A VIEW FROM THE “MAIN CAMPUS” ON INTEGRATION

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Over three years ago, representatives from the faculties of the Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley (JSTB) and the Santa Clara University (SCU) Religious Studies Department met over lunch at Adobe Lodge on the Santa Clara campus to discuss the idea of an affiliation of JSTB with SCU. At that time none of us had a clear idea of what “affiliation” would look like or how the faculties would formally interact. But from the beginning, both faculties insisted, “Let’s talk about mission.” How would JSTB fit into and enhance the mission of Santa Clara as a whole, and how might Santa Clara’s mission as a Jesuit Catholic university enhance the mission of JSTB as a professional school of theology and ministry? This question drives to the role of theology in the mission of the Jesuit university, and of the university in relation to theology. As the dream of affiliation matured into a systemic project of the integration of the many parts of JSTB into SCU and vice versa, this academic concern has remained the heart of the matter.

There are, of course, certain differences between the specific mission of JST and the wider mission of Santa Clara University. There are also differences between the JST mission and the mission of the Religious Studies Department, which includes the 25-year-old Graduate Program in Pastoral Ministries. And this is as it should be, for every school and department within the university has a distinctive mission. At the same time, there is a shared mission that derives from the fact that Santa Clara is a Catholic university, a mission that is specified in its Jesuit foundations and animating principles,
its academic life, and its commitments to the wider world. It is this aspect of Santa Clara’s mission that gives the university its distinctive identity, even as a Catholic university. And this is where the addition of JST to Santa Clara as a school of theology and ministry promises to specify further that identity and to strengthen its mission. It all gets down to the role of theology in the life of a Catholic Jesuit university.

In an Academic Convocation speech at JST on September 22, 2009, at which JST and SCU formally celebrated their integration, Santa Clara President Father Michael Engh, S.J. summarized well how theology serves as a kind of “synthesizing center” for the university. He was referring not to theology as an arcane discipline standing in splendid isolation from other disciplines, but as a vital intellectual enterprise in dialogue with other disciplines and ways of knowing. Why is this important for the university? As Father Engh said so well, “by the integration of JST into the life of Santa Clara, the University now becomes just that much more fully the Catholic, Jesuit university that it most certainly already is.” Indeed, there is already vigorous theological life at Santa Clara, not only within the Religious Studies Department, but through an array of interdisciplinary programs such as Catholic Studies and new Core Pathways, as well as the Ignatian Center for Jesuit Education and the Markkula Center for Applied Ethics. But we have not had the benefit, until now, of a whole set of colleagues engaged full-time at the graduate level of theological studies, or of a theological school that shares so centrally in many of the values of Santa Clara itself as a Jesuit institution.

How is this integration taking shape at Santa Clara? First, the faculties have been coming together in conversations for quite some time. While the project of integration has required the generosity and expertise of administrators and staff from all sectors of
the University, frank discussion among faculty about both possibilities and potential pitfalls have been crucial to integration, and will continue to be so as the process unfolds over time. The result of these conversations and contacts has been a growing list of plans and projects that are drawing JST faculty and graduate students into working relationships with Santa Clara faculty. This year, for example, the Religious Studies Department is adding two JST doctoral students as lecturers in the Department. JST faculty have been regular contributors to Santa Clara undergraduate classes as guest lecturers. And, with projected new video-conferencing capabilities, we will be able to “drop” a visiting lecturer from JST directly into a Santa Clara classroom. In the future we expect to work out arrangements for JST faculty to spend a full quarter on the main campus, working either with our majors or with graduate students in the Graduate Program in Pastoral Ministries.

Of course, it works the other way, too. During academic year 2009-2010, two SCU faculty, Michael Buckley, S.J., from Religious Studies, and Gerdenio Manuel, S.J., from Psychology, are giving graduate courses at JST. There will doubtless be more faculty exchanges in the future, which is a benefit to both faculty and students.

The Religious Studies Department has a particular interest in the integration, because we have a superb faculty and research projects that we are eager to share with our Berkeley colleagues. Theology today calls for interreligious and intercultural dialogues, and the SCU Department specializes in this kind of contextual shaping of theology. Our experts in Judaism, Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism, in African and Latin American religion, indigenous religions and spirituality, as well as in scripture, history, ethics and systematic theology itself, will provide JST theologians a natural set of
academic partners. And our “Local Religion Project”, which surveys the local manifestations of global religions throughout the Bay Area, can play a key role in this partnership. 

In fact both campuses have already begun working together on various joint projects. Last May, even before the integration agreement had been signed, JST and SCU co-sponsored on the Berkeley campus an international conference, “Many Tongues, One Spirit: Local Ecclesiologies in Dialogue.” That conference brought together people from all continents into open and constructive dialogue around issues facing the church. Several other projects are in the works, including a conference on Teilhard de Chardin and co-sponsorship of the National Hispanic Pastoral Institute, to be held on both campuses. We are also working together to build professional relationships with theologians on the Pacific Rim, most recently with scholars at Fudan University in Shanghai, China. We hope to build a distinctive approach to theology on the West Coast, one that is shaped in part by the world we inhabit and which we are called to serve. 

There is so much more that could be said from the perspective of the “main campus”. What is evident is that with the arrival of JST, Santa Clara University is embarking on an exciting and historic journey.