

Education for Justice and the Catholic University: Innovation or Development? An Argument from Tradition¹

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Abstract

Modern Catholic doctrine clearly states that education for justice is constitutive of a Catholic university. However, the Catholic university had a long history of educating for justice even before the advent of the Church's social teaching in the late nineteenth century. What are the warrants or precedents, if any, for the contemporary focus on justice in Catholic higher education? Is this an innovation or a development? By examining two major sources from the tradition of Catholic higher education, Blessed John Henry Cardinal Newman and Saint Ignatius of Loyola, this essay will demonstrate that concern for social justice has long been a fundamental dimension of the Catholic university, seen through the intellectual and moral formation of its students. A concluding section explores how this tradition has been reinvigorated and implemented in the contemporary Catholic university.

The Commitment to Justice as Constitutive of the Catholic University

Magisterial doctrine clearly argues for educating for justice in the Catholic university. If "action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world...[is]...a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or, in other words, of the Church's mission for

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the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation,”³ and if the Catholic university finds its own particular mission within that broader mission—*Ex corde Ecclesiae* (from the heart of the church), as expressed by Pope John Paul II⁴—then it follows that such a university must also constitute itself according to the demands of justice, as understood by the Catholic tradition. Of course, it must do so “*universitariamente*”⁵—as a university and not as a social service agency or political party.

The Catholic university had a long history of educating for justice before the advent of modern Catholic Social Teaching (CST) in the late nineteenth century. What, then, are the warrants or precedents, if any, for the contemporary focus on justice in Catholic higher education? Is this an innovation or a development? To answer these questions, this essay will focus on justice education proper, and on the formation and learning of its students rather than on justice and research or on justice and the university’s way of proceeding as an institution.⁶ I will argue that the educational models developed by Blessed John Henry Cardinal Newman, author of the classic *The Idea of a University*,⁷ and Saint Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Society of Jesus, demonstrate that concern for what we now call social justice has long been a fundamental dimension of the Catholic university. Indeed, these two major sources from the deep tradition of Catholic higher education show that the Catholic university has long promoted social justice as a matter of intellectual and moral formation of its students, in relationship with who they are and who they are becoming. Although this argument has gained ground in

³ Synod of Bishops, “Justice in the World,” in *Catholic Social Thought: The Documentary Heritage*, eds. David J. O’Brien and Thomas A. Shannon (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992), 289.

⁴ Pope John Paul II, “Apostolic Constitution, *Ex corde Ecclesiae*, of the Supreme Pontiff, John Paul II, on Catholic Universities,” in *Catholic Universities in Church and Society: A Dialogue on Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, ed. John P. Langan, S.J. (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1993), 231. All subsequent citations from *Ex corde Ecclesiae* will be to paragraph numbers as given in this text.

⁵ Charles J. Beirne, S.J., *Jesuit Education and Social Change in El Salvador* (New York: Garland, 1996), 228.

⁶ This tripartite understanding of the reach of justice within the university—formation and learning, teaching and research, and the institution’s “way of proceeding”—was famously articulated by Fr. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, then Superior General of the Society of Jesus, in his address at Santa Clara University, October 6, 2000, “The Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice in American Jesuit Higher Education.” Available at http://onlineministries.creighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/kolvenbach_speech.html.

⁷ John Henry Newman, *The Idea of a University* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1982), 10.

recent years⁸—so much so that references to educating for justice often appear in institutional marketing—it is my impression that there are still many members of the Catholic university community who privately believe that justice education is an innovation and even a departure from, if not a betrayal of, the traditional mission of higher education, Catholic or otherwise. It appears that this group believes that the mission should be focused on truth—whether understood as the transmission of the honored truths of the past (as preserved in the so-called “Western canon”) or as the pursuit of new truths (as modeled in the most prestigious research institutions)—and not on justice. Yet, this is surely not an either / or proposition. I will respond to this critique, however muted it may have become, from the tradition of Catholic higher education itself. Even those sympathetic to this commitment to justice education may not be aware of its pedigree. A concluding section will explore briefly how this tradition has been reinvigorated and implemented in the contemporary Catholic university.

