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# Loyola Marymount University's President's Institute on the Catholic Character of Loyola Marymount University: A Twenty-one Year Tradition

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## President's Institute on the Catholic Character of Loyola Marymount University: A Twenty-One Year Tradition

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### Introduction

In May 2016, President Timothy Law Snyder hosted the 21<sup>st</sup> annual President's Institute on the Catholic Character of Loyola Marymount University (the President's Institute). Under the co-direction of Cathleen McGrath, Ph.D., and Elizabeth C. Reilly, Ed.D., fifteen professors from throughout the university gathered for a five-day retreat to explore that year's theme: *Fides et Ratio: The Pursuit of Faith and Reason in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Catholic University*. This paper presents a history of this Institute, a description of the 2016 President's Institute and a discussion of the outcomes of the week.

### History of the President's Institute

The President's Institute was established in 1997 by then-President Thomas O'Malley, S.J., and organized annually by the Faculty Committee on Mission and Identity, to encourage faculty dialogue about LMU's mission and identity as a Catholic and Jesuit/Marymount university. A letter to the faculty introducing the first Institute explains, "The purpose of the Institute is to promote reflection and conversation on the nature of Catholic Higher Education in the traditions of the Society of Jesus and the Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary. Our common endeavor here is an important one: we all benefit from opportunities for deeper reflection and discussion."<sup>1</sup>

From its inception, the President's Institute has provided a space for faculty to engage deeply in

LMU's Catholic and Ignatian identity and to explore topics that are part of their experience throughout their work at LMU. The President's Institute is designed following the principles of Ignatian pedagogy to connect experience, reflection and action to encourage faculty learning and growth. In addition, we address the importance of context in the learning process by working to develop trusting relationships among the fellows in the President's Institute.<sup>2</sup> Over the years, faculty fellows have explored topics such as: Ignatian pedagogy, scholarship of engagement, the intersection of faith and the arts, justice, hospitality, and the intersection of faith and reason. Recent President's Institute titles have included:

- *Reflection in Action: Faith That Does Justice*
- *Coming to Our Senses: Creating Dialogue Between Faith and the Arts*
- *AMDG: Exploring the Frontiers Between Faith and Scientific Imagination*
- *The Scholar and the City: Ignatian Perspectives and Engaged Research*
- *The University and the World: Dialogues on Social Justice in a Globalized Context*
- *Through an Ignatian Lens: Teaching, Learning, and Imagining*
- *Envisioning the Sacramental in Nature and in Art*
- *Ignatian Discernment, Contemplative Listening, and Mutual Hospitality*
- *The Prophets' Call to Justice: The Role of the University in the Integration of Faith and Justice*
- *Fides et Ratio: The Pursuit of Faith and Reason*

McGrath & Reilly,  
*LMU President's  
Institute  
Collection:  
Introduction and  
Overview*

Snyder, *Necessary  
Companions:  
Faith and Reason*

McGrath & Reilly,  
*President's  
Institute on the  
Catholic  
Character of  
LMU: A Twenty-  
One-Year  
Tradition*

Bouvier-Brown,  
*Nurturing Student  
Scientists as  
People of Faith*

Jarvis, *Faith  
and Reason in  
the Pursuit of  
Understanding*

Rohm, *Our  
Students' Search  
for Meaning*

Scheibler, *What  
Can TV Teach Us  
About the  
Spiritually Healthy  
Institution?*

Reilly & McGrath,  
*Faith and Reason  
in Antiquity:  
A Photo Essay*

*in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Catholic University*

Each year's topic is chosen with the goal of resonating with faculty from all parts of campus. Faculty members apply to the President's Institute through a process that is open to all tenured, tenure-track, and clinical members of the faculty, and if selected, they receive a stipend to participate in the week-long experience. The President's Institute's program is designed to engage faculty both cognitively and affectively. We include traditional presentations, round table discussions, and seminar conversations, as well as field trips, art activities, shared writing, and opportunities for deep conversation and reflection on, and writing related to, their scholarship, teaching, and service within and beyond the LMU community. We also are sure to invite expert speakers from both within the LMU community and from outside LMU. On two occasions, the presentations, reflections, and writing then served as the basis of a collaborative publication. School of Education Associate Dean Mary McCullough edited two volumes from the Institute: *The Just One Justice: The Role of Justice at the Heart of Catholic Higher Education* and *Fire and Ice: Imagination and Intellect* (2003).<sup>3</sup>

