FORGETTING FOUNDERS DAY:
HOW THE DISAPPEARANCE OF A CAMPUS TRADITION REVEALS THE AMERICANIZATION OF GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY’S CATHOLIC IDENTITY

A Senior Thesis
submitted to the Faculty of the
College of Arts and Sciences
of Georgetown University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of
Bachelor of Arts
in American Studies

By

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Washington, D.C.
April 25, 2018
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ABSTRACT

When John Carroll founded Georgetown University as the first American Catholic college in 1789, he had conducted a radical experiment. Why? Because the term “American Catholic” was considered an oxymoron. Catholics were not thought to exhibit the democratic values that were quintessential to American culture. Consequently, Catholic universities functioned as insular religious communities to protect themselves from the threats of secular Americanism. But as cultural shifts in both Church and country made Catholicism and Americanism more compatible, Catholic universities began to emerge through a process of Americanization.

This thesis explores the intimacies of the Americanization process of Catholic higher education in the United States by examining a case study of the nation’s first and oldest Catholic university. This work will argue that the rise and fall of Georgetown University’s annual celebration of Founders Day offers an effective lens to interpret the changing expression of the university’s Catholic identity throughout the mid-twentieth century. “Forgetting Founders Day” posits that the evolution and gradual disappearance of Founders Day as a campus tradition reveals how Georgetown University Americanized its Catholic identity.

But could Catholic universities in the United States become modern universities without losing their distinctive Catholic character? This is the question that still plagues Catholic schools to this day. “Forgetting Founders Day” contextualizes these inquiries by investigating the historical roots of Catholic colleges’ ongoing identity crises.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

There are certain individuals without whom this project would not be possible.
I would like to extend my sincerest thanks to . . .

To Professor Erika Seamon and Colva Weissenstein of the American Studies program for their leadership, wisdom, and guidance throughout this entire process.

To my thesis advisor, Dean Stefan Zimmers for his advice, enthusiasm and encouragement.

To Lynn Conway, archivist of Georgetown University, for her help with this project and for tireless work preserving the university’s history.

To Father Hentz for informing my understanding of modern Catholic theology, Father McFadden for thoughtfully reflecting on this important period in Georgetown’s history, and Father Bosco for inspiring my vision of the future of Georgetown’s Catholic identity.

To Governor Frank Keating for sharing his memories of Founders Day

To Emmett Curran for his unmatched contribution to the historical memory of Georgetown

To my fellow classmates and the Georgetown community as well as my family and loved ones for their endless support.

A.M.D.G.
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INTRODUCTION

In 1964, Georgetown University celebrated the 175th anniversary of its founding. Thirty years earlier, it celebrated its 300th. Making sense of this confusion uncovers important implications about the history of American Catholicism.

In 1789, John Carroll founded Georgetown University as the first Catholic college in the United States. Or so the story goes. Contrary to popular belief, historians differ when it comes to the pinpointing the true founding date of Georgetown. It is true that John Carroll, the first Catholic Archbishop in the United States and the “Father of the American Catholic Church,” bought the deed for land on the banks of the Potomac River on January 23, 1789. But for much of its early history, Georgetown considered 1788 – the year construction began on its first building – to be its founding year. It was not until the mid-nineteenth century that a typographical error altered the year to 1789. After an extravagant celebration commemorating Georgetown’s centennial in 1889, school officials decided to maintain the new founding.

The debate over Georgetown’s founding, though, is more extensive than a matter of a year. John Carroll first wrote his prospectus in 1784 but Georgetown did not receive its first student until 1791. Classes did not commence until 1792 but degrees were not formally conferred until 1817 because the college was not officially chartered until 1815. In terms of Georgetown’s religious affiliation, the Society of Jesus did not emerge from suppression until 1808 and Georgetown did not receive papal recognition until 1833.1 Georgetown’s founding narrative possesses a characteristic atypical of most founding dates: flexibility.

Father Coleman Nevils, president of Georgetown from 1928 to 1935, tested the limits of that flexibility. He considered the year 1634 – a whole 155 years before 1789 – to be the most

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appropriate date to popularize as Georgetown’s founding. That was the year that the first Jesuits immigrated to America as missionaries landing at St. Mary’s, Maryland. In the Ignatian tradition, those Jesuits planned to make education an essential part of their evangelization. Nevils believed that the schools that sprouted up over the next century were the direct forebears to Georgetown. Although he acknowledged the patriotic utility of the year 1789, Nevils wrote that, “. . . if the first Founders of Georgetown had been granted the same consideration and privileges that were given other institutions established under different religious auspices, the foundation of Georgetown College would be 1634 – it is Georgetown’s de jure.” As this explanation indicated, Nevils considered the first five Maryland Jesuits – Andrew White, Altham Gravenor, Thomas Copley, Ferdinand Poulton, and Thomas Gervase – to be founders of Georgetown.

Coleman Nevils made it his mission to ingrain the memory of Georgetown’s “founders” into the collective psyche of the Georgetown community. Along with naming new buildings in their honor, Nevils established a new campus tradition to honor the Maryland Jesuits. “Founders Day,” as it was called, was to be held on March 25, the anniversary of the 1634 Jesuit landing. Founders Day was not completely an original idea of Nevils; there was precedent for such a ceremony. In the mid-nineteenth century, Georgetown celebrated an annual “Pilgrim’s Day,” which later became the state holiday of “Maryland Day,” to commemorate the 1634 founding of Maryland. The name “Founders Day” also had precedent, but from a short-lived annual tradition to honor John Carroll two decades before Nevils was president. Nevils essentially morphed the holidays into one to commemorate the connection between John Carroll and the first American Jesuits. During the Founders Day ceremony, it was said that, “The

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3 Nevils, Miniatures of Georgetown, 2-5.
memory of them shall not depart away and their name shall be in request from generation to generation.”

Despite Nevils’ best efforts at memorialization, not only is Founders Day no longer celebrated at Georgetown today but its existence and significance are mostly forgotten. The origin story that Coleman Nevils attempted to secure in Georgetown’s collective memory instead fell victim to collective amnesia.

The rise and fall of Founders Day offers an effective lens to interpret the changing expression of Georgetown’s Catholic identity throughout the mid-twentieth century. “Forgetting Founders Day” posits that the evolution and gradual disappearance of Founders Day as a campus tradition reveals how Georgetown University Americanized its Catholic identity.

For much of American history, Catholicism and Americanism were seen as mutually exclusive. The international and hierarchical character of the Catholic Church seemed contrary to American ideals of patriotism, freedom, and democracy. Catholics differed on the issue of how to deal with such a dilemma. Americanists wanted Catholics to adapt to the culture of the United States while separatists sought to fortify a more insulated Catholic subculture in the United States to protect itself from secularizing threats. After World War II, though, Catholicism in the United States underwent an Americanization process during which it gradually adopted American qualities and entered the mainstream of American culture.

There is extensive scholarship on the topic of the history of Catholics in the United States. John Tracy Ellis, former editor of the Catholic Historical Review and a prominent scholar of American Catholic heritage, published a landmark book entitled *American Catholicism* in 1956 and with an updated version in 1969 after the Second Vatican Council. His work, covering

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mostly nineteenth century American Catholicism, provides historical context for the ghetto mentality of American Catholics.

One of the most renowned scholars of American Catholic culture is Jay Dolan, a former history professor at the University of Notre Dame who has written extensively on the topic. In 1985, he authored a comprehensive history entitled *The American Catholic Experience: A History of Colonial Times to the Present*. More recently, his 2002 book, *In Search of an American Catholicism: A History of Religion and Culture in Tension*, provides a comprehensive overview of the most fundamental historical clashes between the creeds of Catholicism and Americanism. Among the historians in his field, he is optimistic about the state of Catholicism in the United States as a uniquely American brand of the religion.

The process of Americanizing Catholicism was made explicit in the field of higher education and certain scholars have studied this aspect of the tension between nationality and religion. One of the first main scholars of Catholic colleges was Andrew Greeley, a priest who regularly contributed to Catholic publications like *America* as well as the *New York Times*. Greeley’s work, *From Backwater to Mainstream: A Profile of Catholic Higher Education*, offered one of the first reflections in the 1960s on how Catholic colleges risked losing their distinctive characteristics if they blindly sought to be like other elite universities. He expressed concern that the mainstreaming of Catholic colleges stripped them of their unique Catholic contribution to higher education. Philip Gleason, another prominent historian of modern American Catholicism analyzes American Catholics historical relationship with modern culture in his book *Contending with Modernity: Catholic Education in the Twentieth Century*. He assesses how professionalization in American secular education after World War II affected and
deeply confused the purpose of Catholic universities in the United States. He claims that Catholic colleges continue to be uncertain of their identities after Americanization.

William Patrick Leahy focuses particularly on the Jesuit educational tradition as a subsect of Catholic higher education in his work, *Adapting to America*. He investigates the historical motivations and intentions behind the Americanist and separatist camps within the Society of Jesus and how it affected Jesuit education. He explores the emergence from the ghetto mentality of the 1920s and broadly paints a picture of progress as he pushes back against the notion that secularism threatens a distinctly Catholic style of intellectualism.

In *Negotiating Identity*, Sister Alice Gallin, another highly regarded scholar of modern American Catholicism, investigates the root causes behind certain changes. Her extensive work on the effects of federal funding eligibility on the Catholic identities of Catholic universities uncovers hidden motivations that supplements the modernization narrative.

This thesis uses this scholarship to contextualize a case study of Americanization at Georgetown University. But in order to appreciate the significance of changes at Georgetown, one must have a knowledge of the history of the university. While there are several histories of Georgetown relevant to this thesis, no history of Georgetown is as substantial, detailed, or comprehensive as that of Emmett Curran’s three volume *A History of Georgetown University*. This history that synthesizes the perspectives of many aspects of the Georgetown shows Georgetown’s intimate history with both the Church and the country. Curran delicately balances telling the story of Georgetown both chronologically and thematically – a style borrowed in this thesis. “Forgetting Founders Day” relies heavily on the narrative he puts forth. While current scholarship on the modern history of Catholic higher education in America provides myriad
examples of Americanization efforts at different universities, a case study is important to the field to provide a holistic understanding of how different aspects of Americanization are linked.

This thesis is not a comprehensive history of Georgetown’s Catholic identity. Instead, it is a study of this identity through the narrow window of a specific tradition. Studying the evolution of a particular tradition provides an effective method for examining change over time. Traditions seek to reimagine the same concept repeatedly, so changes in a tradition typically indicate other meaningful shifts. The lens of tradition effectively eliminates most confounding variables when attempting to isolate root causes of trends over time.

This thesis chooses to use the tradition of Founders Day as its lens because the celebration’s inherent purpose was to publicly express Georgetown’s founding mission and values. A ‘Founders Day’ of any institution is fundamental to its very identity. The duration of Georgetown’s Founders Day from 1930 to 1970 provides a time frame to examine Georgetown’s Catholicity before and after the start of the Americanization of Catholicism in the United States.

The information about Founders Day in the thesis was gathered from sources at the Georgetown University Archives at Lauinger Library. The sources consisted of invitations, correspondence, programs, photographs, speeches, newspaper articles, and other material related to the event. The “Founders’ Day” collection covered the tradition from 1930 to 1966. Transcripts from 1967 and 1968 were found in a separate collection of presidential speeches – a revealing indication of the eventual diminished stature of the tradition. Recordings of speeches from 1969 and 1970 were found online through the Digital Georgetown database. The material from Founders Day was contextualized with the aforementioned histories of Georgetown as well as scholarly accounts of American Catholic culture. This research concluded that the history of
Founders Day reveals how Georgetown Americanized its Catholic identity by touting the concepts of patriotism, separation of church and state, freedom, and democracy.

The first chapter will discuss how the reconstruction of Georgetown’s founding to focus on the 1634 narrative reinforced the perception that Catholicism was incompatible with Americanism. The remaining chapters of the thesis will examine the subsequent Americanization of Georgetown’s Catholic identity. The second chapter will assess how Georgetown’s reorientation of its founding back to 1789 served to bolster the school’s patriotic credentials. The third chapter will examine how Founders Day’s focus on fundraising played a critical role in separating the rhetoric church and state at Georgetown. The fourth chapter will explore how evolving theology, specifically an emphasis on individual freedom, led to a democratization of Georgetown’s governance. The final chapter will investigate how the ultimate disappearance of Founders Day reflects how the spirit of democratization disrupted traditional Catholic culture.

The findings of this thesis aim to illustrate the historical underpinnings of Georgetown’s Catholic identity. But this thesis is not exclusively significant to a single university. A case study of Georgetown, the first Catholic college in the United States, located in the nation’s capital, is uniquely positioned to more broadly shed light on the phenomenon of Americanization.

When John Carroll founded Georgetown, he did not just establish a school – he established an entirely new Catholic educational system in America. An analysis of Carroll’s legacy serves as an examination of the success of his mission. Founded at the same time as the Church in the country, with historical connections to the original Catholic settlement in America, Georgetown’s story is a history of the complex tension between Catholicism and Americanism – a tension so complex that Georgetown celebrated its tercentennial before even turning 150 years old.
CHAPTER 1 – PRAISE BE TO GEORGETOWN

A TRADITION IS BORN

On June 9th, 1929, a new tradition was born at Georgetown University. Father W. Coleman Nevils, S.J., President of the University, published a declaration establishing March 25th as Georgetown’s “Founders Day.” However, John Carroll – the man typically considered Georgetown’s founder – was not the only person to be honored. The “founders” who were intended to be commemorated on this day died long before John Carroll was even born. Father Nevils wanted March 25th to be an annual recognition of the first five American Jesuits: Andrew White, John Gravenor, Thomas Gervase, Thomas Copley, and Ferdinand Poulton in addition to John Carroll. It was the year that those Jesuits immigrated to America, 1634, that Nevils declared Georgetown’s founding year. Founders Day – or Founders’ Day – honored the multiple founders of Georgetown from the seventeenth century for the duration of the 1930s. The implications of this constructed founding are significant not only for Georgetown, but for the history of American Catholicism.

Before investigating how the Americanization of Georgetown’s Catholic identity led to the demise of Founders Day in the 1960s, it is necessary to fully understand the historical significance of Founders Day prior its Americanization. The first step in doing so is examining how the Founders Day ceremonies of the 1930s reveal Georgetown’s separatist approach of expressing its Catholic identity and reflected how Georgetown resisted Americanization efforts in favor of a distinct Catholic subculture.

5 Coleman Nevils, “Proclamation of Founders Day,” 1929, Old Archives: Founders’ Day, Box 1, Folder 3, Georgetown University Archives, Washington, DC.
A GEORGETOWN MASS [See Appendix Figure 1]

The very ceremony of Founders Day resembled the centerpiece of the Catholic tradition: the Mass. Many aspects of Mass, particularly before the Second Vatican Council, highlighted the fears that many non-Catholic Americans held about Catholics. To many Protestants, the service was overly ritualistic, excluded non-Catholics, glorified the priest, and flirted with idolatry of saints.6 Much like Mass, Founders Day was a solemn and elaborate affair, meticulously ritualistic and full of pomp and circumstance. Jay Dolan, a scholar of American Catholic culture, emphasized the significance of structuring a tradition like a Mass by noting that, “For Catholics, the Mass was immutable. As far as most people knew, the Mass had never changed and never would.”7 Similarly, the liturgy of Founders Day remained virtually unchanged throughout the entire decade.

