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R. Emmett Curran

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THE ROAD TO GREATNESS

Kevin Starr, *Loyola Marymount University, 1911-2011: A Centennial History.*

Los Angeles: The President and Trustees of Loyola Marymount University, 2011.

By R. Emmett Curran

The goal of Robert B. Lawton, Loyola Marymount University's fourteenth president (2000-2010), was nothing less than making it the premier Catholic university of the West. In commissioning Kevin Starr to write the history of Loyola Marymount's first century, Lawton indicated the intellectual level to which he was aspiring. With his Jesuit educational background and as the author of the award-winning volumes on the history of California, Starr was ideally qualified to tell the story.

Starr has not disappointed. With access to administrative records through the 1990s, delvings into university and city news publications, and extensive interviews with a cross-section of the Loyola Marymount community, Starr has produced an outstanding institutional history. Like Fordham, Holy Cross, and Loyola of Baltimore, Loyola Marymount had roots that predated

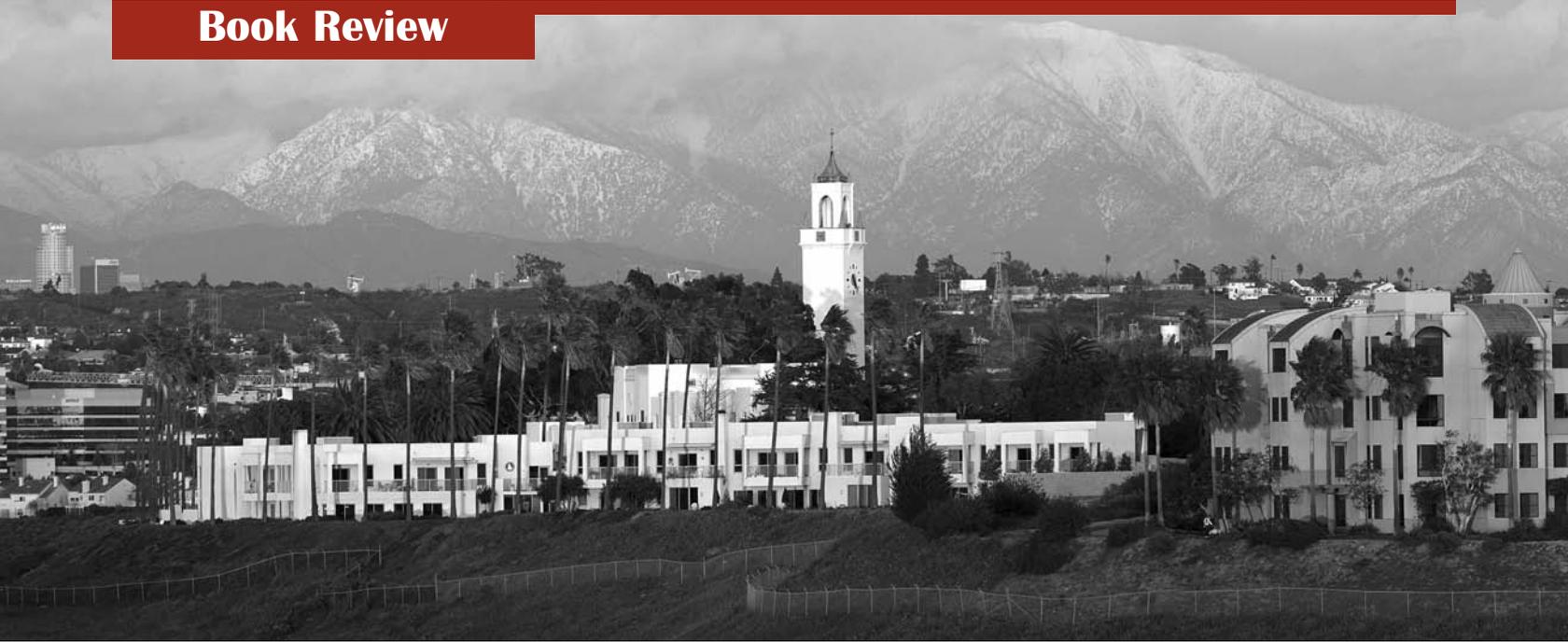
the Society of Jesus. At the conclusion of the Civil War, the Congregation of the Mission, the Vincentians, had begun the first Catholic college in southern California. The earthquake of 1906, which had leveled St. Ignatius College and badly damaged Santa Clara, had left St. Vincent's as the leading Catholic institution in the state. The Bishop of Los Angeles, a former rector of the Catholic University of America, was pressuring the Vincentians to acquire a new campus and develop a comprehensive Catholic university. The Vincentians, for their part, weighed down by debts had little interest in relocating, much less expanding their operation. When the Jesuits expressed an interest in moving Santa Clara to Los Angeles, the Vincentians used it as an excuse to shut down St. Vincent's and return to their original apostolate of service to the poor. The Jesuits kept the name "St. Vincent's College," but, prodded by the bishop, opened their school in September of 1911 on a remote



site in the western section of the city. Initially they confined their academic program to the high school level, with college offerings to come at some undetermined date.

