



## Series Youth – 3

*Pontifical Council for the Laity*

PONTIFICIUM CONSILIUM PRO LAICIS

# Youth and University:

witnessing to Christ in the university world

International Youth Forum

Rocca di Papa, 31 March - 4 April 2004



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## INTRODUCTION

The International Youth Forum took place in Rocca di Papa outside Rome from 31 March to 4 April 2004. It was organised by the Youth Section of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, and the theme for reflection was one that is of particular concern nowadays: **“Youth and university: witnessing to Christ in the university world”**. Young people are the recipients and the prime movers in our Forums, and so they came to Rocca di Papa from all over the world, representing Bishops’ Conferences and the international movements, associations and ecclesial communities that are active in the universities. There were 250 participants between the ages of 20 and 26 from 90 countries, all engaged in Church work in the universities.

The course of the Forum was structured in such a way that an aspect of the theme was developed on each of the four days. This was done with the help of around fifty guests and speakers from various parts of the globe. On the first day we discussed the characteristics of the university in different countries and of the young people who frequent them (“Youth and University Today”). We endeavoured to understand the political and cultural context of the university in the world, and we asked if they had succeeded in giving rise to “educational communities” in which young people could acquire the ability to discern with integrity when dealing with important values in life. On the second day we explored the extent to which universities are places of education and development for young people (“Studies and Life”), and how students actually experience their undergraduate years; On the third day (“University and Truth”) we examined the way in which universities respond to young people’s search for meaning and how they train students to pursue the truth. On the final day (“University and Christian Witness”) we came to the topic of evangelisation and campus ministry,

and we discussed the different means of evangelisation that can be developed in the universities.

The programme of the Forum gave particular importance to interaction and interdisciplinary participation. The talks opened up points for reflection, and these were followed by opportunities to speak from the floor at the assemblies and to have time for reflection in study groups. Personal witness was given by some young people in the assemblies, and there were panel discussions that demonstrated the diversity of situations at the international level.

This publication contains the lectures and the personal witness we heard during the panel discussions that were given by bishops, academics, students and university chaplains. The quality and variety of the content merits publication and attentive reading. We also have the honour of including the message addressed to the participants by Pope John Paul II, a particularly useful document for all those connected with the university world. We hope that this book can offer a small contribution to the exciting debate that accompanies the rapid evolution of the university and its changing role in society and in the Church.

One of the objectives of the Forum – one we hope to have achieved – was to offer the young delegates some specific tools to help their reflection and growth. They can then transmit what they have learned in their respective countries and within their communities, associations and movements. This publication is intended to support them in their mission, and we invite them to share it with their companions.

Above all, the Forum was intended to be a deep experience of faith for the young participants, and we can say that it certainly was. They all had the opportunity to experience the universal dimension of the Church and to recognise Jesus in the face of others who are very different in culture and background but very similar in the faith. Times of work, encounter and relaxation were animated and motivated by times of fervent and spirit-filled prayer and celebration. There were two occasions during the week when the delegates had the pleasure of being

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present with Pope John Paul II in Saint Peter's Square. On Thursday afternoon, 1 April, and on Sunday morning, 4 April, they joined the youth of the Diocese of Rome for the diocesan celebration of the 19<sup>th</sup> World Youth Day.

Although the atmosphere of communion and sharing cannot be transmitted in a publication, it is certainly this factor that has remained most imprinted on the hearts and memories of the young people and of the guests and speakers who took part. We "organisers" were likewise affected, and we continue to thank the Lord for that experience and for the gift of God's presence among us as we are joined together in God's name.

Msgr FRANCIS KOHN

*Head of Youth Section  
Pontifical Council for the Laity*



# **I – YOUTH AND UNIVERSITY TODAY**

**Wednesday 31 March**



## **1. Message from Pope John Paul II on the occasion of the 8<sup>th</sup> International Youth Forum**

1. I should like, first of all, to extend my cordial greetings to all the students who have come together at this time in Rocca di Papa for the eighth “International Youth Forum” on the theme “Young people and the university: witnessing to Christ in the university world”. Your presence is a source of great joy to me, because it is a shining example of the ever-young universal face of the Church. For you have come from five continents, representing over 80 countries and 30 international Movements, Associations and Communities.

I should also like to greet the Rectors, professors and lecturers attending the Forum, as well as the bishops, priests and the laity engaged in the pastoral care of universities, who will be accompanying the students as they reflect over the coming days.