One of the most profound concerns that many non-Catholic Americans had about the Mass was that they were all said in Latin. The universal use of Latin instead of vernacular languages during the Mass made Catholicism seem like an exclusive cult. It also served as a reminder that Catholicism transcended Americanism in both time and space. The Founders Day programs of the 1930s show that Georgetown was not interested in actively combatting this appearance. The ceremony opened with a prayer of invocation that was displayed in both English and Latin. The descriptions of the schools and guests were also printed in both languages.8

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8 Founders Day Program, 1930, Old Archives: Founders’ Day, Box 1, Folder 3, Georgetown University Archives.
After a greeting from the president of the Yard, Georgetown’s student government, and a reading of the University’s Charter, the glorification of the Maryland Jesuits commenced. It was a common Protestant criticism that the Catholic practice of venerating saints, most notably Mary, verged on idolatry. The homage paid to Georgetown’s multiple founders of St. Mary’s in the 1930s resembled the manner in which Catholics might have honored their saints. The president of the university read Coleman Nevils’ “Proclamation of Founders Day” from 1929 to remind attendees of the original purpose of the tradition to commemorate the founders of Georgetown. The Proclamation said of the Maryland Jesuits that, “the memory of them shall not depart away” and that “their names shall be in request from generation to generation.” After a reading of the Proclamation came a recitation of the “Roll Call of the Georgetown Founders.” In 1930, this was done by the Auxiliary Bishop of Baltimore, John McNamara. As each name of the six founders was read aloud, the university archivist solemnly rang the original bell that the Maryland Jesuits used at their church. The ceremony not only recognized the Jesuits of St. Mary’s, but explicitly praised them. This was indicative of American Catholics’ popular “Devotional Catholicism” at the same time. Dolan writes that, “the two main features of this style of piety were the widespread practice of a “Mass and sacraments” and devotion to Mary.” After Roll Call, the Georgetown Glee Club chanted “Praises of the Founders,” an original Georgetown hymn of sorts, adapted from various biblical passages. The lyrics of the song

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9 Founders Day Program, 1930, Old Archives: Founders’ Day, Box 1, Folder 3, Georgetown University Archives.
11 Nevils, “Proclamation of Founders Day”
12 Founders Day Program, 1930, Old Archives: Founders’ Day, Box 1, Folder 3, Georgetown University Archives
13 Dolan, In Search of an American Catholicism, 169.
encourage the Georgetown community to “praise men of renown” and insists that “nations shall declare their wisdom, and the church shall show forth their praise.”\textsuperscript{15} The reading of the Proclamation, ringing of bells, and singing of praises created an elaborate ritual to venerate the school’s founders that effectively constituted a special Georgetown-themed Mass.

Through the use of Latin, the reading of old texts, the honoring of historical figures, the songs adapted from the Bible, the symbolic ringing of bells, and an overall solemn mood, Founders Day was emblematic of Catholic ritual.\textsuperscript{16} As grand spectacle, Founders Day reinforced negative Catholic stereotypes and built walls around a distinct Catholic subculture. Dolan explains that, “Continuity with patterns of the past, rather than change, was the most noticeable aspect of this resurgence in devotionalism.”\textsuperscript{17} Founders Day was more than simply a celebration of Georgetown’s history and heritage; it was a grand spectacle indicative of Georgetown’s goal to emphasize its historical connection to the Catholic Church.

**THE INSPIRATION BEHIND FOUNDERS DAY**

Why would Georgetown establish a new tradition that confirmed the negative preconceived notions of Americans hostile to Catholicism? Understanding the answer to this question is crucial to uncovering how the tradition transformed decades later.

At the time of Founders Day’s establishment, the strained relationship between Catholicism and Americanism had resulted in a tremendously heightened tension between Catholic and non-Catholic institutions of higher education in the United States. At the turn of the twentieth century, many non-Catholic schools were shedding their historically Protestant roots in favor of a more humanist approach to education while Catholic schools continued to focus on


\textsuperscript{16} Dolan, *In Search of an American Catholicism*, 169.

\textsuperscript{17} Dolan, *In Search of an American Catholicism*, 171.
moral formation. Public colleges in America were becoming more practical and scientific, allowing students more freedom to specialize in specific electives. These secularization efforts in public schools dramatically distinguished non-Catholic schools from Catholic ones. A distinction emerged between public American universities that emphasized growth in intellectual curiosity and Catholic schools that stressed growth in religious spirituality.

Catholic leaders clashed, however, on how to advance the mission of Catholic colleges and the extent to which Catholic universities should Americanize to compete with other schools. William Leahy, an expert on Jesuit educational tradition in America, writes that proponents of adaptation, known as Americanists, were, “Optimistic about Catholic opportunities and ardent nationalists, they deplored Catholic separatism, though never suggesting that the Church should modify dogma to gain acceptance.” However, this was not the consensus view – many Catholic leaders in education attempted to remain insulated as secularizing trends began to penetrate the Church’s school system. Leahy notes that, “Especially after the papal condemnation of Modernism in 1907, seminary officials sheltered their students from developments in American society and academic culture.”

This tension within the Church grew after World War I. Leahy writes that, “Anxious about the spread of secularism and atheism in American society, many Catholics in the decade after World War I became greatly concerned about maintaining religious orthodoxy and traditions.” Concerned that the vices of secular society were infiltrating American Catholicism, Cardinal Merry de Val sent a letter to the Holy See in 1927 claiming that Jesuit universities did

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20 Leahy, *Adapting to America*, 46.
21 Leahy, *Adapting to America*, 43.
not sufficiently possess Catholic character.\textsuperscript{22} He was not alone in his critical outlook on Jesuit universities, and “Such feelings reinforced adherence to a narrowly Catholic educational focus and made it difficult to institute curriculum and administrative changes.”\textsuperscript{23} In response, the Superior General of the Jesuits, Father Ledochowski, attempted to protect Catholicism from external threats in academia which included issuing a letter insisting all Catholic and Jesuit schools have Catholic administrations and faculty.\textsuperscript{24} As non-Catholic American schools were embracing academic professionalization, Catholic schools retreated into familiar orthodoxy.

The Catholicizing efforts of Father Ledochowski came at a time of revived nativist attitudes toward ethnic communities. Dolan noted that the anti-Catholic sentiments from groups like the Ku Klux Klan arose because of the persistent belief that, “The alleged tyranny of the church was described as incompatible with the nation’s democratic institutions.”\textsuperscript{25} In 1928, Al Smith became the first Catholic nominee for president but lost the election in large part because of persistent conspiracy theories regarding papal infiltration of America.\textsuperscript{26} In response, some Jesuit schools gradually opened themselves up to the influence of American academic trends that were not rooted in the Church throughout the 1930s.\textsuperscript{27} But it did not take long before, “Old anxieties about loss of religious faith surfaced among Catholics, encouraging a return to a previous cultural isolation.”\textsuperscript{28}

As Americanism began to creep into the classroom at Georgetown, administrators made efforts to ensure that Georgetown’s Catholicity would not be a fatality in its slow modernization.
process. Increasing the Catholic population in certain schools and capping the number of
students of other faiths were some solutions that they implemented.29 The undercurrents of
Americanization at Georgetown during this period resulted in grand counter efforts to distinguish
the school as a distinctively Catholic university, unscathed by the sins of Americanism.

AN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIR

Celebrating the history of Catholicism in America did not mean celebrating American Catholicism. Rather, Founders Day provided an opportunity for Georgetown to associate its history with Catholicism as a global institution. Perhaps the part of Founders Day that would trouble a non-Catholic the most was the fact that it was an overwhelmingly international affair.

Anti-Catholic sentiments in America during the twentieth century were entangled with nativist and xenophobic attitudes regarding immigration. In the mid-nineteenth century, an influx of immigrants to the United States resulted in massive growth of the American Catholic population.30 These new Americans were often poor and uneducated leading to widespread negative stereotypes about the intelligence and work ethic of Catholics. Most Catholic immigrants were consistently denied the economic opportunities afforded to white Protestants.31 Unable to assimilate into American culture, many Catholics found themselves retreating within their own ethnic enclave of the Church in America.32 This further exacerbated the stigma that Catholics were foreigners as part of an immigrant church in the United States. This reputation of Catholics endured into the twentieth century and is vital context for understanding the significance of the international character of Founders Day.

30 Leahy, Adapting to America, 2-5.
31 Ibid.
32 Dolan, In Search of an American Catholicism, 133.
The hallmark of Georgetown’s celebration of Founders Day ceremonies in the 1930s was that it functioned as an academic convocation with the bestowal of honorary degrees in newly established honorary schools to special guests. At the Founders Day convocation, these honorary degrees often went to non-Americans in front of a large audience of foreign diplomats. Perhaps it is unsurprising that Founders Day was intercultural – it was created to remember the legacies of the first Catholic immigrants to America. At the first Founders Day in 1930, Father Nevils bestowed honorary degrees upon Paul Claudel, an ambassador in the French foreign service, and Arturo Toscanini, an Italian musical conductor and Director of the New York Philharmonic Society. The homage paid to prominent Catholics of Italian and French backgrounds reinforced the image of Catholics as immigrants and made the religion seem globalist in a time of American nativism and nationalism. This could have been interpreted as an example of how Catholics, as members of an international order, could not be trusted as loyal American citizens.

Each year, Founders Day gave Georgetown a chance to celebrate its place in a global network of Catholics. In 1931, Katsuji Debuchi, the Japanese ambassador to the United States, was recognized with an honorary degree. His address to the crowd in Gaston Hall focused on the history of Catholicism in Japan since the arrival of Jesuit missionary, St. Francis Xavier. The tumultuous history of Catholics being ostracized in Japan closely resembled the experience of American Catholics. Debuchi said that, “The Catholicism of Japan which was introduced and inspired by St. Francis Xavier about four centuries ago is bound to flourish for it was sown on good ground.” Debuchi’s speech implied that Georgetown might have been the “good ground” on which the Catholicism of America was sown. Perhaps it was Georgetown’s task to maintain

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33 Founders Day Program, 1930, Old Archives: Founders’ Day, Box 1, Folder 3, Georgetown University Archives.

34 “Katsuji Debuchi Speech,” 1931, Old Archives: Founders’ Day, Box 1, Folder 4, Georgetown University Archives.
the vitality of the Catholic Church in America. The tradition of inviting foreign diplomats continued throughout the thirties. In 1932, Georgetown honored Miguel Cruchaga Tocornal, the Chilean ambassador to the United States. The next year, Leonide Pitamic, the Minister of Yugoslavia to the United States, was honored. 

The year 1934, the tercentennial of the pilgrims’ 1634 landing, provided a prime atmosphere to draw the most explicit connections yet between Georgetown and St. Mary’s. The university honored five special guests including Albert Ritchie, the governor of Maryland. A newspaper article previewing the event noted that Ritchie would, “will feel at home in Georgetown, the oldest Catholic university in America whose history has been linked with that of Maryland since its founding.” 

Georgetown also honored Almeto Giovanni Cicohnani, the Apostolic Delegate to the United States, who called for America to remember the St. Mary’s Jesuits as pioneers and for the Church to exalt them as missionaries. Georgetown’s connection to the St. Mary’s settlement was made even stronger by a singing of “Maryland, My Maryland,” an ode to the state written by a Georgetown student during the Civil War. A local newspaper in 1934 described Founders Day as dedicated to the, “memory of the first founders who 300 years ago planted the seed of higher learning from which sprouted Georgetown University.”

John Carroll understandably became more of a focal point in 1935 as the United States celebrated his 200th birthday. But even in that year, Georgetown still maintained its international

35 Program, 1932, Old Archives: Founders’ Day, Box 1, Folder 4, Georgetown University Archives.
36 Program, 1933, Old Archives: Founders’ Day, Box 1, Folder 5, Georgetown University Archives.
37 Newspaper clipping, 1937. Old Archives: Founders’ Day, Box 1, Folder 5, Georgetown University Archives.
38 Almeto Giovanni Cicohnani Speech, 1934, Old Archives: Founders’ Day, Box 1, Folder 5, Georgetown University Archives.
39 Program, 1934, Old Archives: Founders’ Day, Box 1, Folder 5, Georgetown University Archives.
40 Newspaper clipping, 1934, Old Archives: Founders’ Day, Box 1, Folder 5, Georgetown University Archives.
feel by inviting Austrian diplomat Edgar Prochnik to the event. The unapologetically international character of Founders Day did not go unnoticed. In 1936, a newspaper article following Founders Day noted that, “As befits the international character of the educational system to which Georgetown belongs, the exercises and reception were attended by ambassadors and ministers of 10 foreign nations and members of the embassy and legation staffs of at least 15 others.” In 1937, Manuel Luis Quezon spoke of a global Christian spirit in his Founders Day address espousing a, “brotherhood of nations with love in our hearts for all mankind and with a prayer on our lips for the salvation of humanity.” In 1938, a newspaper article noted that the attendance of so many foreign diplomats at Georgetown’s celebration of Founders Day symbolized, “the international bond of the world-wide Society of Jesus.” Catholicism as a global network – a concept that scared many non-Catholic Americans – was on full display during Founders Day ceremonies at Georgetown.

GEORGETOWN’S REJECTION OF AMERICANISM

At Georgetown, Father Coleman Nevils devised a creative solution to appease Catholic students who were losing faith in Catholic higher education in America: He made the nation’s oldest Catholic university into simply the nation’s oldest university. Asserting that Georgetown’s proper founding date was in 1634, he made Georgetown the oldest institution of higher learning in America – beating out Harvard by a mere two years. Rewriting Georgetown’s history in order to connect it to the events of 1634 exemplified how Georgetown responded to educational secularization in the 1920s: in addition to asserting the superiority of Catholic schooling over

41 Program, 1935, Old Archives: Founders’ Day, Box 1, Folder 6, Georgetown University Archives.
42 Newspaper clipping, 1936, Old Archives: Founders’ Day, Box 1, Folder 6, Georgetown University Archives.
43 Manuel Luis Quezon Speech, 1937, Old Archives: Founders’ Day, Box 1, Folder 7, Georgetown University Archives.
44 Newspaper clipping, Old Archives: Founders’ Day, Box 1, Folder 7, Georgetown University Archives.
secular education in America, the reconstruction of Georgetown’s founding to 1634 reveals how
teaching and learning at Georgetown expressed its Catholic identity as distinct from Americanism during the 1930s.

Coleman Nevils’ bold claim that 1634 was Georgetown’s rightful founding year
demonstrated the University’s effort to protect itself against the perceived threats of an
Americanizing Catholic faith and more deeply entrench itself in a distinct Catholic subculture. In
fact, Nevils changed plans for the creation of Edward White Memorial Quadrangle, honoring an
alumnus who went on to become Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, to Andrew White
Memorial Quadrangle, honoring one of the original Jesuits at St. Mary’s.45 This change, along
with other efforts to ingrain the story of 1634 into the collective psyche of the Georgetown
community, made the school’s heritage more Catholic than American. It is also important to note
that the Catholic year of 1634 precedes 1789, implying that Georgetown’s intimate relationship
with the history of Catholicism in the American continent transcended its relationship with the
country of the United States.

It may seem counterintuitive that Coleman Nevils wanted to highlight ways in which
Catholics were unique from most Americans during a time of turmoil for many American
Catholics. As Dorothy Day once said, “Catholics were a nation apart, a people within a people,
making little impression on the tremendous non-Catholic population of the country.”46 But the
professionalization of American academia incentivized Catholics to insulate themselves from the
perceived threats of secularism. There was perhaps no better way to separate Georgetown from
Americanism than to commemorate its founding by honoring five Catholic priests who were
missionary immigrants, especially in a grandiose ceremony that resembled a Mass.

46 Dolan, In Search of an American Catholicism, 132.
Nevils’ response to tension between Catholicism and Americanism, including his creation of Founders Day, was not unlike those of other Catholic leaders at the time who Leahy describes as, “Zealous, full of good will, but more suited to an earlier age…”

Leahy writes that, “…the great majority clung to tradition, orthodoxy, and religious discipline as defenses against a more secular environment.” This was certainly the case with Nevils’ presidency which was marked with constant pomp and circumstance in order to promote Georgetown’s global prominence. Dolan notes that this kind of, “Devotional Catholicism reinforced the countercultural stance of Catholic intellectuals who were promoting a public Catholicism to combat the secular drift of American culture.”

