

International Students in North America and Pastoral Care¹

Archbishop Agostino Marchetto

Introduction

I would like to share some thoughts on the milieu of foreign students and pastoral care. As you “rediscover your roots” with regard to Catholic education, consider these words of John Henry Cardinal Newman:

If I were asked to describe as briefly and popularly as I could, what a University was, I should draw my answer from its ancient designation of a *Studium Generale*, or “School of Universal Learning.” This description implies the assemblage of strangers from all parts in one spot;—from all parts; else, how will you find professors and students for every department of knowledge? and in one spot; else, how can there be any school at all? Accordingly, in its simple and rudimental form, it is a school of knowledge of every kind, consisting of teachers and learners from every quarter. Many things are requisite to complete and satisfy the idea embodied in this description; but such as this a University seems to be in its essence, a place for the communication and circulation of thought, by means of personal intercourse, through a wide extent of country.²

This description comes from Newman’s 1854 essay entitled “What is a University?” Here he paints a picture of a University that gathers together students and teachers and shares different disciplines and

Archbishop Marchetto is the Secretary for the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, Roman Curia, Holy See, Vatican City.

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² John Henry Newman, “The Idea of a University Essays: English and American, with introductions notes and illustrations,” *Harvard Classics*, no. XXVIII, New York, P. F. Collier & son c.1910, <http://www.higher-ed.org/resources/newman-university.htm>

cultures, yet is united through a common bond of learning. Newman would have known well the models of university culture that were expressed in medieval Europe, though his own personal experience at Oxford would have been a particularly English one, locked as it still was then into an admissions policy that accepted only Anglicans. Newman's image, expressed here and in his larger volume "The Idea of a University," is therefore particularly visionary. He would surely have been delighted at the internationalization of many of our great universities, especially those in the United States, which is today "a sign of the times,"³ and "a challenge to be discovered and utilised in our work to renew humanity and proclaim the gospel of peace."⁴

The Current Situation in the United States

Those of you who work closely with international students will know well the extraordinary revolution, if I may call it such, which has taken place in American higher education over the last half century with regard to academic mobility. From nearly 50,000 international students in 1960, the numbers have now risen to more than half a million, a large proportion of which come from India and the Asia-Pacific region. The strength of your education system continues to be exceptionally attractive to students throughout the world. With more than 4,000 public and private colleges and universities, as well as community colleges, you are aptly placed in the vanguard of not only receiving international students, but also in providing their continued pastoral care. Additionally, the United States has a long tradition of welcoming people from other shores. Pope Benedict XVI emphasized this clearly during his recent pastoral visit when he said:

I want to encourage you and your communities to continue to welcome immigrants who join your ranks today, to share their joys and hopes, to support them in their sorrows and trials, and to help them flourish in their new home. This indeed is what your fellow countrymen have done for generations.⁵

³ Cf. Benedict XVI, "Message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2006:" *L'Osservatore Romano* [subsequently OR] 254 (29.10.2005), p. 4; A. Marchetto, "Migrations: A Sign of the Times": published by the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, *The Church's Care for Migrants* (Quaderni Universitari, Part I), Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Vatican City 2005, pp. 28-40.

⁴ Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, *Erga migrantes caritas Christi*, Vatican City 2004, § 14. [subsequently referred to as: EMCC]

⁵ Benedict XVI, "Address to American Bishops," National Shrine Washington, April 16, 2008: OR weekly edition in English 23.04.08.

These words express your generosity and your aspirations in welcoming migrant people and, I am sure, that they also apply to those who are foreign students. Let me say a word that is pertinent to America itself. You have a rich history of Christian life, of saints, and indeed, of martyrs. These are signs of great holiness that provide much fertile soil for the proclamation of the Gospel. It is also a field, however, where 'some seed falls on rocky ground.' The country to which you invite young students is indeed a complex reality. This was recognized by Pope John Paul II when he said:

The greatest gift which America has received from the Lord is the faith which has forged its Christian identity. For more than five hundred years the name of Christ has been proclaimed on the continent. The evangelization which accompanied the European migrations has shaped America's religious profile, marked by moral values which, though they are not always consistently practiced and at times are cast into doubt, are in a sense the heritage of all Americans, even of those who do not explicitly recognize this fact. Clearly, America's Christian identity is not synonymous with Catholic identity. The presence of other Christian communities, to a greater or lesser degree in the different parts of America, means that the ecumenical commitment to seek unity among all those who believe in Christ is especially urgent.⁶

For international students, especially those from poorer countries and the developing world, the freedoms, choices, and wealth experienced in the United States can be, at times, both enriching and invigorating. However, they can also be confusing and challenging especially to the foundations of their cultural and religious identity.