I wish like to express my most sincere thanks to the President of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, Archbishop Stanislaw Rylko, and all his co-workers, for convening this welcome event. I vividly recall previous years’ Forums organised to coincide with the international celebrations of World Youth Day. For this year it was decided to renew the format, to give the Forum a more clearly defined scope, emphasising its educational dimension by choosing a specific theme around which to debate one concrete aspect of young people’s lives. The theme for this meeting is certainly highly topical and meets a real need. I am delighted that so many young people, coming from such rich and diverse cultures, have gathered at Rocca di Papa to reflect together, to share their experiences, and to embolden one another to bear witness to Christ in the world of higher education.

2. It is important in our age to rediscover the bond that unites the Church to the world of higher education. For the Church not only played

a decisive role in founding the first universities, but throughout the centuries she has been a workshop of culture, and continues in the same direction today through the Catholic universities and various forms of presence in the vast world of higher education. The Church sees the University as one of those “workplaces in which man’s vocation to acquire knowledge, and the constituent bond of humanity with truth as the purpose of knowledge, become a daily reality” for so many professors, young researchers and generations of students (*address to UNESCO*, 1980).

Dear students, in the university you are not only recipients of services, but you are the true protagonists of the activities performed there. It is no coincidence that the period spent in higher education is a vital stage in your existence, in which you prepare yourselves to take on the responsibility for decisive choices that will direct the whole of your future life. It is for this reason that you must approach higher education with a searching spirit, to seek the right answers to the essential questions about the meaning of life, happiness and complete self-fulfilment, and beauty as the splendour of truth.

Fortunately, the influence of ideologies and Utopias fomented by the messianic atheism that had such an impact in the past on many university environments has waned considerably today. But there are also new schools of thought, which reduce reason to the horizon of experimental science alone, and hence to technical and instrumental knowledge, sometimes enclosing it within a sceptical and nihilistic vision. These attempts to evade the issue of the deepest meaning of existence are not only futile; they can also become dangerous.

3. Through the gift of faith we have met the One who introduces himself with these surprising words: “I am the truth” (*Jn 14:6*). Jesus is the truth of the universe and of history, the meaning and the destiny of human existence, the foundation of all reality! It is your responsibility, you who have welcomed this Truth as the vocation and certitude of your



lives, to demonstrate its reasonableness in the university environment and in your work there. The question that then arises is: how deeply does the truth of Christ affect your studies, research, knowledge of reality, and the comprehensive education of the human person? It may happen that, even among those who profess to be Christians, some will behave in the university as if God did not exist. Christianity is not a mere subjective religious preference, which is ultimately irrational, and relegated to the private sphere. As Christians we are duty-bound to bear witness to what the Second Vatican Council affirmed in *Gaudium et Spes*: “For faith throws a new light on everything, manifests God’s design for man’s total vocation, and thus directs the mind to solutions which are fully human” (no. 11). We must demonstrate that faith and reason are not irreconcilable, but that, “Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth” (cfr. *Fides et ratio*, Intr.)

4. My young friends! You are the disciples and the witnesses of Christ in the University. May your University days be for all of you a period of great spiritual and intellectual maturity, which will lead you to deepen your personal relationship with Christ. But if your faith is linked merely to fragments of tradition, fine sentiments or a generic religious ideology, you will certainly not be able to withstand the impact of the environment you are in. You must therefore seek to keep your Christian identity steadfast, and rooted in the communion of the Church. To do this, you must be nurtured by persevering in prayer. Whenever possible, seek out sound university professors and lecturers. Do not remain isolated in what are often difficult environments, but play an active part in the life of Church associations, movements and communities operating in the university environment. Draw close to the university parishes, and allow the chaplaincies to help you. You must build the Church within your universities, as a visible community which believes, prays, gives account for our hope, and lovingly welcomes every trace of good, truth and beauty in university life. All this has to be done wherever students live and meet, and not only

on the campus. I am certain that the pastors will not fail to devote particular care to ministering to the university environments, and will appoint holy and competent priests to perform this mission.