At a time when the utility of Catholic colleges faced skepticism and hostility, Catholic universities like Georgetown needed to possess special religious identities that were distinct from secular American schools – and perhaps even grander.

Ultimately, the establishment of Founders Day as a campus tradition in 1929 was a reactionary response to combat the increasing secularization of higher education in America by attempting to preserve the distinctiveness of Catholic higher. Emmett Curran writes of the many ways that Catholicism was strengthened at Catholic universities and notes that at Georgetown, “During the decade, there was a very conscious effort to make the school as Catholic as possible in its administration, faculty, and students.” As part of what Curran described as Coleman Nevils’ “quest to make Georgetown more Catholic,” Founders Day represented Georgetown’s attempt to retain its Catholic identity and turn inward like many Catholic institutions in the face of the perceived threat of the secularism of Americanization. The tradition, in many ways, was an act of resistance and effectively functioned as a rejection of Americanism.

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47 Leahy, *Adapting to America*, 46.
48 Ibid.
CHAPTER 2 – FOR GOD & COUNTRY

AMERICA’S CATHOLIC MOMENT

After 1938, the tradition of Founders Day took a hiatus for almost two decades.\(^{51}\) Every aspect of life at Georgetown was deeply affected by World War II and many traditions were disrupted as a result.\(^{52}\) While Founders Day was absent, cultural shifts changed how Catholics were perceived in the United States. One major impetus for this cultural shift was the War allowing Catholics to prove their loyalty to the American cause by fighting side by side with Protestant soldiers and thus melting away certain ethnic differences.\(^{53}\) After years of nativist discrimination, Catholics were beginning to reconcile their identities and prove that one could both be Catholic and American simultaneously.\(^{54}\) There were, of course, still anti-Catholic sentiments throughout the nation, but the undercurrent of the Americanization movement began to enter the mainstream of Catholic thought in the United States. As Dolan notes, “No longer was the church a community turned inward on itself . . . This new attitude would have significant implications in the United States, where Catholicism did an about-face, abandoned its sectarian posture, and sought to become a major force in American public life.”\(^{55}\)

In his 1969 book *From Backwater to Mainstream* detailing how American acceptance of Catholics affected Catholic higher education in the United States, Andrew Greeley noted that by initiating an process of becoming more ‘American,’ American Catholic higher education was, “departing from its original position within the walls of the immigrant ghetto, attempting to

\(^{51}\) *Old Archives: Founders’ Day*, Georgetown University Archives.


\(^{53}\) Dolan, *In Search of an American Catholicism*, 211.

\(^{54}\) Ibid.

\(^{55}\) Dolan, *In Search of an American Catholicism*, 194.
become part of the broader American higher educational enterprise.” The Americanist vision of interaction between Catholicism and Americanism on campuses was coming into fruition.

Whereas the Founders Day ceremonies of the 1930s reveals Georgetown’s subscription to Catholic separatism, the Founders Day ceremonies of the 1950s and 1960s reveals a systematic Americanization of Georgetown Catholic identity. An examination of the evolution of Founders Day shows that Georgetown gradually adopted characteristics typically associated with Americanism in order to enter the mainstream of modern higher education in American society. This Americanization carried profound implications for the very identity of Georgetown as a Catholic institution in the United States. Dolan notes that as Catholic colleges, “…became more American and left behind the immigrant church of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the search for an American Catholicism became more intense, with consequences far more revolutionary than previously.” At Georgetown, the existential struggle of this search is illuminated in the gradual erosion of the university’s now forgotten Founders Day tradition.

A NEW FOUNDING

As Catholics were emerging from their insular subculture in the mid-1950s, Founders Day was revived at Georgetown. But this new iteration of Father Nevils’ tradition probably would not have pleased him. Gone was the focus on the five immigrant Jesuits who settled at St. Mary’s, Maryland. The celebration not did commemorate multiple men, but rather one: John Carroll. The Founders’ Day of the 1930s returned as Founder’s Day. Despite still being held on March 25th, the anniversary of the Maryland settlement, the special occasion no longer

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57 Dolan, *In Search of an American Catholicism*, 197.
58 Program, 1955, *Old Archives: Founders’ Day*, Box 2, Folder 1, Georgetown University Archives.
recognized the significance of that date as the anniversary of the 1634 landing.\textsuperscript{59} Instead, the year 1789 – the same year as the ratification of the United States Constitution – was celebrated as Georgetown’s rightful founding year. At the first revived Founders Day ceremony, Father Edmund Bunn, president of Georgetown from 1952-1964, referenced the 1634 story and the efforts put forth by the first Maryland Jesuits to open a school. Without naming Nevils specifically, Bunn remarked that, “some historians have seen in these abortive attempts the foundations of Georgetown.”\textsuperscript{60} He then boldly asserted that attempts at connecting Georgetown to St. Mary’s were, “the loving exaggerations of loyalty.”\textsuperscript{61} While Bunn expressed deep gratitude to the Maryland Jesuits for their contributions to Jesuit education in America, he believed that the main purpose of Founders Day was to commemorate Georgetown’s “actual” founder, John Carroll and the mission he envisioned in 1789.\textsuperscript{62}

Reconciling the historically conflicting cultures of Catholicism and Americanism, Georgetown proved its patriotism by merging the university’s origin story with the founding narrative of the United States. The emphasis of this dual founding – both religious and patriotic – was perhaps the most salient symbol of Georgetown’s efforts to Americanize its Catholic identity. As Founders Day reemerged, Georgetown did not treat Catholicism and Americanism as mutually exclusive as it once had. The patriotic guests, themes, and rhetoric of Founders Day in the late 1950s and early 1960s exemplify Georgetown’s active efforts to dispel the notion that Catholics could not be loyal and proud citizens of the United States.

\textsuperscript{59} Edmund Bunn Speech, 1955, \textit{Old Archives: Founders’ Day}, Box 2, Folder 1, Georgetown University Archives.
\textsuperscript{60} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{61} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{62} Ibid.
A PATRIOTIC FOUNDERS DAY

In 1955, Georgetown welcomed Clare Boothe Luce as its keynote honoree and speaker for Founders Day. Luce was a conservative Congresswoman and diplomat to Italy under President Dwight Eisenhower. The contrast between the first Founders Day in 1930, which honored an Italian ambassador to America, and the Founders Day in 1955, which honored an American ambassador to Italy, plainly showcases the tradition’s shift from a global to national mindset. In her speech, Luce spoke of the relevance of John Carroll’s “public philosophy” to American political theory. Dolan points out that Americanists like Luce, “Wanting Catholics to abandon the clannishness that had set them apart from the rest of society, … advocated a public Catholicism, a style of religion engaged in discussing issues related to the welfare of American society and how this society developed.”

Clare Boothe Luce referred to Founders Day as, “the day on which Georgetown University recollects its traditions, reviews its purposes, and resolves anew that they shall continue and prevail.” She used this opportunity to warn society that it must not lose sight of the religious foundations of the American Revolution, and by extension, the founding of Georgetown. She reflected on the unique purpose of Georgetown, as the first Catholic college in the United States, to, “…transmit to generations of Americans the ancient heritage of the Church, her faith and her philosophy.” However, Luce made it clear that Carroll’s mission was not solely to secure the success of the Church in America – it was to secure the success of the

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63 Program, 1955, Old Archives: Founders’ Day, Box 2, Folder 1, Georgetown University Archives.
64 Ibid.
65 Clare Boothe Luce Speech, 1955 Old Archives: Founders’ Day, Box 2, Folder 1, Georgetown University Archives.
66 Dolan, In Search of an American Catholicism, 147
67 Clare Boothe Luce Speech, 1955 Old Archives: Founders’ Day, Box 2, Folder 1, Georgetown University Archives.
68 Ibid.
69 Ibid.
nation as well. Thus, patriotism was actually an original tenet of Georgetown’s founding philosophy.

Luce told attendees of Founders Day how the Georgetown community could and should patriotically contribute to the American cause. She said that John Carroll, “wished his institution to transmit the American heritage – the democratic faith, and the public philosophy which, in the very year of Georgetown’s final foundation, has guided the Founding Fathers to the conclusion of their work in the Constitutional Convention.” She asserted that the morality found in religious tradition was an integral element of the American democratic experiment and feared that the moral foundations of the country were vanishing. She believed that Georgetown and the Church, once viewed as contradictory to American values, were a central part of the solution to rescuing the nation’s soul. She told her audience that Georgetown had maintained its commitment to its founding principles and that, “…the public philosophy of America, the tradition of natural law, has been kept in precious custody.” In her speech, Luce not only made the values and mission of Georgetown compatible with those of the United States, but asserted that Georgetown’s contribution was essential to the survival of the nation.

The following year in 1956, Georgetown welcomed John Courtney Murray, a highly renowned Jesuit scholar who was arguably the most preeminent proponent of Catholic Americanization in the United States. His very invitation served as a controversial statement by Georgetown because he proudly, “. . . took up the cause of demonstrating the compatibility between Catholicism and the American democratic tradition,” for which he was often scorned. 

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70 Clare Boothe Luce Speech, 1955 Old Archives: Founders’ Day, Box 2, Folder 1, Georgetown University Archives.
71 Ibid.
72 Ibid.
73 Ibid.
74 Dolan, In Search of an American Catholicism, 158.
75 Ibid.
In his message to Georgetown, Murray used the story of Saint Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Society of Jesus, to discuss how Catholics should respond to the problem of modernity. Essentially, Murray claimed that there is no purpose in sheltering oneself from the realities of the world; rather, one must meet the present needs of society. Of the first Jesuits, Murray recalled that, “Blocked off from a return to the past, they were forced to confront the future, to meet the modern world and all the problems created by its modernity.” By explaining how the mission of the Society of Jesus sought to address contemporary social issues, Murray concluded that it was in Georgetown’s very nature as a Jesuit institution to adapt to the times. This conclusion highlighted the utility of Georgetown’s revitalized patriotism: to allow the university to contend with other American colleges instead of retreating into obscurity.

In 1957, Fr. John Keating Cartwright, a high-profile priest in Washington, DC spoke at Founders Day asserting that John Carroll played an instrumental part not just in the history of the American Church but in American history in general. He noted that, “It was not the least of the services of this great man to the Church and indeed to the United States, that he was one of the pioneers of higher education.” Cartwright remarked that in a time when America did not have much more than “independence and material resources,” Carroll dared to enrich intellectual life in the heart of the new nation. Positioning its founder as an important figure in national history strengthened Georgetown’s patriotism as part of its Americanization efforts.

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77 Ibid.
78 Ibid.
79 Ibid.
The next year in 1958, Bishop Martin John O’Connor from the North American College in Rome sought to stress the concept of synthesis between civic and religious realms.\textsuperscript{80} To accomplish this, he described Georgetown’s school seal (a slightly altered variation of the federal seal), saying, “On the escutcheon there you see the bold and fearless bird, which is the eagle, grasping on one side the world, on the other the Cross, Civil Society and the Church, human knowledge and the life of Grace, both going to produce the single product, which is the aim of university education.”\textsuperscript{81} By analyzing the significance of Georgetown’s seal – an eagle grasping a globe and a cross – O’Connor advanced the notion that Catholic universities in America existed not just for the success of the Church but for the success of the country as well.

On Founders Day in 1960, Father Edmund Bunn, president of Georgetown, harkened back once more to the year 1634. However, in doing so, he drew a connection from Thomas Copley’s advocacy of religious tolerance to the American value of freedom of religion. He said that, “When this principle of religious liberty was incorporated into the laws of our nation, then only was a permanent and enduring system of Catholic education possible.”\textsuperscript{82} By stating this, Bunn publicly acknowledged that the flourishing of Catholic education in the United States was only made possible by America’s founding principles. He went on to say that, “Both events took place in 1789, with the ratification of our United States Constitution, and the foundation of Georgetown College.”\textsuperscript{83} With the dual founding in mind, Bunn attempted to boldly Americanize the story of 1634 for his audience.

\textsuperscript{\footnotesize{80}} Martin John O’Connor Speech, 1958, \textit{Old Archives: Founders’ Day}, Box 2, Folder 2, Georgetown University Archives.
\textsuperscript{\footnotesize{81}} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{\footnotesize{82}} Edmund Bunn Speech, 1960, \textit{Old Archives: Founders’ Day}, Box 3, Folder 1, Georgetown University Archives.
\textsuperscript{\footnotesize{83}} Ibid.
Louis B. Wright, a Shakespeare scholar, spoke at Founders Day in 1961 on the subject of intellectual quackery in government.\textsuperscript{84} He declared, though, that, “in the wind that blows from 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue there are signs of a change.”\textsuperscript{85} At the first Founders Day since the election of John F. Kennedy, the country’s first Catholic president, Wright commended the White House for recognizing the virtue, necessity, and practicality of a liberal arts education in the modern world.\textsuperscript{86} It was undoubtedly a ringing endorsement of the Jesuit educational tradition’s emphasis on forming political engaged citizens. This foray into the political realm was representative of many American Catholics’ new mindset and how, “By casting off the outsider mentality and the inferiority complex that went with it, they sought to adopt the mentality of the insider, the cultural critic who possessed the confidence and ability to comment intelligently on the welfare of American society.”\textsuperscript{87}

Once again in 1963, Georgetown exalted both Catholicism and Americanism. Founders Day honored Dr. Drimmel, a notable anti-communist and informed attendees of Founders Day that, “for his patriotic and devoted services, [Drimmel] has been many times decorated by both Church and State.”\textsuperscript{88} The same year, Georgetown also honored Alan Bible, a United States Senator, who reminded attendees that, “It is then no small part of Georgetown’s joy and justifiable pride that from her very beginnings so many of her sons have been called to serve in the highest offices and councils of the nation.”\textsuperscript{89} Promoting the contributions of Georgetown alumni to American society as good citizens was essential to proving the university’s patriotism.

\textsuperscript{84} Newspaper clipping, 1961, Old Archives: Founders’ Day, Box 2, Folder 4, Georgetown University Archives.
\textsuperscript{85} Louis B. Wright Speech, 1961, Old Archives: Founders’ Day, Box 2, Folder 4, Georgetown University Archives.
\textsuperscript{86} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{87} Dolan, In Search of an American Catholicism, 147.
\textsuperscript{88} Program, 1963, Old Archives: Founders’ Day, Box 2, Folder 5, Georgetown University Archives.
\textsuperscript{89} Alan Bible Speech, 1963, Old Archives: Founders’ Day, Box 2, Folder 5, Georgetown University Archives.
The theme of Founders Day in 1964 was “Wisdom and Discovery for a Dynamic World.”\textsuperscript{90} This markedly outward-facing theme stood in stark contrast to the more insular tone of Founders Day celebrations in the 1930s. Father Bunn stated that the purpose of Founders Day in 1964 was, “to refresh and to recall the basic and underlying principles and guidelines of Georgetown education.”\textsuperscript{91} With that in mind, Georgetown chose to honor Dr. Robert Hutchins, an intellectual writer focused on epistemology and higher education. He remarked in his address that, “Since 1789, Georgetown has lighted a path for its students to follow.”\textsuperscript{92} He added that Georgetown is now, “…called upon for something more, and that is leadership in American education, in American life, and in the world.”\textsuperscript{93} Hutchins’ speech was a call to action for Catholic students to get involved in civic affairs. He discussed how Catholic schools, many of which were founded in order to give Catholic Americans an educational refuge from harsh discrimination, had begun the process of Americanization. He remarked that his impression of many Catholic universities like Georgetown was that, “their prime obligation was to show that they were just as American as the secular institutions.”\textsuperscript{94}

However, Robert Hutchins warned of the detrimental effects of further Americanization. He bemoaned the fact that Catholic schools’ Americanization efforts made them appear more like secular colleges, “by imitating, or even exaggerating, the vices of those institutions.”\textsuperscript{95} This perspective on Americanization would emerge at the forefront of a vigorous debate around the nature of Catholic universities in America and is still an influential force to this day. Was it

\textsuperscript{90} Program, 1964, \textit{Old Archives: Founders’ Day}, Box 2, Folder 6, Georgetown University Archives.
\textsuperscript{91} Edmund Bunn Statement, 1964, \textit{Old Archives: Founders’ Day}, Box 2, Folder 6, Georgetown University Archives.
\textsuperscript{92} Robert Hutchins Speech, 1964, \textit{Old Archives: Founders’ Day}, Box 2, Folder 6, Georgetown University Archives.
\textsuperscript{93} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{94} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{95} Robert Hutchins Speech, 1964, \textit{Old Archives: Founders’ Day}, Box 2, Folder 6, Georgetown University Archives.
possible that the 1789 narrative could go too far? Could Georgetown’s newfound patriotic emphasis be interpreted as choosing Americanism over Catholicism instead of a synthesis of the two? These were the tough questions that emerged as the Americanization of Georgetown’s Catholic identity continued in new ways throughout the late 1960s.

