

Eight Qualities of Inquiry

The Catholic tradition of inquiry includes:

- A conviction that faith and reason are mutually illuminating, that they are united in the search for truth, and that people of faith must devote themselves to building a world characterized by an “uncompromising commitment to truth”—a world in which truth is explored and revered “in whatever way it discloses itself,” as theologian Michael Buckley, S.J., has written.
- A sacramental vision of reality that holds that each discipline offers the potential to reveal something of the sacred. In the Christian view, grace—God’s loving self-gift to the world in Christ—underlies all of reality. In the words of the Jesuit poet Gerard Manley Hopkins, “The world is charged with the grandeur of God.” Thus, the search for truth in any discipline can be a sacred and sacramental activity.
- A hopeful commitment to intellectual integration among disciplines, combined with an appreciation for the integrity and autonomy of individual academic disciplines.
- A resistance to reductionism and an openness to analogical imagination—a disposition to see things in terms of “both/ and” rather than “either/or.”
- An understanding that confidence in reason’s ability to grasp the intelligibility, meaning, and purpose of the universe must be tempered by an awareness of the mystery of God as radically Other than God’s creation. As St. Augustine wrote, “If you think you have grasped God, it is not God you have grasped.” Anything the tradition declares about God and truth carries the implicit realization that we are incapable of saying everything about God and truth.
- An openness to the mystery inherent in an evolving, unfinished creation. Our search for truth is fed by the hope that God’s grace is drawing the universe toward a fulfillment that lies beyond our vision at this moment in time.
- An awareness that confidence in reason must also be tempered by the recognition that sin can deform reason’s unbiased quest for truth.
- A reverence for the dignity of each human being as one created in the image of God. Hence, a commitment to justice, to the solidarity of the human family, and to the common good.