John Henry Cardinal Newman’s *The Idea of a University*⁹ frequently appears in discussions of the mission of the university. This influential work of the nineteenth century, despite being associated mainly with the idea of knowledge for its own sake and not for its practical or social value, actually presents an impassioned plea for *both* truth and justice as guiding values of the Catholic university. In addition, an even earlier tradition is Saint Ignatius of Loyola’s groundbreaking practice of higher education developed during the period of Renaissance humanism. Here, too, the transmission and pursuit of truth will be seen to converge with commitment to moral formation and social uplift.

These historical explorations will make apparent the dual nature of education for justice: education *of* the poor and marginalized for their social advancement, and education *of* the non-poor and privileged not only for their entry into the professions but also *on behalf of* the poor and marginalized—on behalf of justice. In both cases, such educational commitments enrich the common good as a matter of the Catholic university’s essential mission.

⁸ *Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions: Reflections of the U.S. Catholic Bishops* (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1998), 15-16. In 1998, the Task Force on Catholic Social Teaching and Catholic Education of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops reported “that while there is clear interest in and support for Catholic social teaching among [Catholic] institutions of higher education, it is generally not offered in a systematic way.... The task of convincing faculties that these are intellectually serious matters appears to be an important challenge.”

⁹ Newman, *The Idea of a University*, 10.

John Henry Newman's *The Idea of a University*: Teaching Universal Knowledge

John Henry Newman died in 1890, one year before the publication of *Rerum novarum*¹⁰ (known also as *On the Condition of Labor*), the great social encyclical of Pope Leo XIII (Leo had named Newman a cardinal in 1879) that founded modern Catholic Social Teaching. Given his supremely high valuation of the authority of the papacy,¹¹ Newman would have taken *Rerum novarum* and its successor documents with great seriousness. However, Newman's idea of a university connects to CST intrinsically, not just extrinsically as a matter of obedience to the Magisterium, for Newman was aware of the social mission of the Catholic university.

In his Preface, Newman makes his view of a university as plain and direct as possible: "it is a place of *teaching universal knowledge*. This implies that its object is, on the one hand, intellectual not moral; and, on the other, that it is the diffusion and extension of knowledge rather than the advancement."¹² To underline these points, he observes that if the university's "object were scientific and philosophical discovery, I do not see why a University should have students; if religious training, I do not see how it can be the seat of literature and science."¹³

The logic of these exclusive categories may not be persuasive to current academics; today it is assumed that great universities are so because they are great *research* institutions and even small universities and colleges with heavy teaching loads also expect their faculty to publish. Newman, however, denies the teacher / scholar model that explicitly underlies such modern institutional demands.¹⁴ In fact, during his seven-year tenure as the founding rector (president) of the new Catholic University of Ireland, Newman "strove...to provide for research as well as good teaching."¹⁵ Newman's practice, if not his theory, saves his "idea" from being dismissed by contemporary academics as too narrow for contemporary application.

However, Newman's arguments that the object of a university is intellectual, not moral, and that moral education is equivalent to religious

¹⁰ Pope Leo XIII, "Rerum Novarum," in *Catholic Social Thought: The Documentary Heritage*, eds. David J. O'Brien and Thomas A. Shannon (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992), 14-39.

¹¹ Newman, *The Idea of a University*, 10.

¹² *Ibid.*, xxxvii; emphasis in original.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, xl.

¹⁵ Martin J. Svaglic, Introduction to Newman, *The Idea of a University*, xiii.

training are likely to meet with less resistance from some university people. Clearly, that is the issue in *The Idea of a University* with which I must contend, as justice education is a species of moral education. Understanding what Newman meant by what is now the stock phrase, “knowledge for its own sake,” or, as he titles Discourse V, “Knowledge Its Own End,” is crucial to understanding his view of the very object of a university or liberal education.

Knowledge for the Sake of...?

