

Taking Theology Seriously

Jesuit higher education takes theology seriously.

The 28 Jesuit colleges and universities around the United States make a significant contribution to theological teaching and research. By no means do they make up the only sources contributing to theology in Jesuit higher education. These remarks will not only note the more familiar theological activities of American Jesuit colleges and universities but will also introduce some of those other, equally interesting but perhaps less well known, endeavors.

All of the United States Jesuit schools have departments of theology or of religious studies. Many have been the curriculum battles over the number of courses or credit hours or areas of the field to be taught, but all of the schools consider at least the introduction to that subject as much a component of a well-rounded education as a similar introduction to science, languages, literature, philosophy or history. Many of the schools offer programs on the master's level in a variety of theological fields, and one could spend at least a decade attending every summer one or more of the ongoing institutes in such specialities as spirituality or sacred scripture or pastoral studies or religious education.

Many people are surprised to learn that only eight American Catholic universities offer doctorate degrees in theology. Five of the eight are Jesuit institutions: Boston College, Fordham, Loyola in Chicago, Marquette and Saint Louis. The other three schools are Catholic University, Duquesne and Notre Dame. Perhaps this should not be a surprise; to start doctoral programs involves a very high commitment of personnel and money; to assure their ongoing credibility involves even higher commitments of the same kind.

But the commitment of Jesuit higher education to theology includes more than those twenty-eight American institutions. It ranges far beyond this country. In the United States two national graduate professional schools of theology exist for the education of both Jesuits and laymen, laywomen and other religious, Weston School of Theology in Cambridge, Mass., and the Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley, Calif. In addition, the Woodstock Theological Center in Washington and the Institute of Jesuit Sources in St. Louis, the former directly and the latter indirectly through its historical work, are engaged in theological research at the highest level and in the dissemination of the results of that research to national and international publics.

Internationally, the more than 20 Jesuit faculties or schools of theology are located in such places as Frankfurt in Germany, New Delhi in India, Paris, Nairobi in Kenya, Dublin, Zagreb in Croatia, London, Belo Horizonte in Brazil, Warsaw and Madrid, to name less than half of them. In Rome the Gregorian University, the Biblical Institute and the Oriental Institute carry on their own particular programs and cooperate together on theological teaching and research with and for students and scholars from all over the world. One must add to all of those specialized theological institutions the more general departments of theology in the more than seventy Jesuit universities around the world outside the United States.

Finally, in addition to such schools and departments, there are the numerous scholarly theological journals, monographs, books, articles published by or with the Society of Jesus. Let me mention only two such examples of such works, one from this country and one from abroad, both of which in recent years celebrated their fiftieth anniversary. The first is *Theological Studies*, published "for the Society of Jesus in the United States." The other is *Sources Chretiennes*, the publishing project which has made available in the vernacular—from languages such as Greek, Syriac and Latin—the written patrimony of the early centuries of Christianity. The work was founded by Henri de Lubac and Jean Danielou and continues under the direction of another French Jesuit, Dominique Bertrand, with the scholarly and financial assistance of the French government through that country's equivalent of our National Science Foundation and National Endowment for the Humanities. This last year it published its four hundredth volume of translations. Its analogs in the United States are the two series, *Ancient Christian Writers* and *Fathers of the Church* and to both of those men and women in American Jesuit institutions have also contributed.

The feature article by John Haughey in this issue of *CONVERSATIONS* carries on that world-wide tradition of taking theology seriously in Jesuit higher education and the four personal reflections by teachers of the subject at four different American Jesuit schools gives examples of how in varying and imaginative ways, that responsibility and privilege continues to be carried out in practice.

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