



LORAS COLLEGE CATHOLIC IDENTITY STATEMENT



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.” 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, we assert the following principles:

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”. We encourage the ongoing conversation between faith and reason based on the confident hope that there is in human life a truth founded on reality. We endorse academic freedom which makes open discussion and inquiry about truth possible.

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. 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.”

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”. 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.’”

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. 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.”

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. 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.



LORAS COLLEGE CATHOLIC IDENTITY STATEMENT RESPONSES FROM COMMUNITY MEMBERS



The distinct mission of Loras College as a Catholic, diocesan liberal arts college provides the opportunity to adopt and live a statement as thoughtful and vibrant as this one, developed by the Catholic Identity Task Force. I am proud of the work of the task force in creating a vision that can so beautifully challenge and affirm each of us. It carries with it the spirit and heritage of this great institution, and connects us, as it rightfully should, to the rich intellectual and spiritual traditions of the Church through history. This statement reflects the very essence of who we are and what we represent; of who we hope to be and what we hope to represent ... as students, faculty and staff in service to each other and the world: Pro Deo Et Patria Et Gentibus.

Jim Collins
President

While Loras College's Catholic identity and history have provided the context for learning and teaching for more than a 160 years, our official statement reaffirms the College's commitments to the rich tradition of critical inquiry, pursuit of truth and knowledge, and academic freedom that are essential to higher education. In the academic life of Loras, we emphasize dispositions towards learning that parallel the Catholic intellectual tradition, particularly our concern for critical and reflective thinking.

Two other academic dispositions—ethical and responsible actions—also find firm ground in the Catholic Identity Statement. The increasingly pressing need for respect for diversity brings the College's historic mission into the modern world. Loras College academic dispositions and Catholic Identity Statement require us to "know" and value those whose lives, beliefs, and traditions may differ from our own, as well as to serve them.

Learning and teaching are fundamentally about challenge and growth: meeting the challenge of new ideas, concepts, beliefs, and values and the individual and collective intellectual and moral growth that results. The Catholic Identity Statement of Loras College helps us articulate the ways we encourage the challenges and sustain the growth.

Cheryl Jacobsen
Provost and Academic Dean



"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." The human spirit is delicate and precious. In a world where the human spirit is so often suffocated dealing with the anxieties of our present society, it is important that a Catholic institution of higher learning recognizes the value and importance of forming the human spirit. St. Irenaeus once said, "The Glory of God is man fully alive." The reference of being fully alive does not seem to refer to something of a physical nature, but that of a spiritual one. Loras College has a responsibility to lead all in the community to a true authentic freedom, a freedom that gives the human spirit life. Freedom to recognize our dreams, to understand the world around us, to contemplate the beauty of the world in which we live, to choose righteousness, and develop a faith that is deeply rooted in the truth that propels all people forward to serve and transform the world. Two thousand years ago, a poor peasant woman gave a "yes" that changed all of history. Her spirit rejoiced in God. Our spirit can change the world, and a Catholic college has responsibility to nurture and form those spirits entrusted to them. If the college takes this seriously, men and women will leave at their given time, ready to face the world with spirits that are contagious. Spirits that are a light in darkness, spirits that are truly alive.

Russell Montgomery
Student



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Community is what immediately comes to mind when reflecting on the Catholic identity of Loras College. We are a community that shares common values and has commonality in the purpose of higher learning, but it is our Catholic identity that weaves together this multitude of personalities and giftedness, and provides a backdrop for all that we do and the way that we experience God in our midst.

The process of dialogue and discussion among the members of the Loras community to pull together a statement that is reflective of our particular Catholic identity has offered us a chance to reflect on our history, discuss our current efforts to function as a learning and faith community, as well as, look toward the future as we attempt to carry out this long-standing, higher educational tradition. However, the process will be left behind as history if we, as a community, cannot bring this document to life in our day-to-day living. As a community, we need to be ever-vigilant in our efforts to come to a greater understanding of what all of this means and how we might more fully implement its core components in what we do at Loras. By paying attention to these varied aspects of our Catholic identity, we are able to truly lift up and celebrate: our Catholic intellectual tradition, the spirituality of each person, worship and prayer, service, and the diversity of gifts that we treasure as a Catholic higher learning community.

