This book originally published: -


Permission granted by The Lonergan Centre and Matthew C. Ogilive for use on ResearchOnline@ND.

Copyright © 2018 The Lonergan Centre, Canisius College, Sydney (Australia) and Matthew C. Ogilvie, Ph.D.
Foreword

This book began as a series of professional development sessions held in 2014 for the faculty and staff at the Broome Campus of the University of Notre Dame Australia. Those sessions were given in response to concerns that included: questions about the identity of a Catholic University, the relationship between the Church and Aboriginal people, the place of social justice in a Catholic university, the Catholic Intellectual Tradition, the constitution of the University’s faculty and staff as well as issues of academic freedom. Those concerns made it clear that members of the University community and key stakeholders needed clarification about the mission and nature of a Catholic university, especially one that has a unique campus such as University of Notre Dame’s Broome campus and which has a mandated mission of outreach to Aboriginal people.

Since then, and with the encouragement of colleagues both from the Broome campus and Notre Dame’s other campuses, I have refined those presentations and augmented them with other material in order to present this book, which is a series of essays that focus on the common theme of, “A Catholic University in the Kimberley.” Because each essay is mostly independent, some material may be repeated, though this repetition will occur in different contexts and with different emphases.

The intention of this book is to provide a series of research papers that will serve as resources for faculty, students and other stakeholders. It is my intention to help key parties to articulate the intellectual tradition that grounds the University, the relationship between the Church and Aboriginal culture, the
nature and constitution of the faculty and to outline the theological and social teaching issues that affect the mission of the University. While some of the material in the book may not be entirely new, it is presented in what I trust is a fresh and new perspective, from the Catholic Intellectual Tradition and from theology, that can answer questions of the “why” and “how” of a Catholic University in the Kimberley.
## CONTENTS

The Role of a Catholic University in the Kimberley .................................................. 2  
The Identity of a Catholic University ................................................................. 6  
The Nature and Mission of the Catholic Intellectual Tradition ....................... 16  
Social Concerns and the Catholic University ......................................................... 34  
The Catholic University’s Faculty ........................................................................ 51  
The Encounter of Faith and Cultures ................................................................. 62  
Classicism and Aboriginal Culture ..................................................................... 82  
Conclusion ................................................................................................................. 97  
Bibliography ............................................................................................................. 111
THE ROLE OF A CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY IN THE KIMBERLEY

Our Mission to Work with Aboriginal Australians.

“The Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ speaks all languages. It esteems and embraces all cultures.”
- Pope John Paul II, Alice Springs Address, 1986.

In 1994, the University of Notre Dame Australia (2017) established a campus in Broome. It was entrusted with a “special mission” to foster reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. It has also been charged with providing an “educational arena” in which Indigenous and non-Indigenous people can teach and learn in a united work of learning and training.

Why is a mission to Aboriginal Australians so special to a Catholic University? In the first place, Pope John Paul II highlighted this mission in his
address to Indigenous Australians at Alice Springs (Alice Springs Address). He emphasised that, from the earliest times of white settlement, Church leaders such as Archbishop Polding of Sydney, had recognised the inhumane and unethical treatment of Aboriginal people and they set themselves against the legal fiction used by European settlers that this country was discovered “terra nullius.” John Paul II reminded his hearers that Archbishop Polding, “strongly pleaded for the rights of the Aboriginal inhabitants to keep the traditional lands on which their whole society depended.” John Paul II then declared simply, but authoritatively, “The Church still supports you today” (Alice Springs Address, n10).

John Paul II also emphasised the rights of Aboriginal people to their land. In a way that seems almost prescient, given contemporary debates about constitutional recognition, he argued that Aboriginal people had never surrendered their rights, or what would more correctly be called “custodianship,” and that, “to call for the acknowledgment of the land rights of people who have never surrendered those rights is not discrimination.” He then called on Catholics and people of goodwill to work for the future and to remedy the deeds that had put Aboriginal people in the marginalised position in which they find themselves today (Alice Springs Address, n10).

John Paul II then further explained the Church’s position towards Aboriginal people. He declared that Aboriginal people have a “lasting genius and dignity,” and that the ancient culture that both sustains and shows that dignity must be preserved. That is, the distinctive gifts of Aboriginal culture are valuable and whether that culture exists in song, stories, dance or language, that culture “must never be lost” (Alice Springs Address, n3).

