

The Importance of Choosing a Catholic College - By Jack Moore, Principal

Last June, the fifth and sixth grade class went on a field trip to Emmitsburg and ran into noted writer and spiritual director Father Benedict Groeschel, C.F.R. After hearing the story of his miraculous story of recovering from being hit by a car, we asked him what advice he could give to the students. He quickly responded by advising them to go to a "good Catholic" college, and "not one of those catholic in name only". This comment caught me off guard. Of all the wonderful suggestions Fr. Groeschel could have given our students, I didn't expect this one. So, I pondered it for a while and did some research.

In my search, I came across a Society dedicated to just that – finding "good" Catholic colleges. The Cardinal Newman Society has a guide for students and parents entitled, 'The Newman Guide to Choosing a Catholic College: What to Look for and Where to Find It.' The Newman Guide recommends 21 Catholic colleges and universities which "most faithfully live their Catholic identity and provide a quality education". Each college profile examines the school's history, governance, Catholic identity, curriculum, student life and community.

Colleges range from Mount St. Mary's University in Emmitsburg, Maryland, the nation's second oldest Catholic college, to Wyoming Catholic College of Lander, Wyoming, which opened in September 2007. The Guide's editor, Joseph Esposito, said, "These colleges and universities represent a unique perspective on higher education. They are all impressive institutions, offering a wide range of choices from a Great Books curriculum to a degree in motor sports management. But what sets them apart from others is the day-to-day living of their Catholic identity." Esposito, the Cardinal Newman Society's director of research, is a former Deputy Undersecretary for International Affairs at the US Department of Education. He also has been a full-time writer for Catholic publications and an adjunct history professor.

The recommended colleges are grouped into three categories: "Joyfully Catholic," "Born from the Crisis" and "Fighting the Tide." The first group, Joyfully Catholic, is characterized by a Catholic identity that permeates all areas of campus life; the second includes institutions founded or expanded in the last few years; and the third group represents older colleges and universities that have succeeded in renewing and strengthening their Catholic identity. These colleges are: Christendom College, The College of Saint Thomas More, Franciscan University of Steubenville, Magdalen College, Thomas Aquinas College, The Thomas More College of Liberal Arts, University of Dallas, and the University of St. Thomas (Houston, Texas).

The "Born from the Crisis" colleges are: Ave Maria University, Holy Apostles College & Seminary, John Paul the Great Catholic University; Our Lady Seat of Wisdom Academy, Southern Catholic College and Wyoming Catholic College.

The "Fighting the Tide" colleges are: Aquinas College (Nashville, Tennessee), Belmont Abbey College, Benedictine College, The Catholic University of America, DeSales University, Mount St. Mary's University and St. Gregory's University. The Newman Guide to Choosing a Catholic College: What to Look for and Where to Find It will be available at bookstores nationwide beginning on November 1.