**FOUNDERS’ DAY VS. FOUNDER’S DAY**

As Catholics entered the mainstream of American life, Georgetown was able to merge its own founding with the founding of the United States to appear more patriotic and quell fears that Catholics schools could not form productive citizens. Like most historical events, Americanization did not occur without prompting. The changes in the Catholic higher education during this time were the culmination of decades of debate about the appropriate degree of change. But the goals of Americanists finally came to fruition after World War II. Georgetown’s annual tradition of Founders Day serves as an effective prism to analyze the complexity and evolution of this tension between traditionalist proponents of religious separatism and progressive advocates of Americanization within the Catholic community.

*Founders’ Day and Founder’s Day reflected contrasting visions of American Catholicism. Founders’ Day aggrandized Georgetown’s historical Catholic roots in order to present the school as distinct and superior to non-Catholic schools. Founder’s Day, however, reconciled Georgetown’s Catholicity with Americanism in order to present Georgetown as a modern university. One approach was a rejection of Americanism and an affirmation that Catholic schools should remain in a distinct subculture separate from traditional American schools. The other approach was a bold assertion that Catholic schools could and should enter the same realm as elite non-Catholic schools in America.*
One of the first steps of Georgetown’s Americanization process was to prove its patriotism by melding its own founding with the founding of the nation. There is little question that the difference between the global theme of the 1930s and the American theme of the 1950s and 1960s was stark. Georgetown’s multiple immigrant founders from 1634 gave way to a singular American founder from 1789. The significance of a Catholic university touting the year 1789 – a year emblematic of liberal, secular, and revolutionary values – cannot be overstated. For some, it was a beautiful pairing; for others, it was a concerning contradiction. Either way, Georgetown was paving the way for Catholics to be part of American society. As Jay Dolan notes, “This was a new awakening for many Catholics raised in a subculture that had fenced itself off from the rest of society.”

The reestablishment of Founders Day shows how Georgetown’s construction of its origin story served a certain utility throughout the mid-twentieth century. When the university needed to be more Catholic, Georgetown adopted the 1634 founding narrative; when the university was able to be more American, Georgetown promoted the 1789 narrative. The stunning malleability of Georgetown’s founding date reveals the lengths to which Catholic institutions went to deal with Catholicism’s tenuous relationship with the United States. On Founders Day in 1964, Georgetown celebrated the 175th anniversary of its founding – thirty years after its 300th anniversary.

A DISAPPEARING TRADITION

From 1955 to 1964, Founders Day proved to be a venerable tradition for a decade at Georgetown. But as the university’s Catholic identity Americanized, Georgetown became

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96 Dolan, In Search of an American Catholicism, 152.
97 Programs, Old Archives: Founders’ Day, Boxes 1, Folder 5, and Box 2, Folder 6, Georgetown University Archives.
somewhat less distinct causing Founders Day to gradually lose its stature as a tradition. The revived version of Founders Day was held in McDonough Arena, a generic basketball gymnasium built in the 1950s, as opposed to the 1930s location of Gaston Hall, an ornately decorated auditorium built in the nineteenth century. This change in venue signaled a shift away from a flamboyantly Catholic atmosphere. With this shift came a subtle diminishment of the special grandeur of Founders Day. It is also worth noting that aligning itself with the history and progression of the nation allowed Georgetown to focus more on confronting its present role in American society than simply venerating its past. Perhaps this new orientation toward the future was not as compatible with a tradition that was inherently linked to the past. As Georgetown’s Americanization process escalated after 1964, the speed of the diminishment of Founders Day accelerated exponentially.

For the first time in a decade, there was no Founders Day ceremony at Georgetown in 1965. Instead, Georgetown decided to install its first chapter of Phi Beta Kappa. This decision reflected the academic priorities of Georgetown’s new president, but it was also indicative of the dwindling cache of the formerly extravagant Founders Day. Students were also beginning to feel apathetic toward the repetitive annual tribute to John Carroll. In a scathing open letter, Father Joseph Sellinger bemoaned the fact that, “the great majority of the College student body did not consider it their duty to attend the Founder’s Day Convocation….” If Founders Day were to galvanize the interest of the student body, it could not have continued in its current form. When Founders Day returned in 1966 under a new university president, it was nearly unrecognizable.

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98 Programs, Old Archives: Founders’ Day, Boxes 1, Folder 5, and Box 2, Folder 6, Georgetown University Archives.
CHAPTER 3 – COMMANDER-IN-POPE

ENTER FATHER CAMPBELL

The previous chapter explored how Georgetown’s display of patriotism at Founders Day helped Americanize the university’s Catholic identity by combatting the belief that Catholics could not enjoy a sense of American national pride. This chapter will use the lens of Founders Day to show how Georgetown further Americanized its Catholic identity by forging a separation of church and state.

Historically, many non-Catholic Americans feared that Catholics did not believe in the United States’ high principle of separation of church and state. In fact, many Catholic theologians long believed that the Church was both intertwined with and superior to the state. Dolan writes that, “For centuries, Catholic teaching had held that church and state, the spiritual and the temporal, were not distinct and autonomous spheres. Rather, the temporal sphere, the state, was subject to the primacy of the spiritual or the church.”101 Even in a democratic age, “To suggest that the American model, in which the Catholic Church had no right to interfere in the affairs of the state and no right to prevent the free exercise of religion, should become the norm for nations throughout the world was to challenge the legitimacy of an ancient, and indeed seemingly immutable, Catholic doctrine.”102

However, thinking was beginning to change in the 1960s. After the Second Vatican Council (which will be discussed later) issued Dignitatis Humanae, the Concil’s Declaration on Religious Freedom, many Catholics felt more comfortable interacting with secular society.103

101 Dolan, In Search of an American Catholicism, 158.
102 Dolan, In Search of an American Catholicism, 108.
This shift, though, was already occurring in the United States. As a presidential candidate, John F. Kennedy declared he believed that, “the separation of church and state is absolute.”\(^\text{104}\) Just as the president of the United States stressed separation of church and state in order to appear more American, Georgetown’s president also took measures to divorce the two, particularly in the Founders Day ceremony of 1966.

Father Gerard Campbell was president of Georgetown from 1964 to 1968 after serving for one year as vice president under Father Bunn. Adorned with an American flag and a portrait of Pope John XXIII, Campbell’s office represented Georgetown’s emerging brand of modern American Catholicism.\(^\text{105}\) Campbell was the first of Georgetown’s presidents to have graduated from a non-Catholic university.\(^\text{106}\) A Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Princeton, Father Campbell brought an “Ivy league Catholic” mentality to Georgetown.\(^\text{107}\) With this unique academic perspective, Campbell held the belief that Georgetown had only recently become a “true university” and that it ought to continue down a path of modernization.\(^\text{108}\) Although he gave much of the credit to his predecessor, Father Campbell emerged as one of chief architects of Georgetown’s Americanization process. Although institutional memory of Campbell is relatively weak, the impact of many of his radical decisions as president can still be felt to this day.

**GOVERNMENT FUNDING OF CATHOLIC HIGHER EDUCATION**

Perhaps there was no greater motivator behind separating church and state, a central feature of Americanization at Georgetown, than the desire to attain financial resources from the federal government. Since the dawn of the Cold War, the United States government began
heavily investing in higher education to help the country remain globally competitive. This trend only intensified after the passage of the Higher Education Facilities Act of 1963 when the federal government committed to expanding the physical facilities of American colleges. Federal aid became not just desirable but necessary for the functioning of many universities.  

Catholic universities, despite their religious affiliations, also enjoyed federal dollars. Edward Power, Catholic historian from Boston College, notes a change in that,

The ugly apparition of a state waiting to destroy religion was forgotten, and the colleges, being totally realistic about their chance of survival in an age wherein higher learning was becoming inordinately expensive, and wherein it was hardly possible for the student, by means of tuition money, to continue to carry the entire financial burden of the college, began to make representations to state and federal governments for various kinds of financial assistance.\(^\text{110}\)

The benefits of taking money from the government far outweighed the potential restrictions, even at schools that had unique identities like Georgetown. In her renowned book Negotiating Identity, Alice Gallin observes that, “Catholic colleges may have had some reservations about becoming dependent on government funding, but they certainly took advantage of the programs supporting facilities construction, science, teaching, and languages.”\(^\text{111}\) This was, in part, out of necessity in order to function as modern American universities. Andrew Greeley writes that if, “…American private higher education will not survive without considerable financial help from government and private industry, it could also be said that, in the absence of this help, the Catholic colleges may well be among the first to slip out of existence.”\(^\text{112}\)


\(^{111}\) Gallin, *Negotiating Identity*, 35.

\(^{112}\) Greeley, *From Backwater to Mainstream* 18
The ease with which religiously affiliated universities received federal dollars was soon challenged. In 1966, The Maryland Court of Appeals laid out strict regulations regarding government funding of church-related schools.\(^\text{113}\) This was a victory for the Horace Mann League, an organization that advocated for the complete separation of church and state. The Horace Mann case set a precedent that prevented religious schools from receiving governmental funds if such funding appeared to sanction “legal sectarianism.”\(^\text{114}\) While this was Maryland law, Catholic leaders feared that these principles could be upheld at the federal level and that Catholic universities might lose their funding if they appeared to be too religious.\(^\text{115}\)

Catholic leaders in higher education “did not breathe easily” after the *Horace Mann* case and initiated a systematic process to eliminate explicit expressions of Catholicism that could prevent their schools from receiving federal aid.\(^\text{116}\) The centrality of Catholicism in the core mission of many Catholic universities eventually became so ambiguous that, “By the seventies, the goals of Catholic colleges and universities regarding the secular education they offered and the relationship they sought with the federal and state governments were clearly the same as those of other private institutions.”\(^\text{117}\) The *Horace Mann* case thus ignited a national trend of Catholic schools attempting to separate church and state to retain federal funding and remain culturally relevant alongside other elite schools in the United States.

**GEORGETOWN’S PLANS AHEAD**

The 1960s were a time of unprecedented expansion for colleges in the United States. As such, Georgetown wanted to be no different than other modern universities. In 1963, Father


\(^{114}\) Gallin, *Negotiating Identity*, 37.


\(^{116}\) Ibid.

\(^{117}\) Gallin, *Negotiating Identity*, 38.
Campbell, then executive vice president, and other Georgetown leaders met to discuss the status and future of Georgetown’s academics, governance, facilities, and finances in the most comprehensive assessment of the university in nearly a century.

Unsurprisingly, becoming a modern university was not cheap. Georgetown set goals to increase its endowment by $9 million, raise up to $2.5 million for land acquisition, and explore other ways to improve the school’s financial situation.\footnote{Curran, \textit{A History of Georgetown University}, 3:10.} These plans were so radical that Curran wrote that, “Reorganization of the administration, including certain changes in personnel, was a necessity for the efficient management of what was effectively a new institution.”\footnote{Ibid.} Administrative reorganizations in the Spring of 1965, including the establishment of a position for vice president for planning and physical plant and the appointment of the first layperson to oversee business and finance, prepared the university to confront its financial woes.\footnote{Curran, \textit{A History of Georgetown University}, 3:22-23.}

Like many American colleges, Georgetown’s budget expanded dramatically between 1962 and 1972, increasing from $21,900,000 to $76,164,000.\footnote{Ibid.} But Curran points out that, “unlike the national financial good times for higher education, from 1965 through 1969, the university experienced deficits that cumulatively amounted to more than $2 million.”\footnote{Ibid.} Despite the couple hundreds of thousands of dollars in contributions from local businesses and individuals, Georgetown was operating a deficit of over $300,000 in 1966.\footnote{Ibid.} The university’s financial crisis threatened its continued success on the national stage. Acknowledging that it had to raise money if it wanted to compete with other elite universities, Georgetown turned to its
alumni base and the federal government in order to revive the university.\textsuperscript{124} But, of course, in order to qualify for federal aid, the university had to make its religious affiliation less explicit.

**FOUNDERS DAY 1966**

Founders Day in 1966 offers a glimpse into a watershed moment in the Americanization of Georgetown’s Catholic identity. Forgotten were the days when Founders Day featured prominent Catholic dignitaries from other countries to discuss the global nature of Jesuit education. In 1966, Father Campbell invited Vice President Hubert Humphrey to be the guest of honor at Founders Day.\textsuperscript{125} While the presence of a high-ranking American governmental official further solidified Georgetown’s patriotic credentials, there was another ulterior motive to honoring the sitting vice president. Occurring in the same year as the *Horace Mann* case, Father Campbell’s invitation of Humphrey to campus was not simply a show of Georgetown’s patriotism, but a concerted effort to showcase the cooperative relationship between a Catholic college and the federal government in order to secure public funding. As a result, Founders Day in 1966 was the least explicitly religious one to date.

As Georgetown faced severe financial distress, the university used Founders Day primarily as a platform to publicize its new fundraising efforts that were being executed in conjunction with the federal government. In his correspondence with Humphrey before Founders Day, Campbell highlighted the pressing need for support of education institutions, writing that, “I know of your great desire to emphasize the role which private individuals and groups should play in supplementing the programs advanced by the government.”\textsuperscript{126} Campbell went on to commend the Johnson administration saying that the programs promoted by the government

\textsuperscript{125} Gerard J. Campbell, Letter to Lyndon B. Johnson, 1966, *Old Archives: Founders’ Day*, Box 2, Folder 1, Georgetown University Archives.  
\textsuperscript{126} Ibid.
have greatly improved business, society, and education. Campbell ended his note by citing Georgetown’s contribution to American history writing that, “For the past 176 years, Georgetown has devoted herself unstintingly to preparation of scholars and teachers, diplomats and men in all branches of public service.” Once again, Georgetown flaunted its patriotism to gain acceptance into the American mainstream. But now, in praising the United States government and touting Georgetown’s contributions to the nation, there was also an implicit request for a symbiotic relationship between Georgetown and the federal government.

This goal of attaining a strong relationship between the Georgetown community and the state was apparent in the Founders Day program (now devoid of Latin). It included a prayer written by John Carroll that included the phrase, “O God, assist with Your spirit of counsel and fortitude the Government of these United States.” Vice President Humphrey even observed that the program, “reads like a history book of America.” The program also featured a note from Father Campbell discussing how Georgetown faced its greatest challenge yet in becoming a truly modern university. He wrote that, “in common with other universities, she is called upon to redouble her efforts in education, research, and public service,” and encouraged alumni to join the government in aiding Georgetown’s, “greatest single project in its history.”

