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## Vacation Approves Ex Corde Ecclesiae, UD Officials Comment

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## NEWS TIPS

### VATICAN APPROVES *EX CORDE ECCLESIAE*, UD OFFICIALS COMMENT

**BACKGROUND** — With little revision, the Vatican has approved norms for *Ex corde Ecclesiae* or "From the Heart of the Church," the papal document for Catholic higher education, for the 230-plus Catholic colleges and universities in the United States. The decision on the document was made public June 7. The norms will go into effect in a year.

The process started in 1990 with the papal document, intended to strengthen Catholic identity in Catholic colleges and universities and create closer ties between the bishops and the individual institutions, particularly the presidents and theologians. A first draft of guidelines to govern implementation of the document in the U.S. was rejected by the Vatican. Revisions were made and guidelines were resubmitted by the bishops in November 1999.

Certain provisions provoked no controversy, including those that emphasize the integration of philosophy and theology to give a strong foundation to undergraduate education and the call to faculty members to promote social justice and search for the moral and ethical implications of their research.

Other provisions caused heated conversations, such as the goal to have a majority of faculty and board of trustees be "Catholics committed to the faith," and a requirement that theologians obtain a "mandatum" from their local bishop certifying that they teach "in communion" with the bishop.

**NEXT, A COMMITTEE** — During the "suspension of the law" that will last for a year before the norms go into effect, U.S. bishops will appoint a committee "to explore with theologians on a national level the best way to handle the mandatum," said the Rev. James L. Heft, S.M., chancellor and University professor of faith and culture.

"I understand the U.S. bishops insisted on keeping sections that created a clear window for adjustments to the American system," said Heft, who recently completed four years in leadership roles with the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities. It shows the Vatican is "aware of diversity of state law, to say nothing of some of the dimensions of federal law," he said.

The discussion that led to the norms "by and large has been beneficial," Heft said, "pressing the discussion on mission and identity to another level. It has sharpened the focus.

"It could lead to a greater support on the part of bishops for Catholic higher education, a greater appreciation for the role and ministry of theologians in the church, a clear sense of both rights of bishops as well as rights of theologians, a more carefully worked out due process in cases of possible conflicts and a deeper sense of the mission of the church on the part of theologians as they do their work of retrieval, criticism and development of the tradition."

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**DUAL CITIZENSHIP** — Terrence W. Tilley, chair of religious studies at UD, says the concept of dual citizenship can be used to gain insight into the document. Tilley is former president of the College Theology Society and author of the upcoming book, *Inventing Catholic Tradition*.

"One of the things that was very interesting in the supplemental information that the bishops issued in September 1999 was a much clearer recognition that our colleges and universities are constituted not only in the church but also in the nation or the state," Tilley said. "That there is a form of 'dual citizenship.' It does not mean that there is disagreement about the ultimate goal in the discovery and dissemination of what is good and true and beautiful, but that there are going to be many differences in approaches, styles, methods, criteria and so forth.

"This recognition of 'dual citizenship' offers an important insight into how to read this revised version of the text of *Ex corde*. However, until the theologian is recognized as a dual citizen of the academy and the church, theologians are going to have difficulty with the mandate. In colleges and universities, even Catholic ones, there is in some quarters significant hostility to religious studies and theology. When members of theology and religious studies departments have to go up for tenure and promotion, they are judged by their peers in the university outside the department in most institutions. Quite possibly the possession of a mandate will be a negative. I hope that doesn't happen, but I can clearly imagine it being likely."

The mandate might be seen as marking a theologian as a mouthpiece for an institution that in some cases believes it has the truth and so it no longer needs to seek the truth, Tilley said. "I don't agree with this view, but I understand it."

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