

# **IDENTITY QUESTIONS: USING A UNIVERSITY'S RELIGIOUS CHARISM TO DISCERN**

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Both presentations are rich and on many occasions provide scope for meaningful discussions. They are in tune with the main theme of our conference.

When I started preparing for my response to Dr John's paper, I did not know what the Rule Of St Benedict was and I am sure that many in this august gathering were also on that mental framework. The rule of St Benedict written in the 6th century by St Benedict contains a treasure of spiritual wisdom concerning the monastic movement in the church. Its spiritual doctrine picks up on the values of the Bible and arranges for a life in which these values can be lived out in community. I want to state here that Dr John has greatly succeeded in analyzing how these rules have impacted the teaching learning practices in the Benedictine college.

Dr John Bunch in his elaborate analysis has dealt with the impact of the Benedictine traditions at the Benedictine college. He starts his analysis with the stated mission of the college ie, 'to create a community of faith and scholarship'. To him realization of this mission leads to academic excellence based on 1500 years of the Benedictine religious tradition. This in turn leads to the greater glorification of God.

It is fascinating to understand the transformational process which was on the verge of closure. A statement from the president of the college is reproduced in the paper to explain the phenomenal difference the college has witnessed.

The challenge before the college was not one of survival. It was indeed the demand for excellence. Blessings from God have come in the form of infrastructural additions. The college witnessed positive cash flows and balanced budgets

To the president the secret behind this miraculous change was 'going to the fundamentals'. The college wanted to be a mission driven institution. Every experiment in the college was to be consistent with its mission. The four pillars of the college as envisioned in the mission statement are

- 1 Catholic
- 2 Benedictine
- 3 Liberal Arts and
- 4 Residential college

The mission, vision and values of the college are incorporated in to the college's educational curriculum. The paper clearly illustrates the approach to business education at Benedictine college. This approach is expressed directly in three different program areas

1. Catholic Social Teaching and Outreach.

2. Leadership Programme for Building Future leaders of the World.
3. The Institute for Professional Ethics and Responsibility.

The paper clearly emphasizes on worshipful work, discipline, obedience and subsidiary and human dignity and draws insights from Catholic Social thought.

Dr John's approach is not one of theoretical expositions, but also one of time tested practical methods which they have successfully tried at the Benedictine college. The paper also examines the challenges like gaining support from the college community, lack of knowledge, acceptance or a common interpretation of CST.

In the concluding part, the author of the paper has furnished a sample course outline in accordance with the rule of St Benedict. But as a critique I would like to add that the paper would have been better with a brief introduction of the main Benedictine values.

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Dr. Russell's paper is an attempt to probe in to the impact of the Franciscan values in the Franciscan based catholic colleges. This paper is the result of a survey Dr Russell conducted among the faculty members of Franciscan colleges.

In the survey instrument administered Dr Russell requested the faculty members of 15 Franciscan colleges to rate the extent to which Franciscan values reflected their teaching, advisement, service and scholarship. Each faculty member was asked for specific examples of Franciscan values that were reflected in teaching, advisement, scholarship and service

The survey revealed that Franciscan values influence their teaching, where as there is less emphasis placed on Franciscan values when applied to research. Significant emphasis is placed on Franciscan values when applied to advisement. These responses had a central theme of 'caring for students' Franciscan values appear to influence many faculty members when providing service to their community, school or profession.

Dr Russell succeeded in bringing forth the faculty responses to a fundamental theme, that of catholic social teaching, as envisioned by one of the most effective reformers that the church had ever seen .St Francis Assisi lived between 1182 and 1226.He is known as the patron saint of animals, birds, environment and Italy.

The paper would have been more complete with an introduction to the main Franciscan values like contemplation, conversion, minority, and poverty. Again, to the 150 faculty members to whom the author sent questionnaire, only 51 responded (a response rate of 31%).Generalizations based on this response rate cannot be taken as very strong conclusions.