

ESSAY

How Catholic is Georgetown University?

The oldest Catholic higher education institution in the US can serve as an object lesson of the problems afflicting many Catholic colleges and universities today.

By Patrick J. Reilly

In early February 2006, Patrick J. Reilly, president of the Cardinal Newman Society, a group dedicated to improving the Catholic identity of Catholic colleges and universities in the United States, spoke at Georgetown University in Washington, DC, the oldest Catholic university in the US.

He addressed a crowd of 200 faculty and students on the case for serious concerns at the university. However, those concerns are shared broadly within Catholic higher education, with Georgetown as the most obvious model of secularization.

Despite any shortcomings of its political elite, Washington, DC, can't be beat on a sunny morning, especially when winter's snow blankets the city streets. Crossing over the Potomac River, one can see stately spires above the bare trees, the small crosses at the top identifying their Christian resident: Georgetown University.

Once on Georgetown's campus, one can imagine the ghosts of generations of grateful Catholic immigrants and gifted scholars strolling pensively on the red-brick pathways, while today's aspiring statesmen, businessmen, and community leaders bustle past with their MP3 players and cell phones. One can hardly ignore the contrast between history and modernity, reverence and ambition,

mission and occupation.

Founded in 1789, Georgetown is the oldest Catholic university in the United States. Today it is also one of the most prominent examples of the decay of Catholic life in this country since the turbulent 1960s, exemplifying the dramatic secularization of Catholic colleges and universities.

There is good reason to consider the state of Georgetown—and by extension, Catholic higher education in the US—at this time. The US bishops have announced a "review" of the implementation of *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, the 1990 apostolic constitution governing most Catholic universities, colleges, and other institutes of Catholic higher education. (Ecclesiastical institutions and faculties are governed by the 1979 constitution *Sapientia Christiana*.)

IMPLEMENTING EX CORDE ECCLESIAE

It was more than 15 years ago that Pope John Paul II issued *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, but it was only six years ago that the US bishops completed guidelines implementing the constitution for America's 226 Catholic colleges and universities—by far the largest grouping in any country in the world. Why the nine-year delay? Almost every major Catholic academic association—

including the national Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities and the theological societies—opposed key requirements of *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* and canon law, even going so far as to urge the bishops to take a "non-judicial" approach to the Vatican's clearly juridical norms. In other words, they were prepared to ignore Church law entirely, and they begged the bishops to concur. After the Vatican rejected that approach in 1996, the bishops produced a set of quite reasonable guidelines in 1999.

At Georgetown and elsewhere in the US, the bishops' continued attention to Catholic higher education has had a demonstrable impact. Almost every Catholic college and university in the US has taken steps to emphasize its Catholic identity—although for some it is clearly window-dressing to impress the bishops, donors, and concerned parents. Many institutions have launched "hiring for mission" policies to ensure that faculty members respect the Catholic educational mission, established permanent administrative positions to monitor and improve institutions' commitment to Catholic identity, scaled back support for campus activities that scandalize students, and more.

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But aside from these scattered improvements, the US bishops have little cause for celebration. Especially at many of the large Catholic universities, officials still thumb their noses at the bishops while ignoring the clearest provisions of *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*. Dissent in Catholic theology courses comes as no surprise to students, while many theologians scoff at the predicament of bishops who both insist on the *mandatum* for all teachers of theology (as required by Canon 812) and admit to no means of enforcing the rule. Few colleges and universities require the *mandatum* for theology professors or even minimal respect for Catholic teaching by professors, staff, officials, and even trustees. The Vatican's clear requirement that a minimum of half the faculty be Catholic is

entirely ignored. Campus life often beckons students into sinful behavior, with homosexual clubs and activism expanding rapidly in recent years, leading abortion advocates invited regularly to lecture and receive honors, about ten percent of Catholic campuses annually hosting the vile play “The Vagina Monologues,” and more.

Contrary to the predictions of many academics who in 1999 said the furor over “Catholic identity” in education would quickly die down, lay Catholics are increasingly voicing their outrage about campus scandals and exerting real pressure on the colleges and universities to conform to Catholic teaching. (The organization I founded in 1993, the Cardinal Newman Society, has jumped from 3,000 to more than 18,000 members in just the past three years, a sign of growing awareness and concern.)