R. Emmet Curran is a former professor of history at Georgetown University and author of the three-volume Georgetown history.

Book Review



The Jesuit St. Vincent's had a rather peripatetic existence during its first two decades, with a temporary location in Hollywood before a longer stay, beginning in 1917, on Pico Heights, midway between downtown and the western portions of the city. In 1918 the school acquired a new name, Loyola College of Los Angeles. It awarded its first degrees to six graduates in June of that year. Two years later, a law school opened on the former Vincentian property on Grand Avenue and bore the Vincentian name, as a gesture to older alumni.

Sullivan

Until the legal separation of the high school from the college in 1926, the high school dominated the enterprise, including the teams which included both prep students and collegians. In the fall of 1927 the Jesuits welcomed the offer of Harry Culver of one hundred acres on the western edge of the city, part of a remote mesa that Culver was attempting to develop. The president of Loyola, Joseph Sullivan, envisioned a grand Tudor Gothic campus at Del Rey that would eventually

contain 10,000 students (this at a time when no Jesuit school had close to half that number) and thirty structures, including a Greek amphitheater and an athletic bowl seating sixty thousand. To fund this Sullivan established the Loyola University Building Fund Campaign. Sullivan tended towards the grandiose. For the groundbreaking the president preceded the actual event with a Pontifical Mass at the Hollywood Bowl. To coach the fledgling football team, Sullivan offered the already legendary Knute Rockne \$10,000 (Rockne graciously declined).

The move to Del Rey enabled Loyola to accommodate boarding students among a population that exceeded four hundred before the Great Depression cut enrollment and brought fund-raising and construction to a halt. By the middle of the 1930s the school was in such dire financial shape that officials considered opening part of the campus to exploratory drilling in a desperate attempt to catch lightning in a bottle. The bishop thought they should return to their former home in the city. Loyola resisted and managed not

merely to survive but to increase enrollment that, by 1939, was approaching five hundred. The faculty was beginning to do original research. The library surpassed the 30,000 mark in its holdings. Student culture, in the form of intercollegiate sports (football, basketball, and hockey) and other extracurricular activities (band, dramatics, radio), flourished.

B

y the end of World War II more than 1700 Loyolans, including alumni, would be on active duty, including ten Jesuit chaplains. For a year, a special Army training program provided students and fund-



ing that had helped the school survive. With war's end, the GI Bill led to an enrollment four times what it had been on the eve of Pearl Harbor. The Federal government not only paid GIs' tuition but accounted for most of the campus construction as well. Over the next six decades Loyola would benefit greatly from five presidents who shaped its destiny for the good, a consistency of academic leadership that few, if any institutions of higher learning, Catholic or not, could match.

Casassa

Charles Casassa, in his twenty years, like Jesuit counterparts at Boston College, Georgetown, and St. Louis, led his school into the modern world of higher education through his making planning an integral part of university governance, involving the institution in the larger academic community, initiating graduate education, and introducing targeted fund-raising. His introduction in 1942 of "Manifesto: The Loyola Man, Citizen of Two Worlds," predated by at least a generation the mission statements which became *sine qua*

non in the late twentieth century. Casassa also was responsible for co-education at Loyola when he negotiated in 1968, with Sister Raymunde McKay, an eventual merger with Marymount College.

Merrifield

Casassa's successor, Donald P. Merrifield, brought an MIT Ph.D. in physics, that would prepare him not only to steer the institution through the social tumult of the Sixties and seventies, but also to lead an increasingly diverse Loyola Marymount community at the student, faculty, and administrative levels. Under Merrifield, governance radically changed as the Jesuit community was legally separated from the university, and the board of directors became an autonomous body with a lay majority.

Loughran, O'Malley, and Lawton

Three gifted Jesuits followed Merrifield over the next three decades. James Loughran was brought in from the East Coast to inculcate the academic culture that had distinguished Jesuit insti-

tutions like Fordham and Georgetown. Loughran articulated institutional goals, raised faculty standards (decreased teaching loads, sabbaticals, summer research grants, etc.), and acquired property for expansion. Thomas Patrick O'Malley, with Chancellor Merrifield as point man, vigorously pursued the fund-raising, which his predecessor eschewed to realize, and achieved a record of nearly \$145 million within three years. Finally Robert B. Lawton, president during the first decade of the new century, specialized in building community relations in the broadest sense, from the intramural level to the larger urban world beyond the walls. On his watch he also managed to steer LMU's ship against the academic currents by increasing the endowment (to \$355 million), increasing the number of tenured and tenure-track faculty, and adding doctoral education. By the time LMU inaugurated its first lay president, David W. Burcham, in 2010, it was well on its way toward becoming the premier Catholic university of the West. ■