A Pastoral Imperative

The pastoral care offered in your universities and institutions of higher education is of the utmost importance. This care guides to maturity the faith of those who are young and searching for the meaning of life, and it also brings that meaning to fullness in Jesus Christ. The pastoral care of those who are international students cannot remain on the side in a world where the sirens of relativism and subjectivism are strong. Young men and women come to your land with great trust and hope. Indeed, they are great signs of hope. Pope Benedict XVI recently reminded us:

⁶ Pope John Paul II, Post-Synodical Exhortation *Ecclesia in America*, § 14: AAS 91 (1999) 750, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_22011999_ecclesia-in-america_en.html

For young Christians, this study and formation experience can be a useful area for the maturation of their faith, a stimulus to be open to the universalism that is a constitutive element of the Catholic Church.⁷

Those associated with universities are at the forefront of real opportunities, especially those involved with campus ministry. Students who come to your shores do so for study, for the future of their own home countries, and for the enrichment of your own land. These young migrants need you if they are to be protagonists “of a world where solidarity, justice and peace will reign”⁸ and if they are to profit from their “studies to grow in knowledge and love of Christ.”⁹ Experience also shows that foreign students are truly “people on the move” and that they bring with them new expectations, needs, and challenges which call for new responses.

In addressing the dimension of pastoral care for international students in the U.S., I am not telling you something new. You will inevitably know many situations better than I, as many of you are involved with these students on a day-to-day level. You will know their stories and histories and will have shared in their anxieties, joys, and sorrows. However, I would like to share with you some basic principles, which can guide you and your institutions in this field of pastoral care.

Gift or Commodity?

Any approach to the care of foreign students must begin with an understanding of the motives that are behind the recruitment of students from the international arena. Reflect for a moment on the reasons so many students choose to come to your country, making it the foremost destination for students in the world. What is it that attracts them? What rests behind the extensive drive to recruit them? The way in which international students are considered and valued will dramatically affect the way in which they are received and welcomed during their stay in the chosen country of study.

The high standard of education received in the United States is considered a worthwhile investment. Coupled with the enrichment of

⁷ Pope Benedict XVI, “Message for the 94th World Day of Migrants and Refugees,” *Young Migrants*, January 13, 2008, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/messages/migration/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20071018_world-migrants-day_en.html

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

language, culture, and learning, students are offered prospects for a better future. Your country's economy benefits from international students by nearly four and a half billion dollars per year. This is a huge financial contribution that cannot escape notice. Many of those who come to your shores are some of the brightest minds of their generation. Your institutions assure them of intellectual improvement and advancement, which often cannot be achieved in their own countries. Many can afford to come because their particular stratum of society has the financial means. Many others are "head hunted," often through the generous offers of scholarships and funding. This practice unfortunately "reinforces the well-known effect of the 'brain drain,' leading to the 'diaspora' of intellectuals which is one of the causes that perpetuates the monstrous injustice, the gaping abyss, that exists between the North and South of the world."¹⁰ It is claimed that more than one-third of Nobel laureates from the United States are immigrants and there are sixty-two patent applications for every one hundred foreign doctoral graduates in science and engineering programs.¹¹

Despite this, the United States does not have a complete monopoly on the international student marketplace. Aggressive recruitment efforts by other English-speaking countries, such as Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, as well as others that have begun offering courses in English, such as France and Germany, have put pressure on the numbers for international enrollment. Indeed, international students have become part of a competitive market.

An interesting question was posed by the Association of International Educators (NAFSA) in 2003. Immediately after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the tightening on visa applications created a slump in the international student numbers; the question of whether or not it was important for the U.S. to remain vigorously open to the international student market was posed. The answer given was in the benefits that could be found in three distinct areas: foreign policy, education, and the economy.¹² Another report, three years later, added a

¹⁰ Agostino Marchetto, "Pastoral Care of Human Mobility in the Universities of Europe," *People on the Move* no. 94, 2004, p. 69.

¹¹ Cf. Jaenne Batalova, "The 'Brain Gain' Race Begins with Foreign Students," *Immigration Policy Center* (IPC), September 2006, also: <http://www.migrationinformation.org/Feature/display.cfm?id=571>

¹² NAFSA, Association of International Educators, "In America's Interest: Welcoming International Students, Report of the Strategic Task Force on International Student Access," January 2003.

fourth area: security.¹³ While these distinctions are only the opinion of one particular group involved with American higher education and international students, they unfortunately portray a genuine weakness pervading the recruitment mentality.

