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What a Difference Fifty Years Make!

William Duffy Jr.

Almost fifty years ago, in June of 1953, I received a bachelor's degree from the University of Santa Clara (now renamed Santa Clara University). My aging parents were excessively proud of their only son's achievement of four years of Jesuit high school and four years of Jesuit college. Subsequently, I earned a doctorate in physics at Stanford, secured a faculty appointment at Santa Clara, spent forty-three years on the faculty here and retired last fall. Parenthetically, I would like to note that those years on the Santa Clara faculty were among the best years of my life.

I read with interest the fall issue of *Conversations*. Two of the Santa Clara faculty were among the authors in this issue devoted to *The Catholic University*. I found the lead article by the current Santa Clara Provost, Denise Lardner Carmody, quite disturbing. She seems to opt for a religious diversity that drastically attenuates the Catholic character of the institution. She asserts that *Catholic identity still registers at least as an elephant in the room*. If I understand this metaphor, it implies that Catholicity is clearly present, but *it doesn't really belong*. She opines that *A Catholic University can never be sectarian or cramped*. She adds that *our mission is rooted in our fundamental religious values, not in creedal conformity*. In her desire to be inclusive, she seems to be leading the University away from its Roman Catholic tradition.

I was a practicing Catholic in June of '53 and I am a practicing Catholic today. Santa Clara was a Catholic university in June of 1953. Is it really deserving of this title in 2003? Today, many American private universities founded by various Christian denominations retain only a feeble connection with the religious faith that founded them. Particularly in Catholic institutions, the decline in

religious identity during the last fifty years has been precipitous. Father James Burtchaell, a theologian at Notre Dame, has documented this decline and the reasons for it in *The Dying of the Light*. He did a thorough historical study of three Catholic institutions, including the venerable East-coast Jesuit institution, Boston College. Many of the same factors which caused the decline of Catholic identity at Boston College have had similar effects at Santa Clara.

I am neither an historian nor a theologian, and I do not intend to attempt to analyze the changes in the Catholic character of Santa Clara from those perspectives. I do want to document carefully exactly what has changed. In recent years, in public utterances by University administrators, and even in the University Catalog and on the Website, mention of the Catholic character of this institution has too often been almost subliminal. At University convocations, the occasion is still initiated with an *invocation*. In recent years, although the deity may be invoked, the words Christ, Christian, Christianity or Catholic are totally avoided. Muted public mention of our Catholicity today seems to be associated with certain vague but ubiquitous terms such as "diversity," "the Jesuit presence," and "social justice." I valued the Catholic character of this institution when I was a student here. What can the Catholic student today expect from this institution, which will strengthen his faith and give him some intellectual underpinning to help him to live the faith in our increasingly secular and even anti-religious society?

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When I was an undergraduate, (1949-1953), the student body of about 1200 undergraduates was over ninety-nine percent Catholic. The catalog declared: "Although Santa Clara is a Catholic University, non-Catholic students are freely admitted. Courses in Religion are required only of Catholic students." Two hours of weekly instruction in "Christian doctrine" were required of Catholic students during each of the eight semesters of their undergraduate programs. Each course was accorded only one unit of credit, implying a workload equivalent to one lecture hour per week. The eight required (Catholic) religion courses were entitled *Fundamental Apologetics, The Church of Christ, The Existence and Essence of God, Creation, God the Redeemer, God and Redemption*, and two courses entitled *The Sacraments*. This represented a thorough exposition of the religion. Jesuit fathers or scholastics taught all of these courses, as well as many other courses in the humanities and sciences. The University was undeniably and unashamedly Catholic, and there was a clear commitment to teaching the tenets of the Catholic faith tradition.

In the Fall of 2002 Santa Clara enrolled 4,643 undergraduates. During the 2001-2002 academic year 1,112 bachelor's degrees were awarded. Estimates of the fraction of the student body who identify themselves as Catholic are in the range of one half to one third. Considering the apparent decline in religious belief in our society in recent years, it would not be surprising to find a broad range of degrees of faith commitment. The current catalog declares: "The University emphasizes the Catholic and Jesuit traditions of spirituality, intellectual excellence, study of Western and world cultures, internationalism, the promotion of faith and justice, and leadership as service to others."

Today, the religious curriculum requirement is an integral part of the so-called *Core Curriculum*. Included in this "core" are three *religious studies* courses, totaling thirteen quarter units, required of all undergraduates, irrespective of religious affiliation. The thirteen unit requirement of 2003 translates into 8.2 semester units of 1953. Hence, in terms of credited hours of lecture, the religious studies requirement is virtually the same for

Catholic students as it was in my student days, although augmented for non-Catholics, since there was no religion course requirement for them fifty years ago. This sounds encouraging, but to invoke an apt cliché, *the devil is in the details*.