The project Campbell spoke of was Georgetown’s new fundraising drive – The Progress Fund – the first capital campaign of its sort. The Fund included a $7.85 million grant from the federal government to expand physical facilities in accordance with the Higher Education

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128 Program, 1966, Old Archives: Founders’ Day, Box 2, Folder 1, Georgetown University Archives.
129 Hubert Humphrey, Old North Speech, Old Archives: Founders’ Day, Box 2, Folder 1, Georgetown University Archives.
130 Gerard J. Campbell Statement, 1966, Old Archives: Founders’ Day, Box 2, Folder 1, Georgetown University Archives.
Facilities Act of 1963.\textsuperscript{131} For example, $4.6$ million of government grants were appropriated for the construction of a new main university library – the remaining $1.5$ million for the project was to be raised by Georgetown itself.\textsuperscript{132} The lofty goal of the Progress Fund was to raise an additional $26$ million for both facilities and academics.

**MR. HUMPHREY COMES TO CAMPUS** [See Appendix Figure 2]

Georgetown put its faith in Vice President Humphrey to confirm the university’s worthiness of federal funds. In his introduction of Humphrey, student body president Frank Keating stressed that public service was an integral part of Georgetown’s history. He stated that, “Founded in the same year as our nation, in the year of the ratification of our Constitution, Georgetown has contributed distinguished citizens and leaders to every branch of American life and to every level of excellence.”\textsuperscript{133} Over half a century after the event, Keating – who lived up to Georgetown’s tradition of public service as Governor of Oklahoma – recounted that Founders Day was, “more about celebrating Georgetown’s contribution to American history and culture than talking about John Carroll.”\textsuperscript{134} Keating was correct – Vice President Humphrey proudly used Founders Day to broadcast the relationship between Georgetown and the United States.

Vice President Humphrey gave two speeches on Founders Day. His first address was in front of Georgetown’s Old North Building on the symbolically significant steps where several United States presidents had addressed the Georgetown community. In this speech, Humphrey noted that celebrating the anniversary of Georgetown’s founding was, “as much a part of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{131} Gerard J. Campbell Statement, 1966, *Old Archives: Founders’ Day*, Box 2, Folder 1, Georgetown University Archives.
\item \textsuperscript{132} Curran, *A History of Georgetown University*, 3:21.
\item \textsuperscript{133} Frank Keating, Introduction of Vice President Hubert Humphrey, 1966, *Old Archives: Founders’ Day*, Box 2, Folder 1, Georgetown University Archives.
\item \textsuperscript{134} Frank Keating (Former Georgetown Student Body President) in discussion with author, February 6 2018.
\end{itemize}
American life as any of the great documents of our history,” and claimed that Georgetown was beloved by the people of America as a, “part of the great history of this Republic.”

Linking the histories of Georgetown and America was not simply a love affair about Humphrey’s gratitude to Georgetown or Georgetown’s faithful patriotism – it served a purpose. Through his rhetoric, Humphrey was forging a mutually beneficial relationship between Georgetown and the United States government. In exchange for federal grants, Georgetown would in turn help the United States achieve its objectives in the Cold War. On the Old North steps, Humphrey stressed the importance of achieving Georgetown’s magnificent fundraising goals. Later in the day, Humphrey’s second address at the Founders Day luncheon addressed the other side of this relationship. He discussed how a partnership between the federal government and American collegiate institutions was necessary for the United States to, “become identified as a great educator of the world.” Humphrey declared higher education to hold, “a new and high status in our international affairs.”

It might seem as if the Vice President speaking at a Catholic university with the aim of linking the histories of the United States and Georgetown is anything but indicative of a separation of church and state. The themes promoting Georgetown’s patriotism resembled the Founders Days of the late 1950s and early 1960s. However, it is vital to distinguish between a relationship of church and state from a relationship between university and state. Whereas the ceremonies of the prior decade displayed the relationship between the Catholic and Jesuit educational tradition and civic affairs, the ceremony in 1966 simply showcased the importance of

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135 Hubert Humphrey, Old North Speech, 1966, Old Archives: Founders’ Day, Box 2, Folder 1, Georgetown University Archives.
136 Ibid.
137 Ibid.
138 Hubert Humphrey, New South Speech, 1966, Old Archives: Founders’ Day, Box 2, Folder 1, Georgetown University Archives.
universities in general to the United States. This subtle yet significance shift indicates a more advanced form of Americanization that consisted of a newfound expression of separation of church and state in Georgetown’s public rhetoric.

The 1966 ceremony was a markedly more secular one, celebrating the civic religion of Americanism more so than Catholicism. With its patriotic rhetoric, prominent politicians, and rousing speeches, Founders Day, which used to mirror the liturgy of a Mass, now seemed to manifest as a modern political campaign rally. Alice Gallin writes that for many Catholic colleges in the midst of the *Horace Mann* case, funding eligibility meant that “a distinctly ‘Catholic’ culture would no longer be an option.”

THE END OF HONORARY DEGREES

A major way Georgetown shed its “distinctly ‘Catholic’ culture” was the elimination of the honorary degrees traditionally awarded on Founders Day. Unlike special guests of Founders Days past, Hubert Humphrey did not receive an honorary degree from Georgetown upon his arrival on the hilltop. In May of 1963, the Sacred Congregation, led by Cardinal Pizzardo, issued a decree that all honorary degrees bestowed by any Catholic university must be approved by the Holy See. This controversial move to centralize power at the Vatican frustrated many Catholic colleges in America. Direct connections to the Vatican were intended to protect their religious identities of Catholic schools concerned about a hostile state. However, Catholic leaders in America felt comfortable under their religious freedom protections under the First Amendment. More importantly, American Catholic leaders feared that Vatican-sponsored honorary degrees might make Catholic schools appear too religious for federal funding. Despite

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141 Ibid.
the pope’s rejection of the Pizzardo decree in 1965, widespread confusion persisted about the extent of Vatican involvement in the bestowal of honorary degrees at Catholic universities around the world.\textsuperscript{142} College presidents responded differently to this controversy with some asking the Vatican permission to grant degrees and others bestowing degrees regardless.\textsuperscript{143}

It seems reasonably safe to conclude that it was not a coincidence that the 1966 celebration of Founders Day was the first not to function as an academic convocation. With fundraising as the university’s top priority, any potential for controversy connected to the Vatican could have hurt the school’s chances for receiving funds from the American government. By eliminating honorary degrees from the itinerary, Georgetown averted a battle between Washington and Rome. In 1936, Georgetown’s Founders Day guests were intended to show a relationship between church and state. The Founders Day issue of \textit{The Hoya} even featured a photograph of honoree Father Fulton Sheen, a prominent Catholic priest and future television personality, under the word “CHURCH” beside a photograph of honoree Wilbur Carr, an American diplomat and assistant Secretary of State, under the word “STATE.”\textsuperscript{144} Thirty years later, Georgetown effectively severed that tie by inviting a Protestant government official without a Catholic counterpart. Despite the elimination of honorary degrees, Vice President Humphrey did not leave Georgetown empty-handed – he was ceremoniously deemed an honorary member of the student body by the leaders of the student government.

Ironically, one of Georgetown’s past honorary degree recipients was the foremost proponent of a Catholic embrace of separation of church and state. John Courtney Murray, esteemed theologian and 1956 Founders Day speaker, “. . . believed that it was time to discard

\textsuperscript{142} Gallin, \textit{Negotiating Identity}, 17-20.
\textsuperscript{143} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{144} “Founders of University Honored At Annual Commemoration Day Exercises,” \textit{The Hoya}, April 29, 1936.
the medieval concept of the union of church and state and adopt the American model of the separation of church and state, which guaranteed religious freedom for everyone.”

FOLLOWING THE MONEY

Some observers of federal funding for religious institutions like Kenneth Whitehead claim that ideological changes, not federal funding eligibility, was not the prime motivator behind secularization. However, given the marked shift in Founders Day and Georgetown’s financial situation, it is safe to conclude that this is not true. The late 1960s continued to be a time of prolific expansion, enrollment, construction, and funding for American universities. But as Georgetown strove to keep up with other modern American universities, it struggled to keep its financial house in order. Just as Georgetown was starting to emerge as a competitive national university, American higher education experienced, “…a new depression brought on by dwindling federal support, high energy costs, ‘stagflation’ and its crippling effect upon endowments and fund-raising, technological necessities occasioned by the advent of the computer, and spiraling administrative costs from the profusion of new student services that had developed during the sixties.” Accumulating a $1.5 million deficit in 1967, Georgetown’s quest to be a modern university was leading it down a path to insolvency. Father Campbell often underscored the university’s top priority of salvaging its finances, warning that “Georgetown will not long survive as the institution you and I know” unless the Progress Fund reached its $26 million goal. The Progress Fund continued to be the focal point at Founders

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145 Dolan, In Search of an American Catholicism, 159.
146 Curran, A History of Georgetown University, 3:22.
147 Curran, A History of Georgetown University, 3:55.
149 Curran, A History of Georgetown University, 3:23.
Day for the next few years. At Founders Day in 1967, Campbell claimed told alumni that, “…all the hopes for the future of the university rest on the success of our efforts.”

**A DISAPPEARING TRADITION**

As the Americanization of Georgetown’s Catholic identity advanced, Founders Day was not only transformed but diminished yet again by the changing religious atmosphere. Eliminating the potentially controversial academic convocation portion of Founders Day in order to curry favor with the government disrupted traditional prestige of the Founders Day ritual.

The ceremony, which had already transitioned from Gaston Hall during the 1930s to McDonough Arena in the 1950s, was moved once again. The Old North steps where several presidents had spoken and the New South cafeteria which had been constructed from government funds underscored the secular spirit intruding unto Founders Day. One high-ranking Jesuit at Georgetown, Charles Foley, disliked that the Founders Day reception was being changed from a dinner to a luncheon to fit Vice President Humphrey’s schedule. Foley wrote in a letter to Campbell that, “this notable event in Georgetown’s history merits, of itself, a dinner rather than a luncheon.” He went on to write that, “A luncheon does not carry the glamour of an evening function, nor does it stimulate as great an interest and enthusiasm, and will perhaps lessen the attendance, particularly of out of towners.” Foley would have preferred to sacrifice Humphrey for the preservation of Founders Day’s prestige. However, this campus tradition was becoming about something other than simply a prestigious celebration of Georgetown’s history.

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151 Program, 1966, *Old Archives: Founders’ Day*, Box 2, Folder 7, Georgetown University Archives.
152 Charles Foley, Letter to Gerard Campbell, 1966, *Old Archives: Founders’ Day*, Box 2, Folder 1, Georgetown University Archives.
153 Ibid.
154 Ibid.
It was becoming much more about Georgetown’s future than its past. Father Campbell seemed to care more about the utility of Founder Day than about the preservation of the tradition itself.

The main utility of Founders Day as of 1966 was, of course, fundraising. As aforementioned, Catholic colleges had to appear more secular in order to receive funds from the federal government. This meant shedding some of the more explicit expressions of religious identity, but it also meant promoting disciplines that the government sought to expand like sciences and foreign languages. Gallin writes that, “Specific grants for research were often sought without consideration of a potentially adverse impact on the Catholic identity of the colleges and universities which had a history of devotion to the liberal arts.”155 As Catholic universities turned their attention to the disciplines that would attract federal dollars to their institutions, an autocatalytic cycle of Americanization emerged in which schools would secularize to attract money that would in turn fund causes that would further secularize the school.156 This was particularly true with Georgetown’s focus on its School of Foreign Service and Faculty of Language and Linguistics.157 Thus, stressing separation of church at Catholic schools not only advanced but accelerated Americanization of Catholic identities.

As Georgetown’s Catholic identity became more Americanized, the university became less distinct as an institution. Just as flaunting its patriotism made Georgetown into a more typical American university, minimizing the overly explicit expressions of Catholic identity also helped Georgetown emerge from its unique Catholic subculture. Robert Hutchins’ warning at Founders Day in 1964 that Americanization prioritized prestige above piety had some truth to

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155 Gallin, Negotiating Identity, 34.
156 Gallin, Negotiating Identity, 33-35.
157 Ibid.
As Founders Day became a platform to advance the modernization of the university, many aspects of the ceremony became nearly indistinguishable from a celebration at a secular school.

In the course of Georgetown’s twentieth-century history, Father Campbell and Father Nevils emerged somewhat as somewhat foil characters. Nevils’ invention of Founders Day, a meticulously symbolic ritual with an international academic convocation, revealed the distinctly Catholic character of Georgetown and tied it more closely to the history of the global Church. Father Campbell’s iteration of Founders Day, a patriotic rally used to promote the school’s modernization efforts, looked to highlight the uniquely American character of Georgetown and tied it more closely to the history of the United States. Put simply, Founders Day under Nevils honored the past while Founders Day under Campbell looked toward the future. If early critics of Father Campbell were afraid that the stature of Founders Day had been undermined by Americanization efforts, they were in for a rough few years – Campbell was just getting started.

CHAPTER 4 – LAND OF THE FREE
AMERICA COMES TO ROME

In between the brief Founders Day hiatus from 1964 to 1966, the Catholic Church underwent nothing short of a revolution. The Second Vatican Council radically altered the way that the Church interacted with the world. Convened by Pope John XXIII, Vatican II aimed to “open the windows” of the Church to let in fresh air, allowing Catholics to look out and permitting others to look in. The principle of aggiornamento, or “to bring up to date,” served as the inspiration behind the monumental changes instituted by the Vatican. Jay Dolan argues that the post-conciliar Church was radically different in nature because, “breaking with a four-
hundred-year tradition, it abandoned its defensive posture toward modern society and sought engagement with the world.”

All of the declarations of Vatican II were significant for the Church, but some were particularly relevant to the ongoing Americanization processes of colleges in America. *Gravissimum Educationis*, the Declaration on Christian Education, rejected the separatist mentality of Catholic colleges and instead encouraged schools to interact with the world. The introduction to *Gravissimum Educationis* declared that, “The Church here states with utmost clarity that it has no desire to remain away from the word in a form of isolation but that Christian education is in the world and, in a sense, for the world…” Pope John viewed schools as bastions of cultural leadership and thus thought, in the words of Edward Power, “The Catholic college should therefore be the first Catholic institution to reject the ancient and mistaken notion that education’s only purpose is to reclaim the past.” This teaching was consistent with the landmark declaration *Gaudium et Spes*, commonly referred to as the Church in the Modern World, that encouraged the Church to embrace human culture and seek to synthesize s pluralistic world with the tenets of Christian faith. One of the most notable newfound beliefs of *Gaudium et Spes*, and Vatican II in general, was an unabashed emphasis on the centrality of individual human freedom.

For a Church historically characterized as a uniform group of religious adherents following the commands of a hierarchical order, a pronouncement of individualism was striking.

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and consequential – especially for American Catholics. Human freedom was more in line with the democratic American principles that had seemed incompatible with Catholicism in the past. A flattening of Catholic power structures by emphasizing the importance of the individual after Vatican II integrated many values of Catholicism and Americanism. Alice Gallin writes that, “The emphasis on human freedom and the dignity of each person which was at the core of the new philosophical and theological scholarship, and so congruent with American thought, inevitably meant a search for horizontal as well as vertical modes of decision making”\footnote{Gallin, Negotiating Identity, 30.} The Council dramatically hastened the speed at which Catholics were being accepted into the mainstream of American culture. Philip Gleason, one of leading thinkers on Catholic identity, writes that, “Fundamental shift that took place in Catholic higher education when the assimilative tendencies that had been gathering strength since World War II met and intermingled with the seismic forces unleashed by Vatican II and the social, political, and cultural crisis of the 1960s.”\footnote{Philip Gleason, Contending with Modernity: Catholic Higher Education in the Twentieth Century (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 318.} It seemed as if the Vatican had condoned Americanization.