Institutions attracting the best and the brightest international students have a clear responsibility to form these young men and women to return eventually to their country of origin. As they hold major keys to the development of their own lands—material, academic, social, and spiritual—their prospects are inextricably linked with future history.¹⁴ This is a grave responsibility laid upon their shoulders. It was clearly in the mind of Benedict XVI when he said: “Moreover, for many young people the possibility of studying abroad is a unique opportunity to become better able to contribute to the development of their own countries and participate actively in the Church’s mission.”¹⁵ The Instruction *Erga migrantes caritas Christi*, the framework guiding our Pontifical Council as it seeks to support pastoral care in the different areas of human mobility, speaks of this commitment when it attests:

At the same time, however, migration raises a truly ethical question: the search for a new international economic order for a more equitable distribution of the goods of the earth. This would make a real contribution to reducing and checking the flow of a large number of migrants from populations in difficulty. From this there follows the need for a more effective commitment to educational and pastoral systems that form people in a “global dimension”, that is, a new vision of the world community, considered as a family of peoples, for whom the goods of the earth are ultimately destined when things are seen from the perspective of the universal common good.¹⁶

Specifically, in the academic sphere, another document published jointly in 1994 by the Congregation for Catholic Education, the Pontifical Council for the Laity, and the Pontifical Council for Culture, envisages mutual cooperation, support, and growth, and offers a word of caution:

¹³ NAFSA, “Restoring US Competitiveness for International Students and Scholars,” June 2006, <http://www.nafsa.org/resourcelibrary/default.aspx?id=9169&terms=Restoring+US+Competitiveness>

¹⁴ Marchetto, *Pastoral Care* p.73.

¹⁵ Pope Benedict XVI, “Address to Roman University Students, 15 December 2005,” cf. *People on the Move* suppl. 103, April 2007, p.146, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2005/december/documents/hf_ben_xvi_spe_20051215_saluto-universitari_en.html

¹⁶ EMCC, para 8.

Inter-university and international cooperation shows real progress. The more developed academic centers can help the less advanced; this is at times, but not always, to the advantage of the latter. The major universities can, indeed, exercise a certain technical, and even ideological “domination” beyond their national frontiers, to the detriment of the less favored countries.¹⁷

Benedict XVI, speaking in his message for the 94th World Day of Migrants and Refugees, chose to reflect on the role of young migrants. He reserved a particular section to speak about the phenomenon of international students, as a specific category of these young migrants. He simply said: “The Church needs you too and is counting on your contribution.”¹⁸ Indeed, many international students have been given a new form of wealth gained through the opportunity of education, knowledge, and experience—both material and spiritual—and can, therefore, contribute to development and change in their countries of origin. This viewpoint is much in accord with Catholic Social Teaching. Mindful that education is itself a form of wealth, and often a means to both material and spiritual wealth, Pope Paul VI in his Encyclical *Populorum progressio* starkly reminds us:

We must repeat that the superfluous goods of wealthier nations ought to be placed at the disposal of poorer nations. The rule, by virtue of which in times past those nearest us were to be helped in time of need, applies today to all the needy throughout the world. And the prospering peoples will be the first to benefit from this. ... If prosperous nations continue to be jealous of their own advantage alone, they will jeopardize their highest values, sacrificing the pursuit of excellence to the acquisition of possessions.¹⁹

John Paul II also develops this understanding when he says:

Looking after the common good means making use of the new opportunities for the redistribution of wealth among the different areas of the planet, to the benefit of the underprivileged that until now have been excluded or cast to the sidelines of social and economic progress.²⁰

¹⁷ Congregation for Catholic Education, the Pontifical Council for the Laity, and the Pontifical Council for Culture, *The Presence of the Church in the University and in University Culture* Vatican City 1994 www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/cultur/documents/rc_pc_cultr_doc_22051994_presence_en.html

¹⁸ Benedict XVI, *Young Migrants*, l.c.

¹⁹ Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, § 49: AAS 59 (1967), 286. http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_26031967_populorum_en.html

²⁰ Cf. John Paul II, “Address to the Members of the “Centessimus Annus –Pro Pontifice,” *Foundation* (May 9, 1998), 2: OR weekly edition in English, May 27, 1998, 6.

All this is clearly in step with your own understanding at the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities when you define the essence of “Catholic commitment” under these three headings: The Common Good of the world; Being attentive to the least advantaged; and Bringing knowledge and skills to better the human condition of all.

In academic institutions, there is a clear, natural desire for the pursuit of academic excellence. This has always been the mainstay of any university culture, and international students bring a unique and major contribution. Nowhere is this more prevalent than in the field of scientific research. The pooling together of great minds and resources is the means to achieving far reaching standards and results, often for the greater good of the whole human family. Despite this, host institutions need to be aware that the experience and knowledge that they impart should also be able to flourish elsewhere.

