

Australian Universities and the Catholic Tradition: Intellectual, Educational and Cultural Connections

Joint St. Thomas More Forum Lecture with Australian Catholic University

**Professor Greg Craven
Australian Catholic University National Vice-Chancellor**

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I would like to thank all of you for attending the St. Thomas More Forum this evening.

May I say at the outset that I regard it as a great privilege to be Vice-Chancellor of a Catholic university and particularly to be Vice-Chancellor of this Catholic university. As an academic, to work at any university is to pursue a higher calling, but as a Catholic, to work within a Catholic university is to pursue a higher academic calling within the highest calling.

It is perhaps appropriate at this point of my life to recall a rather embarrassing family story. My mother, a ferociously devout convert, was deeply impressed that I had been born in March, the month of St Joseph. She therefore insisted that I be baptised and indeed solemnly consecrated to St Joseph on his feast day, the 19th of March. The motivation for this was the fond hope that I would one day work for the Church. I am sure that my mother had in mind my eventual elevation to the Papacy, though the election of the Holy Spirit sadly has miscarried in this respect. However, in retrospect, I am reasonably sure that she would have settled for the Vice-Chancellorship of a Catholic university as a consolation prize.

I have to say that I do not recount this story out of the hope that it is any sure indication of divine assistance in my upcoming tasks. On the contrary, my two designated grandparents both died in the fourteen days between my birth and Baptism, one perhaps predictably of senility having reached ninety-three years of age, but one a little unnervingly by being hit by a train. Consequently, I suspect that the personal intervention of St Joseph is not at this point confidently to be expected, and the omens are at best mixed.

Nevertheless, what I hope to do in this lecture is reasonably straightforward and hopefully not fraught with disaster. I first would like to consider the idea of a Catholic University within the familiar historical and philosophical context, which I am sure is well-known to most members of this audience. But beyond this, I quite specifically wish to consider what it means to be a Catholic university in our own Commonwealth of Australia, particularly at the present time and in contemporary circumstances.

The Australian Higher Education Context

I should begin by noting that all Australian universities, and perhaps especially Australian Catholic universities, are facing a challenging and volatile environment. There are a number of reasons behind this reality, but I will isolate only a few.

One is that there is a strong current strand of public opinion that is deeply sceptical of the wider claims of universities to social and other relevance, being inclined to dismiss them as capital-guzzling relics of a last century approach to education delivery: the intellectual equivalents of a 1960's Rover car. This is a school of opinion within which the only thing that matters is a dedication to economic productivity, and which paradoxically does not seem to take much account of the fact that education is now Australia's third largest export industry, behind coal and iron, but ahead of tourism. This scepticism of higher education feeds into and is fed by a rich strand of Australian anti-intellectualism. After all, it often has been remarked that Australia is the only country in which the term "academic" is a term of abuse rather than approbation, or at least neutral description.

Similarly, the rise of technical and vocational education as a viable alternative to university education has had profound implications for Australian universities. No longer is it the case that a university degree is the only or principal viable means to material success. Partly as a result of such pressures, universities themselves have become increasingly vocational in their degree structures and offerings and deeply nervous of the "theoretical" and the "liberal", especially the expensive theoretical and liberal.

Arising out of such considerations, there has been something of a tussle for the souls of the universities in Australia. This has been a contest essentially between "vocationalists" and "traditionalists." For vocationalists, there is relatively little value to be placed upon such things as the liberal arts and humanities. Unless, a degree leads to a remunerative professional qualification or the equivalent, it effectively is useless. On this analysis, Plato was merely a no-good with too much time on his hands, and would have been better re-deployed as a Chartered Accountant. Traditionalists can go to the other extreme. In their more florid moments, they seem to imply that any change in universities since the 1850s has been retrograde, and that the only subjects properly to be taught are Latin, Ancient Greek and Medieval Astronomy. Somewhere in the middle of this somewhat fraught debate presumably lies the proper ground for a modern Australian university.

