

## **Loras College Catholic Identity Statement**

With Resonances and Challenges Connected to *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*

In this document Dr. Janine Idziak and Rev. Douglas Wathier show points of connection between the Loras College Catholic Identity and *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, Pope John Paul II's Apostolic Constitution on Catholic Universities (1990). The connections from *Ex Corde* follow the relevant section from the Loras Catholic Identity Statement. *Ex Corde* both resonates with and challenges the Loras statement.

### **Loras College Catholic Identity Statement**

These quotes from *Ex Corde* indicate the rationale for Loras' Catholic Identity Statement:

- ❖ Every Catholic University is to make known its Catholic identity, either in a mission statement or in some other appropriate public document ... *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, II. Art 2, § 3
- ❖ The responsibility for maintaining and strengthening the Catholic identity of the University rests primarily with the University itself. While this responsibility is entrusted principally to university authorities (including, when the positions exist, the Chancellor and/or a Board of Trustees or equivalent body), it is shared in varying degrees by all members of the university community, and therefore calls for the recruitment of adequate university personnel, especially teachers and administrators, who are both willing and able to promote that identity. *ECE*, II, Art 4, § 1.

*Loras College is a Catholic, diocesan college explicitly oriented to promote service of both church and world through encouraging all members of the community in development of their "diverse professional, social, and religious roles."<sup>1</sup> The college strives to be a community demonstrating the highest standards of the Catholic intellectual tradition and welcoming all people into a dialogue to promote core values of truth, respect, responsibility, excellence, and service. Recognizing that Christ summons us to "continual reformation" as we go our pilgrim way<sup>2</sup>, we assert the following principles:*

- ❖ Catholic Universities are called to a continuous renewal, both as "Universities" and as "Catholic". For, "What is at stake is the *very meaning of scientific and technological research, of social life and of culture*, but, on an even more profound level, what is at stake is *the very meaning of the human person*". Such renewal requires a clear awareness that, by its Catholic character, a University is made more capable of conducting an *impartial* search for truth, a search that is neither subordinated to nor conditioned by particular interests of any kind. *ECE*, 7

- ❖ ... every Catholic University, as *Catholic*, must have the following *essential characteristics*: "1. a Christian inspiration not only of individuals but of the university community as such; 2. a continuing reflection in the light of the Catholic faith upon the growing treasury of human knowledge, to which it seeks to contribute by its own research; 3. fidelity to the Christian message as it comes to us through the Church; 4. an institutional commitment to the service of the people of God and of the human family in their pilgrimage to the transcendent goal which gives meaning to life". *ECE*, 13
- ❖ But a University, and especially a Catholic University, "*has to be a 'living union' of individual organisms* dedicated to the search for truth ... It is necessary *to work towards a higher synthesis* of knowledge, in which alone lies the possibility of satisfying that thirst for truth which is profoundly inscribed on the heart of the human person"(19). *ECE*, 16
- ❖ Because knowledge is meant to serve the human person, research in a Catholic University is always carried out with a concern for the *ethical* and *moral implications* both of its methods and of its discoveries. *ECE*, 18
- ❖ Through research and teaching the students are educated in the various disciplines so as to become truly competent in the specific sectors in which they will devote themselves to the service of society and of the Church, but at the same time prepared to give the witness of their faith to the world. *ECE*, 20
- ❖ A Catholic University pursues its objectives through its formation of an authentic human community animated by the spirit of Christ. The source of its unity springs from a common dedication to the truth, a common vision of the dignity of the human person and, ultimately, the person and message of Christ which gives the Institution its distinctive character. As a result of this inspiration, the community is animated by a spirit of freedom and charity; it is characterized by mutual respect, sincere dialogue, and protection of the rights of individuals. *ECE*, 21
- ❖ Every Catholic University, without ceasing to be a University, has a relationship to the Church that is essential to its institutional identity. As such, it participates most directly in the life of the local Church in which it is situated ... *ECE*, 27
- ❖ A Catholic University, like every university, is a community of scholars representing various branches of human knowledge. It is dedicated to research, to teaching, and to various kinds of service in accordance with its cultural mission. *ECE*, II, Art 2, § 1

- ❖ The mission that the Church, with great hope, entrusts to Catholic Universities holds a cultural and religious meaning of vital importance because it concerns the very future of humanity. The renewal requested of Catholic Universities will make them better able to respond to the task of bringing the message of Christ to man, to society, to the various cultures. *ECE*, Conclusion.