International students themselves can often be caught up in their new culture and environment and seek to become permanent migrants, either in the field of academia, or in occupations stemming from their field of study. The desire for higher standards of living and for greater wealth has always had a strong attraction. “It is hard for them to think about going home after they have experienced their new freedoms, new technology and new opportunities. The political and economic instability of their countries often affect this decision.”²¹ Nevertheless, they must also be aware of the responsibility toward their own countries and the contribution that they may be able to make.

This understanding of the common good—in relation to the students to one another, to the students and their academic studies, and to the students and their country of origin—is vitally important because it lies at the heart of a proper Catholic understanding and approach to the pastoral care of international students. Any attitude that treats them as mere commodities should be carefully avoided. It should be remembered that “students are human persons who need to be respected as such.”²²

²¹ Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, *The Role of the Church in the World of Foreign Students: Proceedings of the First World Congress on the Pastoral Care of Foreign Students*, September 1996; cf. Vincent Kriche, *Campus Ministry in the USA and Foreign Students*, 100.

²² Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, “Proceedings II World Congress for the Pastoral Care of Foreign (International) Students on the Theme: Foreign Students and the Instruction,” *Erga migrantes caritas Christi* (Rome, 13-16 December, 2005); *People on the Move*, suppl.103, April 2007.

Erga Migrantes Caritas Christi: A Framework for a Specific Pastoral Care

I would like now to turn specifically to the pastoral care of foreign students and to reflect on some of the themes present in our Instruction *Erga migrantes caritas Christi*, guided by the teaching of the Second Vatican Council.²³ It envisages distinct areas for the exercise of a specific pastoral care with those who are migrants, in whatever capacity. In the sections to follow, I shall explore the themes that should underpin any pastoral care for international students.

“And Who Is My Neighbor?”

First, we must come to an understanding, from a specifically Christian viewpoint, of whom and what constitutes an international student.

The “foreigner” is God’s messenger who surprises us and interrupts the regularity and logic of daily life, bringing near those who are far away. In “foreigners” the Church sees Christ who “pitches His tent among us” (cf. Jn 1:14) and who “knocks at our door” (cf. Rev 3:20).²⁴

So in what guise do we find these “foreigners” in our midst within the student community? Although I alluded to this earlier, please note that international students are not a monochrome or homogenous group. They fall into three categories. The first group is what we call “free-movers;” they are self-financed and are sometimes wealthier than home students. Some are also financed by business or government. They are culturally connected and often show a greater degree of stability. A second group is comprised of those who have been offered academic incentives, particularly scholarships. Among this group are the many exchange and year-abroad students. Lastly, there are refugees or economic migrants. Sometimes these are illegal or transient and often have the most need for pastoral care. Of all these groups, this third group may find it most difficult to move into opportunities offered within higher education.

²³ Cf. EMCC, § 22: “The Second Vatican Council therefore marked a decisive moment for the pastoral care of migrants and itinerant people, attributing particular importance to the meaning of mobility and catholicity and that of particular Churches, to the sense of parish, and to the vision of the Church as mystery of communion. Thus the Church stands out as ‘a people that derives its union from the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit’ (LG 4) and presents itself as such.” Cf. also § 37.

²⁴ EMCC, § 101.

Throughout institutions offering education to international students there are pastoral structures, other than those offered by the Church, which help to welcome, support, and nurture students while in their host country. Many of these structures offer excellent services and work closely with other religious bodies, both on and off campus. Many are highly professional, and are the backbone of the success of American international relationships within higher education. Although these are very important, my intent now is to address the pastoral care that relates specifically to the ecclesial field, called “campus ministry” (sometimes relegated to the local parish or organization entrusted with the general pastoral care of the institution).

As previously mentioned, I will now explore the Church’s specific areas of pastoral commitment in the context of higher education. These areas are inextricably entwined, and can provide a basic framework for our reflection.

1. *Communion*

Erga migrantes reminds us that “foreigners are also a visible sign and an effective reminder of that universality which is a constituent element of the Catholic Church.”²⁵

[For] the Church, sacrament of unity, overcomes ideological or racial barriers and divisions and proclaims to all people and all cultures the need to strive for the truth in the perspective of correctly facing differences by dialogue and mutual acceptance. Different cultural identities are thus to open up to a universal way of understanding, not abandoning their own positive elements but putting them at the service of the whole of humanity. While this logic engages every particular Church, it highlights and reveals that unity in diversity that is contemplated in the Trinity, which, for its part, refers the communion of all to the fullness of the personal life of each one. The cultural situation today, global and dynamic as it is, calls for the incarnation of the one faith in many cultures and thus represents an unprecedented challenge, a true *kairòs* for the whole People of God.²⁶

This is especially true of those who are young and who may, for the first time, be experiencing the breadth of what it means to live in communion through a multicultural encounter. For “coming from different cultures, but all united by belonging to the one church of Christ,”²⁷ they

²⁵ *Ibid.* § 17.