Justice and service have always been, for me, at the heart of my experience of Loras College's Catholic tradition and its identity as a Catholic learning community. These two aspects of our tradition have been woven so intricately throughout our history and our operational values that it is sometimes challenging to see the subtleties of how this happens. Whether it has been the missionary work of some of the priests of the College, the service students provide when engaged in service trips or local volunteer efforts, or the College's tradition of offering students mentoring and a chance to be successful even when it seems unlikely, this College has often celebrated and affirmed those who offer outreach to and change for the "underdog", the vulnerable. Working to transform the world, as

we are called to do by the Catholic Church, helps Loras as a community, to focus our efforts and foster relationships which are committed to justice and service in the world.

Colleen Kuhl
Director of Campus Ministry

We are constantly deepening, refining, and seeking to understand what we are called to – as an American, Diocesan, Catholic institution of Higher Education. The Catholic identity statement is one of the latest documents to reopen this conversation and to challenge our thinking. While the statement and its implications as a whole are of great interest to me, I am drawn to comment specifically on principles number four and five. These principles challenge us to develop in students the skills and commitment to protect the human dignity of all people, most particularly the poor, marginalized, and oppressed in our communities and world. To develop and deepen our individual and collective sense of solidarity with people who live at the margins – we must have more contact and relationships with them. We must expand upon the opportunities that students have to utilize the community as a text for their learning. Our ability to develop in students a well-educated solidarity will hinge on our own commitment to ensuring that all programs in their totality [academic and co-curricular] ask and answer how they are intentionally achieving this goal. In a new way, the Catholic Identity statement requires that we think through a more systemic and coherent approach to developing in students a well-educated solidarity. As we proceed, we should be mindful that this goal is unique to Catholic Higher Education and sets us solidly apart from our secular peers. Our success, however, will not be measured by our intentions or strategies, but in how well our graduates achieve and give witness to this goal.

Mary Ellen Carroll
Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs
Dean of Experiential Learning





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Good teaching and good scholarship both require asking challenging questions, and for me the special thing about working at a college like Loras with its Catholic identity is that it welcomes and encourages a whole range of questions about our moral and spiritual nature as humans and the implications of this for our lives together. These kinds of questions are critical in my own approach to teaching and research, and so being at a college that makes them central rather than marginal, as in many secular institutions, is important to me. I think that rather than providing set answers, the Catholic identity of Loras puts the kinds of challenging questions on the table that are not as easily addressed at other institutions, and so I find it liberating in my teaching and research rather than confining.

David Cochran
Associate Professor of Politics
Recipient of the O'Connor Chair for Catholic Studies

Our Catholic intellectual tradition is rich and deep, looked upon with respect and even some degree of envy by other Christians. In a time when the popular imagination seems to equate the name "Christian" with a certain stubborn resistance to the achievements of philosophy and science, our robust Catholic confidence in the power of reason to be a friend of faith, not its enemy, is especially needed. I am grateful it is emphasized in our Catholic Identity statement.

The Catholic tradition of social concern has a long history, and American Catholic social teaching and practice has contributed a distinct and influential chapter to that history. It is entirely appropriate that our Catholic identity statement should notice that dimension of our faith and stake a claim for it. In recent years government social programs have been cut and the disparity between the rich and the poor has widened. In such cold times the world can use such a commitment to the truth of our common humanity and God's invitation to all persons, no matter how unfavored or unimportant they may seem.

Robert Beck
Professor of Religious Studies and Theology
Recipient of the O'Connor Chair for Catholic Studies

I believe that the fundamental purpose of the Catholic Identity Statement can be summed up by these two words in the body of the text: "*continual reformation*". A genuine commitment to education and spirituality must call for such action. Whether we (as Christians of various traditions and practices) accept the precept of continual reformation as a "summons", or we (as members of the Loras academic and spiritual community) accept it as an invitation, we acknowledge an internal desire to change, to maintain an open attitude in the face of the unknown or the unfamiliar – or even the unwanted! We articulate and embrace the idea of inquiry with integrity, the intertwining of reason and faith as essential, protected elements of our community. The statement speaks to the integral notion of growth, to the nurturing of the individual and the community, to the necessity of continuous dialogue and to the sustained hope of self-improvement that lies at the base of our academic and spiritual pursuits.

