universities in America, both Protestant and Catholic.

However, occasionally the opposite problem occurs when the relationship between the religious tradition and the mission is held too tightly. If the mission becomes a rigid standard, akin to a creed, and is used to measure orthodoxy and loyalty, academic freedom is threatened, flexibility disappears, and the tradition in which the university is situated becomes stagnant.

I propose that we think of the mission of a university as analogous to the role of tradition in early

Christianity—more descriptive than prescriptive. That is, even as the Apostle Paul spoke of handing on (*paradidomi*) the traditions (*paradosis*) he had received about Eucharist (1 Corinthians 11:23) and resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:3), so the mission of a university represents a commitment to “hand on” its vision of an education informed by faith. This way of thinking about the mission encourages both flexibility and stability.

While interpreting the mission either too narrowly or too widely can be equally detrimental to a university, those outside the Catholic tradition who teach at Catholic universities are especially concerned that the mission not become too prescriptive. Rigid and narrow interpretations of the mission, whether articulated by the institution or by special interest groups in the founding denomination, are contrary to the flexibility essential for both faith and learning. The impulse to restrict and control is destructive of the very element necessary for vital and healthy faith: change.

Though some would wish it otherwise, Cardinal

John Henry Newman, in his “Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine (1845),” knew that change and flexibility were at the heart of faith: “In a higher world it is otherwise, but here below to live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often.” Newman used the analogy of a flowing river. While it may be true that a stream is clearest near the spring, such an analogy cannot hold true for religious belief, “which on the contrary is more equable, and purer, and stronger, when its bed has become deep, and broad, and full... Its beginnings are no measure of its capabilities, nor of its scope. “Stable enough to assure continuity, but flexible enough to encourage growth.

When a university articulates its mission with that principle in mind, people of good will, including this Protestant theologian, will have contributions to make. ■

*Wilburn T. Stancil is professor of theology and religious studies at Rockhurst University.*

## HOW I CAUGHT THE SPIRIT

*Though Jesuit educated, I didn't care, until...*

By Timothy J. Cook

**M**y story about catching the spirit of Jesuit education may be a bit unusual. For me, the third time proved to be a charm. I am a product of a Jesuit College (John Carroll) and graduate school (Boston College), but I became an activist for Jesuit mission only in my third experience of Jesuit education, as a faculty member here at Creighton University.

I had worked for six years as a high school teacher and six more as a president/principal of a Catholic high school in Rhode Island. When I finished my doctorate in education and was ready to go to work at a university, I did not seek out a Jesuit school. My goal then was clear: I wanted to teach at a Catholic university. I am grateful that I landed at Creighton.

I came in 1996 and got involved in the usual round of faculty activities. By now, almost twelve years later, I go around promoting Creighton's Jesuit approach to education. To help you understand why and how, let me address four questions here: What's so special for me about Jesuit education? What do I see happening around me? How did I get so enthused about it? And what can we do better in the future?

What is special for me about Jesuit education is all those things suggested by our familiar slogans: finding God in all things, seeking the greater glory of God, exercising personal care for people, and asking constantly about the “more.” These are exciting things at the heart of our lives! I have learned to love Jesuit education because it is so humane and world-affirming. Life at