Finally, and critically, Australian universities are in the midst of a basic policy debate over the proper organisation of their sector. This centres around the fact that Australia has experienced a period of rapid change in the context of higher education, with the past three decades seeing the number of universities almost triple, from around twelve to around forty. In response to this extraordinary expansion, two widely differing policy prescriptions have been suggested.

The first may be termed the "concentration agenda". According to this approach, there are simply too many universities in Australia. Given that the twin requirements of politics and practicality means that we cannot effectively rid ourselves of any of these excess institutions, the best solution is to strip resources from the "worst" of them in order to feed the "best". This will, if nothing else, push the favoured universities upwards within world rankings, so increasing Australia's intellectual international standing.

The alternative approach is the "diversity agenda". This holds that as we have forty universities, we should work to make the best of that reality. We do not want all of these universities to be Melbourne University, and they cannot realistically be Melbourne University in any event. What we want, therefore, is for them to be excellent in diversely excellent ways, so that we have a sector that is world class not in its individual parts, but in its rich and wrangling totality.

It is clear that for both the former Howard and the present Rudd governments, it is the diversity agenda that represents the way forward. This is a correct and unsurprising policy position, given that diversity maximises potential, competition, vibrancy, and access within the university sector. But diversity carries with it challenges as well as opportunities. Critically, it means that each university will be challenged to concisely express its own meaningful and attractive difference, a requirement sometimes rendered as that to develop a “Diversity Niche”. This is a problematic challenge for some Australian universities who, if truth be known, are very similar to many other Australian universities. Yet it represents a real opportunity and advantage for the Catholic universities of Australia, because in a nation full of broadly similar, secular universities, the Catholic universities represent a distinct intellectual tradition and a fundamentally distinct philosophical and educational mission. In short, the times of university diversity suit Australian Catholic universities.

The Philosophical Context

There can be no surprises in the statement that Catholic universities subsist within a rich intellectual, philosophical and theological tradition. Indeed, that tradition is as rich and richer than that of its secular university derivatives: after all, the concept of a Western university is a Catholic invention and it is the University of Sydney – eminent as it is - that is the side-growth of the intellectual tradition of which the Australian Catholic University is a part of the main trunk.

One important exposition of that intellectual tradition is beautifully expressed in the great work of John Henry Cardinal Newman, *The Idea of a University*. It always should be remembered that this book is based upon lectures delivered when Newman was contemplating the setting-up of a specifically Catholic university in Ireland, rather than a secular institution. It will surprise no-one that the title of this present, humble lecture is a small homage to that seminal book of Catholic University intellectualism.

Sadly, *The Idea of a University* is one of those books that everyone cites, but almost no one has read, as opposed to those books that everybody has read but nobody admits to having read, like the works of Bryce Courtenay. In fact, when reading *The Idea of a University* one is struck both by the many things that are enduringly true, and by those few things which were true simply of the time in which Newman was writing. This is perhaps especially true of those parts of the work dealing explicitly with the notion of a Catholic university, but it is true generally of Newman’s thought relating to universities. Unsurprisingly, however, the greater part of Newman’s work continues to have the steely ring of unflawed truth.

Thus, there are a whole variety of precepts arising out of *The Idea of a University* which remain deeply, enduringly true for any modern Australian Catholic university. These begin with Newman’s absolute insistence upon the unity within such a university of faith and reason. It extends through this foundational truth to the central place of Theology as a discipline within a Catholic university, and the connectedness of all knowledge under the rubric of what Newman called “philosophy”, a concept which was to be fundamentally and pervasively reflected through any university. Beyond this, no sane person could argue with Newman’s insistence that it is the fundamental role of universities to teach their students to think, rather than to teach them any particular facts or things, a notion which Newman saw as arising out of the basic obligation of universities to teach their students “a cultivated, philosophical habit of mind”.