Amy Lorenz
Professor of MLC
Recipient of the O'Connor Chair for Catholic Studies

During an address in the Loras Campus Center, former U.S. Representative and current President of the Board of Regents, Thomas Tauke, called upon the College to assume an important role: educating strong leaders for the Catholic Church during a time when, as he said, "the Church desperately needs" such leadership. The recent statement on Catholic identity produced by faculty, students, and administration sets Loras on a course to accomplish precisely the task called for by Rep. Tauke. Comprehensive in scope, the statement nevertheless focuses the attention of the College on matters it is especially suited to address: the intellectual heritage and academic integrity of a tradition that, at its best, has sought to engage the full range of human experience.

John Waldmeir,
Assoc Professor of Religious Studies and
Theology
Recipient of the O'Connor Chair for Catholic Studies



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I think this statement sounds wonderful on paper. It talks about all of the right things but I am left wondering what it all really means.

“We encourage the ongoing conversation between faith and reason based on the confident hope that there is in human life a truth founded on reality. We endorse academic freedom which makes open discussion and inquiry about truth possible.”

Will Loras College be providing these opportunities? I am also curious to see what we had before this, what has been changed and the reason for the changes. Also in the “Importance of Personal and communal worship” we focus purely on Catholic worship, is there any room to include valuing the practice and prayer or all spiritual life but emphasize Catholicism.

I consider the last paragraph to be the most important. “...serious conversations and hard questions that together we might promote the core values of Loras College.” This is exactly what I think a Catholic college should do.

Abi Calvert
Student

I appreciate the idea that each person is created as a distinct individual. We are not the same and that was purposeful by design. Appreciating differences and people’s right to self-determine their paths helps us all understand that there is no one *right* way. Faculty, staff and student opinions and actions help to make this a rich, collaborative, and intellectually stimulating place to live, work and grow.

Nancy Zachar Fett
Assoc Professor of Social Work

The Catholic Identity Statement helps focus the mission of Loras College. The fact that such a statement exists is integral to our acknowledgment of the importance we place on our Catholic, Christian mission. I believe a key component of the statement lies in reverencing the spirituality of each individual. The hope is that an individual’s spirituality ultimately manifests itself in service to others.

David McDermott
Coordinator for Peace and Justice

“We welcome the responsibility to serve.” Service is not a concept taken lightly by the Loras College Community. Whether in the classroom as a part of a service learning project, or as a part of an alternative spring break service trip, Loras College as an institution and community has shown its dedication to service. The many opportunities to engage in service trips and programs have allowed me personally not only to explore who I am, but how I fit into the world community and how I am called to serve. The responsibility and call to service has led members of the Loras College Community to serve in many capacities: locally, nationally and internationally, imparting changes both at the personal and global levels. The Loras Community doesn’t just engage in service because it’s fun, or it’s the right thing to do. We engage in service because it’s what we are called to do as a Catholic institution, a call we take very seriously. Our faith tradition encourages us to serve others, to seek out the poor and lowly of society, and live in solidarity with them as we work for justice.

Maureen Ryan
Student

I have been a faculty member here at Loras for over thirty years and a Presbyterian even longer. I don’t ever remember reading a document on the Catholic identity of Loras which has spoken to me like this one. It lays out clear principles of the Catholic faith and does it in such a way that welcomes all.

Steve Mosiman
Professor of Mathematics

This statement truly reflects the openness and hospitableness that Loras College is all about. It clearly defines our goal and mission as a Catholic college and draws in the religious and spiritual aspect that exemplifies respect for persons of the non-Catholic faith. It encourages those from different religious backgrounds to engage in deep conversation about beliefs so that we as children of God come to a better understanding of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Jessica Gerlach
Student