Newman hints at the full meaning or purpose of a university education in his Preface when he turns to the theme of the Holy See’s wish to see a Catholic university begun in Ireland. The Pope’s “first and chief and direct object is, not science, art, professional skill, literature, the discovery of knowledge, but some benefit or other, to accrue, by means of literature and science, *to his own children;...their exercise and growth in certain habits, moral or intellectual.*”¹⁶ Perhaps surprisingly, Newman emphasizes the practical, humanistic, and even social import of a university education. He observes that:

when the Church founds a University, she is *not* cherishing talent, genius, or knowledge, *for their own sake, but for the sake of her children*, with a view to their spiritual welfare and their religious influence and usefulness, with the object of training them to fill their respective posts in life better, and of *making them more intelligent, capable, active members of society.*¹⁷

Assuming that Newman is not simply contradicting himself—the object of a University is “intellectual *not moral*”—the issue seems to be not if, but *how* the intellectual and moral, the religious and the social, are to be related in a liberal education, which he clearly believes to be fundamentally for the sake of the future Catholic students of a new Catholic university. By way of contrast,

Protestant youths...[may] continue their studies till the age of twenty-one or twenty-two; thus they employ a time of life all-important and especially favorable to mental culture. I conceive that our Prelates are impressed with the fact and its consequences, that a [Catholic] youth who ends his education at seventeen is no match (*cæteris paribus* [everything else being equal]) for one who ends it at twenty-two.¹⁸

¹⁶ Newman, *The Idea of a University*, xxxviii-xxxix; emphasis added.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*; emphasis added.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, xli.

What were the advantages available to Protestant, but not to Catholic, youths in Ireland (and England) in the first half of the nineteenth century and before? It is crucial to hear Newman's answer at some length. Offering almost a *précis* of his main idea, he answers boldly, in a clearly partisan spirit, that what was lacking was:

the culture of the intellect. *Robbed, oppressed, and thrust aside*, Catholics in these islands have not been in a condition for centuries to attempt the sort of education which is necessary for the man of the world, the statesman, the landholder, or the opulent gentleman. Their legitimate stations, duties, employments, have been taken from them, and the qualifications withal, social and intellectual, which are necessary both for reversing the forfeiture and for availing themselves of the reversal. *The time is come when this moral disability must be removed.* Our desideratum is, not the manners and habits of the gentleman . . . but the force, the steadiness, the comprehensiveness and the versatility of intellect, the command over our own powers, the instinctive just estimate of things as they pass before us, which sometimes is a natural gift, but commonly is not gained without much effort and the exercise of years.¹⁹

Higher education, according to Cardinal Newman, is for the liberation of the oppressed and for the upward mobility of the robbed, the exploited poor. It is for the participation and the inclusion of those “thrust aside,” the marginalized, into mainstream society. A more contemporary-sounding rallying cry (however stilted by contemporary standards of expression it may be) could hardly be imagined.

Cardinal Newman suggests that this liberation is accomplished through the cultivation of the intellect that is available only through a university education. The consequent virtues of such cultivation will be force, steadiness, comprehensiveness, versatility, self-command, and good judgment. Elsewhere, Newman extends the list in the same vein to include “good sense, sobriety of thought, reasonableness, candour,”²⁰ “freedom, equitableness, calmness, moderation, and wisdom; or what . . . I have ventured to call a philosophical habit [of mind].”²¹ In any other context—and that is the context in which Newman's idea of a liberal education is often (mis)understood—these habits of mind would be safe, conventional, taken for granted as desiderata. However, unfortunately, there are times when a whole class of citizens has systematically and deliberately been denied these opportunities.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, xlii; emphasis added.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, xliii.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 76.

For the Sake of the World

The benefits of a traditional liberal education—which we now can also name a socially liberating education—extend beyond the student. Knowledge for its own sake, for the sake of the mind of the knower, reaches through the knower to society and to the world. Contending with those in his day who argued that a classic education was not useful in view of the future material and social advancement of the student, Newman argues for the larger utility of a liberal education since “a great good will impart great good.”²² The great good in question, the cultivation of the intellect, is “useful...in a true and high sense...to the possessor and to all around him;”²³ not “in any low, mechanical, mercantile sense, but as diffusing good, or as a blessing, or a gift, or power, or a treasure, first to the owner, then through him *to the world*.”²⁴

According to Newman, a university best serves the world indirectly by improving people and by improving people in the manner proper, even unique, to a university:

University training is the great ordinary means to a great ordinary end; it aims at raising the intellectual tone of society, at cultivating the public mind, at purifying the national taste, at supplying true principles to popular enthusiasm and fixed aims to popular aspiration, at giving enlargement and sobriety to the ideas of the age, *at facilitating the exercise of political power*, and refining the intercourse of private life.²⁵

Indeed, “why do we educate, except to prepare for the world? Why do we cultivate the intellect of the many beyond the first elements of knowledge, except for this world?”²⁶ Having joined an historically oppressed minority through his midlife conversion to Catholicism, Newman is supremely aware that this world includes the unjust exercise of political power and that this injustice can and should be addressed, indirectly but deliberately through liberal education, to include both those privileged and those marginalized by such injustice.

