

# Preface

Rev. Dennis Dease  
President of the University of St. Thomas

I am pleased to present you with this collection of essays, which were written by faculty, administrators, and staff who participated in the 1994 summer seminar on "The Idea of a Catholic University."

Some of the essays reflect on the general question of what constitutes the Catholic nature of a university; others engage the issue of academic freedom; still others examine the role of specific disciplines within a Catholic university; and finally, some consider the special contribution the Catholic university makes to the spiritual and moral development of students.

As was the seminar for the participants, these essays will be of considerable help to all who wish to acquire a deeper understanding of the nature and value of a Catholic university, its history, its opportunities, and its challenges as it strives to keep its identity vital into the next century. I was especially pleased to see that the seminar gave sustained attention to *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* and that it is a positive point of reference in nearly all the seminar essays.

We owe special gratitude to Rev. Brian Daley, S.J., (professor of historical theology, Weston School of Theology) for selecting the readings and for conducting the seminar in an exemplary fashion. Participants were unanimous in their praise of his learning, critical acumen, and most of all, ability to create an ambience that invited an open exchange of ideas.

One member of the seminar (a non-Catholic by the way) wrote the following:

"I've affirmed my belief that I can make a valuable contribution to the effort of Catholic identity and development."

I hope that reading these essays will help you to make a similar affirmation. I also hope these essays will encourage you to join one of the summer seminars in the upcoming years that will address specific topics with respect to the Catholic identity of a university. Next year's seminar, conducted by Professor Janine Langan of the University of Toronto, will be on "The Curriculum and the Catholic University."