



Photo by Nancy Wiechec / CNS

Vincentian Father David M. O'Connell, president of The Catholic University of America, welcomes Pope Benedict XVI to a gathering of Catholic educators at the university in Washington April 17.

POPE

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also need to speak on the role of truth, stressing that "truth and reason never contradict each other."

As may have been expected, the pope highlighted the importance of Catholic identity – a key issue for Catholic colleges, schools and religious education programs. The pope talked about this identity from a different perspective, focusing on what it is not.

"Catholic identity is not simply a question of the number of Catholic students," he said. It also is not "dependent upon statistics" nor can it be "equated simply with orthodoxy of course content."

Instead, he stressed that the Catholic identity of a school or religious education program "demands and inspires much more: namely that each and every aspect of your learning communities reverberates within the ecclesial life of faith."

The pope linked the current "crisis of truth" to a "crisis of faith" and said educators must do more than simply "engage the intellect of our young" but should instead help today's youths to fully live their faith. "The difficulty or reluctance many people have today in entrusting themselves to God" is a "complex phenomenon," he said, adding that it is one which "I ponder continually."

He stressed that teachers and administrators in universities and schools have a "duty and privilege to ensure that students receive instruction in Catholic doctrine and practice." To not do this, he said, would weaken Catholic identity and cause "moral, intellectual or spiritual" confusion.

As the pope left the campus, students again gave him a rousing send-off, prompting the pontiff to roll down the window of his popemobile and wave as his motorcade moved on to the next event.

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