For Cardinal Newman, “knowledge for its own sake” is only part of the story. His concept of a university also includes two key ideas: the liberation of the oppressed, as he would have understood those terms as

²² Ibid., 124; emphasis added.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid., 134; emphasis added.

²⁶ Ibid., 176.

a nineteenth century, socially conservative but politically astute English Catholic; and the university as a leavening influence in the world that extends even into the realm of political power. Had Newman had the intellectual resources of modern CST at his disposal—with its vocabulary of dignity, rights, participation, common good, solidarity, option for the poor, and so forth—would he not have entered them into his understanding of how the Catholic university endeavors to shape its students' habits of mind and heart? The intrinsic potential for such an explicit integration of the commitment to justice into liberal education is clear.

St. Ignatius of Loyola: For the Sake of Others

Three centuries earlier, St. Ignatius, *a fortiori*, also lacked modern CST to guide his “way of proceeding.” That has not prevented his Jesuit sons, four centuries later, from speaking of “the commitment to justice in Jesuit higher education.”²⁷ But what was the idea of a university, the educational philosophy, of the man who founded what was to become the Catholic Church's first teaching order and became, in effect, Europe's first superintendent of schools?²⁸

Iñigo Goes to School

Iñigo of Loyola's (1491-1556) own education as the son of a worldly Basque around the turn of the sixteenth century would have been limited.²⁹ It is, therefore, no small wonder that by the mid-twentieth century Ignatius³⁰ could be described as being “as worthy of a place amongst the greatest educators as amongst the saints.”³¹ How did this transformation of Ignatius' relationship to education take place, and how did the first

²⁷ The title of a series of conferences of the twenty-eight Jesuit colleges and universities, beginning at Santa Clara University in 2000, where Fr. Kolvenbach gave his famous address.

²⁸ John W. O'Malley, S.J., “How the First Jesuits Became Involved in Education,” in *The Jesuit Ratio Studiorum: 400th Anniversary Perspectives*, ed. Vincent J. Duminuco, S.J. (New York: Fordham, 2000), 64.

²⁹ William W. Meissner, S.J., *Ignatius of Loyola: The Psychology of a Saint* (New Haven: Yale, 1992), 15.

³⁰ He took the name at about age fifty in homage to St. Ignatius of Antioch. Meissner, *Ignatius of Loyola*, 154.

³¹ Robert R. Rusk, *The Doctrine of the Great Educators* (London: Macmillan, 1956), 86. Quoted in George Ganss, S.J., *Saint Ignatius' Idea of a Jesuit University* (Milwaukee: Marquette, 1956), 200, n. 25.

Father General understand education and its relationship to the newly founded Society of Jesus?

Jesuit historian John O'Malley gives us this lapidary answer: Ignatius, "a few years after his conversion, decided that he needed a university education in order, as he said, 'better to help souls.'" ³² By "souls," of course, Ignatius would have meant "whole persons." ³³ To this end, in 1526, after two years of the remedial study of Latin with the young boys of Barcelona, ³⁴ Ignatius moved on to the University of Alcala, where he studied logic, physics, and theology. ³⁵ His main academic experience, however, would come at the University of Paris, the leading institution of its kind in that era where, over a period of seven years, he pursued the studies that would lead to the Bachelor of Arts, the Licentiate of Arts, and the Master of Arts degrees. ³⁶

Scholasticism versus Humanism

It is much to our purposes to unpack George Ganss' observation that "his seven years of study at Paris" had given Ignatius "a serious introduction to both the scholastic and the humanistic learning of his time." ³⁷ In the 1500s in Europe,

two institutions were confronting and trying to accommodate each other—the university, a medieval foundation—and the humanistic primary and secondary schools, which began to take shape in fifteenth-century Italy.... These two institutions were based on fundamentally different, almost opposed, philosophies of education.... The universities...sprang up in the late twelfth and thirteen centuries largely in response to the recovery in the West of Aristotle's works on logic and what we would today call the sciences.... Their goal...was the pursuit of truth. Their problem was how to reconcile Christian truth, that is, the Bible, with pagan scientific (or "philosophical") truth, that is, Aristotle. ³⁸

³² O'Malley, "How the First Jesuits," 74.

