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THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY -- PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

Universities began with the thirteenth century in France. The University of Paris will celebrate its 800th anniversary in about thirty years. From the very beginning, the history was stormy, a presage of what was yet to come. Both the civil and ecclesiastical authorities had early difficulties with faculty members and students, with the result that the first university had to obtain a Papal charter to free it from interference on the part of the archbishops and the mediaeval equivalent of the mayor of Paris.

All the early universities were Catholic; Bologna, Pavia, Salamanca, Coimbra, Oxford, Cambridge, Louvain. None of them, except Louvain, is Catholic today. It would be too long a story to trace all the reasons why they ceased to be Catholic, and what the Church lost in the process, but that would take us too far afield. Suffice it to say that in the last century there has been a renaissance, what Newman would have called a "second spring" in the history of the Catholic university. Now, that rebirth, too, seems threatened. A look at Catholic universities in the world today will tell the story.

There are only a few Catholic universities in Europe where one might expect the most. England has none and Ireland one which is really a seminary trying to grow into a university, Maynooth. It was the project of a Catholic university in Ireland that gave birth to Newman's famous "Idea of a Catholic University." Unfortunately, it was easier to write about a Catholic university than to create one. It never was really born.

On the mainland, the country that gave birth to the first university, also Catholic, now does not allow Catholic universities to be chartered so there are five Instituts Catholiques, the best known, of course, being in Paris.

There are no Catholic universities in Scandinavia or in Germany which only has Catholic theological faculties at some state universities. In the socialist countries, Poland alone has a Catholic university, at Lublin, but it has been reduced to three theological faculties. In all the rest of non-Iberian Europe, there are only three Catholic universities: Louvain in Belgium, Nijmegen in Holland, and Sacro Cuore in Italy. Louvain is the oldest and most distinguished. Unfortunately, it has just been split in two on linguistic and cultural grounds. The old Louvain is now Flemish, the new one just being built nearby is French. They are popularly referred to as Louvain La Veuve and Louvain La Neuve. One would have to say that the state of Catholic universities is hardly splendid in the region where universities, all originally Catholic, began. Nor is the Iberian picture much better, although there has been a recent revival in Salamanca and Navarra, and a modest new birth in Portugal.

In all of Africa, there were three institutions of higher learning. The only one that was really a university, in fact a splendid one, was Lovanium in Zaire, the offspring of Louvain at its best. The creation of Lovanium was an absolute tour de force of Monsignor Luc Gillon -- now Dean of Science at the new Louvain. Unfortunately, Lovanium is no longer Catholic, having recently been nationalized by President Mobutu. The

other two were not really universities -- Pius XII in Lesotho is now nationalized. Asmara is really a college and is still Catholic, I believe, although since the Emperor Haile Selassie was its main patron, the situation may have changed.

Moving Eastward around the world, there are no Catholic universities from Beirut to Tokyo, unless one would so classify a few weak institutions aborning in Indonesia. Tokyo has Sophia, a Catholic university endeavor by an international group of Jesuit scholars, even though most of their students and many of their non-Jesuit faculty are not Catholic. There is a promising young Catholic university project in Seoul, Korea, and several other Catholic universities in Manila -- Santo Tomas, Ateneo de Manila, La Salle, and St. Louis in Baguio. They are all struggling against almost impossible odds to survive and grow.

There are no Catholic universities throughout the vast South Pacific, nor in Australia or New Zealand. This reduces our tour to the Western hemisphere. There were two great Catholic universities in Canada, Laval in Quebec and Montreal University. Both recently have become state universities, retaining only Catholic faculties of theology. Most Catholic colleges in Canada follow the same pattern by affiliating with state universities.

In Mexico City, there are two Catholic universities, the Ibero-Americana and Anayucac, both of fairly recent origin. Throughout Central and South America, the most ancient universities were originally Catholic and now state, like San Carlos in Guatemala and San Marcos in Lima. As

happened in other parts of the world, there was a revival of Catholic higher education during the last century with the founding of universities, such as Andres Bello in Caracas, La Catolica in Quito, Lima, Santiago, Chile, Santa Maria de Buenos Aires, San Salvador in the same city just abandoned by the Jesuits. Cordobe in Argentina has a Jesuit institution, as does Rio. Many new and quite fragile institutions have been founded in Brazil, Sao Paulo probably being the strongest. Several new Catholic institutions have been founded in Central America, as in Guatemala and Nicaragua, but their life is precarious at best, and their true university status questionable. All of these Latin American universities have a Pontifical charter, since they cannot become chartered by the state. One of the best of these institutions, La Catolica in Santiago, Chile, has been intervened by the military government, the rector replaced by an Admiral.

This brings us to the last and best hope of Catholic higher education -- as of most higher education generally - the United States. More Catholic institutions of higher learning were founded here, mostly in the last century, than in all the rest of the world together. Most of these institutions were colleges, a few are universities. As in the rest of the world, the pressure for survival, as institutions and as Catholic, is great and growing. Nonetheless, if there are to remain in all the world a few authentic and, hopefully, distinguished Catholic universities, it will only, as of this writing, be in the United States. At least, that is what a review of the world situation for Catholic universities would seem to indicate. As recent as a decade ago, one

would have pointed to Louvain, Laval, Montreal, Lovanium, La Catolica in Santiago. With all of them gone or going, the outlook is bleak at best. The Church can, of course, survive and even prosper without Catholic universities. But the great mediaeval quest of Fides quaerens intellectum and intellectus quaerens fidem that gave birth to the first universities eight hundred years ago is still a quest ever more important as the Church attempts to respond to the great intellectual and moral questions of our times.

Rev. Theodore M. Hesburgh, C.S.C.
President, University of Notre Dame