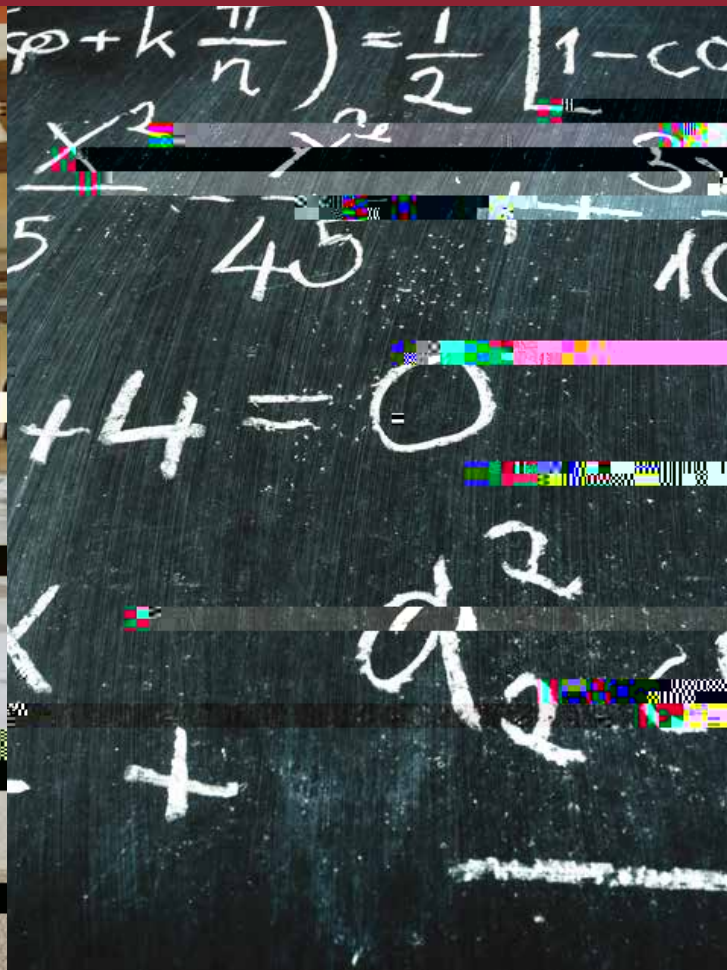






## The Catholic Intellectual Tradition

A GUIDE FOR CONVERSATION





## Crafting the Conversation Around the Catholic Intellectual Tradition

The most effective—and enjoyable—way to profit from this rich set of video reflections on the Catholic Intellectual Tradition (hereafter, CIT) is with a group of colleagues in conversation. To that end, we suggest the following pedagogy.

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## The Catholic Intellectual Tradition Video Selections

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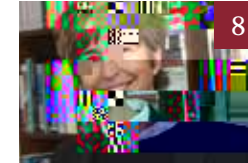
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# WHAT IS THE CATHOLIC INTELLECTUAL TRADITION?

FR. ROBERT IMBELLI



## THE SACRAMENTAL PRINCIPLE

FR. MICHAEL HIMES

Fr. Michael Himes serves as a professor of systematic theology at Boston College. He previously taught at the Seminary of the Immaculate Conception and the University of Notre Dame. He is the author of *The Mystery of Faith: An Introduction to Catholicism*.

“The Catholic tradition insists that the reason anything exists, the reason there is anything rather than nothing, is that God loves it....Everything that exists

### Focusing the Theme

Perhaps the most defining feature of a Catholic outlook on life in the world is the sacramental principle. While it can be described in many ways, it comes down to an attitude that sees the more in the midst of the ordinary, the ultimate in the created order. There is always “more than meets the eye” and it is God’s presence and effective love at work—what we mean by “grace.” This sacramental principle shapes the Catholic intellectual tradition by encouraging peoples’ in-depth look at everything, with a rigorous examination of reality. The more we can “see through what is there” the more we recognize that all creation reflects and is held in existence by God’s love.

### For Conversation

- How does a sense of God’s presence in all reality—the sacramental principle—color your own outlook on life in the world? What tint does it lend to your lenses?
- Why might studying any aspect of reality be an entrée into “the heart of God”?
- That the world is the theatre of God’s grace is a fundamental principle of Catholic faith; how might this color people’s engagement with the various disciplines of learning—humanities, sciences, and arts?

Next: View Fr. Himes’s Video

### For Discernment and Decision

- What does it ask of a person to look at the world in ways that “see” God’s presence in the everyday of life?
- How might teachers encourage students in an asceticism that can see grace—God’s love at work—in their own lives?
- How can Catholic higher education integrate the sacramental principle throughout its whole curriculum, educating students ever to “see what is there” and to imagine its source and potential?







## TRANSFORMING LIVES

KATHERINE MARTIN



Katherine Martin is a graduate of the Boston College Class of 2015. While at Boston College she focused her studies on theology and philosophy, while becoming involved with the Church in the 21st Century Center.

“My reading Augustine really influenced how I see my friendships with others. He has such an emphasis on how God is Truth and how as friends we have to lead one another to truth.”