Similarly, no Catholic academic could quarrel with his insistence that Catholic universities do not merely derive their character from Catholicism, but have a particular role in defending it. Nor could they argue with Newman's conviction that there is something pervasively different about a university that is "Catholic" from one which is not: in other words, that the Catholicity of a university lies not merely in its confession, but in every aspect of its culture. All of these precepts remain as true for a modern Catholic university as they were on the day when they were written in 1852.

Some other, tangential elements of Newman's thought are, frankly, either outdated or quaint, however charming they may be. One example is his idea that classics are the very highest form of all university education, a proposition hard to argue in a world of astrophysics and historiography. Another is his deep scepticism of university education which has an ostentatiously vocational or professional end, though here it must be acknowledged that even Newman provided in his educational projects for the teaching of Engineering and Medicine. Finally, we may note Newman's stress upon teaching over research, although this sometimes is over-played. We must remember here that Newman's writing really pre-dated the final triumph of research within the great university constructs of the nineteenth century. Moreover, Newman's idea of university teachers was very much one of individuals of great scholarship and learning, whose natural outlet today certainly would be in both teaching and fundamental research.

Of course, the great, definitive modern source of educational philosophy for Catholic universities is the groundbreaking *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* of John Paul II. It may be noted at once that when *Ex Corde* is read alongside Newman's *The Idea of a University*, one is struck by the great and profound concordance between the two. Thus, a central message of *Ex Corde* is, in Newman-esque terms, to stress the basic centrality of Catholic universities to the Catholic Church, as illustrated by the idiom of its title: "Out of the Heart" of the Church. Likewise, *Ex Corde* takes as its organizing theme the unity of faith and reason, in terms strikingly familiar to the reasoning of Newman. Consistently with this, its notion of academic freedom within a Catholic university is of a concept that is intrinsic and not extraneous to Catholicity, embedded and not separate from the Church, with the naturally corresponding conviction that Catholic universities must not only accept but be prepared to stand in defence of the Church and its values. Both concepts are deeply harmonious with the positions of Newman. Finally, the fundamental proposition of *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* that the "Catholic" and "university" natures of a Catholic university are inextricable, and that each are fundamentally linked to the notion of intellectual excellence, could only find Newman nodding.

It should be noted, of course, that there are some differences of emphasis between *The Idea of a University* and *Ex Corde*, as one would expect given the lapse of time between the publication of the two documents. *Ex Corde*, for example, constantly stresses the importance of research, and makes it clear that there can be no such thing as a Catholic university that is not also a research university. This is a different emphasis to that of Newman, though there can be little doubt that, in modern circumstances, he would more or less agree. A second slight difference in emphasis is that *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* places heavy store in the service and social justice obligations of a Catholic university. While Newman hardly would be opposed to such concepts, given his own educational predilections, this might smack a little too closely of accounting and plumbing, albeit accounting and plumbing in a good cause.

It may be noted in his very recent speech to the Catholic University of America, His Holiness Benedict XVI reiterated and reaffirmed all of the central elements of *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, again in terms closely reminiscent of Newman's *Idea of a University*. His Holiness' speech revealed an attitude immensely positive toward Catholic universities, and indeed to all educators within the Church, including a call to the faithful to provide financial support to such enterprises. Pope Benedict stressed the role of Catholic universities in demonstrating the consistency between faith and reason, together with the need that they be committed absolutely to upholding the truth, however inconvenient that truth might be. He similarly stressed the holistic nature of Catholic education, in its integration of the intellectual, the formational, the liturgical and the sacramental. In terms reminiscent both of John Paul II and Newman, he defended the academic freedom of Catholic universities and academics, but within the absolute freedom of Catholic truth.