In a democratic society, change occurs frequently. But the concept of change was new for many Catholics. Many The idea of culture affecting religion was foreign because, “Catholic doctrine was fixed, not subject to change….”\footnote{Dolan, In Search of an American Catholicism, 162.} Dolan writes that, “In the 1960s, ‘change’ entered the lexicon of Catholics, and many were uncomfortable with such an idea…Scores of Catholics resented change in what they believed was an unchanging institution.”\footnote{Dolan, In Search of an American Catholicism, 195.} With Catholics split, change and its place in the Church would dominate the Americanization for decades to come.
VATICAN II COMES TO GEORGETOWN

Gerard Campbell did not count himself among these skeptics of change. On the contrary, he confidently defended the fundamental changes of Vatican II as they arrived at Georgetown as an embodiment, not an abandonment, of the university’s identity. On Founders Day in 1967, he reflected the attitude of aggiornamento by giving an historic speech in which he announced some of the most monumental changes in Georgetown’s history. In it, Campbell boldly and rather provocatively, went on to posit that the past and future did not have to be mutually exclusive.169

Addressing a crowd of alumni at a Founders Day breakfast in the New South cafeteria, Father Campbell reconciled the two competing notions of tradition and change that animated new conversations in the Church during the Vatican II era. An historian at heart, Campbell contextualized the magnitude of his pronouncements with historical academic scholarship by citing the Enlightenment, existentialism, and atheistic humanism as healthy challenges to modes of thinking. He then proudly defended the controversial notion of change by stating that, “Change is the law of life, and the price of progress; but change that is controlled, reasoned, freely chosen to meet new situations, is, in the final analysis, a flowering and fruition of the spirit rather than its destruction or suppression.”170 He then made the radical argument that tradition’s true utility was to aid change, not restrict it. On the nature of tradition, Father Campbell declared, Tradition, however glorious, is useless, even detrimental, if it serves as an anchor; it is of inestimable value as a rudder. And the first to rise up and condemn us, should we keep our gaze anywhere but forward, would be those very forebears whom we would dishonor by resting on their laurels. For if we are heirs of the past, we are no less the trustees and brokers of the future.171

170 Ibid.
If a tradition become more than simply a glance to the past, it risked holding Georgetown back from reaching its full potential. Ever focused on the future, Campbell believed it was detrimental to long for a glorified version of yesterday. It is fitting, then, that Father Campbell adeptly turned Founders Day, an occasion that typically venerated the past, into a day that envisioned the future. Campbell utilized the merged founding narratives of Georgetown and the United States to justify his call for change, remarking that, “We cannot – our we ought not – forget that John Carroll and his associates founded Georgetown in times of revolutionary change – our origins coincide with the beginnings of our nation itself.”

According to Campbell, since Georgetown possessed the same intrinsically revolutionary spirit as the United States, the university should be willing to change along with the country. Under this logic, change was necessary in order to conserve the tradition of Georgetown’s founding principles.

**THE LAND O’LAKES PHILOSOPHY**

Father Campbell’s Founders Day speech was given in the midst of ongoing cultural turmoil within the Catholic educational tradition. The centrality and proper expression of Catholicism at Catholic colleges in America was left somewhat ambiguous after Vatican II. It was increasingly unclear what made a Catholic school ‘Catholic.’ As new perspectives completely challenged the purpose, role, and mission of Catholic colleges, these ideas profoundly affected Georgetown’s identity and the annual tradition that celebrated that identity.

In 1967, prominent leaders in American Catholic higher education convened to define the role of their universities. What resulted was the Land O’Lakes Statement which sent shockwaves through the world of higher education. The goal of this meeting was to bring the

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spirit of *aggiornamento* to Catholic universities in the United States. The Statement proclaimed that, “The Catholic University today must be a university in the full modern sense of the word, with a strong commitment to and concern for academic excellence.” Land O’Lakes rejected the view, common earlier in the twentieth century, that Catholics needed to shelter themselves from the intellectualism of a secular world. Instead, it posited that, “The student must come to a basic understanding of the actual world in which he lives today. This means that the intellectual campus of a Catholic university has no boundaries and no barriers.” Many universities, like Georgetown, were already breaking down such barriers through the process of Americanization.

The Land O’Lakes Statement asserted that in order to fully thrive as modern research universities, Catholic schools needed to restructure their governance. The Statement endorsed the spreading trend of American Catholic schools to split from the auspices of the Church insisting that, “The evolving nature of the Catholic university will necessitate basic reorganizations of structure in order not only to achieve a greater internal cooperation and participation, but also to share the responsibility of direction more broadly and to enlist wider support.” If Catholic schools wanted to be treated like other elite American institutions of higher learning, they needed to adopt more democratic governing structures. This meant that a process of laicization, the addition of laypeople to positions of power, needed to commence. The first signatory on this monumental document was Father Gerard Campbell of Georgetown University.

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176 Ibid.
177 Ibid.
leading the way in implementing the philosophy of Land O’Lakes, particularly in regard to laicization. Father Campbell used Founders Day to announce Georgetown’s historic structural reforms to its governance.

**LAICIZATION IN CATHOLIC HIGHER EDUCATION**

in the new spirit of freedom found in *Gaudium et Spes*, Catholic colleges began to democratize their governing bodies in the 1960s by loosening their ties to the religious orders that founded them. By late in the decade, most Catholic universities had laypeople on their governing boards. Altering school governance would not have happened without other shifting cultural factors within the Catholic Church that created an atmosphere conducive to laicization. The call for reorganization in Land O’Lakes was inspired in part by the Vatican II revolution, especially *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, the Council’s Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity. *Apostolicam Actuositatem* indicated a theological reexamination of the centrality of the laity in the Church’s mission and charged laypeople to take an active leadership role in the Church’s institutions. The decree stated that, “Led by the light of the Gospel and the mind of the Church and motivated by Christian charity, they [laypeople] must act directly and in a definite way in the temporal sphere.” As Vatican II extensively democratized the leadership of the Church, the laity found themselves in the center of the Church’s work, including education, like never before. Much of Vatican II functioned as an effective endorsement of Americanization and resulted in Catholic colleges quickly taking advantage of the Church’s new teaching regarding laypeople. Gallin astutely remarked that, “Such rapidity in bringing about a revolution in the governing

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181 Ibid.
structures of Catholic colleges is particularly worthy of note, given the normal pace of change in both academia and the church.”

GEORGETOWN DIVORCES ITS JESUITS

In a bold move, one of the first tasks that Father Campbell set out to accomplish was a reevaluation of Georgetown’s founding documents. Deeming the university’s existing Constitutions and bylaws as bearing “no reality to what was going on” at Georgetown, Campbell rewrote the bylaws and amended the Act of Incorporation.

At the time of Campbell’s arrival, Georgetown’s Board of Directors was an internal body comprised of the president and high-ranking Jesuit administrators at Georgetown. Emmett Curran writes that Campbell, “intended to transform it gradually into an external one that included both Jesuit and lay members and functioned as a policymaking body rather than as a group of consultants.”

Campbell explained to the superior general of the Jesuits in Rome, Pedro Arrupe, that Georgetown needed the expertise that only laypeople could provide in order to become a “high-grade American academic institution.” On October 4, 1966, Georgetown’s rewritten charter went into effect and the University was governed by a new corporation consisting of both Georgetown and non-Georgetown Jesuits along with a separate board of directors that included laypeople. In a matter of just four years, the board of directors had become majority lay.

Campbell then set out to declare legal autonomy from the Society of Jesus. Curran writes that Campbell believed there needed to be a, “clear legal distinction between the university and

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182 Gallin, Negotiating Identity, 44.
184 Ibid.
185 Ibid.
187 Ibid.
the Society of Jesus that would remove the notions that the Jesuits ‘owned’ the institution and that the university’s autonomy was conditioned by the will of religious superiors.” In 1968, Georgetown University and the Jesuit Community reached an agreement for legal separation with the expectation that the continued appreciation and consultation of Jesuits was central to, “the spirit of the Georgetown tradition.” Unsurprisingly, these moves were extraordinarily controversial. While Campbell insisted that declaring autonomy from the Society of Jesus was a necessary step in Georgetown’s journey of taking its, “place among the great public and private institutions in the country,” others disagreed. One Jesuit believed the community had “bartered away its birthright” for breadcrumbs. Rather rapidly, Jesuits began to be replaced by laypeople in positions of authority throughout the university as Georgetown sought out talent in a similar manner to its secular counterparts. Whether or not laicization as a part of the Americanization of religious identity weakened Georgetown’s Catholicity is still debated over fifty years later.

LAICIZATION AT GEORGETOWN

One could conclude that Georgetown was effectively refounded under Campbell’s watch. It seemed fitting, then, that Father Campbell would announce all of these changes at Founders Day. In 1967, Founders Day was used to reveal the most radical steps yet in the Americanization process of Georgetown. Father Campbell spoke with pride about Georgetown past, but signaled that it was time for some necessary, and perhaps overdue, changes. Campbell acknowledged that the school’s governance once made sense but that, “In the past several years, however, in educational associations, in private conversation, and in the meetings of existent

189 Ibid.
190 Ibid.
191 Ibid.
192 Ibid.
boards, the advisability of changes in present structures has been carefully discussed.” To those following trends in American Catholic higher education, these announcements likely did not come as a sudden surprise.

Campbell echoed the sentiments coming out of Vatican II in *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, proudly proclaiming that, “Laymen have been directly involved in the administration of the University, on our faculty and staff, almost from our founding.” He even went so far as to say that, “without laymen Georgetown might not have survived.” After highlighting the importance and necessity of laypeople, Campbell unveiled the big announcement by saying, “…after the completion of a revision of our statutes, and with the knowledge and blessings of Father Provincial and Father General, we added to our Board six distinguished Jesuit Fathers who are not members of the Georgetown Jesuit Community.”

It was central to increasingly popular liberal Catholic thought, and especially to Father Campbell, that the amount of explicit symbols of Catholicism did not necessarily translate into a richer sense of Catholicity. Campbell expressed this belief when he told the crowd at Founders Day that, “I believe that the most important criterion for a director of Georgetown is not that he be a layman or a cleric, but that he rightly conceive the work of the university and that he be capable and willing to work diligently and intelligently to achieve its objectives.”

It had often been customary on Founders Day to review Georgetown’s original objectives and assess how well the university was fulfilling its mission. With a year full of change, it would...
be easy to believe that Georgetown was drifting away from its roots. Yet Campbell harkened back to his synthesis of tradition and change and proudly told his audience that, “...colleges and universities have reached a stage in their development that calls for new procedures to achieve our time-honored goals.”  

Georgetown’s process of laicization, a radical departure from how the school had always been governed, was not a desertion of the school’s identity, but a recommitment to it. Campbell, aware that skeptics would decry Georgetown’s secularizing Catholic identity, address his critics commanding his audience to, “Let no one assume that our goals have been abandoned.”

**ACADEMIC FREEDOM**

The unprecedented laicization changes in governance spurred the empowerment of professors at Catholic schools and helped give faculties at Catholic schools an essential American virtue: freedom. Fellman paints the issue of academic freedom in higher education as a quintessentially American ideal. He writes that, “It is unthinkable that the American society could be characterized as enjoying freedom if our scholars and students were not free in the pursuit of knowledge, understanding, and the truth.” Catholic faculties agreed. Gallin comments that, “As presidents defended the independence and autonomy of their institutions, faculty began to insist on more recognition of their role in the governance of the universities.”

Catholic universities like Georgetown learned that, “now that they were moving into mainstream American higher education they would have to accept the rules that prevailed there.”

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200 Ibid.


Granting faculty broader discretion was a substantial change given that one of the historically defining characteristics of Catholic schools was the limited academic freedom enjoyed by their faculties. Professors had been directed to “teach what is true” and were strongly discouraged, if not prohibited, from teaching any material contrary to the teachings of the Catholic Church.**204** Gallin notes that, “Religious superiors did not hesitate to use their authority to remove a troublesome member of the community from the faculty at the president’s request, or even without it.”**205** The restriction of intellectual curiosity in Catholic education in this sense drew scorn from other elite colleges and even many Catholics.**206** Many scholars “assumed that [Catholic colleges] were not ‘real’ universities or colleges because they were Catholic and therefore subject to control by church authorities.”**207** Many professors at Catholic schools wanted the ability to criticize elements of traditional Christian conceptions of the world.**208**

Academic freedom was also in line with new Catholic thought regarding human freedom. After decades of Catholic colleges being expected to strictly adhere to all of the teachings of the Church, the Land O’Lakes Statement proclaimed that “to perform its teaching and research functions effectively the Catholic university must have a true autonomy and academic freedom in face of authority…”**209** It also claimed that, “…the university should carry on a continual examination of all aspects and all activities of the Church and should objectively evaluate them.”**210** Dissent, an integral part of democratic institutions, was now entering into the American Catholic Church by way of the university. Instead of simply advancing the teachings of the

**204** Gallin, *Negotiating Identity*, 59.
Church, the Statement encouraged Catholic colleges to critically challenge Church actions in a constructive manner. This allowed Catholic colleges like Georgetown to Americanize without fear of violating Church doctrine.

Starting in the mid-1960s, professors at Catholic schools across the country fought to become more like faculties at secular universities and, “Not only did they fight for the freedom to express their opinions without fear of recrimination from those in authority, but they also pressed for control over hiring, tenure, salaries, and firing.”\textsuperscript{211} Justifying their changes by the Pope’s call for respect of individual human freedom, Catholic universities, including Georgetown, began to grant their faculties a great deal of autonomy. To Campbell, the mission to attain a strong faculty, “was the cornerstone upon which to construct the first-rate university that Georgetown aspired to become.”\textsuperscript{212} As laicization expanded, Georgetown dramatically expanded the size of the Georgetown faculty in the 1960s as the university formalized a system of choosing qualified faculty instead of relying on an old familial system.\textsuperscript{213} Father Campbell announced the creation of the Georgetown Faculty Senate, granting professors more autonomy over their own careers, salaries, and tenure, as well as university decision-making.\textsuperscript{214} At Founders Day he said that, “…Faculty Senate has been hailed by most at Georgetown as a significant internal innovation.”\textsuperscript{215} Academic freedom at Georgetown was a vibrant sign of Americanization in line with the Vatican’s new emphasis on human freedom because, as Fellman observes, “... academic freedom in the United States is an aspect of the whole commitment to freedom which characterizes what we call the American way of life.”\textsuperscript{216} The vertical power structure, so

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{211} Gallin, \textit{Negotiating Identity}, 58-60.
\item\textsuperscript{212} Curran, \textit{A History of Georgetown University}, 3:25-26.
\item\textsuperscript{213} Ibid.
\item\textsuperscript{214} Curran, \textit{A History of Georgetown University}, 3:11
\item\textsuperscript{215} Gerard J. Campbell, Founders Day Address, April 9, 1967, \textit{Gerard Campbell, S.J.: Speeches}, Georgetown University Archives.
\item\textsuperscript{216} Fellman, “American Freedom and the American Political Ethos,” 60.
\end{itemize}
emblematic of Catholic organizations and so contrary to the ideals of Americanism, had begun to dramatically flatten.

**CHANGES IN CURRICULUM**

Faculty members were not the only ones who desired more academic freedom in the Catholic college setting; Students wanted more flexibility in the curriculum and demanded more freedom in their studies. Gallin writes that, “Freedom was also the underlying value preached by those who urged curriculum revision in order to minimize required courses and maximize student choice.”