²⁶ *Ibid.* § 34.

²⁷ Benedict XVI, *Young Migrants*.

are able to “show that the Gospel is alive and suited to every situation; it is an old and ever new message. It is a word of hope and salvation for the people of all races and cultures, of all ages and eras.”²⁸ The formation, by pastors, of communities that effectively celebrate both diversity and unity is at the heart of any pastoral commitment toward international students. John Paul II’s Apostolic Constitution *Ex corde Ecclesiae*, while expressing itself specifically to Catholic universities, tells us something important about the nature of such direction stating, “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.”²⁹ *Erga migrantes* speaks of this as “integrated pastoral care” and is to be “understood above all as communion that knows how to appreciate belonging to different cultures and peoples. This is in response to the Father’s plan of love, who in building His Kingdom of peace—through Christ, with Christ, and in Christ—by the power of the Spirit, interweaves the historical, complex, and often contradictory vicissitudes of humanity (cf. *NMI* 43).”³⁰

It is in this sphere that we can also begin to talk about “integrated formation,” making the assumption that all pastoral care has as its chief aim the critical formation of every student.

2. Catholicity

Respect for legitimate cultural diversity, both on the part of international students and their receiving counterparts, is a sign not just of their communion with each other, but also of that Catholicity which is a constituent mark of the Church. It is a clear reminder that “In the mind of the Lord, the Church is universal by vocation and mission, but when she puts down her roots in a variety of cultural, social, and human terrains, she takes on different external expressions and appearances in each part of the world.”³¹ The fostering of a community that expresses communion is a deep expression of what the Church is in herself, Catholic. *Erga migrantes* makes this observation: “the Church... is *catholic* ...in its openness to diversity that is to be harmonised.”³²

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ John Paul II, *Ex corde Ecclesiae*, § 21: AAS 82 (1990) 1488.

³⁰ EMCC, § 93.

³¹ Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii nuntiandi*, § 62: AAS 68 (1976) 52. http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19751208_evangelii-nuntiandi_en.html

³² EMCC, § 97.

3. *Welcome and Solidarity*

One of the ways in which the Church's Communion and Catholicity is manifested within the context of pastoral care, especially within the perspective of campus ministry, is through Welcome and Solidarity. Once again *Erga migrantes* reminds us that "Christians must in fact promote an authentic *culture of welcome* capable of accepting the truly human values of the immigrants over and above any difficulties caused by living together with persons who are different."³³ In the welcome that she gives, especially to those who are far from their homeland, the host Christian community enriches herself both culturally and spiritually, as St. Paul reminds us: "Welcome one another then, as Christ welcomed you, for the glory of God."³⁴ The Instruction also advises us as to the extent of this welcome:

In welcoming migrants it is of course useful and correct to distinguish between *assistance* in a general sense (a first, short-term welcome), true *welcome* in the full sense (longer-term projects) and *integration* (an aim to be pursued constantly over a long period and in the true sense of the word).³⁵

For foreign students, this last aspect must be considered in light of the (generally) temporary nature of their migration.

Fostering a culture of welcome is a sign of solidarity of the host country, institution, and ecclesial community—not only toward those who are new arrivals at university, but also to those who do not share the same national and cultural identity. An authentic campus ministry is one that expresses such solidarity, which "is not merely a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people but a moral value directed toward the common good in specific situations."³⁶ Moreover, it is the means by which the other truly becomes my brother or sister. In addition, a true culture of welcome is sustained throughout the international student's period of study; it is not expressed in a single event or moment. Solidarity means entering into, not merely in a superficial manner, but totally into the reality

³³ EMCC, § 39.

³⁴ Romans 15:7: Cf. EMCC, § 40.

³⁵ EMCC, § 42.

³⁶ Michael Miller, "Pastoral Care of Foreign Students: Evangelization, Dialogue and Proclamation," (Proceedings of the II World Congress for the Pastoral Care of Foreign [International] Students on the theme: Foreign Students and the Instruction *Erga migrantes caritas Christi* 2005): *People on the Move*, Suppl.103 April 2007, p.57.

of the students' needs. Some of these needs may be human, others spiritual, and others temporal. It is "a pedagogy of personal guidance: welcome, availability and friendship, interpersonal relationships, discernment of the circumstances in which students are living and concrete means for their improvement."³⁷ Genuine welcome is interested in the whole person: joys and sorrows, successes and failures.

