

*The Intellectual  
Appeal of  
Catholicism*



M A R K W. R O C H E

*& the  
Idea of a  
Catholic  
University*

Foreword by Theodore M. Hesburgh, C.S.C.

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## Foreword

I have always been deeply concerned about the ideal and reality of Notre Dame as a great Catholic university. A few years ago this idea was becoming a reason for a kind of intellectual warfare among the faculty. At that time I published a volume called *The Challenge and Promise of a Catholic University* in which about thirty of us set forth our ideas on the subject. The great value of this publication was that the internecine warfare almost immediately ceased because the main protagonists of this or that point of view had a chance to say how they saw it. And that was that.

However, the notion of a Catholic university is still a matter of intellectual debate. Recently, Mark Roche, Dean of Notre Dame's College of Arts and Letters, sent me a copy of an article he had prepared on the intellectual appeal of Catholicism and the idea of a Catholic university. This became a chapter in a volume of conference proceedings called *The Future of Religious Colleges*, but Mark wisely kept the copyright to himself.

I was very much impressed by the article, which I think presents the case as well as I had seen it presented intellectually over many years. It occurred to me that it would be a shame to have so good an article rest among a number of others in a book that could easily be overlooked. Anyway, I proposed to Mark that, since he had the copyright, we might reproduce his chapter as a monograph that could receive wide distribution and attention.

Mark presents a clear, precise, and idealistic view of a Catholic university. His arguments will appeal to those interested in the distinctive character of a Catholic university—students and faculty, parents and graduates, donors and friends, administrators and trustees. The original essay was focused on Notre Dame, but the revision offers a more general view of the challenge and promise of a Catholic university. The essay creates a better understanding of what a Catholic university is here at home, but all the outstanding members of the International Federation of Catholic Universities around the world, not only those in the United States, will recognize its importance.

I believe we need more and more of this kind of presentation to give us a sense of our own identity, which I think gets pretty blurred at times. In some instances the Catholic identity is taken for granted, and in others it is barely understood. In a short

amount of space Mark makes visible the ideal of a Catholic university. I think he has done a stellar task of presenting the case, as intellectually valid as I have ever seen one. Even Cardinal Newman did not do as well in his classic *The Idea of a University*.

One of the things that I especially like in Mark's essay is the prominence he gives to the Holy Spirit, which is too often neglected in our thinking. If a Catholic university is to fulfill its mission, it must be intimate with the light, the inspiration, and the courage that the Holy Spirit brings. The intangible presence of God in our lives brings us closer to truth and to one another. A Catholic university and a Catholic community are animated by the breath of the Holy Spirit, which brings wisdom and courage as we face challenges and difficulties.

Mark is involved in the active work of helping to build a great Catholic university. His work is replete with vision and dreams for the future. He has wonderful insight into where we should be, and what needs to be done to get there. It is not by chance that in leading the College of Arts and Letters, he would be led to think deeply and passionately about these higher questions. Being at a special and prayerful place like Notre Dame doesn't hurt, either.

Mark's essay is very ecumenical in its outreach to scholars who are not Catholic. It shows how a Catholic university can make a difference, how it

can be a great university and still be something more. This trenchant and intellectual presentation gives us hope that by exploring the ultimate questions and ultimate values that distinguish a great Catholic university, we may come ever closer to realizing the living unity of knowledge and dignity, wisdom and grace, God and truth.

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