### Focusing the Theme

A distinctive aspect of the CIT is to engage students with great ideas (usually by exposure to great thinkers such as Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, and so on). It does so not simply to learn about them but to learn from them for life. This is how the union of faith and reason becomes integrated in the CIT to the advantage of students. It invites them to take great ideas to heart, to make them their own, and to do so from a faith perspective—faith in themselves, in others, in life, and, grounding all, in God. Because the CIT reflects the conviction that all intellectual work quests for truth, which is ever grounded in ultimate Truth, can help people to connect great ideas from across the disciplines of learning and, even more importantly, with their own lives.

### For Conversation

- What are some of the “great ideas” that you engage regularly in your own teaching or function of leadership?
- How do you encourage students to “take responsibility” for themselves—who they are becoming—and for the well-being of others?
- How effective is your institution at making its students consciously aware of the CIT and how it can shape their lives in the world?

### Next: View Katherine Martin’s Video

### For Discernment and Decision

- How can your institution engage the CIT to encourage a “holistic” education of its students, one that enables them to have a life as well as make a living?
- What positive difference can it make for students’ future lives when the CIT highlights that all good human work participates in God’s creation?
- Are there commitments to uniting faith and reason that your institution or your own work needs to deepen or renew?





## THE LAW OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

DEAN VINCENT ROUGEAU

### Focusing the Theme

One common stereotype of the word “intellectual” raises the image of a lone scholar who is more concerned about ideas than real issues. By contrast, in the CIT, faith and reason combine into what is, in fact, a spiritual way of knowing. This can make a world of difference to Catholic higher education, for example, making its law school education more likely to promote justice for all.



## INFORMING AND FORMING CAREGIVERS

### PROFESSOR KATHERINE GREGORY



Katherine Gregory worked for a number of years as a neonatal intensive care nurse before becoming a professor at Boston College in the Connell School of Nursing. She conducts clinical research as a nurse scientist at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston.

“A nursing school in a Catholic university is unique because, while we teach scientific principles and the foundations of nursing practice, [the CIT encourages] teaching compassion that is critical to the success of any nurse or caregiver.”



#### Focusing the Theme

The CIT can empower our striving for wholeness. However, its union of faith and reason is never more needed than when we face the precariousness of life, as in facing serious illness or the reality of death. As a Catholic college or university prepares people for the helping professions such as nursing, it can lend a unique resource to encourage care and compassion for the human condition when most in need.

#### For Conversation

- How have you experienced the CIT to encourage care and compassion for people in need?
- What is the best Catholic rationale for forming students in such values as care and compassion?
- How might the study of theology and philosophy lend people unique resources to prepare them for the helping professions?

#### Next: View Professor Gregory's Video

#### For Discernment and Decision

- How can the whole curriculum of your college or university be crafted to nurture its students in care and compassion—especially for when “we suffer the human condition”?
- In your own teaching or leadership, how can you model the quest for truth and harness it to improve the quality of life for all?
- Should all of the curriculum in an institution of Catholic higher education be value laden? If so, which values should be favored?

### Focusing the Theme

St. Augustine said some 1,500 years ago that “catholic” means to be open to the truth, wherever it can be found. Yet, for many centuries the Church itself was not open to learn from non-Christian religions—this would not happen until the Second Vatican Council. Throughout the centuries, however, the Catholic Church has consistently taught that all people of goodwill who, through no fault of their own, do not have access to Christian faith, yet can be saved by “baptism of desire.” Vatican II and its “Declaration on Non Christian Religions” (Nostra Aetate) went a significant step further; it encouraged respect for and dialogue with non-Christian religions precisely because they have “a ray of that truth which enlightens all people.”

### For Conversation

- Has your own faith been enriched by dialogue with or the good example of people of other religious traditions?
- What might be some preconditions for effective interreligious dialogue?
- Why might the CIT encourage openness and dialogue with non-Christian religions?

## CATHOLIC HIGHER EDUCATION: THE STEWARD OF CIT

PROFESSOR THOMAS GROOME

“The CIT should shape all instances of Catholic education—from preschool to postschool—yet Catholic higher education is surely its primary steward, responsible to carry it forward and develop its legacy over time.”

### Focusing the Theme

The CIT epitomizes the ancient Catholic conviction—reaching back to the beginnings of the Church—that faith and reason, divine revelation and human scholarship, are necessary partners to each other. The pages of history are replete with examples of the danger of “faith” that does not have the tempering influence of “reason.” Likewise, reasoning without the guidance of faith and of a Source of Truth higher than ourselves can be equally dangerous. Yet, holding the two—faith and reason—in mutuality, sometimes in fruitful tension rather than choosing either/or, can be a challenge. In many ways, the modern university is marked precisely by its collapse of the tension and its favor for reason alone. It is not easy for Catholic higher education to resist the temptation to do likewise.





Resources developed by the Church in the 21st Century Center at Boston College.  
The C21 Center is a catalyst and resource for the renewal of the Catholic Church.

[WWW.BC.EDU/CHURCH21](http://WWW.BC.EDU/CHURCH21)