Solidarity involves a whole set of responses to particular situations that international students often find themselves encountering. Visiting students in the U.S. face many difficulties that are common to others throughout the world, ranging from the practical to the personal, spiritual, and emotional. Financial needs often loom high on the agenda, coupled with those of accommodation. Particularly prevalent in the United States are problems with visa applications, which often entail late entry and the postponement of studies. More personal problems are those of culture shock and secularization, which can bring about a weakening or loss of faith. Others are homesick and face a "double-estrangement," both from home and also from their adopted country. Others face problems with language and communication in a culture different from that with which they are familiar. Pastors need to be aware of problems and patterns of behavior that may be damaging to an individual. International students should also be encouraged to form their own responses in solidarity with each other.

Another issue that is particularly pertinent to Catholic students in the U.S. is that they can be singled out as easy targets for conversion to other denominations or religions. Insecurity in the faith, coupled with a period of personal uncertainty, may make a person more susceptible to aggressive proselytizing. This is a particular problem with groups that are categorized as sects, and can serve only to distance and alienate a foreign student further from his or her roots and other points of stability.

An additional word is necessary for a special, and often forgotten, category of international student: those who are married. They face their own set of problems and challenges as they try to settle into their host country either with or without their spouse and children. Specific pastoral care should always be given in this direction to support and preserve the marital bond and family unit. Married students can often face deep estrangement when they are separated from their family.

³⁷ Congregation for Catholic Education, the Pontifical Council for the Laity, and the Pontifical Council for Culture, *The Presence of the Church in the University*, l.c.

Others who are accompanied are often faced with issues relating to unrealistic financial expectations, accommodation, schooling, and language. Special attention needs to be paid to children and their nurture, both human and spiritual.

4. Dialogue

Living in “communion” also entails living within an intercultural dialogue. This is a necessary and healthy consequence of diversity.

The dialogical character of the Church is rooted in her nature as communion. Communion implies communication. It firstly means communion and communication with God through Jesus Christ within the Holy Spirit; and, secondly, communion and communication among Christians themselves through word, sacraments, and *diaconia* or service, but also through communication, information, prayer, exchange, cooperation, living together, mutual visits, friendship, celebrating and worshiping together, witnessing together, and suffering together.³⁸

International students, host students, professors and academics, Christians of other ecclesial bodies, non-Christians, and the secular world are all starting points for dialogue in the university culture. Yet, international students can clearly bring their own dimension to these encounters. Pastoral care of students should always encourage such dialogue. It can take many forms, from mere friendships, to religious or academic encounter, to works in accordance with the social doctrine of the Church. It can take place on a human, cultural, and spiritual level. *Erga migrantes* envisages pastoral care among international students which includes the important component of dialogue.

Because it involves dialogue, communion, and mission, specific pastoral care *for, among* and *with* migrants will then become a significant expression of the Church, which is called to be a fraternal and peaceful meeting place, a home for all, a building sustained by the four pillars referred to by Blessed Pope John XXIII in *Pacem in Terris*, namely, truth and justice, love and freedom, the fruit of that paschal event that in Christ has reconciled everything and everybody. Thus, the Church will manifest clearly that it is a home and school of communion (cf. *NMI* 43) accepted and shared, of reconciliation requested and given, of mutual, fraternal welcome, and of authentic human and Christian development. In this

³⁸ Walter Kasper, *That They May All Be One—the Call to Unity Today*, (Burns & Oats, London 2004), p.42.

way, “ever more affirmed [is the knowledge of] the innate universality of the Church’s organization, in which no one can be considered a stranger or just a guest, or in any way on the fringe of things.”³⁹

Our Instruction also calls for both an ecumenical and interfaith dialogue with a pastoral focus on migrant communities. Especially, it encourages “living ecumenical fraternity in practical day-to-day life and of achieving greater reciprocal understanding between Churches and ecclesial Communities.”⁴⁰ In the case of those who are non-Christians there is a clear call to be:

...concerned with their human development and with the witness of Christian charity, which itself has an evangelising value that may open hearts for the explicit proclamation of the gospel when this is done with due Christian prudence and full respect for the freedom of the other. In any case the migrant of another religion should be helped insofar as possible to preserve a transcendent view of life.⁴¹

For this dialogue to be productive within the context of an institution of higher education, there needs to be a program that provides some form of clear preparation.

The ordinary Catholic faithful and pastoral workers in local Churches should receive solid formation and information on other religions so as to overcome prejudices, prevail over religious relativism, and avoid unjustified suspicions and fears that hamper dialogue and erect barriers, even provoking violence or misunderstanding.⁴²

Such formation is also necessary for the students and even members of the academic staff, particularly those who associate themselves closely with the life of campus ministry. The rich tapestry of religious belief that has developed freely in the United States may provide a safe and fruitful environment for these different levels of engagement in dialogue.

