

Mentoring and Modeling: Two Distinctive Roles in Catholic University Education

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Mission Statement for the University of St. Thomas

The University of St. Thomas is a comprehensive, coeducational, Catholic university. It seeks to develop morally responsible individuals who combine career competency with cultural awareness and intellectual curiosity.

In its undergraduate program, the university is committed to the development of the student through a liberal arts education within the living Catholic tradition and through a high degree of personal attention in a spiritually and intellectually stimulating campus environment.

Graduate programs emphasize the integration of theory with practice, enhance the professional competence and ethical judgment of their students and foster personal growth and an appreciation of lifelong learning.

In all of its academic programs and other educational enterprises, the university is committed to meeting the diverse, changing needs of the community. Throughout, the university fosters in the student a tradition of service to the public welfare and an energetic, thoughtful approach to the challenges of contemporary life.

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If we look closely at the University of St. Thomas mission statement, we can see that its two middle paragraphs present distinguishable aspirations for the undergraduate and graduate programs, respectively. The undergraduate program is "committed to the development of the student through a liberal arts education within the living Catholic tradition and through a high degree of personal attention in a spiritually and intellectually stimulating campus environment." The graduate programs, largely professional in orientation, "emphasize the integration of theory with practice, enhance the professional competence and ethical judgment of their students and foster personal growth and an appreciation of lifelong learning."

Intuitively, there is a difference of emphasis here that might (mistakenly) be interpreted as "undergrad Catholic" and "grad secular." This would be a mistake because both paragraphs are prefaced by the university-wide characterization of "comprehensive, co-educational, Catholic." So a natural question is: How do we understand the Catholic character of the university in these two broad settings? And if the graduate programs are

to participate in our traditional faith-anchored mission, how does this participation differ from that of the undergraduate programs?¹

In this short essay, I offer an interpretation of the Catholic character of the university as it manifests itself differently in these two parts of the curriculum and in the experience surrounding the curriculum.² My perspective, in a nutshell, is that while all of the educational programs in a Catholic university ultimately must be evaluated in terms of their contribution to its overall mission, the undergraduate programs and the graduate professional programs express the Catholic character of the university in distinct ways. Two principal ways, and the ones I shall focus on, are mentoring and modeling.

The significance of this interpretation, if it is widely shared, is that it affirms the unity of our mission while at the same time appreciating different embodiments and curricular strategies for accomplishing that mission.

Two Student Populations — Some Background Demographics

As an empirical platform for the discussion of mentoring and modeling, let us briefly look at some of the demographic characteristics of the two student populations, undergraduate and graduate. I have chosen here some very basic variables for comparison and contrast: population size, academic concentration ("major"), age, residential status, religion, gender and racial background.

As the table on next page indicates, pre-professional and professional education represent large proportions of the undergraduate (50 percent) and graduate (95 percent) populations. The average ages of the two populations are separated by 11 years and, we can assume, significant work and family experience. The proportion of undergraduates who live on or near the campus (50 percent) is significantly different from the proportion of graduate students (1 percent). This latter fact influences the forum of interaction between the university and the student, with the graduate schools having a much more limited forum than the undergraduate college. The proportion of Catholics is closer to two-thirds in the undergraduate population and one-third in the graduate population, but the proportions of expressed religious affiliation are both significant (91 percent undergraduate; 73 percent graduate). Gender balance is similar between the populations as is racial background (90 percent white).

Perhaps the most significant factors that argue for different approaches to the mission of the university among these two populations, especially that part of the mission that emphasizes the institution's Catholic character, are those in the middle of the table: concentrations, ages, residential status, and expressed religious affiliation.

Mentoring and Modeling — Two Approaches to the Mission of the Catholic University

I suggest that the mission of St. Thomas has a dual orientation, not unlike the two faces of Janus at the gates of Roman cities: one looking inward over the growth and

development of the residents; the other looking outward to guide and support those who go forth from the gates into the "world."³

Mentoring connotes teaching, counseling, and trusted stewardship toward students in the last formal stages of their pre-adult education.⁴ The inward face of Janus is "domestic." In a Catholic context, stewardship includes helping students to integrate sacred and secular streams in their intellectual and social lives.