**We promote an open atmosphere of critical inquiry and academic conversation that includes varied voices, past and present, across Catholic and other traditions.** The Catholic intellectual tradition upholds the “*impartial* search for truth”.<sup>3</sup> We encourage the ongoing conversation between faith and reason based on the confident hope that there is in human life truth founded on reality. We endorse academic freedom which makes open discussion and inquiry about truth possible.

- ❖ By vocation, the *Universitas magistrorum et scholarium* is dedicated to research, to teaching and to the education of students who freely associate with their teachers in a common love of knowledge. With every other University it shares that *gaudium de veritate*, so precious to Saint Augustine, which is that joy of searching for, discovering and communicating truth in every field of knowledge. A Catholic University's privileged task is "to unite existentially by intellectual effort two orders of reality that too frequently tend to be placed in opposition as though they were antithetical: the search for truth, and the certainty of already knowing the fount of truth". *ECE*, 1
- ❖ And thanks to her Catholic Universities and their humanistic and scientific inheritance, the Church, expert in humanity, as my predecessor, Paul VI, expressed it at the United Nations, explores the mysteries of humanity and of the world, clarifying them in the light of Revelation. *ECE*, 3
- ❖ It is the honour and responsibility of a Catholic University to consecrate itself without reserve to *the cause of truth*. This is its way of serving at one and the same time both the dignity of man and the good of the Church, which has "an intimate conviction that truth is (its) real ally ... and that knowledge and reason are sure ministers to faith". *ECE*, 4
- ❖ It is in the context of the impartial search for truth that the relationship between faith and reason is brought to light and meaning. The invitation of Saint Augustine, "*Intellege ut credas; crede ut intellegas*" (9), is relevant to Catholic Universities that are called to explore courageously the riches of Revelation and of nature so that the united endeavour of intelligence and faith will enable people to come to the full measure of their humanity ... *ECE*, 5

- ❖ Through the encounter which it establishes between the unfathomable richness of the salvific message of the Gospel and the variety and immensity of the fields of knowledge in which that richness is incarnated by it, a Catholic University enables the Church to institute an incomparably fertile dialogue with people of every culture. *ECE, 6*
- ❖ Every Catholic University ... possesses that institutional autonomy necessary to perform its functions effectively and guarantees its members academic freedom, so long as the rights of the individual person and of the community are preserved within the confines of the truth and the common good. *ECE, 12*
- ❖ A Catholic University, therefore, is a place of research, where scholars *scrutinize reality* with the methods proper to each academic discipline, and so contribute to the treasury of human knowledge. Each individual discipline is studied in a systematic manner; moreover, the various disciplines are brought into dialogue for their mutual enhancement. *ECE, 15*
- ❖ In promoting this integration of knowledge, a specific part of a Catholic University's task is to promote *dialogue between faith and reason*, so that it can be seen more profoundly how faith and reason bear harmonious witness to the unity of all truth. While each academic discipline retains its own integrity and has its own methods, this dialogue demonstrates that "methodical research within every branch of learning, when carried out in a truly scientific manner and in accord with moral norms, can never truly conflict with faith. For the things of the earth and the concerns of faith derive from the same God". A vital interaction of two distinct levels of coming to know the one truth leads to a greater love for truth itself, and contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the meaning of human life and of the purpose of God's creation. *ECE, 20*
- ❖ The university community of many Catholic institutions includes members of other Churches, ecclesial communities and religions, and also those who profess no religious belief. These men and women offer their training and experience in furthering the various academic disciplines or other university tasks. *ECE, 26*
- ❖ The Church, accepting "the legitimate autonomy of human culture and especially of the sciences", recognizes the academic freedom of scholars in each discipline in accordance with its own principles and proper methods, and within the confines of the truth and the common good. *ECE, 29*
- ❖ The basic mission of a University is a continuous quest for truth through its research, and the preservation and communication of knowledge for the good of society. *ECE, 30*