Over the history of the President's Institute, 228 faculty members have participated as fellows. Of those, 150 are still part of the LMU community. The initial goal of the Institute was to bring faculty from all parts of the campus together. Representation has spanned all areas of the university: 42 percent of faculty fellows have been from liberal arts, 18 percent from the sciences, 12 percent from communication and fine arts, 10 percent from business, 9 percent from education, 8 percent from film and television, and 2 percent from law.

**2016 President's Institute on the Catholic Character of Loyola Marymount University**

We now turn specifically to the description of the 2016 Institute from which the papers in this series emerge. For this Institute, we engaged in interdisciplinary dialogue around the relationship between faith and reason in our academic work. We were able to leverage the expertise of faculty members in liberal arts, sciences, and professional schools to create an enriched dialogue of theory

and practice. The topic of the pursuit of faith and reason in the 21<sup>st</sup> century complemented a conversation that began with the Academic Lecture for the inauguration of Timothy Law Snyder, Ph.D. as the sixteenth president of Loyola Marymount University. John F. Haught, Distinguished Research Professor in Theology at Georgetown University, discussed "Science, Faith, and the Cosmic Future." In his address, Haught presented life and human understanding as a recent addition within the context of the entire history of the universe. Understanding of the vastness of the universe in space and time allows us to see, at the least, room for both faith and reason as means to understanding the universe and, more likely, the necessary partnership of faith and reason to that understanding.<sup>4</sup> From this context, faculty began to engage in a deep discussion of the relationship of faith and reason and its implications for academic life. Over the week we developed a particular understanding of faith and reason from which we moved to an understanding of the ways in which faith and reason intersect in our collective and individual work in the university. In the next section we will describe each day of the President's Institute to provide a sense of the structure and flow of the Institute.

**Monday: Foundations: What Are Faith and Reason?**

Our primary goal for the first day was to ground the week in a rich understanding of faith and reason. We allowed fellows to explore many different forms of relationship that may occur in the relationship between faith and reason. An expert panel consisting of two members of LMU's Theological Studies department, Christopher Chapple and Tracy Tiemeier, and one member of LMU's Philosophy department, Brian Treanor, introduced concepts and models for understanding and exploring the relationship between faith and reason. Panel members met with the directors of the Institute individually and as a group in the months leading up to the Institute. Their commitment to the goals of the Institute were clear from the outcome of their panel. We were able to start our week with a rich vocabulary to express our perceptions of the relationship between faith and reason and the way it influenced and was influenced by our individual

disciplinary work in the academy. We concluded the first day's presentations with Fr. Robert Caro's introduction to *The Intellectual Appeal of Catholicism and the Idea of a Catholic University*, which provided an excellent bridge to our second day of the Institute in which we worked with the author, Mark Roche.<sup>5</sup> Our goal with Fr. Caro's session was to be sure that fellows were prepared to engage fully in the second day with our keynote speaker. By day's end, Elizabeth Reilly initiated a Writer's Workshop where fellows had the opportunity to respond in writing to prompts and to begin to consider a formal paper as a product from the Institute.

### **Tuesday: Faith and Reason Go to College**

The goal of the second day was to expand our focus beyond our conceptualization of faith, reason, and the relationship between them to include the institutionalization of this relationship within the university. Professor Mark Roche, who formerly served as the Dean of the College of Arts and Letters at the University of Notre Dame, led our work on this day. Professor Roche shared his perspectives on the relationship of faith and reason from his academic lens and also shared his experiences in the implementation of policies to nurture the relationship between faith and reason when he served as Dean at the University of Notre Dame. His presentation fostered a lively and collegial discussion of the transition from theory to practice. In the afternoon of the second day, we split into working groups around the areas of research, teaching, and governance and service. Each group explored the opportunities and challenges for integrating faith and reason faced in those realms. We were able to share what is unique about Loyola Marymount while also acknowledging some universal characteristics of Catholic universities in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **Wednesday: Faith and Reason in Antiquity: A Visit to the Getty Villa**