Religious Studies course offerings for the 2001-2002 academic year included twenty courses which are clearly *Catholic* in subject matter or point of view, another thirty-five which are *Christian* and may or may not be taught from a Catholic perspective, and another fifty-six courses which I will categorize as other. (These are the author's categories, based on my reading of course titles and catalog descriptions.) Examples of the last category include such courses as *American Judaism, Native American Religion, World Religions, and Zen Spirituality*. There are various stipulations limiting the choices of the three required courses, although these do allow for considerable variability. For example, any student may take three courses in the category Catholic, or three in the category other to satisfy the requirement.

Since my particular concern is the Roman Catholic student, let us assume that such a student takes three clearly Catholic courses. A possible set of courses would be *Catholic Theology: Foundations, Theology of the Sacraments, and Issues in Contemporary Catholicism*. What is remarkable is that he or she could elect to take three courses of the *other* variety, which have *little or no Catholic content!* What actually occurs? It is a little difficult to evaluate, but one can make some quantitative inferences. A key Catholic religion course would surely be *Catholic Theology: Foundations*, five sections of which are currently offered annually. Assuming that the class size is a typical thirty-five, just 700 students per four years take that course or fifteen percent of the current student population, compared to the estimated fifty to sixty percent of the student body which is Catholic.

It is stipulated that the first religious studies course taken by a student must come from a list of approved courses. During the 2001-2002 year, nine distinct approved courses were taught, some in multiple sections, adding up to a total of thirty-six sections. One-half of these thirty-six course offerings were in the other

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Photo Courtesy of Wheeling Jesuit University

category, and only twenty-eight percent were in the *Catholic* category. In the *Core Curriculum* booklet, there is an unequivocal statement about the purpose of the first religious studies course:

" This requirement enables students to cultivate a critical and scholarly understanding of the Bible...of the Christian tradition in its historical, ethical and theological dimensions..."

Where the second and third religious studies courses are referenced, it refers back to the purpose statement in which the above quote occurs, so it is apparently applicable to the other two courses as well. The list of approved second and third courses includes thirteen sections in the *Catholic* category, thirty-four in the *Christian* category and forty-six other. Thus, an incredibly small fourteen percent of course sections taught are in the *Catholic* category. Moreover, there are many sets of courses which a student can elect, such as

three from the *other* category, which will in no way permit the attainment of the admirable goal stipulated in the above quotation from the *Core Curriculum* booklet.

Much of the foregoing concerns itself with course titles and descriptions to be found in the catalog and listings in the quarterly *Schedule of Classes*. A key consideration from the standpoint of the Catholic student has to be the religious commitment of the faculty who teach these courses. Fifty years ago, they were all Jesuits, mostly ordained priests. Today, the catalog lists twenty-two faculty in the Department. I am told by a Department faculty member that twenty are Catholic, one is Protestant and one is Jewish. These numbers include eight Jesuit priests and one nun. This does not tell the whole story, since, regrettably, the Department is understaffed. Of all the course sections taught during 2001-2002, more than forty-five percent were taught by adjunct faculty. For these, I have no information on religious affiliation. Many are probably non-Catholic in view of the large number of other courses offered by the department.

Fifty years ago the sacrament of marriage was treated in the religion course entitled *The Sacraments*. Today that subject is addressed in a course entitled *Theology of Marriage*. The course description in the catalog says:

"An examination of human relationships, intimacy and marriage in the modern world in light of theological and spiritual issues."

Based on number of sections, this is the most popular course in the Religious Studies Department. In 2001-2002, nine sections were taught to an estimated 315 students. I thought it might be informative to have a look at the books assigned for the four sections of this course being taught during the current quarter (Winter 2002-3). Surprisingly, only one of the eleven on the shelves of the campus bookstore dealt with marriage from a Catholic point of view, as far as I could determine by reading the jacket/back cover descriptions. This book was entitled *"Perspectives on Marriage"* edited by Kieran Scott and Michael Warren. As I reviewed the descriptions of the other books, I could usually detect a connection with marriage, but I could not help but wonder what was the connection with *theology* or *spirituality*?

Fifty years ago, in addition to the religious instruction required of Catholics, all students were required to take a sequential series of courses in Scholastic philosophy. Most Catholic colleges and universities at that time required such courses, and most of the Catholic philosophy faculty were committed to the Thomistic Scholastic tradition. Undergraduates at Santa Clara were required to take courses entitled *Logic*, *Metaphysics*, *The Philosophy of Man*, *The Theory of Knowledge and Ethics*. This twenty-one semester-hour series started from a theistic metaphysics and led up to natural-law treatment of ethical behavior. The point of view presented provided intellectual support for the Christian faith, and a Christian code of morality. Of the eight philosophy instructors, seven were Jesuits and one was a lay Catholic.