One small, final thing to be gained from this very brief excurses, is an understanding of the sophistication of the Catholic "theory" of a university, especially compared to the position pertaining to Australian secular examples. Typically, Australian secular universities focus less on what it is to be a university than upon such admittedly important operational issues as curriculum, quality and research. Australian Catholic universities necessarily are properly engaged in all of these important topics, but also are engaged in a constant meditation – almost prayer – upon what it is to be a university, and what it is to be a Catholic university. I would respectfully observe that this is a richer, deeper dialogue.

To Be an Australian Catholic University

This brings me to the heart of this lecture: what must a university do to be a genuinely Catholic university in Australia within the continuous, cohesive line of thought represented by Newman, John Paul and Benedict? I note here that I am a lawyer, and lawyers are practical creatures. They are, as Newman might have condescended, the plumbers of the academic world and I bring my pedestrian, itemised lawyer's approach to this task. Consistent with this, I believe that there essentially are ten components to being an authentically Australian Catholic university.

I would, however, precede this solicitor's itemisation by saying that all are wrapped in a simple prescription, which I believe to be applicable to all Catholic Universities and not just Australian Catholic universities. In short, to be successful as a Catholic university, an institution has to be supremely good at only two things: it must be supremely good at being Catholic, and it must be supremely good at being a university. There can be no choice between these two requirements. To be a great Catholic university, one cannot be a great university but not particularly Catholic, nor be deeply Catholic but a very bad university, although both options have been attempted. Catholic universities around the world must work overtime with both lobes of their single, united institutional brains, and the whole point of the thought of Newman, John Paul II and Benedict XVI regarding Catholic universities is to show that not only are the two indispensable, but they are richly, harmoniously, and mutually reinforcing. I now turn to consider the ten suggested characteristics of a Catholic university, which obviously overlap and interact, one with the other.

1. Demonstrating the Consistency of Faith and Reason

Flowing from everything that has been said so far concerning the nature of Catholic universities, it is clear that a Catholic university in Australia must take as its fundamental task that of demonstrating the consistency between faith and reason. This is enormously important in Australia, because the prevalent intellectual (and university) assumption is that the two are dichotomous, and that no connection may be drawn between them. By the quality of its teaching, its research, its intellect and its public engagement, an Australian Catholic university must rebut this falsity in demonstrating a deep and pervasive consistency between faith: that faith is not the enemy of reason, but its natural ally.

This is, perhaps, the right place to mention the concept of academic freedom within a Catholic university, though it is not the object of this lecture to deal with it comprehensively. It is the prevalent assumption of many within society that it is simply impossible to have academic freedom within a religious university, and perhaps that it is especially impossible for this to occur within a comprehensively religious university, such as a Catholic university. There are a number of responses to these propositions, none of them positive or polite.

The first is philosophical, and draws directly upon the reasoning of Newman and *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*. By definition, a Catholic university is a university of truth. Equally by definition, academic freedom thrives upon and exists within the truth. On this basis, academic freedom and the Catholic character of a Catholic university are deeply consistent, so long as an institution and its academics remain committed to its own basic institutional truth.

Secondly, to perhaps approach the matter from a more practical aspect, there is a deep hypocrisy in the idea that secular universities are the embodiment of academic freedom, unconstrained by ideology, and Catholic universities the opposite. The truth is that academic freedom within secular universities is deeply modified – sometimes benignly - by a whole variety of forces clustered around the acceptable expression of particular views: forces intellectual, social, philosophical, and even legal. The test here is to simply imagine an academic within an Australian secular university putting forward a deeply institutionally uncongenial view, especially, perhaps a view that was uncongenial precisely because it had a religious or religiously philosophical flavour within a secular university. It would not be unfair to say that, for an academic pertinaciously advancing such a view, promotion and preferment would flow like congealed mud.