The college-level extension of the Catholic formation process, often a continuation of students' Catholic high school education — what I am here calling mentoring — calls for curricular and extracurricular activities that strengthen and reinforce an ongoing developmental process. To do so, assumptions must be made about the general orientation of the student body, even if a significant minority of students, staff, and faculty are not Catholics. It has long been true that non-Catholics have found much to affirm short of communion with the Church of Rome in the values and disciplines of Catholic higher education.⁵

Modeling, on the other hand, connotes something different. It can go on alongside mentoring, of course, but it also can go on outside the mentoring context as the outward face of Janus in a more cosmopolitan environment. To model is to exemplify and to witness to certain values and beliefs. In graduate education, modeling translates into selecting themes and materials for classroom use and applying principles and tools in a manner that is consonant with the Gospel values informing the university as a whole. It also translates, of course, into instructor interactions with students and colleagues that are respectful of the dignity of each person.

In our graduate and professional schools, students are not enrolling (typically) for an extension of the Catholic formation process. They are seeking competence in education, psychology, social work, business, technology, and someday perhaps, law — from an institution whose religious foundation and mission they respect, but whose religious faith they may not share.⁶ And while it is true that our undergraduate population is not entirely Catholic (60 percent), the mission adjusts for the exception on the undergraduate campus in a way quite different from the graduate school environment.

To illustrate, using a subject common to the two curricula, the teaching of business ethics in our required undergraduate business ethics course (BUS 300) includes in a very natural way the reading and discussion of John Paul II's *Centesimus Annus*. This reading might be less appropriate in the Graduate School of Business, unless it was presented in an elective course or as a document directed broadly to persons of good will.⁷ Similarly, perhaps, for a required Community Service 200 experience at the undergraduate level. In a context of formation or mentoring, such a requirement is easier to justify than in a context of witnessing or modeling (which might, nevertheless, call for an elective approach to service rather than no approach at all).

None of this is to say that the core mission of St. Thomas — and specifically its Catholic character — is irrelevant to its graduate professional schools. Nor is it to say that the

audience for that teaching must be exclusively Catholic. It is to say, though, that normal student expectations at the graduate level do not include mentoring in Catholic adult education — at least not without special explanation or specific course focus.⁸ But they do and should include modeling (e.g., the presence in the curriculum of courses on and course attention to the ethical and spiritual dimensions of management decision making as in MBMG 600 and 990, and the study of the humanities to place in context the contemporary leadership virtues needed for global commerce as in MBMG 900.)⁹

There are no doubt some who believe that the Catholic character of St. Thomas should be more explicit and more vigorously emphasized at all levels — and others who would disagree. A recent controversy over displaying a poster depicting Margaret Sanger in the library is an illustration. A separate question, however, is whether there is a difference between the way the Catholic character of the undergraduate college (inward-facing Janus) as compared with the graduate schools (outward-facing Janus) expresses itself. We would do well to distinguish degree of commitment (which can be high in both settings) from the orientation of that commitment (which can be as different as Peter and Paul). [See diagram.]

The Academic Vision Statement of the university articulates eloquently the spirit behind both mentoring and modeling — and allows us to discern the complementarity of the two orientations:

The members of the University of St. Thomas community commit themselves to learning as a lifetime activity for students, staff, and faculty. We strive to impart this value to all in the larger community, urban and beyond, with whom we come in contact. We believe learning is enhanced when it takes place within a diverse but supportive community, when it is active and collaborative, and when all involved acknowledge they have both something to learn and something to teach. Such learning should touch the whole person — spirit and faith as well as intellect and skills. We believe the Catholic educational and social traditions provide a rich context for the learning community because they embrace a respect for each person.

We further believe that all in our community are entitled to have a voice in the ongoing creation and evolution of the University. We respect the past and preserve tradition at the same time that we embrace change and accept the new. We strive to model in our professional lives those values which we espouse to the community.