The two semesters of ethics gave a particularly valuable exposition of traditional Christian ethical tenets, and their application to the great moral issues of the modern world. The respected Jesuit Austin Fagothey was my instructor, as he was for several generations of Santa Clara students. The text used was a thick mimeographed precursor of his soon-to-be-published, widely-used (recently reprinted) book entitled *Right and Reason*.

Today, scholastic philosophy is no longer on center stage in Catholic institutions, including Santa Clara. Philosophy professors who practice the Catholic faith belong to many different schools of philosophy, as do their colleagues professing other religions or no religion.

The twenty-one-semester-hour philosophy course sequence requirement is now replaced by a single 2.6-semester-hour course in ethics. Each student must choose from a list of eight philosophy courses in ethics. Of the thirty-three sections of courses offered, the most heavily subscribed courses are entitled *Ethical Issues in Society* (twelve sections) and *Ethical Issues in Business* (nine sections). Only two of the sections of the former course were taught by a Jesuit during 2001-2002, who indicated to me that he included Christian perspective and a natural-law Thomistic component. Nevertheless, when the student signs up for the course, he is not given any opportunity to *choose* a section with a Christian perspective. The catalog description mentions no

connection between what is taught in these courses and Catholic or Christian perspectives. In fact, I am told that there is no attempt at uniformity among the several sections of a given course. The instructor does what he judges to be appropriate in any given course. There are eleven faculty members in the Philosophy Department, including two Jesuit priests. A spectrum of philosophical points of view are represented on the faculty, most of which have no connection with Christian perspectives. Indeed, most of the philosophy faculty are non-Catholic.

To get a little better idea of course content, I had a look at the books assigned for the *Ethical Issues in Society* course being taught during the current quarter. The major work appeared to be the 655 page sixth edition of *Morality and Moral Controversies: Readings in Moral, Social and Political Philosophy*, edited by John Arthur. The publisher indicates that the book includes "classical and contemporary readings in moral theory" along with "...essays that address today's most philosophically interesting and controversial ethical and political issues." Just one of the sixteen chapters is devoted to Classical Theories of Morality, including writings of Aristotle, Hobbes, Kant and Mill. There is no listed contribution of Aquinas or Augustine. The three other books required for the course include a book on the morality of war, Judith Jarvis Thomson's *A Defense of Abortion*, and Peter Singer's *All Animals are Equal*. It appears that our young Catholics may be getting a substantial exposure to points of view about crucial moral issues of our time which are strongly opposed by the teachings of the Catholic Church.

About five years ago, the University inaugurated the Catholic Studies minor program. The catalog describes it as "... a cross-disciplinary program for the study of the intellectual tradition of the Catholic faith." It is directed by a Jesuit priest, with the collaboration of a faculty committee of four Jesuits and five lay practicing Catholics. Required courses include two seminal Catholic theology courses, and a selection of offerings mainly in history, literature and philosophy. It is described on the Website as "...an ideal minor for Catholic students who wish to grow intellectually in their faith tradition." It sounds like it offers the kind of program which a Catholic university should be

promoting for all of its Catholic students. Currently only eighteen students are enrolled in the program, but the recently inaugurated Loyola Learning Community, which will be described subsequently, may significantly augment the number of participating students.

Certainly the religious content or perhaps more accurately the attitudes toward religion and particularly Catholicism notable in course offerings of other departments than Religious Studies and Philosophy could be considered. To come up with meaningful significant information would be difficult if not impossible, and I will not attempt it. Many of the Santa Clara faculty today are non-Catholic. Religious affiliation is not discussed when a faculty member is hired, as far as I am aware. One would expect that academics who would pursue their professional careers at a Catholic Jesuit institution would not have a world-view which is opposed to Christianity or Catholicism, but there is no guarantee.

There are several University-sponsored activities, which are not administered by academic departments, but may have a significant religious dimension. These are (1) the Arrupé Center, (2) the Bannan Center, (3) Campus Ministry, and (4) the Residential Learning Communities (RLCs). Although the Campus Ministry has been around for many years in some form or other, the Arrupé and Bannan Centers and the RLCs have appeared quite recently.

The Arrupé Center for Community-Based Learning, founded as the Eastside Project in 1985 by three Jesuit faculty members, involves students in community service. This rapidly growing activity has recently placed 400 students from thirty courses taught by fourteen departments at one of forty schools, parishes or service agencies *each quarter*. The particular placements are chosen by the course instructors to provide appropriate supplements to the usual coursework. Typically, the

student works for two hours weekly during eight weeks, concurrently with the course. Examples of some of the many activities include serving lunch and conversing with seniors, assisting stroke survivors in relearning lost skills, working with developmentally-disabled adults, and tutoring elementary school children. This is certainly an opportunity for the students to experience a personal encounter with individuals from less fortunate segments of society. To what extent a religious motivation is invoked is hard to assess, and it must be remarked that most of the associated courses have no obvious connection with Christianity or Catholicism.