At the midpoint of the Institute, we visited the Getty Villa in Malibu, California. President's Institute fellows traveled together to explore Etruscan, Greek, and Roman antiquities at the Villa. We began our day with a presentation by Katerina Zacharia, Professor of Classics and Archeology at LMU, to ensure that all fellows in

the Institute were attentive to the relationship of faith and reason that can be gained from the study of classics and archeology. Professor Zacharia accompanied us throughout the day as Institute fellows toured pre-Christian and early Christian mosaics, participated in a workshop on the creation of the mosaics, and explored the cultural treasures on display at the Getty Villa. Institute fellows took photographs during this day to use for reflection. [See *Faith and Reason in Antiquity: A Photo Essay*, in this collection. The essay provides samples of fellow reflections and their accompanying photographs.]

### **Thursday: Faith and Reason Go to the Movies**

The fourth day of the Institute began with fellows sharing their photographic reflections from the previous day's trip to the Getty Villa. Fellows shared photos of the day that meant something to them, connected to the theme of faith and reason, and served as a metaphor for their learning. For the rest of the day, we worked to expand our exploration of faith and reason to include the areas of film studies and history. Professor Paul Gulino of Chapman University worked with Institute fellows to identify issues of faith and reason as they are expressed by filmmakers and are understood by viewers. A lively discussion emerged in which we benefited greatly from the interdisciplinary expertise of Institute fellows and our session leader. In the afternoon, Elizabeth Drummond, Associate Professor of History at LMU, led the Institute fellows in an exploration of faith and reason using the lens of historical analysis. This fourth day effectively built upon the work begun in our first day in engaging the question of the relationship of faith and reason from multiple disciplines.

### **Friday: Faith and Reason in Teaching, Scholarship, and Service**

On the final day of the Institute, Nicole Bouvier-Brown, Associate Professor of Chemistry and Biochemistry at LMU, led a discussion examining how faculty at LMU have integrated faith and reason into our holistic approach to teaching, research and service. Her presentation highlighted the importance of understanding the perspectives of faith and reason that our students bring to their studies at LMU. We also used this day to plan and

develop our writing for the collection of essays. Finally, we met with President Timothy Law Snyder to share our work from the week. At the end of our week together we were able to move into the summer and academic year with a plan to write essays to be published within the next one to two years. We also moved into the coming academic year with a plan to bring a more examined understanding of the pursuit of faith and reason in our work. As the week concluded we also agreed to meet throughout the following academic year to continue our conversation around the work of the President's Institute and to reconnect with each other. Throughout 2016-2017 we met together and in smaller groups to continue the work we had begun over the summer. Some of that work is represented in this collection.

### **The Human Spirit Rises: Fellows' Experiences**

We have drawn upon several sources of data to identify the themes that emerged from our work together as Institute fellows. Both formative and summative evaluations provided insight into faculty experiences over the course of the five days. In addition, we invited faculty to write in reflection each day and to share their thoughts. Of the several themes that emerged from this work we will highlight three: deeper understanding of the university's mission; feeling valued by the university and a closer connection to colleagues; and greater integration of faith and reason into one's teaching, scholarship, and service.

### **Deeper Understanding of Mission**

All fellows expressed by a variety of means that one value of the Institute was a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the mission of the university. One fellow wrote that the President's Institute was an "extremely important part of my slow initiation into the culture and mission of LMU. The content of the Institute, my colleagues in the Institute, and our noble directors have all helped me to understand this special place better. I think about mission all the time, in my teaching, service, and research largely because of LMU's emphasis of it, and the opportunities LMU provides faculty to reflect on it." Another fellow expressed that because of her experience at the

President's Institute, she is integrating more Ignatian perspectives in her work with her own college at LMU. She shared, "I've been so inspired that I've spent the summer studying Ignatian education, spirituality, and the Catholic intellectual tradition. I was able to bring some of it to my [college's] faculty last Friday at our retreat and we're working it into our governance, bylaws, and climate work." In emphasizing connection to mission, another fellow offered, "In true Ignatian fashion, I was given a context through all of the presentations, each of which I found interesting, challenging, and thought-provoking. I was given an experience of learning through the presentations, readings, and formal discussion as well as informal discussions during lunch. I had plenty of opportunity to reflect as we broke out into our reflective writing prompts but also as I drove home each evening."