To bolster the Catholic position on the importance of Aboriginal culture, and perhaps to show that esteem for Aboriginal culture was not just a concern of one Pope, John Paul II cited Pope Paul VI’s address (1970) in which he made clear the Church’s respect for Aboriginal culture. Paul VI further emphasised
that society itself is enriched by different cultures and that the Aboriginal people and their values are “precious” to the Church.

So, Aboriginal people, their culture and values are precious to the Church and Popes have emphasised the Church’s commitment to upholding, preserving, even advancing Aboriginal culture. Where does this place a Catholic University in the Kimberley? In Ex Corde Ecclesiae (1990, n13) John Paul II emphasised that one of the defining characteristics of a Catholic university, “as Catholic” (John Paul II’s emphasis) is, “an institutional commitment to the service of the people of God and of the human family in their pilgrimage to the transcendent goal which gives meaning to life.”

So the challenge before a Catholic university in the Kimberley is how to serve the Aboriginal people of God, how to achieve reconciliation and to right past wrongs, how to sustain Aboriginal culture, and how to foster the dignity of Aboriginal people.

To help with answers to those challenges, this book will explore the identity of a Catholic university and the nature and mission of the Catholic Intellectual Tradition. We will then explore Catholic social teaching with particular emphasis on the concerns of Aboriginal people. To explore issues important to the Broome campus of Notre Dame, we will discuss briefly the role and place of Catholic and non-Catholic staff and academic freedom. Then, this book will pursue reflections on the encounter of Catholicism and Aboriginal cultures and the reasons why Catholic theology has for so long found it hard to engage properly with Aboriginal culture. The book will end with summary reflections and recommendations on the nature, mission, and identity of a Catholic university in the Kimberley.

Before doing this, however, I should raise two caveats. Firstly, this book is in no way meant to be exhaustive in its scope. It will deal with some select issues that are important enough to generate discussion about the mission of a Catholic university campus that serves Aboriginal people. Secondly, this book is written “from the outside,” by a non-Aboriginal author. While I have been
blessed by the hospitality, openness, and wisdom of Aboriginal people in the Kimberley and in Perth, I can in no way pretend to write “from the inside” of deep cultural issues. So my aim in this book is to write in a way that is accessible to non-Aboriginal people, to inform and prompt them to discussion and give a more solid perspective on why the campus in the Kimberley is so important. If my Aboriginal friends also find worthwhile reflections in this book I shall be happy. Otherwise, I will rely on the grace of Aboriginal people being the most forgiving race whom I have ever encountered.
THE IDENTITY OF A CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY

The Catholic University is
“Born from the Heart of the Church.”
- Pope John Paul II, Ex Corde Ecclesiae.

In this chapter, I would like to examine the identity of a Catholic University with primary reference to Pope John Paul II’s Ex Corde Ecclesiae. In his encyclical, the Pope intended to define the nature of a Catholic university, to explain the relationship of a Catholic university with the Church and to outline the mission of a Catholic University to the world.

John Paul II highlights the importance of Catholic universities, first, by declaring (Ex Corde Ecclesiae, n1) that they are, “Born from the Heart of the Church.” In a personal statement (Ex Corde Ecclesiae, n2) he emphasises how Catholic universities are vital signs of the potential for the Catholic Intellectual Tradition to have a positive impact on the world’s cultures. In the face of myriad challenges and changing circumstances, John Paul II conceives Catholic universities as contributing to the hope that Christian culture can flourish within and contribute to the world’s cultures today by bringing to the world the truth and love of God.
One question with regard to Catholic universities is whether they exist to either promote Christian faith and values or to serve the broader human good. John Paul II’s clear answer is “both” (Ex Corde Ecclesiae, n11). He states that, “Catholic Universities are essential to her growth and to the development of Christian culture and human progress.” This dual mission of the Catholic university, to serve both God and the human good, grounds John Paul II’s conviction that Catholic universities should be supported by the Church community and also be protected by the state. That is, because Catholic universities serve the good not only of the Church but also civil society, John Paul II argues that Catholic universities should have their rights and freedoms protected and that they should be given appropriate economic aid. This point bears upon what John Paul II would see as both the Church’s and civil society’s responsibility to support Catholic universities. That is because the universities do not exist for their own benefit, but instead they work in service to both Church and the wider society.