The unique Jesuit curriculum, *Ratio Studiorum*, long provided a common academic experience for all students of the Ignatian tradition. Nearly untouched since 1599, this curriculum focused heavily on the liberal arts with a special emphasis on theology and philosophy as well as Latin and Greek. However, in the 1960s, “…the questioning of the relevance of traditional staples of liberal education all produced pressures for a fundamental reform of the curriculum that would recognize their diverse and segmented character of modern intellectual culture.”

In 1968, Georgetown unveiled a new plan that consisted of fewer required courses and more electives to empower students with more individual freedom to choose what they wanted to study and encourage them to embrace interdisciplinary work. The College introduced social science fields such as sociology and anthropology as well as majors that integrated a range of diverse fields like the new American Studies program. With an emphasis on electivism, the traditional structure of a Jesuit education was obliterated, especially in regard to theology.

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218 Gleason, *Contending with Modernity*, 51-60.
219 Ibid.
222 Ibid.
requirements which were reduced from four courses to two. This Americanization of curriculum went a long way in weakening the distinctly Catholic academic experience of Georgetown students. These changes, though, were consistent with new Catholic thinking. Gallin writes that, “It was, to be sure, mostly indirect, through the work of Vatican Council II, but the emphasis he [Pope John XXIII] gave to human freedom in his 1963 encyclical, *Pacem in Terris*, inspired a rethinking of the kind of discipline then prevailing in Catholic colleges.”

**FOLLOWING THE MONEY**

All of these fundamental changes – laicization of governance, autonomy from the Jesuits, and academic freedom of the faculty – were examples of how institutional democratization of Georgetown propelled the Americanization of its Catholic identity. Father Campbell denied that Vatican II was the singular motivation behind Americanization saying that, “the atmosphere created by the Council has perhaps hastened the process – the possibly this is even more important – increased the acceptability of such a move.” However, he claimed that democratization efforts were, “well underway before Pope John summoned Vatican II.” Given the other factors spurring Americanization that have already been examined, it is reasonable to conclude that Father Campbell was correct. The promotion of freedom and democratic values within the administration helped the school stay focused on its top priority: funding.

The growing popularity of laicization during the 1960s also served as a further elimination of explicit signs of religiosity at Catholic colleges, done out of fear of losing funding eligibility after the Horace Mann decision. Alice Gallin notes that “although other factors had prepared the way for the shift to independent boards, the urgency was linked to legal

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225 Ibid.
decisions.” To expel the appearance of any ecclesiastical or hierarchical influence, laypeople – not the clergy – had to dominate the university board of trustees to qualify for federal aid like secular universities. Emmett Curran writes that the public image of the University was a top priority for Campbell and notes that, “Involving the laity in sharing ultimate authority within the institution was clearly related to fund-raising and public support, both individual and governmental.” Separating the board of directors from the school’s corporation granted the directors the powers of a non-profit corporation allowed Georgetown to borrow money and turn its attention to expansion of academic facilities. There is little question that declaring legal autonomy from the Society of Jesus made it easier for Georgetown to dispel concerns that the government was funding a school was governed by a religious order.

Meeting eligibility for funds through laicization ironically produced even more need for fundraising. With the hiring of laypeople as professors and administrators and the expansion of interdisciplinary academic programs, tuition could not cover the newfound expenses of salaries and programs. Before legal separation, it was common for the religious community of a given university to suffice as a “living endowment” by accrediting agencies. But as Alice Gallin noted, “Once a college separated from the sponsoring religious community, it was necessary to pay salaries and give benefits to the religious on par with the lay faculty, with no assurance of a return gift from the community.” Schools had to turn to alternative sources of money like foundations, the government, and alumni fundraising. To achieve this at Georgetown, focus on

226 Gallin, Negotiating Identity, 44.
228 Ibid.
229 Ibid.
231 Gallin, Negotiating Identity, 73-74.
232 Gallin, Negotiating Identity, 73.
233 Gallin, Negotiating Identity, 35-42.
the Progress Fund, which was crucial to the future Americanization of Georgetown, intensified and became even more a centerpiece of Founders Day.

**A DISAPPEARING TRADITION**

As the Church and the country changed, so did Georgetown and Founders Day. But it is important to note that Founders Day was not just changing; it was diminishing. Unlike the year before, Founders Day in 1967 honored no special guest and featured no pomp and circumstance.234 Father Campbell seized upon the moment while discussing tradition and change to address the changing tradition he was celebrating. Reflecting on the special occasion, Father Campbell called into question the very existence of Founders Day by stating,

> It is eminently fitting and proper that we should so look to the past; that, in the inspired writer’s words, we ‘look to the rock whence we were hewn’ – provided always our looking is but a glance to refresh our sense of direction, an assurance that we do not deviate from our purposes and goals, and not an indulgence in nostalgic longing for the imagined simplicity and peacefulness of days gone by.235

If Founders Day prevented Georgetown from looking toward the future, should it even exist at all? Perhaps there was an inherent danger in Founders Day of focusing the university’s attention on the past while an Americanizing Church, free to interact with the modern world, began looking toward the future. To a certain degree, Founders Day, in whatever form, possessed an inherent aura of the past. But as Gleason wrote in his book, *Contending with Modernity*, “... accepting modernity implied rejection of the past, and enthusiasm for the new was accompanied, if not overshadowed, by denunciation of the old.”236 Was it possible to use Founders Day simply to “glance” at the past as Father Campbell suggested or was the tradition emblematic of a

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235 Ibid.
fixation on the past that would continue to dissipate as Georgetown ventured further into the future of American Catholic higher education?²³⁷

The answer seemed to be the latter. The next year, Founders Day took the form of a breakfast in the cafeteria. Father Foley was correct in predicting that changing the reception to a luncheon in 1966 would introduce a slippery slope, and Founders Day was not finished sliding.

CHAPTER 5 – OF THE STUDENTS, BY THE STUDENTS, FOR THE STUDENTS

THE SPIRIT OF DEMOCRATIZATION

Founders Day in 1968 continued to promote Georgetown’s embrace of change. A concentrated focus on fundraising in order to achieve the status of a modern American university was evident, as Campbell told alumni that their, “personal commitment, through sacrificial financial support, will be essential to the shaping of Georgetown today and tomorrow.”²³⁸ Of course, Father Campbell connected these goals to the roots in the dual founding of Georgetown and the United States, reminding his audience that, “In every discipline, in law, in medicine, in the liberal arts, new facilities are being constructed, to better enable us to carry out the educational mission which we inherited from John Carroll.”²³⁹ In contrast to the Founders Day ceremonies of the 1930s that memorialized the events of 1634, the Founders Days of the 1960s were focused on how the founding informed Georgetown’s current challenges. The dynamic nature of contemporary Catholic thought regarding aggiornamento was expressed as Father Campbell continued his call for using the past to inform the future, calling on alumni to enter into, “…a partnership to help preserve what is good of our tradition, and to change that which

²³⁹ Ibid.
needs to be changed.”

As Gleason states, “the 1960s climaxed the transition from an era in which Catholic educators challenged modernity to one in which they accepted modernity.”

The breakfast in 1968 was the final public Founders Day event. The next year, Founders Day took the form of a radio address broadcast from the president’s office. In order to understand why Founders Day devolved from a grand affair to a recorded message, it is vital to analyze how the dawn of modernity at Georgetown introduced radical cultural changes to campus that were reflective of the university’s Americanized identity. After institutional reorganizations flattened the hierarchical structure of governance, the democratic spirit spread to students. Not only was Georgetown’s student body larger than ever, but multiculturalism began to emerge in the late 1960s that made it more reflective of the general American population.

As the demographics of Georgetown’s student body began to resemble other modern universities, a liberalizing community challenged the traditional Catholic culture of Georgetown’s campus. Counterculture sentiments at Georgetown, which were so common at other elite American colleges, created an environment that was hostile to established traditions like Founders Day.

The profile of a typical Georgetown student had often been manifested in the notion of ‘Jack Hoya’ – a stereotypical white Catholic male who was content with his school’s identity.

Before the 1960s, Georgetown was full of Jack Hoyas. Founders Day, in the 1930s, originally celebrated six white Catholic men – fairly easy for Jack Hoya to relate to. But as Georgetown

241 Philip Gleason, Contending with Modernity, 318.
243 Curran, A History of Georgetown University, 3:72.
student body diversified, the idea of ‘Jack Hoya’ came under intense scrutiny. A student who
was not white, male, or Catholic could understandably feel marginalized during a
commemoration of John Carroll’s Georgetown. It was not simply the demographics of the
student body, though that challenged symbols of tradition like Founders Day; These students
wielded more power than in the past – a significant development at a Catholic school.

**DIVERSITY OF RELIGION**

The landmark Vatican II pronouncement *Nostra Aetate* encouraged Catholics to interact
and learn from people of non-Christian religious traditions. At Georgetown, in the late sixties,
the percentage of Catholics at Georgetown hovered around 90 percent. By the mid-1970s, this
percentage had sunk by over 20 percent. Administration began promoting interreligious
campus ministry as the hallmark of student life. As the proportion of Catholic students
plummeted, questions about the nature of Georgetown’s Catholic identity emerged. There
seemed to be many components to what made a university ‘Catholic.’ If Catholicity of a school
was measured by its legal connection to a religious order, the religiosity of its administration,
faculty, or student body, the presence of Jesuits in the classroom, or strength of its theology
program, it seemed as if Georgetown were becoming much less Catholic. But proponents of
Americanization at Georgetown proposed a different way of assessing Catholicity.

For ages, Georgetown had required attendance at religious services and programs. But
in the sixties, some Jesuits began to think that, “mandatory mass and retreats were
counterproductive in shaping religious character.” In an historic move, Georgetown ended its

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compulsory attendance at religious events in the mid-sixties. To many in the 1960s, coerced participation in Catholic rituals seemed patronizing, superficial, and possibly even inappropriate given Vatican II’s insistence on religious freedom. Gallin wrote that as the Church modernized, “College leaders hoped that the new liturgical rites and the wider scope for lay participation would engender not only a positive student response to the abolition of required attendance, but also a high degree of attendance at the newly-permitted evening masses.”\(^{250}\) Perhaps, Catholic leaders thought, the true Catholicity of Georgetown could more accurately be measured by assessing how many students attended religious services on their own volition.\(^{251}\) This new outlook certainly had a profound effect on the tangibly Catholic atmosphere of the campus.

**DIVERSITY OF RACE**

Improving racial diversity, particularly in bettering the black experience, was an important way that Georgetown responded to a liberalizing American society. In 1968, the Black Student Alliance was formed to promote the marginalized black identity on campus. In a meeting with the president’s office, black students demanded Georgetown, “step up the recruitment and admission of African Americans, to hire some black professors, and to make available a place where they could gather.”\(^{252}\) The Office of Admissions soon launched affirmative action programs to help qualified black Americans get accepted to Georgetown and expanded programs to assist with any financial barriers.\(^{253}\) Administrators also responded to black students’ call for more students of color and students of low-income backgrounds.\(^{254}\) The homogenous racial makeup of Georgetown was disrupted and new perspectives were finally being heard.

\(^{250}\) Curran, *A History of Georgetown University*, 3:57


\(^{252}\) Curran, *A History of Georgetown University*, 3:76


\(^{254}\) Ibid.
While racial diversity was significant at most American colleges given the United States’ history of civil rights, it was particularly newsworthy at a leading Catholic school. Like most groups, American Catholics have had a complicated history when it comes to race. of the civil rights movement, but a large portion of Catholics were at best indifferent toward black civil rights. One typical explanation given for this is that since Catholics were not accepted by Americans either, “. . . they had to avoid movements and causes that might endanger their own hard acceptance.” While this reasoning might have carried weight at one point, some Catholic leaders were on the forefront of the civil rights movement and did not compromise Catholic acceptance while doing so. Either way, black students did not constitute a significant proportion of the population at Catholic schools. This was often explained by reasoning, “that Catholic colleges were schools for Catholic students, and since few black American were Catholics, it would be natural to find few black students on the rosters of Catholic colleges.” Whatever the reason, leaders in American Catholic higher education realized that a truly Americanized university would promote racial diversity regardless of religion. Since black Americans were predominantly Protestant, racial demographic change was entangled with religious demographic change and thus had an impact on the distinctly Catholic culture of the school.

It could be thought that as the black population grew substantially at Georgetown, traditions that celebrated the past became more difficult to celebrate. The supposed subject of Founders Day, John Carroll had owned over 100 slaves and seemed to represent fewer and fewer

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256 Ibid.
257 Power, Catholic Higher Education in America, 437.
students throughout the sixties. It might have been difficult for black students to celebrate the historical legacy of the Society of Jesus given that it had at one point been the largest slave owners in the Maryland colony. Despite recent call to reorient Founders Day to the future, the holiday unavoidably celebrated Georgetown’s past – a past that included the sale of 272 black slaves by Georgetown president Thomas Mulledy. This did not mean that black students loved Georgetown any less than other students, but just as Frederick Douglass expressed in, “The meaning of July Fourth for a Negro,” occasions that recognized a founding must acknowledge that if the founders did not include everyone in their project. It was not only racial minorities, though, who were not historically part of the Jesuit educational tradition.

**DIVERSITY OF GENDER**

In her examination of coeducation at Georgetown, Susan Poulson wrote that admitting women, “profoundly altered the nature of Jesuit higher education.” It is true that women had been permitted to attend certain Georgetown schools since 1903 and, “there were already nearly one thousand undergraduate women on campus” by 1965. But Emmett Curran importantly points out that, “…the college remained a male world, true to the Society of Jesus’s historic commitment of fostering male education.” But in 1969, Georgetown officials decided to make the College coeducational to further secure Georgetown’s status as a modern university.

Coeducation was vehemently derided by traditionalists who said Georgetown was abandoning

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260 Ibid.
the tenets of a Catholic and Jesuit education. However, Georgetown administrators claimed that the Jesuit tradition all-male education at Georgetown simply did “not make sense” any longer.265

As was customary during this time of constant change in the Catholic Church, leaders at Georgetown posited that this change was necessary not in spite of tradition, but because of it. Curran writes that, “Since the Society of Jesus had traditionally aimed their education at the preparation of leaders, it was fitting that they now open the doors to women, given women’s changing status in society.”266 Despite this justification, many saw the inclusion of women on campus as an erosion of tradition at Georgetown. The front page of The Hoya displayed the headline, “Tradition Crumbles,” and as one school official commented, women attending a Catholic college meant that, “the last enclave has been infiltrated.”267

It is reasonable to assume that some women might not have felt that Founders Day was a celebration in which they could fully participate. Of course, women could celebrate the progress made over the nearly two centuries since Georgetown’s founding, but it remained difficult to honor the life and vision of John Carroll when he did not imagine women ever attending his academy. Louise Lague, a female student in the mid-sixties, wrote in The Courier, “Every time I walk through the quadrangle, I look at John Carroll sitting there (he does not stand up for me), and I wonder what he would think of my being here.”268 She acknowledged that the historical philosophy behind Jesuit education did not include her and remarked, “What [John Carroll] had in mind in founding Georgetown, I think, was a sort of seminary for the training and education of

265 Curran, A History of Georgetown University, 3:25.
266 Curran, A History of Georgetown University, 3:74.
267 Ibid.
young Christian gentlemen.” With women making up growing proportion of the student body, Founders Day might have been becoming less compatible with the Georgetown community. The largest impact that the introduction of women had on the Catholic culture campus was contributing to the corrosion of Georgetown’s strict disciplinary culture that resembled an elite boarding school. Given the culture of the 1960s, administrators had a tough time enforcing rules with both men and women on campus.