5. Mission—Encountering the Person of Jesus Christ

At the very core of campus ministry, and integral to any approach to pastoral care, lies the formation and nurture of those who live the

³⁹ EMCC, § 100.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* § 56.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* § 59.

⁴² *Ibid.* § 69.

communio. True communion, with its many facets and expressions of human diversity, and enriched by dialogue, has at its heart the person of Jesus Christ. This is not just another concept, but a deeply personal encounter that needs to be lived and breathed every day. Pastors should continually ensure that students in their care drink at the wellsprings of the sacramental life, and are fed on prayer and the Word of God. The sacraments, especially the Eucharist, become truly a feast for all people when celebrated with international students. It calls to mind that wonderful passage from the Letter to the Hebrews: “But what you have come to is Mount Zion and the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem where millions of angels have gathered for the festival with the whole Church of first-born sons, enrolled as citizens of heaven.”⁴³

The celebration of the Eucharist thus becomes a true expression of both communion and catholicity. For the many who are far from home this can bring familiarity and stability. It is rooted in their faith journey and the story of their life. It is an important point of dependability in an otherwise changing environment, and “it is a fundamental link with their Church of origin and with their ways of understanding and living the faith.”⁴⁴ However, regional and cultural differences can be alienating. Pastors need to be attentive to the legitimate richness of liturgical and spiritual diversity made present by the involvement of international student communities. It is important that “liturgical celebrations become a living expression of communities of believers who walk *hic et nunc* on the ways of salvation.”⁴⁵ Other forms of popular, local, or regional piety can be expressed and encouraged, and can be mutually enriching.

Benedict XVI, speaking again in the U.S. to professors, teachers, and educators, closely links education, and particularly Catholic education, to spiritual growth:

Education is integral to the mission of the Church to proclaim the Good News. First and foremost every Catholic educational institution is a place to encounter the living God who in Jesus Christ reveals his transforming love and truth (cf. *Spe Salvi*, 4). This relationship elicits a desire to grow in the knowledge and understanding of Christ and his teaching. In this way those who meet him are drawn by the very power of the Gospel to lead a new life characterized by all that is beautiful, good, and true; a life of Christian

⁴³ Heb 12:22.

⁴⁴ EMCC, § 46.

⁴⁵ EMCC, § 44.

witness nurtured and strengthened within the community of our Lord's disciples, the Church.⁴⁶

In many ways, for the international student, this divine encounter becomes the pivotal point of both reference and discovery, of what is stable in an otherwise changing environment.

A university pastoral program that is missionary in character will have a "Eucharistic heart," for it is here that the person of Jesus Christ, "the Way, the Truth and the Life" is met and shared. We are reminded:

An encounter with the Lord brings about a profound transformation in all who do not close themselves off from him. The first impulse coming from this transformation is to communicate to others the richness discovered in the experience of the encounter. This does not mean simply teaching what we have come to know but also, like the Samaritan woman, enabling others to encounter Jesus personally: "Come and see" (*Jn* 4:29).⁴⁷

6. Mission—Sharing in the Person of Jesus Christ

From this first point of contact, a community becomes missionary both internally and externally. Most of all, an "evangelizing zeal must spring from true holiness of life."⁴⁸ International students are called to join with those of their host country in being both signs and ministers of the gospel, for "young people who are well trained in faith and prayer must become more and more the apostles of youth. The Church counts greatly on their contribution."⁴⁹

A rich cultural experience can enable not just an internal reflection, in the individual and Christian community, but also a wider perspective, in particular within the context of the academic institution. An experience of dialogue and communion, supported by welcome and solidarity, and nourished by the spiritual resources mediated through the Church, should lead to an inevitable Pentecostal experience.

The Church has been catholic and missionary from her birth. The universality of salvation is meaningfully manifested with the list of the numerous ethnic groups to which those who heard the Apostles' first

⁴⁶ Benedict XVI, *Address*, Meeting with Catholic Educators, April 17, 2008: OR weekly edition in English April 23, 2008: p. 7, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2008/april/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20080417_cath-univ-washington_en.html

⁴⁷ John Paul II, *Ecclesia in America*, § 68: l.c. 803.