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As an ever-grateful recipient of the O'Connor Chair for Catholic Thought, I am privileged to research the life of Reverend Raymond Roseliep, priest and poet. Father Roseliep taught at Loras College from 1946 to 1966 and was appointed Professor Emeritus in 1982, a year before his death on the feast of his beloved St. Nicholas, December 6, 1983. In reading the Loras College Catholic Identity Statement, I am especially drawn to the idea of capturing **voices**, past, present and future. For many years, I have been reading and critiquing the voice, the poet-persona, of Roseliep in all his texts, especially his many books of haiku. Now, I reach out to past, present and future **voices**, as I interview members of his family, his friends, his students, his correspondents and all who touched his life in one way or another. I listen to their voices and look forward to the future when I will finally publish a biography titled: *Raymond Roseliep. Man of Art Who Loves the Rose*. You may follow my progress on my web site: <http://myweb.loras.edu/db000020> Use the side link for **Roseliep**. A special thank you to all who make this award possible. You have launched many excellent projects that are ongoing and reflect well on the Catholic Identity of Loras College.

Donna Bauerly
Professor of English
Recipient of the O'Connor Chair for Catholic Studies

An aspect of the Loras Catholic Identity Statement that I appreciate is the **daily** challenge it can offer. We are all on "our pilgrim way," and I think each of us can find concrete ways to respond to the Statement's invitations. For me, the call to create an open atmosphere of dialogue, to accept and reverence the gifts of each person and to be committed to my own spiritual and intellectual growth takes time – a precious commodity these days. With a conscious daily effort **to listen** to the hopes and concerns of colleagues, students, and co-workers, I believe we can each contribute to the building of the community we seek.

Sr. Marlene Pinzka
Associate Professor of Mathematics

Chuck Offenburger, a former Des Moines Register columnist, once described Loras College as a "spirited and spiritual" place. As a professor of the business division and a parent of college-aged children, I appreciate that Loras is a community that welcomes students to question and grow in their faith, to become involved in service, to join in worship, and to learn how to integrate their faith into their chosen career path. I am blessed to work with students and experience the energy and enthusiasm they have as they develop academically and spiritually at Loras, truly a "spirited and spiritual" place.

Karen Sturm
Professor of Accounting and Business

The *Loras College Catholic Identity Statement* eloquently reminds us of the full force of Matthew's message ("By their works you shall know them"), namely, that, as Catholics, we are identified by our actions, and that our actions are based on what we believe, and that what we believe we should also strive to understand. And it is this final point that is worth reflecting upon a bit further. Our search for truth (i.e., for the intelligibility of God and God's creation) ought to be fearless, unfettered, and enthusiastic, and we ought to be guided by two overarching disciplines, which are focal points in the intellectual and moral life of any liberal arts institution which is Catholic: philosophy and theology. In such a setting, philosophy ought to act as a natural complement to theology in providing a rational process by which *fides quaerens intellectum* ("faith seeking understanding") can bring every reflective person as close to a true appreciation of God and God's creation as is humanly possible. Hence, this "seeking" is not only our privilege as rational believers, but also our sacred obligation, both to ourselves and to our Creator.

Roman Ciapalo
Professor of Philosophy
Recipient of the O'Connor Chair for Catholic Studies



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There is a unique level of spirituality that is expressed at Loras College. The community at Loras is one that encompasses welcoming everyone from where they are in their spirituality. At this time in their life, each student is searching for where they want to go, what they want to accomplish, and how they want to go about doing so. Encouragement from students, faculty, and staff to build up the spiritual atmosphere of Loras is found through the model of Christ. In college each individual is looking for something different to aid them in growing to become the best version of themselves. Loras offers a variety of activities including Liturgy celebrations, service trips, as well as striving to offer opportunities for other religions and faith traditions to share and convey their religious beliefs. These are available for everyone, and all are strongly encouraged to attend. The variety of faith opportunities allows the students to truly enter into the liberal arts college experience. It is the passion that this college community has for encouraging the dignity of all to be expressed that is truly practiced and carried out through its members. We are a community, but we are only as strong as our weakest link. For this reason, Loras challenges individuals to hold each other to accountability. We are a Catholic college, where our cornerstone lies at the morals of Christ, but that statement is broadened to encompass all. Spirituality, love, compassion, and concern for all—Loras College, You belong

Marianne Giovingo
Student



As an English professor who teaches Nature Writing, and who engages in nature writing myself, I am particularly drawn to Loras' call "to respect God's creation in all its forms." The most basic creation is that of nature itself. Our tradition holds that God is present in all things of nature and of humankind. As such, the earth itself is sacred. We must tread softly on this earth, treating it with dignity even as we take from it what we need for our own existence. That, I believe, is the message that Loras College's Catholic identity speaks to humankind's interaction with the natural world.