³³ Howard Gray, S.J., "Soul Education: An Ignatian Priority," in *A Jesuit Education Reader*, ed. George Traub, S.J. (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2008), 196. Gray reports that Ganss, in his translation of the *Constitutions* of the Society, "notes that *animas* in Ignatius' Spanish means 'the person,' first the men of the Society and their entire selves, and then the persons they serve—men and women in their total reality." Knowledge, for Ignatius, was for the sake of others as whole persons, as created and redeemed by God.

³⁴ Ganss, *Ignatius' Idea of a University*, 9.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 11.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 12-15.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 17.

³⁸ O'Malley, "How the First Jesuits," 58-59.

Even here, “knowledge for its own sake” served a larger purpose, insuring the integrity of the truth of revelation.

But the new schools of, typically, Renaissance mode approached the integrity of Christian life and belief from a more practical perspective and with a different curriculum and aims. The humanistic schools preferred literary over scientific texts, including poetry, drama, oratory, and history. This so-called *studia humanitas* was pursued for more than eloquence. Indeed, such study was “assumed to inspire noble and uplifting ideals. *They would, if properly taught, render the student a better human being, imbued especially with an ideal of service to the common good,*³⁹ *in imitation of the great heroes of antiquity—an ideal certainly befitting the Christian.*”⁴⁰ In contrast to the universities, “the purpose of this schooling was not so much the pursuit of abstract or speculative truth... as the character formation of the student, an ideal the humanists encapsulated in the word *pietas*—*not* to be translated as piety, though it included it, but as upright character.”⁴¹

The distinguished theologian Michael J. Buckley, S.J. remarks on this historical shift in more contemporary terms: “The ‘abstract’ medieval arts gave way to the concrete humanities, and this focus upon particularity embodied a new orientation towards social action and efficacy and a conjunction between literary education and moral and religious formation.”⁴² Debates today about the nature and purpose of the university, in other words, are nothing new. Should the university emphasize research for its own sake or service to society? And how does a university best serve its students? By exposing them to the best that has been thought, by shaping their moral sensibilities, or by enhancing their professional opportunities? The Catholic university today is not isolated from these debates.

Pietas as Christianitas

But what did the Society of Jesus itself bring to this somewhat contentious mix of scholasticism and humanism? As Buckley points out,

³⁹ O’Malley, “How the First Jesuits,” 64. “Common good” here is no importation from the twentieth century. “When St. Ignatius spoke of schools, he in fact described them as a work of charity, a contribution to what he called the ‘common good’ of society at large.”

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 59 (emphasis added).

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Michael J. Buckley, S.J., *The Catholic University as Promise and Project: Reflections in a Jesuit Idiom* (Washington, DC: Georgetown, 1998), 92.

“Jesuit higher education does not come out of a prior philosophy of education. It comes out of a spirituality.”⁴³ From the *Spiritual Exercises*, the companions took what O’Malley calls “an impulse to interiority,”⁴⁴ which influenced their teaching of catechism before they began opening schools. That basic instruction in Christian belief and conduct included not only “the Apostles Creed, the Ten Commandments, and basic prayers, but also...the so-called spiritual and corporal works of mercy—feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, welcoming the stranger. These were ultimately derived from the 25th chapter of Matthew’s Gospel, where Jesus said that to do these things for the needy was to do them to *Him*.”⁴⁵

This “art of Christian living,” known at the time as *Christianitas*, correlated well with the *pietas* of the Renaissance humanists and thus became a defining element of the mission of the Society’s schools.⁴⁶ This explains the deep religious motivation for the policy Ignatius insisted upon: that Jesuit schools be endowed sufficiently so that no tuition need be charged and the poor need not be excluded from them. As O’Malley reports, one of the rationales for the schools was “that poor boys, who could not possibly pay for teachers, much less for private tutors, will make progress in learning and that their parents will be able to satisfy their obligation to educate their children.”^{46a} The expected contribution of the schools to the common good could not be stated any more clearly: “Those who are now only students will grow up to be pastors, civic officials, administrators of justice, and will fill other important posts to everybody’s profit and advantage.”⁴⁷ O’Malley further remarks that “while the Jesuits of course had no idea of what we today call ‘upward social mobility,’ the schools in fact acted in some instances as an opportunity for precisely that.”⁴⁸ Thus, in this very early Ignatian model, we see both a commitment to educate the poor (no tuition) and the non-poor on behalf of the poor,⁴⁹ or to what I have previously described as the two-fold nature of education for justice.

