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**A Philosophy of Professing**

Arguably, the best fun I have at Nazareth is in the classroom! In the past twenty years, I have moved from a teacher who teaches content to a teacher who experiences the content of the areas I teach as more integrated in me as a person. This is not only an important statement pointing to my growth but is important as well for my students who – whether they know it or not – are the direct beneficiaries of this enlargement of mind and soul. I have noticed over the years that, where at an earlier time I was less confident in my belief that I had something worthwhile to say, I find that having grown in age and (hopefully) wisdom, I am more assured that perhaps experience and steady contemplation of higher realities come to fruition in the classroom. In my view, it is the difference between teaching and professing. Further, I have come to recognize that I am not just a professor of philosophy. I am, in my heart of hearts, a *Catholic* professor of philosophy. Embracing this in myself *informs* the manner in which I embrace the student. Permit a statement of clarification.

Taking Aristotle's injunction to 'Know Thyself,' the chief revelation I have come to embrace in my professional growth is that I understand and interpret myself to be a Catholic philosopher who does not dissociate the experience of faith and reason. I believe philosophical reasoning pursues truth in the empirical world and is open to the possibility of a supernatural realm. From the standpoint of a Catholic philosopher this entails, on the one hand, a conviction of the tenets and creed of my Faith as possessive of Truth. It entails a perception of person as possessive of an inherent dignity inseparable from a Divine Account. It entails, as well, regulation of my behavior in the presence of 'the other' – i.e. my catholicity influences and sustains the manner in which I attempt to live my life both personally and as a professional. As a Catholic I am open to opposing views *exactly because* I know what I believe and why I believe it to be true.

On the other hand, I take as a principle of human existence a twofold reality: a human being is a spiritual being who is a seeker of truth; a human being is one who lives by belief of something. As a philosopher, I pursue truth as it manifests itself in its temporality. As a Catholic I have embraced, as formative of my being, the belief system of my Faith. As a philosopher, I remain true to the principles and methodology of my discipline as it pursues truth by way of a process governed by reason. As a Catholic philosopher, I approach my discipline as a philosophic speculation conceived in a dynamic union of faith. For example, my faith's 'reasonableness' shapes the way I approach the philosophical problem of evil; the nature of love; the quest for life's meaning, the idea of person, etc. I hold dear the words of the late pope, John Paul II, in *Fides Et Ratio*: 'Faith ... has no fear of reason, but seeks it out and has trust in it. Faith is in a sense an "exercise of thought"; and human reason is neither annulled nor debased in assenting to the contents of faith, which are in any case attained by way of free and informed choice.' (45-46)