No place invites more criticism than Georgetown University, and several other Jesuit institutions—Boston College, the College of the Holy Cross, Saint Louis University, Santa Clara University, the University of San Francisco, and others—are also frequently cited for scandals. Many believe that Georgetown is beyond saving as a genuinely Catholic institution. That’s probably an exaggeration, but the problems are quite serious.

This much is certain: before the US bishops can declare the great project of renewing Catholic higher education successful, Georgetown must clean up its act. That’s a tall order.

GEORGETOWN’S MISHIRES

When Pope John Paul II addresses the “university community” in *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, he turns first to the faculty. The academy is a unique institution that, although dependent on the leadership and oversight of administrators, is controlled in many ways by its faculty members. Because of the protections of academic freedom, professors are primarily responsible for the content of their teaching and the subjects of their writing and research, the core functions of academic life.

Academic freedom is often cited as protection for professors at Catholic colleges and universities to lead students astray from Catholic teaching and opine on virtually any topic. But while academic freedom prevents theology from making claims that are the province of other disciplines—scientific claims about the origins of the world, for instance—it also properly prevents pro-

fessors of other disciplines from making theological claims. A Catholic institution embraces divine revelation as sacred truth and thus does a terrible disservice to students by teaching opposite that truth. It is precisely because faculty members enjoy a generous academic freedom that college and university officials must be especially vigilant to protect the Catholic mission of their institutions, ensuring that the moral truths and ethical implications of Catholic theology are explicitly acknowledged in every course of study.

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In their guidelines implementing *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, the US bishops insist that Catholic colleges and universities recruit faculty members who “exhibit not only academic competence and good character but also respect for Catholic doctrine.” Canon 810 of the Code of Canon Law goes further, calling for the removal of faculty members whose actions and public statements outside the classroom—even off campus—fail to demonstrate “integrity of doctrine and probity of life.” College and university professors, then, are not only expected to refrain from scandal in the classroom but also to avoid scandal in their private and public lives.

Where college officials draw the line is left to their discretion, but one can hardly imagine a more obvious conflict than a Catholic university professor who also works for an abortion provider or one of the nation’s leading abortion lobbies. Georgetown University appears not to understand—or perhaps not to care—as it touts the qualifications of Jacqueline Payne, Adjunct Assistant Professor of Women’s Studies, on its Web site. Payne, who discusses “reproductive and abortion rights” as part of her course on Women and the Law, also holds a job as policy attorney for the pro-abortion NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund and

is Assistant Director of Government Relations for the Planned Parenthood Federation of America. Meg DeRonghe, who holds the same Georgetown faculty position as Payne, is Planned Parenthood’s Associate Director for Partnerships.

What raises alarm bells at Georgetown? One might suppose a professor’s efforts to legalize physician-assisted suicide would jeopardize his employment, but apparently it does not. More than a philosophy professor, Tom Beauchamp is a Senior Research Scholar at the university’s Kennedy Institute of Ethics. He moonlighted as a member of the board of directors of the Compassion in Dying Federation from 1999 until last year, when the organization merged with another group. Compassion in Dying was a radical lobby best known for advocating Oregon’s assisted-suicide law and for challenging assisted-suicide bans in Washington and New York states, taking its fight to the US Supreme Court. Beauchamp has written more than 100 books and articles, lectured at more than 100 universities worldwide, and helped file *amicus curiae* briefs in federal courts—often for the purpose of advancing physician-assisted suicide. In a 1999 article in Georgetown’s *Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal*, Beauchamp suggested that certain humans—possibly including “fetuses, newborns, psychopaths, and various dementia patients”—might be placed in a new class with high-level animals. He argued that “these individuals do have some rights and merit moral protections, but not on the basis of moral personhood. In this respect, these humans are in the same situation as many non-humans.”