5. Dear participants at the 8th International Youth Forum, I am happy to know you will be present in St Peter's Square next Thursday, to meet the young people from the Rome diocese, and later for the Palm Sunday Mass, when we shall be celebrating together the 19th World Youth Day on the theme "We wish to see Jesus" (*Jn* 12:21). It will mark the final stage in the spiritual preparation for the great gathering in Cologne in 2005. It is not enough to "speak" about Jesus to young undergraduates: we must also "show" Jesus to them, through the eloquent witness of our lives (cfr. *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 16). My wish for you is that this Rome meeting will help to strengthen your love for the universal Church and your commitment to serving the university world. I am depending on each and every one of you to hand on to your local Churches and your ecclesial groups the richness of gifts that you are receiving in these intense days here.

Invoking the Virgin Mary, Seat of Wisdom, to protect you on your path, I impart a special heartfelt Apostolic Blessing on you and on all those – fellow students, rectors, professors, lecturers, chaplains and administrative staff – who, with you, make up the great "University community".

From the Vatican, 25 March 2004

## 2. Opening address

Most Rev. STANISŁAW RYŁKO

*President of the Pontifical Council for the Laity*

*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ!  
(Phil 1:2)*

1. In the words of Saint Paul and in the name of the Pontifical Council for the Laity I greet you all, dear friends, who are participating in the eighth International Youth Forum. Our theme is: Youth and university: witnessing to Christ in the university world”. I extend a very warm welcome and my gratitude to the bishops, priests, religious and academics who are here to accompany you. You have come from almost ninety countries and all the continents. Among you there are representatives from about thirty international ecclesial associations and movements that are active in the university world. You are therefore a very qualified “cross-section” of that great population that fills the campuses and lecture halls of universities around the world. It is quite awe-inspiring to see you all here. You are so different in your languages, cultures, races and nationalities, and yet you are so united. The fact that you are all university students is not the sole reason for your presence. It is above all because of your common faith in Jesus Christ and the communion of the Church, mother and teacher of us all. This Forum, unlike other conventions and seminars, has the ambitious objective of becoming a sort of research laboratory, a space for human and Christian growth, a place for a delightful spiritual adventure.

2. This is the eighth in the series of International Youth Forums, and it introduces two innovations that I shall briefly outline. The genesis of this initiative stems from World Youth Day in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in

1987. Young people themselves invented the Forum as an opportunity to meet for more direct and more personal dialogue within the context of that amazing gathering of youth around the Successor of Peter. From that time on, for many years and for many young people, the Forum has been a particularly moving and incisive faith experience. However, as time went on, the structure and programmes of World Youth Day acquired an ever greater educational dimension. Meanwhile the Forum, although maintaining its value, was becoming almost like a parallel event in the shadow of the mass gathering. It was clear to us, the organisers, that if we were to make the most of this educational event, we would have to change the formula. Therefore, without damaging the link that unites the two events, it was decided to have the Forum at a different time from World Youth Day. In this way it has a more defined space, more visibility and a higher profile. Moreover, taking into consideration the diversity within the world of youth, it was decided to centre each Forum on a specific theme corresponding to a particular category of young people. The eighth International Youth Forum therefore marks a new stage in this venture in the service of youth. We are certain that this renewal will make it an even more effective instrument for evangelisation.

3. In this Forum we shall place the university at the centre of our reflection. It is an institution of great importance for the life of humanity and of society. University implies culture, and culture is an indispensable component of a fully human life. Pope John Paul II forcefully declares that “people live truly human lives thanks to culture. Human life is culture in the sense also that the human person is distinguished and differentiated through it from that which exists in other parts of the visible world: man cannot be outside culture [...] Culture is that through which a human being as such becomes more human, ‘is’ more, and comes closer to ‘being’”.<sup>1</sup> Universities are real “generators” of culture in its various

<sup>1</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Speech to Unesco*, 1980.

## 2. *Opening address*

expressions. They are places from which culture radiates. This is why they are so important.

In our times, however, there is a widespread and serious crisis in culture. Many speak of humanity being at the crossroads, and many voices of alarm can be heard. There is one that I think is particularly perceptive: “[Humanity today] is floating in a ‘pluralism without frontiers’, exposed to all the winds, prepared to sell itself to whoever offers less. ‘never has diversity been such a terrible sin as in this period of tolerance’ (Pasolini). From the fascination of a ‘luminous future’ to the attraction of emptiness [...]. After the red horse of the revolution [Marxist-communist], followed by the black horse of repression, there will be the triumph of the grey horse of nihilism. The circle has closed. Violent revolution has brought its fruits. The exaltation of deceit has shown its true face. Utopia, like every ideology, proved the opposite. Another train has completed its journey on a different track: the enlightenment has died out and rationalism has lost dominance. They travelled in opposite directions and met at the same station, nihilism”.<sup>2</sup> It is a picture of a culture emptied of values and secularised, that hermetically encloses the individual within the immanent, and this is suffocating. Gabriel Marcel said that life without mystery becomes unbreathable. We experience this in thousands of ways today. This is where the crisis of postmodern man derives. Fortunately, this dark picture is tempered by many signs that allow us detect a rebirth of spiritual values in today’s culture. This should help us Christians particularly not to allow ourselves be tempted by pessimism and to be, more than ever, bearers of hope.