⁴³ Ibid., 81.

⁴⁴ O’Malley, “How the First Jesuits,” 60.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 61; emphasis in original.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 64.

^{46a} Juan Alfonso de Polanco, Ignatius’ secretary, as cited in O’Malley, “How the First Jesuits,” 66.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 68.

⁴⁹ Formation according to Mt. 25.

Ignatius' Idea of a Jesuit University: The Best of Both Worlds

But how did these early Jesuits—all ten of the original company were educated at the University of Paris—reconcile the medieval scholastic pursuit of truth and the Renaissance humanist pursuit of personal and social betterment? Perhaps that opposition is softened if we remember that, for the medieval scholars, the pursuit of truth ultimately served Christian revelation and that Renaissance humanists, such as the members of the Society of Jesus,⁵⁰ were deeply committed Christians who understood *pietas* in light of *Christianitas*. That answers the reconciliation question in a way intrinsic to the Christian worldview, but there's another more practical response.

During his fifteen-year tenure as head of the Jesuits, Ignatius gave approval to some thirty-five school foundations, yet only one of them (the Roman College, later known as the Gregorian University) is recognized today as resembling a university; the rest more closely resembled our secondary schools. Indeed, George Ganss, who titled his magisterial work *Saint Ignatius' Idea of a University*, remarks that his writings might well have been named “*St. Ignatius' Ideas on Education or Saint Ignatius' Concept of Christian Paideia*.”⁵¹ But his “Schematic Outline: A University as Conceived by St. Ignatius”⁵² goes a long way toward resolving Ignatius' concept of university education. The outline traces pupils from ages 5-23 and divides their studies into the modern elementary, secondary, and higher categories. The Society enters the picture during the secondary years, from 10-13, through instruction in humane letters. Higher education, from years 14-23, is devoted first to philosophy (logic, physics, metaphysics, moral science, mathematics) and second to theology, law, or medicine (what we would call graduate or professional school).

For Ignatius, what we would call high school (and even junior high or middle school) is included in the university, whereas we would reserve that term for postsecondary education. In Ignatius' idea of a university, the medieval scholastic and the Renaissance humanistic philosophies and institutions of education are both honored and indeed integrated into a single vision of the educated person from childhood to

⁵⁰ Ronald Modras, *Ignatian Humanism: A Dynamic Spirituality for the 21st Century* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2004). See especially chapter 2, “The Renaissance Origins of Ignatian Humanism,” 51-84.

⁵¹ Ganss, *Ignatius' Idea of a University*, x.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 45.

young adulthood, though not all students would have gone on to study law, medicine, or theology.

Finally, and most importantly for our purposes, is Ignatius' understanding of the mission of such an educational institution. He himself pursued a university education to "better...help souls." He eventually came to understand that the best way for the Society to help souls was also through education;⁵³ moreover, the purpose of that education was to "render the student a better human being, imbued especially with an ideal of service to the common good, in imitation of the great heroes of antiquity—an ideal certainly befitting the Christian,"⁵⁴ as O'Malley remarked of the Renaissance humanist ideal (to which Ignatius wedded the scholastic ideal of the pursuit of truth that he had experienced in Paris).

Justice Education and the Contemporary Catholic University

I have argued that both Newman and Ignatius had a profound understanding of the moral and social dimensions of a Catholic university education and articulated and implemented that understanding in ways appropriate to their cultural and historical contexts. Newman and Ignatius thus provide a solid historical and intellectual foundation on which to build an explicitly modern view of a socially engaged Catholic university education.