Beauchamp has allies. Georgetown law professor Maxwell Gregg Bloche signed an *amicus* brief in *Oregon v. Ashcroft*, recently decided by the US Supreme Court, arguing that doctors’ actions protected by the Oregon assisted-suicide law constitute “sound and ethical medical practices.” Howard Freed, Clinical Associate Professor of Emergency Medicine, and Lawrence Gostin, a Georgetown law professor and faculty affiliate of the Kennedy Institute of Ethics, also joined *amicus* briefs defending Oregon’s assisted-suicide law. Lauro Halstead, Clinical Professor Emeritus of Medicine, served until the end of 2003 on the board of directors of Autonomy, a so-called “disability rights

advocacy organization" that advocates the right to assisted suicide and patient autonomy in end-of-life decisions. Georgetown's Web site applauds law professor Peter Rubin for his Supreme Court experience—specifically, his opposition to New York's ban on assisted suicide in *Vacco v. Quill* and his fight against a law that effectively restricted abortion referrals in *Rust v. Sullivan*. Rubin also assisted Harvard Law professor Lawrence Tribe with his 1990 book, *Abortion: The Clash of Absolutes*, which defended the legality of abortion under *Roe v. Wade*.

SCHISMATIC "PRIESTS" AND PRO-ABORTION POLITICIANS

One could hardly expect a Catholic university to employ a professor who declares himself a priest in the schismatic "United American Catholic Church," which among other things ordains women and claims to be led by the true successor of Peter. Such is the status of Ed Ingebretsen, English professor and director of Georgetown's American Studies Program, a former Jesuit who was "married" in Massachusetts to his homosexual partner. His writings include "Rethinking Plato, When the Cave is a Closet" (*Queer Pedagogies*, NCET Publishers, 1999) and "'One of the Guys' or 'One of the Girls': Gender and the Problem of Authority in the Roman Catholic Clergy" (*Religion and Sexuality*, April 1999), neither of which conforms to his qualifications as a scholar in the English department.

Surely a Catholic university would not go out of its way to hire politicians and political operatives who have distinguished themselves as vocal advocates for abortion rights? But Georgetown, with its close proximity to the halls of Congress, has gobbled up more than its share of Democrats wearied from their years of vigorous opposition to the bishops and pro-life advocates. Georgetown's professors include former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, former Sen. Tom Daschle, former Rep. Geraldine Ferraro, former Clinton chief of staff John Podesta, and former Maryland gubernatorial candidate Kathleen Kennedy Townsend. Father Robert Drinan, SJ, who rebuffed the Vatican to serve 10 years in Congress and earn a "pro-choice" voting record, is a celebrated darling of Georgetown's law school.

Seeking refuge in Georgetown's theology department, students are confronted by feminist Diana Hayes,

Associate Professor of Systematic Theology, who dissents from Church teaching on the male-only priesthood. While claiming the right of women to be ordained, she has rejected ordination in the Church "as it is presently constituted" and has recommended to fellow activists the "dismantling of the entire structure, from within and from without, using tools of our own creation." Fellow theologian Theresa Sanders had the audacity to walk off the stage while the Vatican's Cardinal Francis Arinze, whom Georgetown invited to speak during its 2003 commencement ceremony, defended the family against contraception, abortion, infanticide, euthanasia, pornography, fornication, adultery,

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homosexuality, "irregular unions," and divorce. Later it became apparent that Sanders' beef was with the mention of homosexuality, and about 70 Georgetown professors echoed her sentiment in a protest letter to university officials.

Homosexuality appears not to be uncommon among faculty at Georgetown—at least the faculty think so, because they sought and recently won medical benefits for their same-sex partners. Georgetown hosts the Web site of the Forum for Academic and Institutional Rights (FAIR), the plaintiff in a Supreme Court case seeking to block military recruiters from university campuses, in protest against the US military ban on openly homosexual soldiers. FAIR's members include the law faculties of four Catholic universities: Georgetown, DePaul, Fordham, and San Francisco. Georgetown law professor Chai Feldblum sits on FAIR's board of directors.

Georgetown's problems extend to its leaders. In a 2004 address to the American Philological Association, Provost James O'Donnell claimed "the 'papacy' was created as a kind of avatar of Roman religious authority chiefly in

the fifth and sixth centuries and spawned its own authorized narrative... to legitimate the line back to Peter." In his 1998 book *Avatars of the Word*, O'Donnell suggests that the true message of Jesus—as well as Socrates, Confucius, and Buddha—lies in the "platitudinous and benignly impractical nature" of their teachings, which need not be considered "extraordinary manifestations of charisma and wisdom." O'Donnell's new biography of St. Augustine characterizes him by his faults—"social climber," "troublemaker," "self-promoter"—and suggests that one of the most magnificent and transforming works ever written, St. Augustine's *Confessions*, was more a means to worldly prestige than an impassioned testimony to his Creator and Redeemer. John DeGioia was named president despite his key role—at the time, as dean of students—in the 1991 decision to officially recognize and fund a pro-abortion student club. (Georgetown later reversed its decision after students and alumni petitioned the Vatican to declare the university no longer Catholic.)