- ❖ Freedom in research and teaching is recognized and respected according to the principles and methods of each individual discipline, so long as the rights of the individual and of the community are preserved within the confines of the truth and the common good. *ECE*, II, Art. 2, § 5

**We reverence the spirituality of each person.** From the Catholic perspective, spirituality is a response to the grace God gives to all to share the divine life and friendship.<sup>4</sup> Because each person is created in God's image, we are responsible to one another and called to respect God's creation in all its forms. Catholic tradition has stressed both the dignity of the individual and communal participation in the formation of personal conscience. "The human spirit must be cultivated in such a way that there results a growth in its ability to wonder, to understand, to contemplate, to make personal judgments, and to develop a religious, moral, and social sense."<sup>5</sup>

- ❖ ... its Christian inspiration enables it to include the moral, spiritual and religious dimension in its research, and to evaluate the attainments of science and technology in the perspective of the totality of the human person. *ECE*, 7
- ❖ A specific priority is the need to examine and evaluate the predominant values and norms of modern society and culture in a Christian perspective, and the responsibility to try to communicate to society those *ethical and religious principles which give full meaning to human life*. In this way a University can contribute further to the development of a true Christian anthropology, founded on the person of Christ, which will bring the dynamism of the creation and redemption to bear on reality and on the correct solution to the problems of life. *ECE*, 33
- ❖ When the academic community includes members of other Churches, ecclesial communities or religions, their initiatives for reflection and prayer in accordance with their own beliefs are to be respected. *ECE*, 39
- ❖ A Catholic University is to promote the pastoral care of all members of the university community, and to be especially attentive to the spiritual development of those who are Catholics. Priority is to be given to those means which will facilitate the integration of human and professional education with religious values in the light of Catholic doctrine, in order to unite intellectual learning with the religious dimension of life. *ECE*, II, Art. 6, § 1.

**We recognize the importance of personal and communal worship.** A vital dimension of a Catholic College is prayer and worship, which increases "our sense of responsibility for the world".<sup>6</sup> From the Catholic sacramental tradition, we affirm the idea of a God who acts in history on our behalf, a God who sent Jesus, who lived among us, who taught, who died for us, who rose

from the dead and is present in the Eucharist and alive and at work in the world today. We value the integration of the material and spiritual, through creative rituals for prayer and celebration. We seek a vision that calls for awe and reverence, sends us forth to serve, and compels hope that “peace would be possible as the result of a ‘more perfect justice among people.’”<sup>7</sup>

- ❖ As a natural expression of the Catholic identity of the University, the university community *should give a practical demonstration of its faith in its daily activity*, with important moments of reflection and of prayer. Catholic members of this community will be offered opportunities to assimilate Catholic teaching and practice into their lives and will be encouraged to participate in the celebration of the sacraments, especially the Eucharist as the most perfect act of community worship. When the academic community includes members of other Churches, ecclesial communities or religions, their initiatives for reflection and prayer in accordance with their own beliefs are to be respected. *ECE, 39*
- ❖ Those involved in pastoral ministry will encourage teachers and students to become more aware of their responsibility towards those who are suffering physically or spiritually. *ECE, 40*

**We welcome the responsibility to serve.** The Catholic social tradition affirms a solidarity built according to justice, enlivened and integrated by charity, and put into practice in freedom.<sup>8</sup> Called to build up the reign of God, we must meet our responsibilities to protect human dignity. Aware that the world is an imperfect place, we challenge ourselves to embrace “the joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the men and women of our time, especially those who are poor or afflicted in any way.”<sup>9</sup>

- ❖ Every Catholic University, *as a university*, is an academic community which, in a rigorous and critical fashion, assists in the protection and advancement of human dignity ... *ECE, 12*
- ❖ A Catholic University, as any University, is immersed in human society; as an extension of its service to the Church, and always within its proper competence, it is called on to become an ever more effective instrument of cultural progress for individuals as well as for society. Included among its research activities, therefore, will be a study of *serious contemporary problems* in areas such as the dignity of human life, the promotion of justice for all, the quality of personal and family life, the protection of nature, the search for peace and political stability, a more just sharing in the world's resources, and a new economic and political order that will better serve the human community at a national and international level. University research will seek to discover the roots and causes of the serious problems of our time, paying special attention to their ethical and religious dimensions. *ECE, 32*

