

## **Editor’s Introduction: Seven Papers from the King’s College Conference “The Idea of a Catholic College”**

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The complementarity of faith and reason; a commitment to philosophy and theology as “sapiential” and “architectonic” disciplines; the belief that all reality is suffused with the presence of God such that God may be found in all things; an understanding of education as a work of sanctification if not even resurrection; and an ambition to educate hearts as well as to instruct minds—these are, among others, the ideas that have animated and animate yet today Catholic colleges and universities in the United States. But how do these ideas fare, and how can they best be expressed, in today’s undergraduate colleges? Are philosophy and theology up to the charge? How should courses in these disciplines be conceived and structured in general education curricula? Further, how do the other disciplines in the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences serve and express the basic mission of Catholic higher education? Do professional programs in business, education, engineering, or nursing have distinctive vocations within the context of Catholic higher education? And just what is the warrant for an institution of higher learning to seek to transform students’ hearts?

The conference “The Idea of a Catholic College: Charism, Curricula, and Community,” hosted by King’s College in fall 2014, examined questions of just this kind. Proceedings of the conference have been split between the *Journal of Catholic Higher Education* and *Expositions*. Here *Expositions* publishes seven papers concerning curriculum, academic life more generally, and pedagogy.

Alexander Eodice, Professor of Philosophy at Iona College and Dean of the College’s School of Arts and Sciences from 2001 to 2008, considers the relevance to present-day Catholic institutions of John Tracy Ellis’s “scathing critique of Catholic intellectual life in America” published in 1955. Jonathan Sanford, Professor of Philosophy and Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs at Franciscan University of Steubenville, makes a case for the relevance of a critique of higher education published a century earlier, namely, John Henry Newman’s reflections on the idea of the university. Ilija Delio, O.S.F., Director of the Catholic Studies Program at Georgetown University, argues for breaking new ground: according to her, the curricula at Catholic institutions ought to reflect a distinctive “epistemology,” rooted at once in the ancient Catholic aspiration to “wholemaking” and insights from the contemporary natural philosophy of Teilhard de Chardin, among others.

The papers by Karen Eifler and Charles Gordon, C.S.C., Co-Directors of the Garaventa Center for Catholic Intellectual Life and American Culture at the University of Portland, and Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., Senior Research Fellow at the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, change the focus from curriculum to collegiality and student life, respectively. Plantinga asks what is involved in educating for *shalom*—“*universal flourishing and delight*, each created thing a wonder, each created person a source of joy”—and comes to focus on practices within the so-called co-curriculum, the non-academic side of student life. Eifler and Gordon focus, instead, on faculty life. Using the work of the Garaventa Center as a case study, they discuss methods of engaging faculty more deeply in the mission of the institution.

Finally, Kim Paffenroth, Professor of Religious Studies at Iona College, presents some personal reflections on how best to think about teaching the pre-Christian classics within the setting of a Catholic institution. Stephen Laumakis, Professor of Philosophy at the University of Saint Thomas, Minnesota, discusses how philosophy and theology courses may serve as “‘bridge’ or linking courses unifying the students’ experience of the core curriculum at a Catholic university.” His proposal is that linking these courses may help to overcome what he takes to be “two of the major obstacles in a typical undergraduate experience: namely, prematurely focused specialization and an inability to see the ‘big picture.’”