⁴⁸ Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*; § 76. l.c. 67.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* § 72.

proclamation belonged (cf. Acts 2: 9-11). But in the Spirit multiplicity and unity go hand in hand. He breathes where He wills. He does so unexpectedly, in unexpected places, and in ways previously unheard of. And with what diversity and corporality does He do so! And it is precisely here that diversity and unity are inseparable.⁵⁰

The presence of international students is an intense reminder of the variety of works of the Spirit, which extends to all people and places. International students can open up student communities to new ways of expressing the same truth, which is “Christ the same, yesterday, today, and forever!” (Heb. 13:8). John Paul II reminded us of this when he said:

In the Third Millennium, Christianity will have to respond ever more effectively to this *need for inculturation*. Christianity, while remaining completely true to itself, with unswerving fidelity to the proclamation of the Gospel and the tradition of the Church, will also reflect the different faces of the cultures and peoples in which it is received and takes root.⁵¹

This has the possibility of bringing a new dimension and a new vibrancy to the mission of evangelization, a task to which each campus community, indeed each baptized person, is called. Pastoral programs that value the contribution of international students in the role of evangelizers should be provided. In this way, chaplaincies and campus ministries become not only laboratories of faith but also schools of the universality of the Gospel.

7. Being the People and Family of God

The Church, through its experience of communion and its missionary activity, becomes more and more orientated to that final assembly when all will be united in the vision of the Triune God. In particular, the migrant student offers “the Church the opportunity to realize more concretely its identity as communion and its missionary vocation,”⁵² and in so doing can become a prophetic sign to the world. You, in the

⁵⁰ Benedict XVI, *Homily*, Prayer Vigil and Meeting with the Ecclesial Movements and New Communities, June 3, 2006: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/homilies/2006/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20060603_veglia-pentecoste_en.html

⁵¹ John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Inuente*,: § 40: AAS 93 (2001) 294. http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_letters/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_20010106_novo-millennio-adveniente_en.html

⁵² EMCC, § 103.

United States, are uniquely privileged to lead the way. You have vast resources at your disposal: academic, cultural, financial, personal, and spiritual. I believe that you have a vocation to lead the way, to develop different legitimate models of communion, solidarity, welcome, and mission. In this way, you will enrich the people of God; this will enable them to become the Sacrament of the Church, which lies at the heart of Christian vocation.

In a climate that has seen increasing xenophobia, with the onset of global terrorism, and increasing instability in various parts of the world, young people, particularly students, can become a prophetic sign that leads to peace and reconciliation. For the Church to become more of a chosen people, a royal priesthood, and a holy nation, it must increasingly break down barriers that contribute to prejudice and mistrust. In this way, ministry that involves international students becomes an essential element for global renewal and understanding. John Paul II reminded us of this when he said:

In the end, peace is not essentially about *structures* but about *people*. ... *Gestures of peace* spring from the lives of people who *foster peace first of all in their own hearts*. They are the work of the heart and of reason in those who are peacemakers (cf. Mt 5:9). *Gestures of peace* are possible when people *appreciate fully the community dimension of their lives*, so that they grasp the meaning and consequences of events in their own communities and in the world. *Gestures of peace* create a tradition and a culture of peace.⁵³

Conclusion

“I was a stranger and you made me welcome.”⁵⁴ At the heart of the call of the Gospel is the challenge to make the foreigner welcome in our midst. When Abraham welcomed the three strangers at Mamre,⁵⁵ he experienced a foreshadowing of the life of the Trinity. So, too, in the welcome we give, particularly to our international students, we experience something of the face of God. As we accompany young men and women through this formative part of life, it is vital that the Church accompanies them with love and solicitude, supporting, sustaining, and encouraging them whenever possible. Their history is our history, as they come to play their part in not only shaping the world, but also bringing about the kingdom.

⁵³ John Paul II, Message for World Day of Peace: *Pacem in Terris, a Permanent Commitment*, January 1, 2003, § 9. http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/messages/peace/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_20021217_xxxvi-world-day-for-peace_en.html

⁵⁴ Mt 25:35.

⁵⁵ cf. Gen 18: 1-5.

Your forbearers came seeking a land where there was peace and freedom. They themselves were migrants, fleeing oppression, poverty, and hunger. They found hospitality, welcome, and new life. These are your noble foundations. In the care and nurture you give to those who are international students in your midst, you are “rediscovering your roots,” and in so doing you enable, I pray, those roots to grow and flourish, as you continue to open your land, your resources, and your hearts to these young people.

Later this year, the Church will begin a year dedicated to St. Paul, Apostle to the Gentiles. As we are on the threshold of this time of grace, maybe a last word should go to him, who knew so well what it was not only to welcome, but to be welcomed in the name of Christ.

So you are no longer aliens or foreign visitors: you are fellow citizens with the holy people of God and part of God’s household. You are built upon the foundations of the apostles and prophets, and Christ Jesus is himself the corner stone. Every structure knit together in him grows into a holy temple in the Lord; and you too, in him, are being built up into a dwelling-place of god in the Spirit.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ 2 Eph 19-22.