Thirdly, and finally – and also practically – it has to be remembered that no academic is forced to operate within the context of a Catholic university. An academic who cannot in conscience support the ethos or truths of a Catholic university may well choose to pursue their research or teaching elsewhere. This is a reality that correspondingly faces not only academics from secular universities but the whole range of professionals who find themselves unsympathetic to the missions of their employers, be they law firms or miners. Naturally, this entire consideration needs to be wrapped within a notion of intellectual charity, a concept referred to prominently by Benedict XVI in his recent speech on Catholic education. Within this concept Catholic universities have an obligation to lead towards truth in an atmosphere of genuine intellectual discovery and discussion, but always genuinely to lead towards truth.

2. The Consistency between Faith and Excellence

Closely related to the demonstration of the consistency between faith and reason is the demonstration of the consistency between faith and excellence. This is, perhaps, the down-to-earth cousin of the urbane message of *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*. Thus, in a profoundly secular Australia, the prevalent assumption within not only institutions of learning but also the media and public service tea rooms is that you have to be stupid to believe and - correspondingly - that if you are clever, you should not believe. This prevalent attitude, pernicious in itself, is absolutely fatal to the continuance of faith among the young. Young people may well bear persecution for their faith, but they are deeply vulnerable to being laughed at over it.

In this connection, the Catholic university should demonstrate by the quality of its academics, its ideas, its teaching and its community standing that Catholic learning and intellect may stand unashamed in the very best company that there is. This is a fundamental role distinction between Catholic universities and the secular universities in Australia. Sadly, most secular universities are passive monuments to the proposition that faith and intelligence sit uneasily together and this is a message that will be repeated explicitly, implicitly and quite unselfconsciously in the lecture room, in the cafeterias and in the colleges.

A crucial connected issue, therefore, relates to the formation of future Catholic intellectuals and professionals. If we desire large numbers of genuinely Catholic professionals in areas like health and education, it simply is unrealistic to rely upon secular universities to nurture not only their intellectual development but the preservation of their intellectual faith life. This is not a deliberate or a considered decision on the part of such institutions: it merely is the case that all institutional cultural settings are against such a tendency. Clearly, it is not the case that every Catholic in Australia will attend a Catholic university, or that a range of Catholics will not come through the experience of secular universities with their faith intact or even enhanced, though support for such students by the Church certainly should be enhanced. Nevertheless, it remains the case that a fundamental argument for the existence of Australian Catholic universities lies in their maintenance of what might be called a Catholic workforce of intellect.

3. Intellectual Support for Faith

This is an aspect which looms large in the thought of both Newman and *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*. Both clearly look to Catholic universities to provide a crucial element in the intellectual fire-power of the Church in the defence of truth. This is not confined merely to the area of theology, although that clearly is an important aspect. Rather, Catholic universities must march with the Church into the world on those intellectual issues of most concern to it. These include issues of life (such as abortion and euthanasia), freedom of religion (including the free conduct of Catholic schools and other enterprises), and issues of social justice, such as the treatment of the marginalised and the vulnerable.

Catholic universities support the Church upon these issues in a variety of contexts: in their teaching; in their research; and crucially through their public intellectualism, where they give to the Church's participation in public debate both intellectual depth, learning and that particular type of public credibility conferred by "academic support". One may note that in the context of this public advocacy, there is a real distinction to be observed between the potential of Catholic academics at secular universities and Catholic academics at Catholic universities. No matter how well-disposed academics at non-Catholic universities may be, it will be all too easy for them to find themselves in a position where the forceful, public exposition of a Catholic point of view is embarrassing either for themselves internally or for their own institution externally. In these circumstances, they are in an invidious and inhibited position not experienced by intellectual leaders at a Catholic university. This is another major justification for Catholic universities in Australia, but its plausibility depends upon the willingness of academics at such institutions to shoulder the intellectual burden of their institution's Catholicity.

