Greeting and introduction

I wish to thank Father Daniel Gambet, the President of this College, for the very kind invitation to be with you today and to speak to you on the theme of the Catholic identity of the Catholic college. In my own name and in the name of the Congregation for Catholic Education I greet all of you: Administrators, Faculty members, students, staff, benefactors and friends of Allentown College of Saint Francis de Sales.

My visit here today is for me a source of great pleasure. Beyond giving me the satisfaction of meeting with you and speaking on a topic of importance for the Church and of interest to us all, this visit gives me an occasion to recall in public the memory of an old and dear friend, the late Bishop Joseph McShea. While older than myself, Bishop McShea and I were both students at the Roman Seminary and I knew of him because of that common bond. When I was a young priest I was stationed at the Apostolic Delegation in Washington and Bishop McShea was an Auxiliary Bishop in Philadelphia. I returned to the United States assigned as Apostolic Delegate and later as Pro-Nuncio after the establishing of diplomatic relations between the Holy See and this country. By this time Bishop McShea was Bishop of the new diocese of Allentown. One of the first things I did upon returning to the United States was to come to visit him in the diocese. I remember well that he brought me here to see the "apple of his eye" that Allentown College was. To be here today and to see the College prospering revives for me a very warm memory.

Another priest too must be recognized as we gather today, Father Thomas J. Furphy of the Oblates of Saint Francis de Sales in whose honor this lecture is being held. A former Faculty member of this College as well as of Villanova and of Northeast Catholic High School in Philadelphia, Father Furphy lived out his priestly life in a special dedication to catholic education on the levels of secondary education and of Higher studies. As Prefect of the Congregation for Catholic Education, I deem it an honor to speak here this evening in the lecture series which bears Father Furphy's name.
The theme of this presentation

The Apostolic Constitution "Ex Corde Ecclesiae"

The Apostolic Constitution of Pope John Paul II on Catholic Universities - the first official pontifical document on this subject in the history of the church - opens with three Latin words which give the tone of the entire text and focus its theme. These words indicate, among other things, the privileged birthplace of the Catholic University: "Ex Corde Ecclesiae". It is precisely from the heart of the Church that Catholic Universities assume their identity and their reason for being.

Because it is "born from the heart of the church", the Catholic University is not - and cannot be - something on its own, without roots or support, and free of all ties. It belongs to something from which then it receives a role, a special mission, to accomplish. The Catholic University belongs to the Church, not in the sense that it is part of the "ecclesiastical structure", but in the sense that it is an "ecclesial" institution: it is in the Church and of the Church. It follows from this that between the Catholic University and the church there exists a profound relationship, a "living" "institutional" bond of which both parties must become ever more aware.

Every University or university College has as its proper functions research, the teaching of the truth and service to society. The adjective "Catholic", without taking anything away from the threefold purpose just mentioned adds to it something more, because it attributes to the university a particular characteristic, enriching it with a further dimension, opening it to the whole truth which comes from Christ the Incarnate Word.

Father William J. Byron, S.J., former President of "The Catholic University of America", in an article published in the journal of our Congregation, Seminarium (Vol. XXX, n.4, p. 728), wrote as follows:

"(T)he close Church relationship; the clear faith commitment; the conscious opening to God and other transcendent realities; the internal acceptance of Catholic cultural values and the evident impact of those values on Catholic teaching and research: All these defining characteristics set the Catholic University apart. They give it a comparative advantage; they give it what marketers would call a 'competitive edge'."

The Catholic Identity of the University or College

"The preparation of "Ex Corde Ecclesiae"

Some aspects of the history of the redaction of the Apostolic Constitution will be helpful in gaining a clearer idea of the Catholic University's identity, "qua Catholic".

As is well known, a Congress was held in Rome in April 1989 under the auspices of the Congregation for Catholic Education, which brought together Delegates of the Catholic Universities from different parts of the world, Representatives of the Bishops' Conferences, experts, and members of our Congregation. During that meeting, and in the course of a more limited subsequent one, three different directions emerged with regard to what constitutes the
"Catholic" character of a Catholic University or Catholic College: three different positions one might say on the ecclesiology of the Catholic University.

The first of these positions held that the Catholic University (or College) should be considered an expression of the Church itself, a part of its structure, as are, for example, a parish, or a seminary. Even though it was recognized that there were valid notions contained within such a position, it was not accepted. It was judged to be, not only excessive, but also lacking a mature theological reflection behind it. Nevertheless, it was recognized that this position had the merit of underscoring the fact that the Catholic University is in the Church and has a relationship with the Church which is essential to the university's institutional identity (cf. "Ex Corde Ecclesiae", n. 27).

The second position that emerged with regard to understanding the Catholic character of the University located that character solely in the fact that the University was inspired by Christian principles. This position was unanimously rejected as inadequate for distinguishing a Catholic University from any other university under the influence of Christian principles.