Kevin Koch
Professor of English

Throughout the academic year, the Loras community is regularly provided with opportunities to express our Catholic Identity. I have personally participated in prayer and worship in Christ the King Chapel, sitting alongside fellow staff members, while being surrounded by students. One of my first liturgical experiences here at Loras was attending a prayer service on September 11, 2001. Students, faculty, and staff, as well as others from the Loras neighborhood, filled Christ the King, taking time out of their day to pray for those who had lost their lives and for guidance during the days ahead. It was apparent to me that being given the chance to worship and reflect together as a community provided a great source of comfort. As a staff member, some of the invitations I receive include participating in service trips, weekly adoration in the Chapel of the Apostles, Giving Tree charitable work during the holiday season, and food drives to replenish the Dubuque Food Pantry. I appreciate knowing that as a member of the Loras community I am encouraged and challenged to strengthen the campus community by participating in service opportunities.

Colleen Fitzpatrick
Academic Secretary, Hennessy Hall



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The Loras Catholic Identity Statement provides the foundation for a most impressive vision for the College. It fosters a global, ecumenical view of faith formation while at the same time holding fast to essential Catholic principles of service and spirituality. At this time, when the face of the Church is truly changing, Loras has positioned itself to be a leader in Catholic education. This vision will announce to others in no uncertain terms what Loras College is about; and it gives me great pride just to be a part of it.

Craig Schafer

**Associate Professor of Communication Arts
Recipient of the O'Connor Chair for Catholic Studies**

The Catholic Identity statement invites the Loras community to further reflection on sacramentality, mediation, and communion. These are the three foci around which our "Catholic Voices" mission courses are constructed.

Sacramentality: Catholics tend to emphasize those inbuilt similarities between God the creator and created objects which all human beings can know. Whatever has been made by God is good and is included within the Catholic understanding and embrace. There is no absolute distinction between the sacred and the profane. There is not natural and supernatural. There's only one world, and it's supernatural. The sense of sacramentality gives a sense of belonging to the universe.

The principle of sacramentality is embedded in an incarnational vision of reality. When one takes the incarnation seriously— that God really became flesh in this world and thus flesh is no longer abhorrent— then the political, economic, and mundane are really no longer secular. What one finds in Catholicism is a tremendous appreciation for the poor, for redemptive suffering, and for the essentially contingent nature of human existence. The Catholic tradition continues to affirm the fundamental mystery and sacramental character of human existence and the reality of the supernatural. Likewise, it affirms our radical incompleteness and the genuine possibility of redemption.

Catholicism stresses embodiment and spirit. Spirit calls people to transcendence and God. Embodiment emphasizes concrete, sensual incarnations. I would claim this celebration of

the created order is very much a part of the Catholic view of things. It expresses itself in a certain comfort with life's pleasures. But more profoundly, it shows itself to be at ease with the bodiliness of our human being. Catholic reality is very body-aware.

Mediation Physical human reality signifies and makes present the divine in the order of salvation, as well as in the created order. In Catholic understanding the church is a visible human community with human leaders and members. God does not come immediately and invisibly to the individual person. Rather the saving gift of God is present and mediated in and through the visible human community with its human-divine structure called the church.

Communion The Catholic genius is very community-driven. God is made present in the context of community. A community of faith is a social body – as physical as it is intentional. Communion calls Catholicism to an insistence on of the value of inclusivity. Catholicism at its best reflects an openness to the world: openness to all races, openness to all social classes, openness to all parts of the world.

Catholic identity in the college context might mean a readiness to enter into serious conversations about the ultimate meaning of what the institution does, to ask hard questions about the implicit human values of curriculum, research and student life, and to hold the college's leadership accountable for practicing what they preach— for letting the high ideals of the Christian gospel really make a difference, really transform the institution into something distinctively and selflessly humane.

Rev. Douglas Wathier

**Assoc Professor of Religious Studies and
Theology**