4. The crisis in culture must of necessity be strongly felt in the university as it is going through a period of much transformation and is searching for its “new” identity – a delicate and complex process that we hope will result in growth. We shall say a lot about the crisis in the

<sup>2</sup> *Editorial to “La Nuova Europa”* 1 (2004), p. 2.

university during our Forum. Many claim that “the crisis in the university is not mainly organisational or institutional, but spiritual and cultural. In other words, the university is in crisis as an educational and cultural institution, as a place of production of knowledge both theoretical and practical”.<sup>3</sup> This has consequences observed by teachers and students. One in particular is a cause for concern. “Man” is no longer spoken about in the universities, nor are questions posed on this subject. No space is made to critically question the very identity of the human person. The acceleration in scientific progress without precedent, the multiplication of specialisations, the resulting fragmentation of knowledge, the contradictory partiality of the answers from modern science, all cause existential and cultural bewilderment among the young – and not only among the young. Weak thought spreads rapidly proclaiming the dogma of radical doubt, scepticism and relativism, and this produces weak personalities, men and women who avoid embarking on the search for truth. The discrepancy widens between ethics and scientific research, and the risk increases that science, instead of being allied with humanity, may become a threat for the human race. In an era of globalization, the rules of the marketplace also hold sway in the university, and particularly over scientific research where they are often decisive factors. In the production of knowledge, research is increasingly conditioned by market forces and demand. More than anything it transforms the individual from being a responsible subject into an irrelevant object manipulated on all sides.

The symptoms of this serious crisis with which the university is struggling are obvious. What is the way out? As we have not come here only for recriminations, this is a question we can ask. It is generally agreed that if there is a way, it consists of rediscovering the dimension of wisdom in learning and science. The Second Vatican Council tells us: “Our era needs wisdom more than bygone ages in order that new dis-

<sup>3</sup> E. CORECCO, *La Chiesa e le sue università*, Il Nuovo Areopago” 4 (1988) p. 27-28.

## 2. Opening address

coveries may be more human. For the future of the world stands in peril unless wiser people are forthcoming”.<sup>4</sup> Therefore there is great need for many men, women and young people to have the courage to ask about truth (including the last and ultimate truth!) and about meaning (including the last and ultimate meaning!). It is necessary to rediscover the original vocation of the university to serve thought, to serve truth and to serve wisdom.

5. The Forum will first of all study the situation of the university of our times, something I have just briefly glanced through, and then it will proceed to analyse the situation of young people in the universities. How do young people in different countries and continents find themselves in such a complex world? What does “student days” mean for them? What meaning does it have, especially for Christians, at this important stage of a person’s life?

The starting point for this close examination should be the principle that university students must neither regard themselves nor be considered mere “consumers” of knowledge. They are active creative protagonists in the process of their own education. The image of the university of today and of tomorrow depends to a large extent on them. It is not by chance that one of the objectives of the Forum is to awaken in you young university students this sense of responsibility, and to spur you on to active presence and engagement rather than to retreat into the comfort of your own private circles.

Our years as university students are very important in our lives, and they should coincide with our human and Christian growth and development. Knowing more does not necessarily mean “being” more. It is not enough to know more in order to “be” more. Several years ago, the Pope spoke about this to the university students of Rome. He said: “To

<sup>4</sup> VATICAN COUNCIL II, Pastoral constitution on the Church in the modern world *Gaudium et spes*, n. 15.

your scientific training you must add a deep moral and Christian training. It must be lived thoroughly and produce an increasingly harmonious synthesis between faith and reason, faith and culture, faith and life. Unite dedication to rigorous scientific research with the testimony of an authentic Christian life. This is the fascinating undertaking of each university student ”.<sup>5</sup>