CAMPUS SCANDALS

The pro-abortion club that DeGioia approved, G.U. Choice, has been unofficially resurrected as "H*yas for Choice." The asterisk is supposed to warn of Georgetown's refusal to allow the students to appropriate even the name of Georgetown's mascot, but given how freely the *ad hoc* group operates on campus, the asterisk has become more of a taunt than a burden for students. In recent years, the group has distributed condoms to students in Georgetown's designated "free speech zone" (which is unfortunately named Red Square), offered "condom-grams" on Halloween and Valentine's Day, sponsored a petition drive to advocate condom distribution in various campus centers (which was its practice until the university halted it in 2002), held campus rallies for abortion rights and contraception, decorated the campus with coat hangers and pro-abortion flyers, participated in national abortion-rights protests and trained members in abortion clinic "defense" tactics. Until recently, the H*yas for Choice Web site instructed students on how and where to obtain condoms, birth control pills, "emergency contraception," and abortions and promoted internships with almost every major pro-abortion advocacy organization and political committee.

Georgetown officials—like the administrators of many Catholic colleges and universities in the US—see their laissez-faire treatment of student life on campus as essential to letting young adults think freely, but by lending the university's facilities, Web site, personnel, and other resources in support of even "non-sponsored" campus activities, Georgetown is complicit in scandal. Worse, most of the offending student clubs are officially recognized and funded by Georgetown. *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* offers little guidance to Catholic colleges and universities in the realm of student life, yet almost everything that needs to be said is contained in this one mandate: a Catholic institution "informs and carries out its research, teaching, and all other activities with Catholic ideals, principles, and attitudes." All official actions and commitments must be in accord with the

institution's Catholic identity.

Pro-abortion activism at Georgetown is led by H*yas for Choice but also involves other student clubs. The university-sponsored chapter of the American Constitution Society for Law and Policy—a politically liberal organization of law students, law professors, and practicing lawyers—has sponsored pro-abortion lecturers including NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund official Jennifer Brown, US Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton, US Sen. Edward Kennedy, Planned Parenthood official Susanne Martinez, and ACLU president Nadine Strossen. The group also launched Georgetown's Law Students for Choice, which is not sponsored by Georgetown but enjoys the use of campus facilities. Its inaugural event featured four panelists including Karen Mulhauser, NARAL Pro-Choice America's first executive director;

Choice USA executive director Crystal Plati; Jenny Blasdell, senior counsel at the National Abortion Federation; and Virginia Bader, vice president of Planned Parenthood of Metro Washington.

Perhaps such student behavior is not surprising given the lack of any clear pro-life message from university officials. As of December 2002, the Office of Student Affairs posted on the university's Web site a "Sexual Health and Safety" page which linked to Planned Parenthood, promoted the abortifacient "morning-after pill" and encouraged the use of sexual aids including dental dams and latex gloves for "safer sex". After the university received complaints, the Web page was altered to remove the inappropriate material. But today the Web pages for Georgetown's Women's Center include a "Women's Health Resource List" which refers stu-

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dents to local abortion clinics in Washington, DC, and Virginia. [Although the official Web page providing information on pregnancy does not list the clinics, the separate "Women's Health Resource List" does—Editor.] The Georgetown Law Center houses and provides administrative support to the Women's Law & Public Policy Fellowship Program, which helps law graduates secure employment with women's rights organizations. These include pro-abortion groups like the ACLU, the Center for Development and Population Activities, the Center for Reproductive Rights, the NOW Legal Defense & Education Fund, NARAL Pro-Choice America, and People for the American Way.

MONOLOGUES AND GAY PRIDE

The most controversial event at Georgetown is the sexually explicit and offensive play "The Vagina Monologues," an annual travesty repeated on or around Saint Valentine's Day. The play presents women discussing their sexuality and sexual encounters, replete with vulgarity, explicit language, and graphic descriptions of lesbian activity and masturbation. In one monologue, the intoxication and seduction of a 16-year-old girl by a 24-year-old lesbian is described as the victim's "salvation"—with obvious parallels to the abuse of teenage boys by some American priests. It is revolting that any Catholic institution would host this play, yet one in 10 Catholic colleges and universities in the US host it every year.

