Anthony D. Andreassi

Teach Me to Be Generous: The First Century of Regis High School in New York City.
New York: Fordham University Press, 2014. Pp. 272. Hb, \$35.00.

R. Eric Platt

Sacrifice and Survival: Identity, Mission, and Jesuit Higher Education in the American South. University of Alabama Press, 2014. Pp. 240. Hb, \$44.95.

In the United States' earliest decades, there was much hand-wringing among the founding fathers at the thought of Jesuits roaming the republic. In a letter to Thomas Jefferson, John Adams famously wrote, "If ever there was a body of men who merited damnation on earth and in Hell, it is this society of Loyola's." Despite these sentiments of trepidation and a general pervasive anti-Catholicism throughout much of American history, the Society has built an impressive network of colleges and high schools since the founding of Georgetown College in 1789. Scholarship on this extraordinary educational legacy has largely been limited to institutional histories of universities, such as Robert Emmett Curran's magisterial three-volume history of Georgetown; but two new books, one by Anthony Andreassi and one by R. Eric Platt, have charted new ground in the field of Jesuit education in the U.S., although one has done so more successfully than the other.

Anthony Andreassi's *Teach Me to Be Generous* is the more traditional work in that it is an institutional history. But rather than a college or university, Andreassi focuses on a Jesuit high school, chronicling the first century of Regis High School. This high-achieving Upper West Side institution is unique for being the first freestanding Jesuit high school in the United States—prior high schools began as the lower divisions of colleges—and one that has never charged tuition to the thousands of young men who have passed through its doors since they first opened in the fall of 1913. As Andreassi reminds us, the Jesuits were, from the foundation of their order, committed to offering a free education at their colleges, the first of which was opened in 1548. Making good on this commitment was not easy before the Jesuits' suppression in 1773, and it became even more difficult—if not impossible—after the Society's 1814 restoration, due to the widespread state seizure of the Jesuits' previous properties and schools.

Thanks to a scenario most heads of a school can only dream of, Regis was an exception, as it benefited from the great generosity of the Grants—one of the most powerful Irish Catholic families in New York City. Hugh Grant rose to riches and fame through shrewd real estate dealings and his prowess within the Tammany Hall machine, amassed a fortune, and even served as New York

City mayor. After his death, his wife, Julia, entered into discussion with Father David Hearn, S.J., superior of the Jesuit community of the Upper East Side, who yearned to open a Jesuit school that might return to the early Society's tuition-free policy. In late 1912, Julia made the first gift from her considerable inheritance toward Regis's founding and endowment, beginning its tuition-free tradition.

In addition to this renewal of Loyola's original intent of tuition-free schooling, Andreassi's work uses Regis as a case study to illustrate the "Americanization of Jesuit schools" (1). Throughout the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth, Jesuit colleges in the United States followed a course of study that combined what we would now recognize as secondary and collegiate study. It typically took around seven years to complete. It was only around the turn of the twentieth century that the Society moved to separate its existing schools into high school and college divisions in response to prevailing trends in American higher education, particularly following public criticism of the Jesuit model by Harvard President Charles Eliot in the pages of the influential *Atlantic Monthly* in 1899. Thus, Regis's 1913 creation as the Jesuits' first stand-alone high school was the product of a larger educational adaptation within the order.

The bulk of the book focuses on the evolution of the school and the experiences of its teachers and students over Regis's first century. With meticulous use of sources, Andreassi weaves together items from the school's student newspaper, its yearbook, and several provincial archives to bring to life the daily workings of the school in the classroom, at sporting events, and even in detention. It is rich with descriptions of legendary faculty such as Stephen Duffy, S.J., and stories like that of the school's short-lived football team or of the "rock and roll hymns" (148) and Coke bottle candlesticks present at mass in the heady years surrounding Vatican II. These stories further provide a lens for viewing the changing face of American Catholicism in the twentieth century at the high school level. Mirroring demographic and cultural changes, the reader sees important trends develop. Regis's students come less often from the city and more frequently from the suburbs, more students of color populate each incoming class (starting in the sixties), scholastics are replaced by lay teachers, and mandatory Latin instruction and sodality chapters give way to computer science and Head Start service placements.

Readers looking for greater causal explanation and discussion of the wider context, which would include cultural shifts surrounding Vatican II or the alleged "return to normalcy" in the 1980s, will not find them here. The main focus is Regis High School, and the author paints with a broad brush elsewhere. But these are minor objections. *Teach Me to Be Generous* is a helpful addition

both as a history of a Jesuit high school and as a case study in the Catholic philanthropy that helped build the brick and mortar legacy of the American Catholic ghetto. This work does however point toward the need for a more comprehensive history of Jesuit secondary education in the United States, and is a reminder that the story of Catholic philanthropy like that of the Grants largely remains to be told.