In the undergraduate experience, curricular and extracurricular, the Catholic tradition is preserved and students are mentored into adult integration of that tradition with their lives in a wider community. In the more diverse graduate experience, the Catholic tradition provides a context that addresses "the whole person — spirit and faith as well as intellect and skills."

The message of the frescoes on the ceiling of our Minneapolis campus facility (faith, hope, charity, prudence, temperance, fortitude, and justice) is not the message of a secular institution, even if one is not taken with the artist's renderings of the cardinal virtues. It is

the message of a faith-affirming institution to a secular world. The second or third largest graduate school of business in the nation (UST) is, we can hope, a witness to the educational mission of the Church in the modern world, but the curriculum presents this testimony in a more inclusive manner and with different assumptions about its students' needs and expectations, than does the curriculum in the undergraduate college. And similar observations would apply to the graduate schools of education, technology, psychology and social work.

Summary and Conclusion

If one believes, as I am inclined to, that the Catholic character of St. Thomas expresses itself differently in the undergraduate college than in the graduate professional schools, one must also be aware of common ground. There are some basic Gospel values that are common to both efforts, values such as:

- a foundational commitment to the common good (and so to stakeholder consideration) in the interpretation of professional responsibility;
- a belief in the dignity of the human person alongside this commitment to the common good;
- a desire to develop both head and heart (mind and spirit) in one's professional life and in the organizational cultures that surround and influence professionals;
- a conviction that the study of the humanities plays a central role in achieving the balance of head and heart in one's life;
- a dedication to social justice and so to community service as among the moral, if not legal, obligations of professionals.

The distinctive expression of these values in the undergraduate college, which surely includes the formation of mature Catholic adults, heart and mind, differs from their expression in UST's graduate professional schools, which witness to the traditional values of the institution in relation to a more diverse population. This difference contributes to the richness and the relevance of our university in the 21st century.

Notes

1. We can set aside the Divinity School as a clear exception in this context, since its participation in the Catholic character of the university mission is unique.
2. I concentrate here on the undergraduate and graduate programs at the University of St. Thomas, but my guess is that these observations are generalizable to other Catholic universities with undergraduate liberal arts colleges and graduate professional degree

programs. I should add that professional degrees (like the M.B.A.) are the main focus in the context of graduate education, leaving for another time a discussion of doctoral studies and non-degree executive education programs. Still another dimension of the issue here comes from non-traditional age groups pursuing undergraduate education through New College. Do these students align more with the graduate population or the undergraduate population — or do they present a third paradigm?

3. Taking a more biblical perspective we might draw an analogy to St. Peter and St. Paul — the former attending to the Jews in Jerusalem and the latter off to the commercial and cultural crossroads in Asia Minor. Both lived out the Catholic mission, of course, but in distinct ways, and not without occasional disagreements about the right course to take.

4. The origin of the word lies in Homer's *Odyssey*, where Odysseus leaves his trusted friend Mentor in charge of the household during his absence.

5. It should go without saying, but I will say it, that the two orientations (mentoring and modeling) are not exclusive vis-à-vis the undergraduate and graduate programs, respectively. There surely are non-Catholic undergrads toward whom modeling is the natural organizational response and there are Catholic graduate students toward whom mentoring is appropriate. These minority exceptions do not undercut the main thrust of the argument in this essay, which is that the university's mission differs in orientation between the undergraduate and graduate programs.

6. At least three-fourths of the graduate students affirm religious belief, as we see above, but less than half of that number affirm Catholic religious affiliation.

7. As a matter of fact, *Centesimus Annus* is taught in at least one elective course in the Graduate School of Business, MBMG 900, the Aspen Masters Seminar.

8. For example, an elective course that might be taught jointly between the Graduate School of Business and the Divinity School on "Management Ethics and Catholic Social Teaching."

9. A new elective titled "Faith, Spirituality, and the Modern Manager" was taught during the spring 1996 semester in the Graduate School of Business.