Whereas students presenting the play on other Catholic campuses often have to work their way around hesitant college officials—often by securing the sponsorship of faculty departments and declaring the protection of "academic freedom"—Georgetown officially sponsors and funds a club which, in its constitution, identifies "The Vagina Monologues" as one of its primary purposes.

Also officially sponsored by Georgetown are the student clubs G.U. Pride (for undergraduates) and Outlaw (for law students). Homosexual clubs and "gay-straight" alliances are permitted on many US Catholic campuses for the purpose of combating alleged discrimination against homosexual students. But the Georgetown clubs' activities are predominantly social meet-and-greet events including participa-

tion in the Washington, DC, Drag Race (running in high heels), a "drag brunch," and celebration of National Coming Out Day.

Even when not vocally opposed to Catholic teaching on homosexual activity, any club or event built around homosexuality—which the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* reminds us is a disordered inclination toward sinful activity—can be a scandal to students. In 1992 Cardinal Pio Laghi, then Prefect of the Vatican Congregation for Catholic Education, opposed a homosexual club at Seattle University:

At a Catholic university, support can be given only to Catholic teaching on homosexuality and Catholic pastoral practice to help homosexual persons morally, ascetically, and spiritually... The university's responsibilities towards homosexual persons, doctrinally and pastorally, should find their expression in courses in Catholic theology.

In recent years, homosexual students have pressed for a more prominent role on campus. Since 2001 students have sought a campus "resource center" staffed by a full-time administrator to coordinate programs for homosexual students. The idea has been endorsed by the student newspaper *The Hoya* and the

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student government, and in January 2002 activists interrupted a campus Mass celebrated by Washington's Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, urging him to butt out of university decisions concerning the resource center.

Georgetown officials have not agreed to the center, but they have accommodated the activists in almost every other conceivable way. In 2001 a committee formed by Vice President of Student Affairs Juan Gonzalez recommended homosexual living space on campus, at least 10 rooms in a new campus dormitory reserved for homosexuals, and a new counselor for homosexual students at the university's Center for Psychiatric Services. In October 2002, Georgetown established a new full-time staff position, the Coordinator of LGBTQ

(Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, Queer) Resources to accomplish essentially what students wanted from the resource center. Gonzalez said, "Once you're part of the family, we need to go as far as we can to help you succeed, to help you become the person you want to become without making judgments about it." The problem carries over beyond graduation with the Georgetown University GLBT Alumni Group, which recently announced a scholarship to encourage homosexual students to attend Georgetown.

In April 2002, several student clubs including G.U. Pride and H*yas for Choice sponsored a Progressive Career Fair at Georgetown. They invited Choice USA, the NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund, the National Gay & Lesbian Taskforce, the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, and other radical groups to recruit employees and interns. Gonzalez, citing concern for Georgetown's Catholic identity, abruptly cancelled the fair originally planned in February 2002—then after reviewing it, allowed it to be rescheduled for April. Apparently his initial concern was unwarranted?

Campus publications are shamefully opposed to any sort of Christian campus culture. In March 2000, *The Hoya* fired columnist Robert Swope because he had repeatedly criticized radical feminist activities on campus—the final straw was a column (never published) criticizing Georgetown's production of "The Vagina Monologues." From the fall of 2002 through December 2003, *The Hoya* ran a weekly column titled "Sex on the Hilltop," in which the author addressed such topics as "hooking up when you have a roommate" and "having sex with your ex." A 2003 article in the *Georgetown Voice* listed the "best" features of the Washington, DC, metro area for students: first on the list was best place where "Jane Hoyas" can pick up their birth-control pills, followed by the "best private but very public place to get it on," the "best place to hook up if you're a screamer," and the "best sex shop" near campus. (Advising "the innocent Georgetown undergrad" to "leave your Catholic guilt at the door," the article goes into detail describing how there is "something for the sexual novice and the kinky dominatrix alike.") *The Hoya* published a 2004 editorial complaining that Georgetown does not allow pro-abortion advertising in the paper, and the *Georgetown Voice* published a 2005 editorial titled "Something

Queer Afoot in the Vatican,” arguing that “the fact that homosexual behavior is still considered sinful by the Church is sad in and of itself.” Now *The Hoya* is negotiating with university officials to become its own publisher, insisting that it has no intention of attacking Georgetown’s Catholic identity.