4. Intellectual Leadership in Areas of Special Concern to the Church

It must be obvious that Catholic universities should be the Church's own think-tanks in those areas of policy, research and public affairs that are of particular concern to the Church. As such, they should have a passionate interest in such theoretical fields as theology, philosophy and ethics, but also in such areas of applied knowledge as religious education, health, social justice, rights and education. Correspondingly, they should be ready and willing to respond to the needs of the Church in providing advice and insight in these contexts. The fundamental importance of research in this context again should be noted. There can be no such thing as an institution of intellectual leadership that is not an institution of research, Catholic or otherwise. Research is the license for a university to play in the great game of public intellectualism, and without this licence, it will be without credibility.

5. Support the Great Enterprises of the Church

It likewise is clear that a Catholic university must support those great enterprises that have been constructed by the Australian Church in the furtherance of its mission. One dimension of this is by providing support for the Church in the study and the teaching of theology. But other obvious dimensions will involve Catholic universities in supporting the Church in what have been its two great interventions in society in Australia, the creation of Catholic healthcare and Catholic education systems. Here, it will be a fundamental obligation of an Australian Catholic university to perform two services. First, as a matter of history and practicality, it has been a central role for Australian Catholic universities to take the leading responsibility for the production of the workforces of the Catholic health and education sectors. But secondly, and critically, these universities must educate those workforces within a deeply Catholic ethos: such a task cannot simply be left to secular entities, however eminent or generally well-disposed. An indispensable part of this wider educational envelope will be the provision of a research capacity that nourishes the ongoing intellectual and professional development of these enterprises.

6. A Distinctive Catholic Intellectual Perspective

Catholic universities should not be just other universities with a Catholic label applied and more or less filled with Catholic personnel, but nevertheless teaching the same syllabi according to the same educational approach and the same intellectual perspective as secular universities. On the contrary, a genuinely Catholic university should have a genuinely distinctive educational and intellectual product. This has a number of aspects.

One is that there must be something in the nature of a central curriculum, where students receive special exposure to the core intellectual apparatus of the Catholic tradition, theology and philosophy. This need not necessarily be a common core in the sense that every student studies each of these concepts in precisely the same way, so that theology is taught identically to students of nursing, literature and accountancy.

In reality, a number of possibilities are open, some more imaginative than the others. The two difficulties to be avoided are, on the one hand, numbingly delivering precisely the same content and pedagogy to vastly different students with vastly different needs; or on the other hand, dispersing the key disciplines of theology and philosophy so differentially through the entire curriculum of different degrees that they become both unrecognisable and undetectable. The real challenge is to inoculate students with a genuine Catholic intellectual sensibility that is pervasive, demonstrable, and intellectually sustainable. This is a task that requires both dedication and insight.

There is a second and wider task here. This is the issue of whether in a Catholic university it is possible to bring to virtually every unit of study a genuinely Catholic intellectual perspective, such that “Catholic English”, “Catholic History”, “Catholic Law” and even “Catholic Commerce”, while including the standard perspectives of such disciplines taught in any university, also bring something distinctly Catholic to their content and teaching. This is not an easy challenge, but it is one which I believe lies before every Catholic university, and ultimately is capable of being resolved in a way which distinctly enriches those institutions and their teaching.

7. Education that Values Faith

It is a fundamental truth that a Catholic university cannot simply engage in its educational activities amiably alongside its faith commitment, but without the two ever interacting, like two cars parked in adjoining parking bays. A Catholic university must value, reinforce and promote the faith of its Catholic students. This must occur in every context: in its teaching, as part of its community life, and in the availability of sacraments and literature. It must be demonstrated in the model of that university’s life, both as an institution and as a collectivity of staff. As Benedict XVI emphasises, Catholic universities are in the business of evangelisation, and without such an internal commitment, their value to the wider Church will be at best tangential.

It also follows that as universities of faith, Catholic universities will value and respect the faith of others, including those of their students who are not Catholic, as well as their non-Catholic staff. It is the role of a Catholic university to value not only its own faith but to value the fact of faith, and to engage in an intellectual dialogue with those of other beliefs, always within the envelope of its own absolute commitment to truth.

