

CONTINUED...

Colleges

Continued from page 1

boards of trustees. Nazareth declared itself independent in 1964, and St. John Fisher became an independent college in 1968.

A vice president at St. Bonaventure University noted that declaring oneself an "independent college" was often used to help shed the perception of a Catholic college as a rigid, fundamentalist institution.

"In many ways, Catholic colleges were run like seminaries prior to Vatican II," remarked Father Anthony Carrozzo, OFM, director of the Franciscan Institute at the Olean-based college.

In the 1960s and 1970s, however, many colleges altered policies that had clearly marked them as Catholic institutions:

- Governing boards, formerly operated by religious orders, became composed primarily of lay people.
- Mandatory Mass attendance was dropped as a student requirement. In fact, Boston noted, Nazareth College has not asked the religious affiliation of any student since 1969.

• Such religious symbols as statues and crucifixes were removed from classrooms and other public areas.

• Catholic theology courses became optional rather than mandatory. Father Carrozzo, who was teaching at Siena College in Albany during this time, recalled that his department at the Franciscan college was renamed "Religious Studies" rather than "Theology" to reflect expanded course offerings in other faiths.

Monika Hellwig, executive director of the Washington, D.C.-based Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities, noted that before Vatican II, the function of Catholic college curricula "was to give everybody ready-made answers which were already clear."

But the Second Vatican Council fostered more openness to the discussion of church issues. That openness trickled down to the universities, where asking questions about Catholicism became just as popular as furnishing answers, she said.

Hellwig also noted that faculties at Catholic colleges had mostly consisted of men and women religious until the 1960s. However, she said, society's thrust toward equal-opportunity employment helped swell the number of lay instructors on Catholic campuses.

In New York state, a key development in



Tom Wolf

Canisius College, Christ the King Chapel

the late 1960s further changed the face of Catholic campuses. When a new state funding program for colleges — known as Bundy funding — became available, Catholic colleges were not considered eligible unless they were clearly distinguished as non-sectarian institutions.

Bundy funding provides grants for private institutions. The aid program was designed to create a balance of support between universities that were private and colleges that received public funding.

Bishop Dennis W. Hickey, auxiliary bishop for the Diocese of Rochester, recalled that when the Bundy program was announced, Nazareth College and St. John Fisher sought to have their listings removed from the *Official Catholic Directory* so as not to endanger their funding status.

Boston, who pointed out that Nazareth College had already established a lay board in the early 1960s, said her school had qualified for Bundy funding with relative ease. However, St. John Fisher did not establish a lay board until 1968 and was initially rejected for the funding. The state did not reverse its decision until after the college's then-president, Father Charles J. Lavery, CSB, appealed the rejection in 1969.

In a letter from Ewald B. Nyquist, state commissioner of education, Father Lavery was initially told his school was not eligible "under the provisions of the New York State Constitution which forbids the pay-

ment of state aid to any institution of learning which is wholly or in part under the control or direction of any religious denomination, or which any denominational tenet or doctrine is taught."

Father Lavery responded by stating that St. John Fisher was "a private, independent liberal arts college." He noted that Fisher was operated by a board of trustees representing various religious faiths, and that religious courses at Fisher were offered as electives rather than requirements.

According to Keough, nearly all Catholic colleges in the state made adjustments so they could be considered non-sectarian.

"In the 1970s, you could not survive without state aid," Keough said.

According to Hellwig, St. John Fisher was one of many Catholic colleges in New York state which was unfairly labeled as a fundamentalist institution.

"There was always a very unsatisfactory definition on the part of the state as to what constituted sectarianism," Hellwig remarked.

Father Carrozzo agreed, saying, "The law was very nebulous. While there were questions about crucifixes in classrooms, the friars could teach in their robes."

With no firm measuring stick of what constituted a sectarian institution, Catholic colleges applied varying measures of compliance. Although Nazareth College and St. John Fisher opted to be removed from the *Official Catholic Directory*, for example, most other Catholic colleges in the state remained in the directory.

Father Carrozzo feels that some colleges may have overreacted in an attempt to comply with state standards. Today, he said, St. Bonaventure does not proselytize, but neither does it downplay its religious tradition for fear of backlash from the state.

"We're saying we're a Catholic, Franciscan college — and we're making no bones about it," Father Carrozzo commented.

Hellwig reported that Catholic colleges in general seem to be in the midst of a return to their roots.

"Since the mid-1980s, there's a real surge of awareness that we can't drift with the secular currents in higher education," Hellwig said.

Recently, some activists felt that those currents ran too strongly at a Jesuit college in Scranton, Pa.

A pro-life group, Pennsylvanians for Human Life, sought to have a textbook, *Health Care Ethics Principles and Problems*, banned from the University of Scranton because of

its references to abortion, suicide and euthanasia.

Members also wished for co-author Harold Baillie, a philosophy professor at the college, to be removed from his position, and for college president Father Joseph A. Panuska, SJ, to resign.

Father Panuska responded by defending the professor's use of the book and its subject matter.

"As a Catholic university, we are obliged to ensure that (students') consideration of such issues takes place in the context of a curriculum and, indeed, a campus community that helps them to clarify their own religious values about those questions and that challenges them to seek out the beliefs of their own faith tradition," Father Panuska stated in an April 29, 1996, letter to the college community.

Keough agrees with Father Panuska's contention that a college can promote open and free discussion without losing its Catholic identity.

"How can you have a name like this and not be a Catholic school?" she said of St. John Fisher.

But such identities were too open-ended for Joseph Marcoux, whose longing for Catholic tradition led him to the Franciscan University of Steubenville, Ohio.

Marcoux, from St. James Parish in Irondequoit, received his bachelor's degree in theology from Steubenville in 1996. He said he had also considered St. John Fisher and Nazareth College for his undergraduate studies.

"They have a much more liberal interpretation of theology — which isn't necessarily bad, but it was different," he said.

Marcoux is currently in his first theology at the American College in Louvain, Belgium. He said his experience at Steubenville largely shaped his path to the seminary.

"Every class I took there starts with a prayer," Marcoux said. "They teach strict orthodoxy — some say a little too strict, but I don't think so. People come to Steubenville seeking the truth of their faith, and they leave satisfied."

On the other hand, Sara Mortimer, a St. Bonaventure sophomore, said she feels comfortable in an atmosphere that promotes Catholicism but doesn't broadcast it.

"There are opportunities if you want to take advantage of them, but nobody is looking over your shoulder making sure you go to church," said Mortimer, whose home parish is St. Mary's Church in Rushville.

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