HONORING DISSENT

In June 2004 by a near-unanimous vote, the US Conference of Catholic Bishops approved the statement “Catholics in Political Life,” including the mandate: “The Catholic community and Catholic institutions should not honor those who act in defiance of our fundamental moral principles. They should not be given awards, honors or platforms which would suggest support for their actions.”

Georgetown University—like many Catholic colleges and universities in the US—has a long history of honoring pro-abortion leaders and other opponents of Catholic moral teaching, or giving them platforms to elevate their public image. In recent years, Georgetown’s commencement speakers and honorary degree recipients have included former US Surgeon General David Satcher, who opposed a ban on partial-birth abortion and advocated contraceptive education in schools; US Rep. Nancy Pelosi, a

Catholic with a pro-abortion voting record; former New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and District of Columbia Mayor Anthony Williams, both advocates of abortion rights and homosexual rights; pro-abortion US Sen. Daniel Inouye of Hawaii; and Geraldine Ferraro, the pro-abortion former US Representative and Democratic vice presidential candidate in 1984.

Several campus lectures have been public embarrassments to Georgetown. In 2004 Martin Cauchon, then Attorney General of Canada, used his address at Georgetown to call for a redefinition of marriage to include same-sex couples. Similarly, in 2002 the Rev. Jesse Jackson announced his support for homosexual “marriage” while at Georgetown. The prior year, Georgetown’s lecture fund sponsored Patricia Ireland, former president of the pro-abortion National Organization for Women (NOW). But the worst case was a 1999 lecture by *Hustler* magazine publisher and pornographer Larry Flynt, who told students that religion has done more harm than good to mankind. (“The Church has had its hand on our crotch for 2,000 years.”) Even though then-Auxiliary Bishop William Lori (now bishop of Bridgeport, Connecticut) said publicly that Georgetown’s sponsorship of the event was “indefensible”—“No

Catholic university should provide a platform which furthers the degradation of women, immoral behavior, and the antireligious opinions Mr. Flynt represents”—Georgetown declared its unbending loyalty to an apparently limitless “academic freedom.”

The names of leading advocates for abortion rights and/or contraception who have been invited to lecture at Georgetown are far too numerous to list here. A sampling includes former President Bill Clinton (who has made at least 17 visits and lectures), Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton, National Organization for Women (NOW) president Kim Gandy, Planned Parenthood Federation of America vice president Susanne Martinez, NOW Legal Defense and Education Foundation vice president Jennifer Brown and special counsel Kate Pinzler, Feminist Majority Foundation president Eleanor Smeal, New York Attorney General Eliot Spitzer, American Civil Liberties Union president Nadine Strossen, political strategist James Carville, radical filmmaker Michael Moore, Sen. Edward Kennedy, and many other pro-abortion politicians.

One might expect that a Catholic university, even one that has no concern about undermining the Church’s efforts to fight abortion by regularly featuring pro-abortion lecturers and honorees,

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would refrain from hosting blatant political activity that helps “pro-choice” politicians get elected. But during the 2004 presidential campaign, pro-abortion candidates were allowed several times to use Georgetown as a platform for promoting their candidacies. Campus events featured Sen. John Kerry in January 2003, former Gov. Howard Dean in October 2003, Kerry again in April 2004 (as the presumptive Democratic Party nominee, he chose Georgetown to outline his economic plan), and former Vice President Al Gore for a pro-Kerry speech in October 2004.

Is this coincidence, or could Georgetown actually be a friendly environment for pro-abortion politicians? A review of campaign donations by university employees just prior to the 2004 election suggests an overwhelming political bias at Georgetown. The Federal Election Commission, which identifies campaign gifts of \$250 or more, reports that employees at the ten largest US Catholic universities gave \$196,025 to the Kerry campaign, but only \$21,200 to President George Bush’s campaign. That’s a bias of more than 9-to-1. More than half of the gifts to the Kerry campaign (\$116,915) came from Georgetown employees, who gave just \$7,000 to the Bush campaign (a 17-to-1 split). By contrast, national polls showed self-identified Catholics more or less evenly divided over Bush and Kerry, and Kerry’s campaign was indirectly challenged by some bishops who cautioned Catholics against voting for candidates who support abortion rights.