The vision of a Catholic university’s mission is echoed in John Henry Newman’s The Idea of a University (1852, xii). Newman argues that Catholic universities are founded not only for the sole purpose of intellectual development, but also for fostering the spiritual formation of students, for making the students more productive and influential members of their society, for aiding them to better fulfil their vocations and for making students, “more intelligent, capable, active members of society.”

If the Catholic university is founded for a spirit of service, John Paul II (Ex Corde Ecclesiae, 4) also emphasises that the university’s mission includes, “the acquisition of useful knowledge” as well as the pursuit of truth that is integrated, truth that tells us about our world and the reality of human beings and their relationship to God. Thus, the university’s mission is not only to discover truth but its mission is to seek and explain the meaning of truth. Thus, the Catholic university has a mission to a “universal humanism,” as he puts it, by which we keep alive “freedom, justice and human dignity.” That search for the meaning
of truth is especially important because a university may, and should, make many scientific and technological discoveries. However, he explains (Ex Corde Ecclesiae, n7) that the Catholic university’s special mission is to ensure that, through the search for meaning, it can ensure that “new discoveries be used for the authentic good of individuals and of human society as a whole.” In other words, a Catholic university is not just a technical institute of utilitarian service, it is an institution that unites knowledge under the mantle of wisdom.

While John Paul II presents a lofty vision, it bears upon a conflict of visions of university education. Is higher education supposed to be technical training for vocations, or is it education in wisdom? The question has been both important and divisive, especially with regard to education for oppressed peoples. In his classic autobiography, Up From Slavery, Booker T. Washington (1901) rejected classical liberal arts education for African-Americans in favour of technical training that produced job-ready graduates. The thinking behind this position was to advance the economic good of African-Americans by training productive graduates who could create marketable goods and services. This was in contradistinction to those who wished to leave productive labour, have a classical education, and enter a less utilitarian career.

The differences between the visions of John Paul II and Booker T. Washington cut to the core mission of a Catholic university in the Kimberley. Should the university follow Washington’s vision and provide vocational training that produces job-ready graduates, or should it engage in wisdom education, as in John Paul II’s vision of a university? In the Kimberley, the question may be framed thus: Do we desire a training institute that can produce employable Aboriginal people who can follow the dominant Australian culture, or do we have a vision for forming educated wise people who can be leaders in their culture, and provide leadership and inspiration to non-Aboriginal culture? While Washington’s technical emphasis has visible economic advantages, John Paul II’s vision (Ex Corde Ecclesiae, n7) is for a university to bring together faith and reason under a mantle of commitment to Catholic faith and values. This
means that a Catholic university’s teaching and research necessarily include “the moral, spiritual and religious dimension” and that we ensure that the discoveries we make and the things we teach are evaluated in the light of how they serve “the totality of the human person.”

A thoughtful consideration of the mission of a Catholic university will naturally see the goals of technical training and formation of wisdom united under the one mantle of Catholic education. The problem has been, in the past, that sometimes these educational goals have been pursued without careful reflection and the discernment of the goals that are better suited to the good of the students or their communities.

Pope John Paul II (Ex Corde Ecclesiae, n12) envisages Catholic universities as dedicated to advancing human dignity and as possessing the autonomy required to fulfil its tasks. He sees the Catholic university as not only a teaching and learning community, but also as explicitly founded to protect and advance human dignity. That is, the teaching, research and other services of the university are not directed to knowledge for its own sake, but to advancing people’s dignity and culture at the local, national and international levels. John Paul II argues that, to fulfill this mission, the Catholic university needs appropriate autonomy and its members require an appropriate level of academic freedom. More will be said later about academic freedom. However, John Paul II’s points about autonomy and freedom are expressed positively. The points may be made clearer negatively, especially if we recall Pope John Paul II’s many years of working under the spectre of communism. Simply put, institutional autonomy and academic freedom mean that a Catholic university should be able to function without undue interference by the state. The Catholic university should be able to function without government manipulation and the university’s members should have the freedom to teach the truth, even if this means speaking truths that are uncomfortable to governments or international communities.
Pope John Paul II provides a clear statement (Ex Corde Ecclesiae, n13) of the essential characteristics of a Catholic university. He sees these characteristics as indispensable to the identity of the University in being authentically Christian and in presenting to the world an authentically Catholic contribution to resolving the challenges before society and culture today. John Paul II thus writes that to be authentically Catholic, every Catholic University, must have four essential characteristics:

1. The university as a whole, and not only individual members of the university, must be inspired by the Christian faith.