BREAKDOWN OF THE FAMILIAL SCHOOL

Edward Power claimed in 1972 that, “Catholic colleges have changed more in the management of student life than in any other way.” With all of the changes to the autonomy and demographics of the student body, the familial environment so iconic to a traditional Catholic education was fracturing at Georgetown. Catholic schools had historically been an extension of the home with a classroom dynamic modeled after the two other main sources of socialization for Catholics: the church and the family. This paternalistic style of schooling, referred to the concept of loco parentis was a paternalistic style of schooling, reminiscent of a strict boarding school, that maintained the superiority of faculty, staff, and clergy to students in all aspects of daily life. In 1969, Greeley opined that, “One need not ignore the paternalism, emotional manipulation, exploitation and frustration that frequently characterize the relationship between these celibates and their charges; but it still seems to the present over that there is much that is healthy and positive in many relationships between the religious and the students.”

Whatever the benefits of this system, the respect for this hierarchical relationship began to

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271 Power, Catholic Higher Education in America 439.
273 Ibid.
274 Greeley, From Backwater to Mainstream, 20.
crumble as college students across the United States emerged at the forefront of the culture wars of the 1960s. Students at Catholic schools wanted more autonomy for themselves as well and saw the philosophy of Vatican II as rationale. Curran writes that, “By the end of the sixties, students were more concerned about student freedom as it related to liberation from the rules and discipline that had traditionally governed student life at Georgetown.”275

Philip Tripp, the new vice president of student development, agreed with students and saw the relationship between students and professors not as a parent-child one, but rather, “as a collegial relationship, that is, a community of scholars both older and younger, in which the students are junior colleagues whose dignity, worth, motivation, and integrity are respected and appreciated as those of the faculty are.”276 Students who lived on campus, “were pressing for more and more autonomy in their residential lifestyle as the hitherto prevailing in loco parentis began to crumble as a rationale for strict dormitory discipline.”277 The needs of an increasingly restless student body became an urgent priority for administrators.

Remarking on how the breakdown of loco parentis reflected an American – and now Church – emphasis on individual freedom – Power commented that, “Freedom to leave the campus at will, to return without having to meet any curfew, to have visitors in college residence halls, with or without restrictions, changed the face of Catholic college student life and made it practically unrecognizable to a graduate from any earlier era.”278

STUDENT UNREST

Georgetown truly felt what it was like to be a modern American university when it learned that with increased student empowerment came the spread of student activism. The

275 Curran, A History of Georgetown University, 3:110
276 Ibid.
277 Curran, A History of Georgetown University, 3:111.
278 Power, Catholic Higher Education in America 440.
United States was experiencing a cultural revolution in 1968 and Georgetown found itself at the crossroads of very different generations. Contingents of the New Left formed at Georgetown and vocally opposed the War in Vietnam. A chapter of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) opened at Georgetown and after a year, the radical left gained in popularity and served as an outlet for college students’ frustrations in a tumultuous time.\textsuperscript{279} Dean Royden Davis described the severe divide on campus by saying, “Old men fear the chaos they think they see while young men fear – not chaos – but established placidity which bottles up change.”

In 1969, the counterculture sentiments grew even stronger. In a memorable moment of cultural rage on Georgetown’s campus, freshmen held a Guy Fawkes-style revolt to protest the Georgetown establishment.\textsuperscript{281} As students drank to loud rock music, they burned copies of The Hoya, which was considered too conservative of a news publication and burned an effigy of ‘Joe Hoya.’\textsuperscript{282} This zealous display of a youth revolt showed just how antagonistic the student body was becoming to the notion of tradition. These riots and Anti-Vietnam demonstrations such as a 400 person sit in on Copley Lawn and subsequent march through the neighborhood, “showed how far mainstream sentient at Georgetown had shifted toward a radical posture by 1969.”\textsuperscript{283}

Expressing their frustration with the status quo in unprecedented ways, some students took to disrupting public events, a common counterculture tactic at secular college campuses in America. In June of 1968, administrators were fearful that student protesters might disrupt commencement. Although the plans were foiled, the university was right that students intended to heckle the graduation ceremony.\textsuperscript{284}

\textsuperscript{279} Curran, \textit{A History of Georgetown University}, 3:147-149.  
\textsuperscript{280} Curran, \textit{A History of Georgetown University}, 3:142.  
\textsuperscript{282} Curran, \textit{A History of Georgetown University}, 3:142.  
\textsuperscript{283} Curran, \textit{A History of Georgetown University}, 3:145.  
\textsuperscript{284} Curran, \textit{A History of Georgetown University}, 3:140.
Georgetown, a group of students walked out in protest.\textsuperscript{285} Actions of civil disobedience were also taken like members of Georgetown University Radical Union interrupting classes in Gaston Hall if the professor had a connection to the military.\textsuperscript{286} One event on March 13, 1969 particularly highlighted the willingness of the radical left to disrupt public events. When the mayor of San Francisco, Joseph Alioto, was invited to speak on campus, he was protested by members of SDS. When Alioto arrived for his event in Gaston Hall, the lights went off and protesters stormed the stage cutting off the microphone and overturning the podium. After the riot, a contingency plan for Alioto to speak in a more private venue had to be put into effect.\textsuperscript{287}

In May of 1970, the intensity of anti-war commotion on campus prompted faculty to vote 156-13 to suspend the examinations and the end of the school year.\textsuperscript{288} Father Thomas Fitzgerald, vice president of student affairs, remarked that, “Something has been going on within our undergraduate student body; my impression is that large sectors of it are becoming radicalized.”\textsuperscript{289} It was becoming apparent that not only was loco parentis no longer in effect, but in some cases, it was reversed. As students became more vocally critical of the Georgetown establishment, a holiday praising Georgetown’s history and culture seemed potentially unwise.

\textbf{AN UNEVENTFUL FOUNDERS DAY}

Given campus’ anti-establishment sentiments and recent history of public student disruptions, it is understandable that starting in 1969, Founders Day was not a public event. It was, after all, shortly after the Jack Hoya burning and the Alioto protest. The threat of student activism might have killed the Founders Day event, but it had not yet ended Founders Day
altogether. Instead of a traditional speech, Founders Day took the form of a presidential radio address by Acting President Edwin Quain who took over after Father Campbell’s resignation. Quain, a Jesuit at Fordham from Georgetown’s new external board, was a fitting illustration of how Georgetown’s governmental reorganization affected future leadership of the university.

Father Quain’s address was the first one on Founders Day to avoid any mention of John Carroll. The numerous potential motivation behind this are up for debate – the racial, gender, and religious shifts in Georgetown’s demographics, Quain’s own unfamiliarity with Georgetown, an emphasis on the present and future rather than the past – all of which provide decent rationale for a Founders Day devoid of the Founder.

In his Founders Day address, Quain acknowledged that Georgetown was in a “state of change,” citing that the school would have three presidents in less than six months and the school’s completely new governance structure being put into action with the search for a new president. He mentioned how the new governance structure was being put into action with the inaugural search committee to select a new university president – the search committee included not just members of the newly diversified board but faculty and even several students. For a Catholic school to have such a democratic, and thus American, method of choosing its leader was a truly remarkable statement of Americanization. Quain even mentioned the possibility of a lay president (although it would take thirty more years for that to happen).

Quain then turned to the main topic of his Founders Day address: student unrest. Aimed toward alumni still in the middle of the Progress Fund campaign, Quian sought to dispel fears

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291 Ibid.
292 Ibid.
293 Ibid.
294 Ibid.
295 Ibid.
that Georgetown’s campus was radicalizing. He assured graduates that, “…the Georgetown you have known and loved is still here.”

To some, the very need to articulate such a statement could draw suspicion. Quain then quoted a recent article in the *Chicago Tribune* that outlined the tame nature of Georgetown’s protests that rarely ever had police, bloodshed, or vandalism. He condemned the violent approach of SDS and quoted *Tribune* writer who said that Georgetown offered a “small hopeful note in a period when most American despair of a solution to campus convulsions.” Quian proved to alumni that the Georgetown of 1969 was still the Georgetown they knew and loved by proudly proclaimed that, “there have been no riots at Georgetown.”

Despite his claim of peace at Georgetown, Quain’s narrative was misleading due to the fact that he naively – or perhaps wisely – compared Georgetown to other elite universities across the country. While Georgetown’s riots might have been tame relative to other liberal colleges, the unrest of Georgetown’s students was hugely out of the ordinary for traditional Catholic colleges given the history of *loco parentis*. Alumni who experienced *loco parentis* during their time at Georgetown would have been shocked to attend Georgetown in 1969. Quain pointed out the respect that a new progressive student publication, *The Voice*, called for by quoting its editorial in saying, “The administration must receive the legitimate needs and desires of the students just as the students must realize the task the administration faces.” This was certainly measured in relation to other college protests, but at a Catholic school, an equal power dynamic between students and administration was radical.

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297 Ibid.
298 Ibid.
299 Ibid.
300 Ibid.
THE LAST FOUNDERS DAY

In 1969, Father Quain remarked to alumni that, “In spite of what you might read in the papers, [students] love Georgetown.” But Georgetown’s day historically set aside to express that love was a shell of its former self. The next year, Georgetown’s new president, Father Robert Henle presided over what would become the last Founders Day on record.

Father Henle was brought in as president at a time of financial disaster and as such his top priority was turning around Georgetown’s financial situation. He made fundraising the main topic of his Founders Day radio message in 1970. In order to do so, he needed to curry favor with an alumni base that found itself continually more alienated from the student body. Henle assured alumni that they were “forever members of the Georgetown community.” He attempted to convince the alumni that they had a stake in the current situation at Georgetown. He connected alumni to Georgetown’s current affairs by saying plainly, “…the meaningfulness of your Georgetown degree will rise and fall with the prestige, honor, and success of this institution.” He then used his Founders Day address to announce that the Progress Fund, launched on Founders Day four years earlier, had been completed. Not only had Georgetown reached its ambitious $26 million goal in private donations, but it had succeeded with nearly double the amount of contributions. In addition, Georgetown had secured coveted federal grants piling up to over $15 million. Henle warned that the Progress Fund was only the first of Georgetown’s modern capital campaign and called on annual alumni giving to triple in order to secure the future financial stability of the university.

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303 Ibid.
THE END OF FOUNDERS DAY

Henle’s address became the second Founders Day in a row without a specific mention of John Carroll.304 While Henle did not talk much of the past, he did offer a glimpse into Georgetown’s future. He claimed that Georgetown would be one of just a few Catholic universities to survive the seventies. Andrew Greeley agreed that this was a legitimate question, noting in 1969 that, “one is forced to be cautious in predicting how Catholic higher education will survive in the remaining decades of the present century.”305 Since the original purpose of the Catholic higher education system was to help Catholic immigrants adjust to American life in a protective environment accepting of their faith, the utility of the Catholic school system was coming into question as the culture on Catholic college campuses synchronized with a liberal American society.306 Father Henle believed that while not every school would survive, Georgetown could attain “national leadership as a private, as a Catholic, [and] as a Jesuit university of distinction.”307 And thus, Henle succinctly underscored the great dilemma of American Catholic colleges in the twentieth century: Georgetown sought to be a modern and nationally recognized elite American university without abandoning the distinctiveness of its Catholic and Jesuit character. This tension between these two goals, the result of years of Americanization, amounted in a complex identity crisis. Founders Day – a tradition dedicated to publicly celebrating the identity of Georgetown – could not withstand such complexity.

Father Henle ended his address with what could now be interpreted as a fitting final moment to Founders Day. He told his audience that, “I do beg God’s mercy on all departed

305 Greeley, From Backwater to Mainstream 19.
306 Greeley, From Backwater to Mainstream 86.
He, of course, was referring to deceased members of the Georgetown community, but he very well could have been giving an obituary of Georgetown’s un-Americanized Catholic identity – and by extension, of Founders Day. As the tradition that Father Nevils established four decades earlier came to a close, Father Henle bid farewell to his listeners with a “thank you, God bless you, and goodbye.”

CONCLUSION

Nearly a half century after Founders Day ended, it is timely that we reflect upon the lessons learned from the rise and fall of such a tradition. When Catholicism was practiced rather uniformly in America, Georgetown’s identity was fairly straightforward, and Founders Day thrived as a grand affair. But as new ways of expressing Catholic identity in America emerged during the 1960s, Georgetown’s identity became more complex, and Founders Day gradually disappeared from memory. Understandably, it is much more difficult to celebrate an identity that is not easy to define. This ambiguity still animates the perplexing debates surrounding Catholic higher education today.

A Jesuit priest at Georgetown recently said he believes that, “this place is much more Catholic than it ever has been” due to widespread enthusiasm among faculty and students for promoting social justice. At the same time, there is a canon lawsuit at the Vatican claiming that Georgetown has effectively abandoned any commitment to Catholic identity based on its speakers, faculty, and programs that are inconsistent with Church doctrine. It can be

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308 Robert Henle, Founders Day Message, 1970, Audio Archives, Georgetown University Archives
309 Ibid.
confusing, especially for non-Catholics, when one member of the Georgetown community praises the school’s strong sense of Catholicity while another admonishes its lack thereof.

This confusion was born out of the Americanization movement. Many liberals believe that the new thinking of Vatican II and Land O’Lakes strengthened the Catholic character of universities by making the tradition more inclusive and accessible to the world.\textsuperscript{312} Many conservatives believe that this new thinking inspired a quest for mainstream prestige that has come at the expense of true religiosity.\textsuperscript{313} Both have legitimate viewpoints. Americanization possessed threads of both modernization and secularization. But in order to move forward, both sides must engage in a dialogue.

Most historians of modern Catholic higher education in the United States comment on the loss of these colleges’ distinctiveness as Catholic universities. Like most assimilative processes, there is truth in the fact that Americanization stripped Catholic universities of some unique characteristics – for better or worse. By examining Founders Day, we learned that for the first half of the twentieth century, distinct American Catholic universities stressed the Catholic part of their identities. For the second half of the century, these universities became more indistinct after emphasizing the American part of their identities. Perhaps as we enter further into the twenty-first century, American Catholics will enter adopt a new paradigm.

The first step in engaging in a dialogue between modern Americanists and separatists is to reject the outdated false binary between the two identities of “American” and “Catholic.” Perhaps what should make Catholic universities in America distinct in the future is the fact that they are both Catholic and American simultaneously. This means making compromises on both

sides – but it also means appreciating the value in each of the perspectives. This could mean that conservative Catholics might look more favorably on academic freedom in exchange for liberal Catholics recommitting to build more central Catholic theology programs.

Father Campbell’s favorite word was “challenge.” He certainly led Georgetown through challenging times. Creating a Catholic higher educational system that is boldly and unapologetically both American and Catholic will also certainly be a challenge. But it will be a challenge true to the spirit of Georgetown’s motto of “utraque unum” – both into one. Every effort to revive Founders Day since it ended in 1970 has failed to gain permanence. After studying its evolution, it seems that a tradition dedicated to Georgetown’s founding mission can only return with a clear sense of Georgetown’s identity. Crafting this identity – one that is both truly Catholic and fully catholic – will be a challenge. But it could also be considered a responsibility – a responsibility that Georgetown must choose to embrace if it is to lead the future of Catholic higher education in America. As Father Campbell said in his fateful Founders Day address of 1967, “What the Georgetown of the twenty-first century will be like, no one can say. But this much can be said: the vision of the future, no more than the successes of the past, will not be achieved without the understanding, the cooperation and the support of all Georgetown’s sons and daughters – present and to come.”

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*Old Archives: Founders’ Day Collection*, GAMMS266, Georgetown University Archives, Washington, DC.


*Old Archives: Women at Georgetown*, Reference Folder, Georgetown University Archives, Washington, DC.


Appendix

Figure 1: Founders Day, 1936 (Georgetown University Archives).

Figure 2: Founders Day, 1966 (Georgetown University Archives).