STILL CATHOLIC?

When considering the Catholic identity of Georgetown or any other college or university, one must defer to the bishops’ rightful authority to determine whether institutions are Catholic. As long as a bishop formally recognizes any institution to be Catholic, no one can rightfully take away the label. Such is the case with Georgetown University and many wayward colleges and universities worldwide, which are still recognized by their bishops despite much heartache.

If one asks “How *faithfully Catholic* is Georgetown University?”—that is, how well does Georgetown comply with the guidelines for Catholic universities issued by the Vatican and the US bishops—then the answer is clearly “not so well.” Are there wonderful things happening at Georgetown, even from the

perspective of a faithful Catholic? Certainly, no doubt the scandals are a minor portion of what occurs at Georgetown. But scandal has a way of undermining the good accomplished by every other act and intention. Once exposed, scandal that is not properly addressed leads to the hypocritical position of many Catholic institutions that claim a commitment to the Catholic faith yet knowingly attack or at least undermine it.

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Why are so many of the scandals related to the issues of abortion and homosexuality? Do we perhaps focus too strongly on these issues, as if Catholic teaching were not much broader? The questions ignore the reality that Catholic college and university students, faculty, and officials seem determined to challenge Catholic teaching particularly in these areas, perhaps because sexuality is a leading concern for college-age students. Georgetown and other US Catholic colleges and universities do very well in promoting social justice, for example, but they often conflict with Catholic teaching on sexuality.

In December 2002, Pope John Paul II insisted that “university centers that do not respect the Church’s laws and the teaching of the Magisterium, *especially in bioethics*, cannot be defined as Catholic universities” [*emphasis added*]. They also risk leading young women into abortion: unplanned pregnancy in the US is highest among women aged 18-19, and almost half of these pregnancies end in abortion, according to 2004 statistics from the Planned Parenthood-affiliated Alan Guttmacher Institute. Women aged 20-24 obtain one third of all abortions in the US, accounting for the single largest age group of women who have abortions.

Could the scandals ever lead to Georgetown’s total secularization? The danger is real and not unknown to American Christians. Harvard University and Yale University were founded as divinity schools, and several large Protestant universities are no longer committed to the visions of their founders. Since *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* was issued in 1990, four Catholic colleges in New York State have formally shed

their Catholic identity. It can happen.

Archbishop Michael Miller, OSB, Secretary of the Vatican Congregation for Catholic Education, recently told an audience at the University of Notre Dame that Pope Benedict XVI would likely encourage bishops to “prune” non-committed institutions from the rolls of Catholic colleges and universities. If so, he would be carrying out the warning issued by Pope John Paul II in his 1993 encyclical *Veritatis Splendor*:

A particular responsibility is incumbent upon Bishops with regard to Catholic institutions. ...It falls to them, in communion with the Holy See, both to grant the title “Catholic” to Church-related schools, universities, health-care facilities, and counseling services, and, in cases of a serious failure to live up to that title, to take it away.

There can be no question that such an action is just and appropriate in extreme circumstances—but it should be viewed as a concession of defeat, to be made only after a fierce fight to renew historically Catholic institutions. Bishops and lay Catholics can come together to defend the rights of students who selected Catholic colleges and universities like Georgetown because they are advertised as Catholic institutions. We also ought to defend the legacy of alumni and donors, who over hundreds of years built up these great academies in service to the Church. Historically Catholic colleges and universities have been purchased at great price by faithful Catholics who believed in the founders’ vision for Catholic scholarship. We should not allow that to be taken away.

Everything must be done in a Christian manner, to be sure, but it is entirely appropriate to hold Georgetown University officials to account for the scandals that occur on their watch. Just a few weeks ago, Georgetown announced that it would stop serving eggs from caged birds in its dining facilities—a practice that animal activists consider inhumane—instead providing cage-free eggs at great expense. If such concessions can be made to radical environmentalists, is it too much to expect such careful attention to Georgetown’s Catholic mission?

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