As regards the particular place of non-Catholic staff, as almost any Vice-Chancellor, President or rector of a Catholic university readily will testify, it often will be among the non-Catholic staff of such universities that a particular commitment to the mission of the University and Catholic intellectualism will be found.

8. Reflective Service in the Catholic Intellectual Tradition

Catholic universities must engage with and serve their communities, in faithfulness to one of the most central of the messages of the Gospel. It needs to be accepted that the commitment of a Catholic university to service must be expressly in pursuance of the Gospel message itself, and not based merely upon the conviction, common enough in many secular universities, that service itself is an intrinsically good thing. Service within the culture of a Catholic university is service which is actuated by the message of Christ and which is carried out in the great service tradition of the Church. Critically, it must be service counted in terms of humility, in the sense that the server both serves and is served in return, through receptive and reflective experience of the service relationship. It also is the case that, with a view to producing a holistic education, a Catholic university should be assiduous in ensuring that service is not something that is carried on essentially apart from the main enterprise of the university, but rather is integrated with teaching, research and the fulfilment of graduate attributes, so that it enriches both pedagogical and intellectual outcomes.

9. Fostering Catholic Culture

As very significant repositories of the material and intellectual goods of the Church, there is a strong obligation amongst Catholic universities to foster the richness of Catholic culture. This extends to every aspect of the Church's cultural heritage, including art, music, liturgy, literature and history. A Catholic university should be a showcase of the cultural quality of the Church itself within the community concerned. It may be noted that, at least in Australia, Catholic universities have not always risen to this challenge, although similar comments could be made regarding their secular equivalents, perhaps especially in the field of architecture.

10. A Model Catholic Community

As a collection of individuals, a Catholic university must model that which it says it is: in other words, it must be a profoundly Catholic community. There are two aspects to this. The first is obvious. Catholic members of the community of a Catholic university pursue a life that is authentically Catholic in terms of their faith, values, and behaviour. Non-Catholic members of such a community naturally will not partake directly in the faith aspects of such a life, but nevertheless, will act consistently with the moral, intellectual and ethical values of a Catholic university.

The second aspect of modelling a Catholic community is, perhaps, less obvious. This is that a Catholic university in its own internal, institutional behaviour should on an everyday basis model itself upon the teachings and precepts of Jesus Christ. This precept will extend to the care of students, the treatment of staff and interaction with the wider community, and will have a whole variety of aspects across such areas as industrial relations, a commitment to inclusive student life, and a just approach to discipline. There can be no point in a Catholic university which professes to follow the values of Christ intellectually and religiously but does not extend charity and understanding to those of Christ's people who are members of its own community.

Things No Catholic University Can Do

Beyond these positive stipulations for a Catholic university, it seems to me that there also are three fundamental prohibitions that should negatively guide its direction. In a sense, these all flow from the fundamental requirements that a Catholic university be deeply Catholic and very much a university.

First, no Catholic university can afford to diminish its own Catholicity to please Government, the higher education sector in general, society as a whole or any segment of its own community. A Catholic university is, by definition, Catholic and so it must remain. Second, and correspondingly, a Catholic university cannot honestly take the position that so long as it is faithfully Catholic, it can afford to be a second or third rate university. There is nothing second rate about Catholic intellectualism, and such a stance would be an insult to its own Catholicity. Third, a Catholic university cannot become inward-facing, so that it speaks only to Catholics or to some particular grouping of Catholics, "liberal" or "conservative". Rather, Catholic universities must boldly and outwardly face the community as a whole in bringing the insights of Catholic intellectualism to the world or their part of that world.

Again, what all these propositions ultimately come down to is that a Catholic university must do two things. It must be supremely Catholic, and supremely a university: with this dual commitment, all else follows.

Some Applications for The Australian Catholic University

This lecture is not an advertisement for the University of which I am Vice-Chancellor. However, I will offer just a few brief, illustrative observations concerning some directions to be followed in an attempt to conform to the stipulations that we have been discussing.

