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President Garvey Inaugurated at CUA

Michael Sean Winters | Jan. 25, 2011 Distinctly Catholic

The Catholic University of America inaugurated its fifteenth president today at a Mass at the National Shrine adjacent to the campus. John Garvey made his profession of faith before 3 cardinals, more than a dozen bishops, a hundred concelebrating priests and a packed crowd of students and faculty.

In remarks at the close of the liturgy, Garvey spoke about ?Faith and Intellect,? a wide-ranging exposition of ideas drawn from his reflections on Blessed John Henry Newman?s lectures ?The Idea of a University.? After discussing the ways our culture often sees faith and reason, or religion and science, as working at cross-purposed, Garvey said, ?I think the fault for this flat, crabbed, cartoonish vision of Catholic higher education lies not with the critics of religion but with us. We have been so intent on defending ourselves against charges of fundamentalism and censorship that we have failed to create, let alone promote, a serious Catholic intellectual culture. Think of the schools of thought we have seen come (and go) in the academy in our lifetimes: Marxism, modernism, post-modernism, feminism, law and economics, critical race theory, queer theory, and so on. And ask yourself whether, in the Catholic intellectual tradition, there is not enough material to get our own movement going.?

Garvey also articulated the ways that virtue leads the intellect, noting that ethical judgments are made in a variety of issues studied at the modern, research university, from migration to the environment to the history of capitalism. He also extended his talk to discuss how virtue informs our judgments of beauty: ?There are true and there are meretricious appeals of beauty, and we learn them not by solitary contemplation but in the same way we learn the appropriation of virtue.

The inaugural festivities will continue with a Mass in honor of the university?s patron, St. Thomas Aquinas, which will be celebrated Thursday, one day in advance of Aquinas?s feast day. The homilist at that Mass will be Archbishop J. Augustine DiNoia, O.P. Secretary of the Congregation for Divine Worship at the Vatican.

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