### **Value as Professionals and Individuals**

Numerous fellows expressed how the opportunity to spend a week in a retreat-like setting with colleagues from all schools and colleges led to a sense that the university values them. A fellow offered this appreciation for the Institute: "In addition, President's Institute is a great opportunity for the university to show faculty that it values us and thinks we're special." Another fellow shared, "It was such an inspiring, uplifting, and deep learning experience for me!" And finally another reported, "What a delight to take a week away—a mix of summer camp, spiritual retreat, and scholarly conference. I came in starved for community and left absolutely saturated and overflowing." The community that is formed during the week-long intensive program encouraged both intellectual commitment to the mission related topic of faith and reason, as evidenced by fellows' reports of a deeper understanding of the relationship between faith and reason and their hope to integrate this into their teaching and research, as well as a deeper commitment to the university as a whole and to their colleagues in particular. One fellow reports a goal for the week was to, "To learn from and engage with LMU faculty from other departments as a new LMU faculty member—which I saw as both an opportunity to be connected to my larger community." At the conclusion of the week, fellows expressed interest in continuing

collaborations. In fact, the fellows met throughout the 2016-2017 academic year to catch up with each other and continue their conversations on the relationship of faith and reason in the work.

### **Integration of Faith and Reason with Teaching, Scholarship, and Service**

Fellows expressed a desire to find ways to more fully integrate faith and reason with all aspects of their academic life. One fellow reported that, "I had a main goal of finding applicable ways to start dialogue and conversations with my students around not just faith and reason, but also other spiritual aspects of the mission." Through the context of the President's Institute, fellows were able to engage from multiple perspectives. One fellow reported, "I found both the presentations and the group dialogue most helpful to me in encouraging my understanding of faith and reason. I also found that by virtue of participating in the Institute my interest in topics related to our university mission were re-awakened." Over the week, fellows were able to establish an integration of the seemingly competing notions of faith and reason and their impact on their work as professors in a Catholic university.

### **Coming to the Fullness of Truth: Discussion of the Efficacy of the Institute**

Overall, the 2016 President's Institute successfully met its goals of fostering mission, cultivating community, and examining the relationship of faith and reason in our work at Loyola Marymount University. At the start of the Institute, most fellows focused on the specific question of the relationship of faith and reason. By the end of the week, fellows reported a deeper understanding of faith and reason but also closer connections to their colleagues and to the mission of Loyola Marymount University. <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> International Commission on the Apostolate of Jesuit Education (ICAJE), *Ignatian Pedagogy: A Practical Approach* (1993), reprinted as Appendix B in *The Jesuit Ratio Studiorum of 1599: 400th Anniversary Perspectives*, ed. Vincent J. Duminuco, S.J. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000).

<sup>3</sup> Mary McCullough, ed., *The Just One Justices: The Role of Justice at the Heart of Catholic Higher Education* (Scranton, PA: University of Scranton Press, 2000); Mary McCullough, ed., *Fire and Ice: Imagination and Intellect* (Scranton, PA: University of Scranton Press, 2005).

<sup>4</sup> Jim McDermott, S.J., "Theologian John Haught on the Future of Faith in 'an Unfinished Universe,'" *America: The Jesuit Review* October 5, 2015, <https://www.americamagazine.org/content/dispatches/universe-unfinished-theologian-john-haught-faith-and-cosmos>.

<sup>5</sup> Mark W. Roche, *The Intellectual Appeal of Catholicism and the Idea of a Catholic University* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame Press, 2003).

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### **Notes**

<sup>1</sup> Thomas O'Malley, S.J., letter to the faculty of Loyola Marymount University, 1996.