The Bannan Center for Jesuit Education and Christian Values was established in 1996 as a kind of *think tank*, dispenser of funds for scholarly/spiritual activity, and sponsor of lectures and visiting scholars for the promotion of the *Catholic and Jesuit character* of the University. During the past academic year, it published two issues of its scholarly magazine *Explore*, one concerned with *Vatican II, the Unfinished Agenda* and the other with "The Religious Imagination." The Center supported numerous projects during the 2001-2002 academic year, many of which were directed toward faculty or faculty scholarship rather than directly toward student religiosity. They did provide a direct and significant contribution to some Catholic students by their support of two of the recently inaugurated *Residential Learning Communities* as will be discussed below.

Campus Ministry serves a similar function for the student body as does a parish church for the parishioners. It is staffed by a *Campus Ministry Team* composed of two Jesuits, a nun, and a number of lay men and lay women. They schedule and staff a daily liturgy and three Sunday liturgies in the Mission Church. They provide for Christian Initiation of Adults and administration of the sacraments. They arrange retreats for Catholics and non-Catholics. They organize Christian Life Communities,



Photo Courtesy of St. Louis University

which are groups of ten or twelve Catholic students who *socialize together and engage in works of social justice*... They also sponsor interfaith groups called the *Bronco Christian Fellowship* and the *Spiritual Life Community*.

Residential Learning Communities are a significant new feature of student life at Santa Clara University. All freshman were asked to choose from one of seven such groupings in the Summer orientation prior to their first quarter of study in the 2001-2002 academic year. Even students living off campus were included. Each community has its own on-campus housing, set of Core Curriculum courses that are linked to the theme of the RLC, social and co-curricular activities, and opportunities for informal meetings with faculty. Among the RLC themes are those focused on art, the humanities, multiculturalism, and science. One of the RLCs, called *The Loyola Learning Community*, inaugurated in 2001-2002, has a Catholic religious theme. According to its Website, it integrates *core Courses, community-based learning (Arrupe), Catholic Studies, and residential education*. Included on the list of classes offered for the Loyola RLC is the seminal *Catholic Theology: Foundations*, and several other religious studies courses in my "Catholic" category. One of the notable features of the Loyola RLC is a weekly Tuesday liturgy offered at the residence hall of the RLC. A second RLC with some religious orientation called the Xavier RLC was inaugurated during the current year.

Now that I have completed my exploration of the Catholicity of Santa Clara University today, please allow me to return to the question which I posed at the beginning. Does Santa Clara University deserve to call itself a Catholic university? Based on the information I have collected and presented to you, the reader should be sufficiently informed to answer that question. I believe that I must reply with a qualified "yes." There definitely are problem areas. Within the present structure of the institution, much more could be done to educate the Catholic student in his faith tradition. There are many ways in which this could be done, without infringing on the academic freedom of the faculty, or diminishing the educational commitment to the non-Catholic students.

Perhaps the reader will allow me to make two focused suggestions.

To the extent possible, Catholic students should be *channeled* into at least one seminal, sophisticated, intellectually challenging course on the Catholic religion, such as the previously mentioned course *Catholic Theology: Foundations*. More sections should be made available, as needed. Mandating it for Catholic students, as might have occurred in the 50s, will not work today, as I was assured by several of the faculty. The channeling can be done by encouraging all Catholic students to take it as their first *Core* religious studies course. It should be actively promoted though the faculty advisors in all departments, perhaps even by advertisements in the student newspaper! Some channeling is already taking place through the Loyola RLC and the Catholic Studies minor program, and should be expanded. Let's be sure that our Catholic students know what their religion teaches and why, before we expand their horizons with courses in ecumenism, world religions and Zen.

In my opinion, the ethics requirement of the *Core Curriculum* should be rethought. The University is forgetting its Catholic identity and turning its back on its Catholic students in this key area. Surely, Santa Clara University's commitment to its significant number of Catholic undergraduates must include giving them the Catholic ethical rationale for opposition to abortion, eugenics, and euthanasia. The Catholic student should not have to depend on Lady Luck to give him/her a course on *Ethical Issues in Society* with some Christian perspective. Either the Philosophy Department or the Religious Studies Department should institute such courses. A solid course in Thomistic natural-law ethics, such as I received from Austin Fagothey, would not be amiss. Another approach would be to have sections of current courses which are advertised as being taught with a Christian/Catholic perspective. There should be some effort to channel Catholic students into such courses, and an adequate number of sections should be made available. Let's be sure that our Catholic students learn that their faith has much to say about the moral imperatives which should govern their lives!