The first is the establishment of a Faculty of Theology within The Australian Catholic University, a development currently being pursued through a review under the leadership of Archbishop Mark Coleridge of Canberra-Goulburn. As propounded by *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, it is vital that every Catholic university accord Theology an appropriate place within its walls, in order that Theology itself may stamp its character upon the university. The creation of a Faculty of Theology in The Australian Catholic University will be a fundamental step in this direction. Indeed there is a wider, basic role for Theology within The Australian Catholic University and the Australian Catholic higher education sector as such. At a time when the Commonwealth government is conducting a fundamental review of research within Australian universities, it is a matter of interest for the entire Australian Church that intellectual leadership in this field be strongly driven through an authentically Catholic tradition rather than through some secular university prism.

Similarly, the requirement that a Catholic university be characteristically a university within which serious research is systematically undertaken has prompted The Australian Catholic University to commence a complete review of its research profile and effort with a view to greatly amplifying the research life of the university. This type of process is fundamental if the university is to constantly demonstrate the consistency of faith and reason through intellectual excellence. A crucial element of this process will be to identify those areas of research excellence and importance, concentration upon which by the university will constitute its “diversity niche” within the Commonwealth Government’s policy agenda.

A fundamental criterion in the identification of these points of concentration will be their correlation with the character of the university as a Catholic university. Consequently, one major distinguishing feature of the Australian Catholic University within its diversity niche inevitably will be a profound concentration upon theology and philosophy. Others, unsurprisingly, will concern aspects of healthcare and education of vital significance to the Catholic, community, as well as a deep commitment to research in the field of social justice. Given that The Australian Catholic University is the only Australian Catholic university with a commitment to a broad research platform, this is a particular responsibility that it must discharge within Australian Catholicism.

The university also intends to work hard in the context of public engagement on issues relevant to Catholic intellectualism. It will strive to bring the academic firepower of the university to bear in public debates in a way that promotes Catholic values and positions. One important aspect of this will be the establishment of an Institute of Public Policy in Canberra to focus on policy issues of concern to the Church and its people: for example, in such areas as life, social justice and religious freedom. The object will be to give support to the Church, her people and her leaders in the furtherance of policy objectives reflective of Catholic social and other understandings. In a similar connection, the University will be reflecting upon the contribution it potentially might make in such fields as journalism and communications.

After decades of contribution in these fields, the university is earnestly reflecting upon the ways in which it might even better serve and support the great works of the Church in the fields of education and health. In the context of education, the university will look for new and innovative ways to work with Church educators, particularly in enhancing the intellectual opportunities of those who are already teachers and administrators within Catholic education systems through postgraduate education, backed by quality, focused research. In the context of health, it will expand its programmes into other areas crucial to the development of the Catholic workforce.

Ambitiously, the university will closely explore ways in which it can deliver a distinctive Catholic educational experience, within which a Catholic intellectual insight appropriately informs and embellishes all disciplines. It will examine how it can centralise within its courses significant perspectives from such elemental disciplines as Theology and Philosophy to ensure that every aspect of its curriculum is deeply imbued with Catholic intellectualism. In this context, it stands ready to pursue challenging, innovative and exciting new options.

Finally, like any Catholic university committed to its mission, the University looks to renew its spiritual life as part of a perpetual meditation upon what it is to be an authentically “Catholic university”. It will conduct, if so unlikely a phenomenon can be imagined, a full “spiritual audit” in order to determine the range of ways in which it can move ever closer to the living ideal of a Catholic university.

Conclusion

I would like to thank you all for the opportunity of addressing you this evening. It is a great challenge to be Vice-Chancellor of an Australian Catholic university, but it is also the greatest privilege that can be imagined for any Australian Catholic academic. In this, there is an essential similarity between leading an Australian Catholic university and being any other follower of Christ.

Please Note: This speech has been used for other purposes and has been used on more than one occasion.