- ❖ The Christian spirit of service to others for the *promotion of social justice* is of particular importance for each Catholic University, to be shared by its teachers and developed in its students. The Church is firmly committed to the integral growth of all men and women. The Gospel, interpreted in the social teachings of the Church, is an urgent call to promote "the development of those peoples who are striving to escape from hunger, misery, endemic diseases and ignorance; of those who are looking for a wider share in the benefits of civilization and a more active improvement of their human qualities; of those who are aiming purposefully at their complete fulfilment". *ECE, 34*
- ❖ In its service to society, a Catholic University *will relate especially to the academic, cultural and scientific world* of the region in which it is located. *ECE, 37*
- ❖ Catholic Universities will seek to discern and evaluate both the aspirations and the contradictions of modern culture, in order to make it more suited to the total development of individuals and peoples. In particular, it is recommended that by means of appropriate studies, the impact of modern technology and especially of the mass media on persons, the family, and the institutions and whole of modern culture be studied deeply. Traditional cultures are to be defended in their identity, helping them to receive modern values without sacrificing their own heritage, which is a wealth for the whole of the human family. *ECE, 45*
- ❖ The education of students is to combine academic and professional development with formation in moral and religious principles and the social teachings of the Church; the programme of studies for each of the various professions is to include an appropriate ethical formation in that profession. Courses in Catholic doctrine are to be made available to all students. *ECE, II, Art. 4, § 5.*

**We advocate respect for diversity.** As a Catholic college, we are called upon to be particularly attentive to the rich variety among the people of the world. We seek to foster dialogues that will promote understanding, cooperation and respect.<sup>10</sup> We value ecumenism and collaboration among all people. In every dimension of what diversity entails, human dignity must always be maintained. We invite all members of the community to enter serious conversations and ask hard questions that together we might promote the core values of Loras College.

- ❖ Non-Catholic members are required to respect the Catholic character of the University, while the University in turn respects their religious liberty. *ECE, 27*
- ❖ By its very nature, a University develops culture through its research, helps to transmit the local culture to each succeeding generation through its teaching, and

assists cultural activities through its educational services. It is open to all human experience and is ready to dialogue with and learn from any culture. A Catholic University shares in this, offering the rich experience of the Church's own culture. In addition, a Catholic University, aware that human culture is open to Revelation and transcendence, is also a primary and privileged place for a *fruitful dialogue between the Gospel and culture*. ECE, 43

- ❖ A Catholic University must become *more attentive to the cultures of the world of today, and to the various cultural traditions existing within the Church* in a way that will promote a continuous and profitable dialogue between the Gospel and modern society. Among the criteria that characterize the values of a culture are above all, the *meaning of the human person, his or her liberty, dignity, sense of responsibility, and openness to the transcendent*. ECE, 45
  
- ❖ ... a Catholic University ... can offer a contribution to ecumenical dialogue. It does so to further the search for unity among all Christians. In inter-religious dialogue it will assist in discerning the spiritual values that are present in the different religions. ECE, 47

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<sup>1</sup> Loras College Mission Statement

<sup>2</sup> Cf., *Unitatis Redintegratio*, the Second Vatican Council's *Decree on Ecumenism*, #6.

<sup>3</sup> *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, Apostolic Constitution of Pope John Paul II on Catholic Universities, #7, emphasis in the original.

<sup>4</sup> Cf., *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #1996.

<sup>5</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*, the Second Vatican Council's *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, 59.

<sup>6</sup> *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, Encyclical Letter of Pope John Paul II, *On the Eucharist in its Relationship to the Church*, #20.

<sup>7</sup> *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, Encyclical Letter of Pope John Paul II, *On Social Concern*, #10.

<sup>8</sup> Cf., *Pacem in Terris*, Encyclical Letter of Pope John XXIII, *On Establishing Universal Peace in Truth, Justice, Charity, and Liberty*, #167.

<sup>9</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*, #1.

<sup>10</sup> Cf., *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, #45.