2. The university must engage the whole of human knowledge and advance it by scholarly research, but it should do so by reflecting upon it specifically, “in the light of the Catholic faith.”

3. The university, both as an institution and in its individual members must be faithful to the Christian message, specifically as it is taught by the Church.

4. The university should not be “inward-looking,” but as an institution, it must be committed to serving both the members of the Church and the whole human community in seeking their ultimate goal.

These four essential characteristics are probably John Paul II’s most direct rejection of the Catholic institutional identity that emerged in North America after the Land O’ Lakes Statement of 1967 (Hesburgh 1967). Critics disagree as to whether the outcomes of the statement were unintended or intended, but there is a widespread opinion, fair or otherwise, that many Catholic universities have become secularised, that they neglect their Catholic mission to humanity and that they do not operate in communion with the Church. Regardless of the accuracy, or otherwise, of such criticisms of Catholic universities today, Pope John Paul II does challenge us to consider the difference between a university that is a distinctively Catholic university and a university that is merely run, founded or funded by the Catholic Church.

For his part, Pope John Paul II insists (Ex Corde Ecclesiae, n14) that these four essential characteristics reflect a mission that is not only to teaching and
research, but also a commitment of the university as an institution to being inspired and animated by the Christian faith. John Paul II thus envisages a university that is not just Catholic in its origins, but is formed and guided at all times by “Catholic ideals, attitudes and principles.”

Pope John Paul II (Ex Corde Ecclesiae, n15) then provides helpful clarification of the identity of a Catholic university by explaining critical aspects of research at a Catholic institution. “In a Catholic University, research necessarily includes (a) the search for an integration of knowledge, (b) a dialogue between faith and reason, (c) an ethical concern, and (d) a theological perspective.”

First, the “Integration of knowledge” (Ex Corde Ecclesiae, n16), stands against the disintegration of knowledge seen in so many contemporary universities. It is a common experience of concern to faculty members and great frustration to students that fields of study at universities are becoming increasingly compartmentalised, isolated and separated from other fields. Indeed, as Richard Liddy notes (2000, 521), even though highly specialised disciplines can enhance a “professional knowledge base,” such specialisation can easily fall into the trap of an “extreme compartmentalization of education.” Likewise, John Paul II (Ex Corde Ecclesiae, n16) refers to “the explosion of knowledge in recent decades, together with the rigid compartmentalization of knowledge within individual academic disciplines.” He argues that these factors make it hard to integrate knowledge.

Against that trend, John Paul II states that any university, Catholic or not, as a “University,” has the task of bringing together knowledge in a vital union. John Paul II proposes that such a union is possible not by linking different disciplines together laterally, but by integrating them under a “higher synthesis” of knowledge. With reference to his earlier statement (1989, 4), to Vatican II’s Gaudium et Spes (n61) and to Cardinal John Henry Newman (1852, xi), John Paul II envisages that higher synthesis as an outcome of the search for ultimate truth that is sought by every person. To engage that ultimate truth and to integrate different fields of knowledge, he sees philosophy and theology as
indispensable, especially in positioning and relating the different fields of knowledge. This higher synthesis thus integrates fields of knowledge under a firm understanding of the human person as well as the enlightenment that comes from being oriented towards Christ as “the centre of creation and of human history.” That is, from a similar perspective (Liddy 2000, 526) an authentic liberal education is not just a transfer of knowledge. Instead, it leads students to understand the value of knowledge. Such a liberal education will also put knowledge into a “moral perspective” and link the acquisition of knowledge to the good of the human community and foster a well-grounded love of God and one’s fellow human beings.

Secondly, John Paul II (Ex Corde Ecclesiae, n17) proposes that to properly integrate knowledge and to promote the unity of truth, a Catholic university must promote an effective dialogue between faith and reason. John Paul II does recognise that every academic discipline has its own proper methods and he rejects the interventionist approach seen in cases like Galileo (John Paul II 1983, n3). However, within the Catholic horizon in which “grace” and “nature” are united rather than opposed, and because all creation and the convictions of faith come from the same creator God (Gaudium et Spes, n36), he argues that there can never be a substantial conflict between authentic learning and faith.