A fundamentally important condition of this educational process and of every educational process is a complete perspective of the person. It is a perspective that has nothing to do with the deformed and reductive images of humanity produced by ideologies of every era and colour. It is a perspective that befits Christianity and our faith. According to it the mystery, vocation and destiny of mankind are only revealed fully in Christ. Twenty-five years ago, Pope John Paul II wrote in *Redemptor hominis*, his first encyclical and the programmatic encyclical of his pontificate: “Those who wish to understand themselves thoroughly – not just in accordance with immediate, partial, often superficial and even illusory standards and measures of one’s own being – must with their concerns and uncertainties and even with their weakness and sinfulness, with their life and death, draw near to Christ. They should, so to speak, enter into him with their whole being, “appropriate ” and assimilate the whole reality of the Incarnation and the Redemption in order to find themselves ”.<sup>6</sup>

Another objective that has priority for young Christian students should be the recovery of harmony between one’s own faith and reason. Faith and reason are not enemies. They are two great allies that run together towards the finishing post, as Pope John Paul II explains step by step in *Fides et ratio*, in this sense a very valuable guide. An old proverb says: *fides quaerens intellectum et intellectus quaerens fidem* (faith seeks reason and reason seeks faith). Cardinal

<sup>5</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Agli universitari romani* (1979).

<sup>6</sup> JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical letter *Redemptor hominis*, n. 10.



## 2. Opening address

Joseph Ratzinger wrote that “faith speaks to our reason because it voices the truth. From this point of view a faith without reason is not authentic Christian faith”.<sup>7</sup> How important it is in our times to recover the notion of the reasonableness of faith! There is so much need in our world for the courage of faith, and for the courage of reason open to mystery. The educating and self-educating process within the university is what is most at stake for students and lecturers. The phenomenon of depersonalisation, typical in our mass society that generates anonymity, loneliness and deep frustration, also affects the universities, and so it is imperative to reassess the master-disciple relationship. This is a special kind of human relationship that has always implied communion of life and that is an excellent means of communicating values. It is an indispensable passage in the educational process.

6. The final study theme of our Forum is also the most important. It concerns the Christian presence in the university world: to be Christians, that is, witnesses to Christ, in this great areopagus of our times. Two thousand years ago, Saint Paul was the first to do that on the Areopagus of Athens (cfr. *Acts* 17:22-34), and this has much to teach us today. The Church has always devoted great attention to the university, cradle of culture *par excellence*, and the evangelisation of culture is one of its great pastoral priorities. The relationship between faith and culture, like that of faith and reason, is not easy, particularly in times like ours of very radical and rapid cultural change. It is also essential to recover harmony and to re-establish an alliance while overcoming prejudices, counter-positions and even hostility that unfortunately continue to spread in quite a number of university environments.

Pope John Paul II has spoken of the faith-culture relationship in terms that deserve close and constant reflection on our part, especially

<sup>7</sup> J. RATZINGER, *Dio e il mondo* (God and the World).

over the course of these few days. Back in 1982 he said: “If it is true that faith does not identify with any one culture and is independent from all cultures, it is not less true that, precisely for this reason, faith is called to inspire and permeate every culture. It is every person, in the concreteness of daily existence, who is saved in Christ and it is every person, therefore, who must fulfil him/herself in Christ. A faith that does not become culture is a faith that has not been fully absorbed, nor fully thought about, nor faithfully lived”.<sup>8</sup> These words contain an explicit programme that is extremely demanding for every university lecturer and student.

Christ requires courageous witnesses in universities all over the world. We should make Saint Paul’s words our own: “Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel” (*1 Cor 9:16*). It is not an easy task. The dominant culture is full of prejudice towards faith, Christianity and the Church, and people can feel constrained to confine their faith to the strictly private sphere and make it “invisible”. We need courage to be Christians today. Thank God, you are not lacking in this courage! It is the courage to be ourselves – Christ’s disciples – and not to be ashamed. We Christians have an immense treasure to share with others. So, it is a question of freeing oneself from the false and totally unjustified inferiority complex that we often feel within us. Of course, it is not easy to resist the pressures of current thought and fashionable cultural trends and to swim against the tide. We can easily be discouraged and lose our way. This is why in universities today the chaplaincies are so important, and the communities, Christian groups, spiritual guidance and company to help give strength and direction. This is why there is need for campus ministry that is dynamic and creative, and in which you young students have a major role. This is another loud message that will go forth from this Forum.