In August 1990, John Paul II issued the Apostolic Constitution, *Ex corde Ecclesiae*,⁵⁵ "From the Heart of the Church." Its status as the governing document for Catholic universities worldwide meant that most of the ensuing attention, at least in the United States, was paid to the relationships among the required episcopal *mandatum* for Catholic theologians and academic freedom and civil law. Because of this, the substance of the document has, unfortunately, been often overlooked. The Pope could hardly be any more explicit about the theme of this article: "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."⁵⁶ He does not elaborate on *how* this teaching and learning is to be accomplished, whether on the pedagogy

⁵³ O'Malley, "How the First Jesuits," 64.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 59.

⁵⁵ Pope John Paul II, *Ex corde Ecclesiae*, 229-253.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, §34; emphasis in original.

of justice or prophetic faith. John Paul II does argue that a Catholic university education should be made “accessible to all those who are able to benefit from it, especially the poor or members of minority groups who customarily have been deprived of it,”⁵⁷ but he also puts this imperative, which we saw in Newman and Ignatius, in global perspective: “A Catholic university also has the responsibility, to the degree that it is able, to help to promote the development of the emerging nations.”⁵⁸ In short, Catholic universities “are committed to the promotion of solidarity and its meaning in society *and in the world*.”⁵⁹

During the inauguration of a president at Spring Hill College on the day before the beginning of Holy Week in 1990, the same year that *Ex corde* appeared, Michael Buckley offered a profound meditation on “Education Marked with the Sign of the Cross.” He noted that for Ignatius the Passion of Christ was “a twofold experience...of the absence of God...and...of an enormity of human suffering.” According to Buckley, that Ignatian insight about the Passion suggested:

the two major challenges of Jesuit education within the United States today: the massive absence of God from so much of the contemporary world...[and] the suffering of humanity—with all the wretchedness of the four million homeless in our major cities and the refugees at our border, impoverished families, boat people and the starving in Africa, the exploited and the tortured.⁶⁰

“Educate our students ‘comfortably,’” continued Buckley, “without the sensibility, the awareness, the reflective skills, and the desire to confront these two dimensions of human existence...and you have not given them a Catholic education adequate for our time.”⁶¹ Given the nature of the two contemporary challenges Buckley presents—ubiquitous practical atheism and unimaginable suffering—this is no simple call for an education relevant to the aspirations of our students. Clearly, a Catholic university must deepen and expand those very aspirations beyond personal piety and professional advancement.

Buckley then asked his audience to remember the previous November 16, when six Jesuits at the University of Central American (UCA) in El Salvador were assassinated because of their commitment

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid., §37; emphasis added.

⁶⁰ Michael J. Buckley, S.J., “Education Marked with the Sign of the Cross,” in *A Jesuit Education Reader*, ed. George W. Traub, S.J. (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2008), 139.

⁶¹ Ibid., 140.

to justice for the poor majority of Salvadorans. He observed that “what happened in El Salvador to these men is not so much a barbarous and bizarre anomaly as, somehow or other, a sacramental sign lifted up of what our higher education must always be about.”^{61a} Although Buckley spoke with a particularly Ignatian accent, what he said holds true for all Catholic colleges and universities: “Higher education is neither propaganda nor indoctrination. But Catholic and Jesuit higher education must also educate its students into the disciplined sensitivity toward the suffering in the world.”⁶² Otherwise, he concluded, our students will graduate “underdeveloped religiously and humanistically because [they are] ignorantly indifferent to what is the lot of the great majority of human beings.”⁶³

According to the martyred rector of the UCA, Ignacio Ellacuría, S.J., this could be true even in El Salvador, since “any university student here is privileged and should be held accountable as a privileged person.”⁶⁴ Thus, Ellacuría narrowed any sort of gap between the two types of justice education we have identified: in his estimation, higher education of the poor necessarily *becomes* education of the privileged—just as education of the privileged becomes education on behalf of the marginalized. In terms of the university’s mission, the important point about the character of the student body is not *where they come from* (the impoverished *campo*, the alienated ghetto, the isolated reservation, or the affluent suburbs) but *where they are going*⁶⁵ (into careers of personal advancement only or into vocations rooted in a human solidarity that knows no bounds).