R. Eric Platt's *Sacrifice and Survival* is another departure from traditional works on Jesuit schools, by virtue of its conceptual framework and focus. Platt's work is animated by questions like "How does a university survive? What factors keep the lights on in one college and permanently close the doors at another?" (1). Specifically, the author is concerned with a school's mission and identity, "town and gown" relations with the local community, and how these relations influence a college's ability to survive. To answer these questions, he explores the respective fates of seven Jesuit colleges of the New Orleans province in the nineteenth and twentieth century: St. Charles College, Spring Hill College, the College of the Immaculate Conception, St. Mary's University, the College of the Sacred Heart, Loyola College, and Loyola University. It is both a collective study and a series of individual case studies, as the author explores how these respective Jesuit schools did or did not weather the challenges of curricular adaptations, communal relations, the ebb and flow of general anti-Catholic sentiments, and other unplanned-for obstacles such as floods and yellow fever. It was no easy task for the Jesuits who labored to build on their distinct educational tradition in a part of the United States that lacked the large populations of Catholics that supported and fueled the proliferation of Catholic colleges and universities elsewhere.

Sacrifice and Survival is a welcome step forward as Platt attempts a systematic exploration of many Jesuit schools across a wide region in the United States. Additionally, in his conceptual framework, he works to integrate very recent and ongoing student affairs conversations about mission and identity into the disciplinary context of historical research. *Sacrifice and Survival* is most compelling in its early chapters, where Platt deftly summarizes and unpacks the more recent scholarship on mission and identity. His narrative draws on the *Woodstock Letters* and provincial archives to provide several compelling examples that illustrate the tumultuous ups and downs of the schools, culminating with a 1921 critical report by a visitor from the superior general that finally moved the province to close several colleges and consolidate its resources into Loyola University New Orleans and Spring Hill.

Platt ultimately concludes that his book represents a "possible explanation as to how institutional identity, mission, and town and gown relationships work together to either promote or inhibit institutional survivability" (162).

While the questions raised are of interest and import to administrators at college and universities with a religious identity, *Sacrifice and Survival* does not deliver compelling answers. At the end of each example, Platt proposes an explanation for how the interplay of mission and external social forces influenced the fates of these schools, but aside from recognizing these relationships as factors, he does not clearly identify just how important or influential those variables were. The importance of mission among other environmental pressures, from natural disasters to the business of recruiting students and paying the bills, remains unclear.

Humility can be a virtue, but at times Platt displays it to a fault. In his moments of analysis, his language is hedged with the use of “maybe” and “perhaps.” This hesitancy undercuts his points precisely when he should be making his case most strongly. In one exemplary passage about when communities adjacent to St. Charles College in Grand Couteau, Louisiana, raised objections to the Society’s presence, Platt writes, “The training of students and “Jesuits-to-be” in tandem may have contributed to further anti-Jesuit sentiment from neighboring communities as it may have been perceived that lay students might choose the life of the cloth instead of returning home after the completion of studies” (75). The book is full of tentative explanations like this one from which no further conclusions are drawn. The reader is left with interesting thought experiments rather than more forceful proof of the importance and value of the ideas thus floated.

While not every text needs to be a tome, Platt attempts to cover a lot of ground in under 170 pages, especially given his regional focus, his consideration of a large number of individual schools, and the finer points of his framework; at times, the book rushes through points the author could have, and should have, developed further. The book is rich with anecdotes, but often leaves the reading wanting more. For instance, while racism was a structural part of Southern life throughout this period, it is touched upon only briefly, through one particularly illuminating instance in which a scholastic from South America visits St. Charles college only to be met by a general uproar and protest from the student body. Also visible, but equally underdeveloped, is a fascinating trend of communities of women religious partnering with or monetarily bailing out the Society at critical moments. With so many places in need of further clarification, the inclusion of several unrelated tangents, like Platt’s mention of the plight of former slaves in New Orleans, is all the more puzzling.

Furthermore, conspicuously absent from Platt’s analysis is any reference to Charles Eliot’s aforementioned 1899 broadside against Jesuit schools in the *Atlantic Monthly*. Elliot’s critiques were a direct catalyst for the institutional

and curricular changes in Jesuit schools in the period, a fact which, while smack in the middle of Platt's timeframe and focus, receives no mention. Finally, there is an error on page 47 in the description stating that "Jesuit colleges and universities are chartered by state governments but owned by a corporation of Jesuits that determines the characteristic identity of each college or university." This used to be true, but is no longer, as Jesuit colleges and universities have long since separately incorporated outside of the Society as independent institutions with independent boards of directors.

Sacrifice and Survival is a step in the right direction in many ways, but in several regards leaves room for improvement. Despite its shortcomings, this book does show that issues of mission and identity can and do influence a school's institutional fate. As such, this text should be of particular interest to administrators of Jesuit and Catholic schools who are contemplating these questions today, albeit with far more resources and far fewer Jesuits than Platt's subjects.

Taken together, *Sacrifice and Survival* and *Teach Me To Be Generous* contribute much to the scholarship on Jesuit schools in the United States. Hopefully these promising volumes will spur further research on the still under-examined yet mightily impressive and influential network of institutions the Society has built over the past two centuries.

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