A third position, which was accepted and which remains the key to understanding the Catholic identity of the University as set forth in "Ex Corde Ecclesiae", holds that the University is Catholic primarily on the basis of an "institutional" Catholic commitment, which involves not only all those who have responsibility for the University (faculty, students, staff) but also the University as such. The Constitution underlies that its relation to the Church is essential to the institutional identity of the University (cf. n. 27). This statement was introduced into "Ex Corde Ecclesiae" so as to take into consideration the positive elements present in what I called above the first position.

**Institutionally Catholic**

Pope John Paul II has, on a number of occasions, spoken along these lines about the identity of the Catholic University. At Xavier University in New Orleans, addressing the Representatives of Catholic Higher Education, on September 12, 1987, he said "Amidst changing circumstances, Catholic universities and colleges are challenged to retain a lively sense of their Catholic identity and to fulfill their specific responsibilities to the Church and to Society". And he remarked: "The Catholic identity of your institutions is a complex and vitally important matter. This identity depends upon the explicit profession of Catholicity on the part of the university as an institution, and also upon the personal conviction and sense of mission on the part of its professor and administrators" (*Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, Vol. X,3 1987, p 449).

Stated succinctly, the notion of the institutional commitment of the University to its Catholic character or identity is that the University, as an institution is committed to being Catholic and to conforming its every official stance or action to that identity. That is to say that the University is Catholic not only because some or all of the individuals who guide it or are part of it, are Catholic; nor because it has a faculty or a department of Catholic Theology and/or of ecclesiastical sciences; nor because it provides pastoral ministry for those who live on the campus.

To say this is surely not to undervalue the personal Catholic commitment of individuals, nor the place of theology in the university, nor of a program of pastoral service there. These will always be necessary and will exert a profound influence on the University's Catholic identity. What I am
saying is meant rather to highlight the distinction and the relationship between a personal dimension of Catholic identity and an institutional one, and to assert that the Catholic identity requires that there be this institutional commitment, which, in turn, requires the personal commitment on the part of all in the University.

Even should the ownership of the University's property be in the hands of a merely civil corporation, the institutional Catholic identity remains intact: the Catholic character, in fact, is identified with the University as such, not with the physical properties of which it disposed or which it uses.

The Catholic character of our universities is meant to assure in an institutional manner a Christian presence in the university world. "Ex Corde Ecclesiae" expresses the essential characteristics of the University's Catholic identity in four points:

1) "A Christian inspiration not only of individuals, but of the university community as such;

2) a continuing reflection in the light of the Catholic faith upon the growing treasury of human knowledge, to which it seeks to contribute by its own research;

3) fidelity to the Christian message as it comes to us through the Church;

4) an institutional commitment to the service of the people of God and of the human family in their pilgrimage to the transcendent goal which gives meaning to life" (n.13).

"Ex Corde Ecclesiae", in laying down these four points, clearly specifies what a Catholic university should bring, by its institutional commitment, to the tasks of teaching, research and service: the inspiration and light of the Christian message, in full fidelity to the Magisterium of the Church.

This very fact serves as the foundation for the University's relationship with the local church and its Bishop. Besides, as a part of the international community of learning and sharing and contributing to the life of the universal Church, each Catholic university has a relationship with the Holy See. It will be helpful to hear the words of the Apostolic Constitution on this point:

"Every Catholic University, without ceasing to be a University, has a relationship to the Church that is essential to its institutional identity. As such, it participates most directly in the life of the local Church in which it is situated; at the same time, because it is an academic institution and therefore a part of the international community of scholarship and inquiry, each institution participates in and contributes to the life and the mission of the universal Church, assuming consequently a special bond with the Holy See by reason of the service to unity which it is called to render to the whole Church. One consequence of its essential relationship to the Church is that the institutional fidelity of the university to the Christian message includes a recognition of and adherence to the teaching authority of the Church in matters of faith and morals" (n. 27).

And with regard to the position of the Bishops and their role, again let us hear the Constitution itself:
"Bishops have a particular responsibility to Promote Catholic Universities, and especially to promote and assist in the preservation and strengthening of their Catholic identity, including the protection of their Catholic identity in relation to civil authorities. This will be achieved more effectively if close personal and pastoral relationships exist between University and Church authorities, characterized by mutual trust, close and consistent cooperation and continuing dialogue. Even when they do not enter directly into the internal governance of the University, Bishops ‘should be seen not as external agents but as participants in the life of the Catholic University’” (n. 28).

The mission of the Catholic University

In the light of the identity of the Catholic University as set forth by "Ex Corde Ecclesiae", the mission of the University follows as a consequence.

University and Catholic

It may seem a commonplace to say it, but the fundamental objective of the Catholic University is to be at one and the same time both University and Catholic. Herein lie the criteria with which the Catholic University will be judged.

It must be emphasized that, according to "Ex Corde Ecclesiae", the two elements of identification: university and Catholic, are conceived of as in harmony with one another, and not in opposition, nor even in tension. The Holy Father introduces this idea at the very beginning of the Constitution, and later on, when he stresses the importance of academic freedom.