This emphasis on student development, transformation, and vocation by both Ellacuría (1975) and Buckley (1990) is a precursor to Fr. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach’s (2000) oft-quoted dictum that “the measure of Jesuit universities is not what our students do but who they become and the adult Christian responsibility they will exercise in future towards their neighbor and their world.”⁶⁶ In Buckley’s words, the “challenge of the Christian cross to...education [is] to become increasingly part of

^{61a} Ibid., 142.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid., 143.

⁶⁴ Ignacio Ellacuría, “Is a Different Kind of University Possible?” trans. Phillip Berryman, in *Towards a Society That Serves Its People*, eds. John Hassett and Hugh Lacey (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1991), 198.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 198; emphasis in original.

⁶⁶ Kolvenbach, “The Service of Faith,” 156.

these enormous struggles, patterned on those of the passion of Christ.”⁶⁷ To educate students for or into the struggle for global justice is, in other words, a powerful way to bring both young people, whether rich or poor, and their mentors into deeper solidarity with Christ himself.

From Ignatius to Newman to their contemporary heirs, each in his own historical and social context, education for justice is conceived of as constitutive of Catholic higher education. The focus on education for justice in the contemporary Catholic university is no innovation at all; however, modern Catholic Social Teaching and a globalized social reality may shape it. Although presenting a full-fledged pedagogy of justice according to that body of teaching is beyond the scope of this essay, outlining what such a pedagogy might look like in practice may be helpful.

Contemporary Examples of Education for Justice

As Catholic and Jesuit, Creighton University is affiliated with the Wisconsin Province of the Society of Jesus, which has sponsored ministries on the Pine Ridge and Rosebud Lakota Indian reservations in western South Dakota for many decades. In recent years, the University, located in Omaha, NE, has made special efforts to recruit, retain, and graduate young people from those communities that are located in some of the poorest counties in the United States, where rates of unemployment, school drop-out, diabetes, and alcoholism are among the highest in the country. For several years, Creighton has sponsored a retreat for Native American high school students from these reservations and throughout the country with the purpose of encouraging them to pursue higher education, and providing them with the guidance to do so. Employees of the University have volunteered to serve as mentors for some of these students as they apply for Gates Millennium Scholarships and other grants. This school also boasts the only Native American Studies program at a Jesuit university, offering both a major and a minor; the program has been developed, in part, to provide a curriculum of special relevance to Native American students. An “All Nations Pow-Wow” has been hosted on the campus to celebrate Native culture and peoples for the edification and enjoyment of the wider University community. Recently, a special section of the Ratio Studiorum Program, Creighton’s first-year experience, has been created for Indian students and is led by a nationally respected Indian educator and former tribal chairman.

⁶⁷ Buckley, “Education Marked,” 143.

But what about those students from the affluent suburbs of Omaha, Minneapolis, Chicago, or Denver who find their way to Creighton (often because our undergraduate degree is seen as a ticket to our professional schools in the health sciences)? Or those students from smaller towns in Nebraska and Iowa whose parents are themselves successful professionals?

Since 1992, Creighton has offered a study abroad experience in the Dominican Republic.⁶⁸ For a full semester, ten to twenty students are immersed in another culture, speak another language, live in close and intentional community on a small campus where health outreach programs for the rural poor are also housed, enjoy the generous hospitality of Dominican or Haitian-Dominican families in remote mountain villages or isolated migrant worker communities, volunteer in schools and health care facilities and other programs serving the poor, and work on community development projects such as a water system or bridge—all while taking a slate of courses especially designed for the context and participating in regular reflection and retreats. Upon their return to campus, many of these students take courses in the Justice & Peace Studies Program (established in 1994), which now offers both a major and a minor. The Justice & Peace Studies Program provides these and other service-inspired students with the opportunity to study CST, moral exemplars such as Archbishop Romero and Mahatma Gandhi, Christian ethics of war and peace, methods of social analysis, strategies for pursuing social justice, and skills of vocational discernment.

While these innovative and intensive efforts on behalf of education for justice in its twofold nature reach a relatively small number of students at one university, they do provide representative and substantial evidence that this constitutive dimension of the tradition of Catholic higher education, as developed by Ignatius and his followers and as articulated by Newman, is thriving in the heart of the American Catholic Church today. Were they able to observe these efforts, I believe those two giants of Catholic higher education would approve.

⁶⁸ Other Catholic universities offer similar programs, e.g., Santa Clara University in El Salvador and Xavier University in Nicaragua.