At this point, with the wisdom of the Kimberley in mind, it is worth asking what sort of faith, or what manner of reason are being explored in a Catholic university? This is an area in which, as will be explored below, dialogue with Aboriginal wisdom traditions is an essential part of the Catholic university’s mission. As can be implied by John Paul II’s criticism of higher education, the study of faith has often become too rationalistic, being disintegrated from other fields and somewhat remote from the experience of everyday people. This point echoes Newman’s concern that a lack of integrative philosophy in a secularist education would fragment and distort knowledge and suppress one part or another of knowledge (Lonergan 1974, 185).
Likewise, Western philosophy has often become compartmentalised and isolated. I would suggest that engaging Aboriginal approaches to faith and wisdom, which are integrated and integrating, and which bring together various elements of knowledge under the mantle of wisdom, can help realise John Paul II’s vision for an effective dialogue of faith and reasons.

Thirdly, John Paul II argues (Ex Corde Ecclesiae, n18) that knowledge acquired at a Catholic university is not isolated from the common good, but that it is meant to serve the good of the human person. Thus, he states that research at a Catholic university must be conducted with priority given to the ethical implications of its discoveries and moral concern for its methods. In words that should resonate with Aboriginal wisdom, John Paul II states that a Catholic university must prioritise the ethical over the technical, the human person over objects and the primacy of the human spirit. In other words, he emphasises that knowledge, in both its discovery and its search, is only genuinely “Catholic” when it is “joined to conscience.”

Finally, in integrating knowledge, John Paul II (Ex Corde Ecclesiae, n19) makes the seemingly audacious claim that theology is a vital part of synthesising knowledge. Theology can aid other subjects in seeking ultimate meaning, it can inform disciplines how they affect people and their cultures, and it can give a higher perspective that is not usually intrinsic to those disciplines. Because of the importance of theology, John Paul II insists that “every Catholic University should have a faculty, or at least a chair, of theology.”

Having said that, one can ask, “What sort of theology is active in a Catholic university?” If one has in mind a very abstract “faith seeking understanding,” or “the study of God and all things in relation to God,” (Ott 1974, 1; Ogilvie 2001, 113) then such an abstract theology will probably contribute to disintegration of the disciplines rather than to uniting them. However, if one adopts Lonergan’s view (1994, xi) that “a theology mediates between a cultural matrix and the significance and role of a religion in that matrix,” then such a culture-
engaging theology can bring together and integrate a culture’s knowledge and values with a religion and faith in God.

Conclusion
In this chapter, we have explored the nature and mission of a Catholic university. While it may be taken for granted that a Catholic university is dedicated to the service of the Church, John Paul II makes it very clear that a Catholic university is also equally dedicated to the broader good, that is, to serving society as a whole.

The Catholic university is called to serve under the mantle of Catholic faith and, in Pope John Paul II’s opinion, it is vital to the Church’s life. Having said that, Pope John Paul II makes it clear that because the Catholic university serves both Church and wider civil society, there are mutual obligations associated with this service. While the Catholic university does enjoy an appropriate level of autonomy because of its nature as Catholic, the fact that it is dedicated to the advancement of society implies that the Catholic university should be able to call upon the protection and support of civil society as is appropriate.

Importantly, what distinguishes a Catholic university from a secular university is not just the historical origins or even the patronage of the university. Instead, a Catholic university goes beyond a secular institution by being committed to both faith and reason. That is, it teaches the integration of (i) truth as humanly discovered and (ii) truth as communicated in divine revelation. The Catholic university is also characterised by an ethical orientation. This is neither a “lateral” nor a “horizontal” ethical perspective or right conduct between persons, but a “vertical” ethical orientation that views interpersonal relationships and the mission of the university in relation not just to people but to God. The Catholic university thus answers to a “higher authority” in its ethical treatment of persons. This is part of the theological perspective that is so important to a Catholic university. That is, the education in wisdom that is so important to the University is not just a wisdom that deals
with now this, now that, discipline. Instead, it is a wisdom that unites all
disciplines under the mantle of their creator God.

This last point makes it clear that the university is dedicated to the Catholic
Intellectual Tradition. It is vital then, to address the key question, “What is the
Catholic Intellectual Tradition?”