Earlier, addressing leaders of Catholic Higher Education at Xavier University, he said: "Religious faith itself calls for intellectual inquiry; and the confidence that there can be no contradiction between faith and reason is a distinctive feature of the Catholic humanistic tradition, as it existed in the past and as it exists in our own day" (p. 450). There is an underlying conviction in this affirmation: it is that truth is one, and there cannot be disharmony between what is true scientifically, philosophically or historically, and what is known from Christian revelation as handed on by the Church. It goes, however, without saying that intellectual effort will be required to demonstrate this unity of the truth.

One of the speakers at the meeting in Saint Paul, Minnesota last month of the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities in speaking of this Catholic intellectual tradition and of the fact that Christianity is a tradition of the mind as well as of the heart and the will, said "...Catholicism is also and has always been a Church with a brain, with a mind" (Margaret Steinfels, "The Catholic Intellectual Tradition", Origins Vol. 24, n. 11, p. 172).

"Ex Corde Ecclesiae" is clear and firm on the point that the Catholic University is a University. It ascribes to it the three objectives which characterize every University and which were enunciated in the Magna Charta of the European Universities in 1988. These are research, teaching and the various services offered to the local, national and international communities. These roles constitute the very being of a University, and in the case of a Catholic University, the Catholic character of the University enters into this institutional and public threefold function.
The vision of "Ex Corde Ecclesiae" is that the Church calls upon the Catholic University to share in its mission. In so doing the Church entrusts to the Catholic University tasks connected, on the one hand with the role of the university, and on the other tasks which touch the mission of the Church Itself. The presence of the Church In the world of the University takes place, then, in a way which is appropriate to the nature and the finality of the University in its rendering a public service.

**Catholic Identity and some specific tasks of the University**

It is obvious that the Church, by means of the presence assured for it in the university milieu by the Catholic University, has to respond to questions which emerge with the changes in the culture and in society.

The relationship of the Catholic University to the Church should guide our understanding of the aspects of the University's mission which are detailed in the Apostolic Constitution. Those, for example, of the integration of the various branches of knowledge, of promoting the dialogue between faith and reason and of acting in accord with the ethical and moral implications of research, teaching and societal service which the University renders (cf. nn. 16, 17, 18).

**Integration of knowledge**

The need for the integration of the various branches of knowledge is keenly felt everywhere today because of the fragmentation of human knowledge which has resulted from modern specialization. While this specialization is especially characteristic of the scientific disciplines, it is registered also in the human sciences. This is a situation which calls for a cross-disciplinary approach. This need has been sensed and is being responded to also in Universities other than the Catholic Universities. In the Catholic universities, however, the integration of knowledge should take place not only on the horizontal level but on the transcendent as well. That is, the Catholic University with the assistance of philosophy and theology is able to get to the roots of problems and to respond to the urgent questions and challenges of the day with an integral vision of the human being and with concern to promote the genuine good of man and society.

**Dialogue between faith and reason**

In the same way should be seen the dialogue between, faith and reason and the attention to the moral implications of research - in its methods as well as its discoveries, of teaching and of service to society. Here too the presence of the disciplines of philosophy and theology contribute a vertical dimension so necessary to find for today's problems solutions which will respect the truth about man and his destiny.

It must be recognized that the challenges of the future will be, at their root, ethical, moral, and religious ones. In this regard it is, and will be an important aspect of the mission of the Catholic University to guarantee the priority of the ethical over the technical, the primacy of the person over things, and the superiority of the spirit over matter. The cause of the human person, the good of humankind, justice among people will only be served if knowledge is joined to conscience (cf. N. 18).
The University and Evangelization

What I have Said here this evening of the institutional relationship of the Catholic University to the Church and of the mission of the Catholic University should lead to a final point, that of the University and evangelization. "Ex Corde Ecclesiae" specifies the Catholic University's role in the Church's mission, in accordance with its nature as a University and the three essential functions of a university. The Constitution states:

"All the basic activities of a Catholic University are connected with and in harmony with the evangelizing mission of the Church: research carried out in the light of the Christian message which puts new human discoveries at the service of individuals and society; education offered in a faith context that forms men and women capable of rational and critical judgment and conscious of the transcendent dignity of the human person; professional training that incorporates ethical values and a sense of service to individuals and to society; the dialogue with culture that makes the faith better understood, and the theological research that translates the faith into contemporary language. 'Precisely because it is more and more conscious of its salvific mission in the world, the Church wants to have these centers (the Catholic Colleges and Universities) closely connected with it; it wants to have them present and operative in spreading the authentic message of Christ'" (N. 59).

Conclusion

Concluding, I wish to say that you will not think that I have defined too important a role for the Catholic Universities nor placed on them too great a burden to accept their natural share of the Church's mission when You recall the words of Pope John Paul II in "Ex Corde Ecclesiae". He writes:

"The mission that the church, with great hope, entrusts to the Catholic Universities holds a cultural and religious meaning of vital importance because it concerns the very future of humanity. . . .The salvific action of the Church on cultures is achieved, first of all, by means of persons, families, and educators. . . . (The work of those engaged in the significant mission of Catholic higher education) becomes ever more important, more urgent and necessary on behalf of Evangelization for the future of culture and of all cultures. The Church and the world have great need of your witness and of your capable, free, and responsible contribution" (conclusion)

Thank You.