“I really feel that we are in need of a kind of revolution in faith in

<sup>8</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *To the Congress of the Ecclesial Movement for Cultural Engagement* (1982).

## 2. Opening address

several ways. We particularly need to find the courage to go against public opinion [...]. For this we should have the courage to set out on the road, even against that which is seen as “normal” for humanity at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and to rediscover faith in its simplicity”.<sup>9</sup> As I borrow these words from Cardinal Ratzinger, I wish for all of you, dear friends, that this eighth International Youth Forum may be the spark that ignites this revolution in your lives and in the lives of so many other young people that you meet on your way.

<sup>9</sup> J. RATZINGER, *Il sale della terra* (Salt of the earth).

### 3. The contemporary university: a time of great change

PROF. RENÉ RÉMOND

*President of the Fondation Nationale  
des Sciences Politiques, France*

Dear friends, if you permit me to call you this in spite of the difference in our ages. I am certainly one of the oldest people here, and perhaps even the oldest (You could be my grandchildren). However, at least two things draw us closer together: we share the same faith, and we have been brought together through our common interest in the University. I am happy to be here. It is always a joy for a teacher to be with students. It is an even greater joy to meet outside the usual relationship between teachers and those being taught, and to be able to share concerns, interests and ideas.

I am honoured to be the first to speak. If I ask myself what qualifies me to address you this morning, I see the answer stems from three experiences. The first dates from a long time ago, and it is probably this one that brings me closer to you in spite of age difference. A very long time ago, I was a leader in a Catholic student movement. In the 1940s and later I was the national leader in France of the university branch of the *Young Catholic Students* before becoming the international head of the movement. In 1947 I was cofounder, together with the Canadian YCS, of the International YCS. It was at that time that I came to some firm convictions, from which I have never wavered, concerning the responsibility of young Christian students towards the university milieu.

Twenty years later I found myself president of a university that was much spoken of at that time, Nanterre University. I was therefore able to contribute to building up higher education in France a little on the principles I believed in and for which I had fought twenty years earlier as a

### 3. *The contemporary university: a time of great change*

student leader. I was particularly interested in the principle of student participation, directly or indirectly through elected delegates, in the running of universities, in decision-making and in exercising responsibility. I had an opportunity that is rare when one is older, of being able to put into practice principles for which I had fought as a young student.

The third experience is still ongoing. For the past few years I have been in charge of a large institution of education and research with the *National Foundation for Political Sciences*. These experiences are probably what qualify me to share my thoughts on the present situation of the University. I have been involved in its evolution over the past half century and am a witness to the transformations that are the subject of our reflection this morning.

I shall not say much about changes in the ethos of the University. I am in total agreement with what Archbishop Rylko said in this regard. You will have the opportunity to come back to these fundamental questions about the meaning of life. I shall confine my talk to the changes affecting the institution.

Can we speak of the University in the singular? They can be private and public, and the State universities include regional and municipal universities that depend on the municipality and town. Their degree of responsibility and autonomy is quite different. Some have almost no autonomy while others are totally independent.

They vary in length of existence. Many have been founded within the past ten or twenty years. Others have been in existence for centuries. Here in Italy the earliest universities were founded in Bologna nine centuries ago.

They vary in their philosophical orientation. Some are identified by their focus on a conviction, ideology, philosophy or faith. There are humanistic, liberal and confessional universities. There are others that have no ideological tendencies at all.

They also differ in their objectives. Some have no other aim than to train people for a profession. These are vocational schools. Others, on

the other hand, can have quite different missions and they consider themselves to have a responsibility with regard to knowledge, thought and intelligence. Nevertheless, they all have two things in common, and perhaps even three.

The first is that their mission is to transmit. They transmit a body of knowledge, learning, ideas, cultural patrimony, techniques, skills. They are all depositories of a body of knowledge and it is their *raison d'être* to transmit this to the following generations.

The second mission is to ensure continuity through time.

Thirdly, they participate in the personal development of individuals. I shall return to this topic. This is a crucial mission that nowadays is sometimes sacrificed to more immediate objectives.

Moreover, they are all familiar with the same problems, and they are faced with the same demands resulting from change. It is a question of describing the situation, of measuring the changes that have taken place, of identifying the problems they pose, of drawing them to your attention. The measure of success in resolving these problems will partly determine the future, not only of the universities, but also that of society. There is a link between society and the University. On the one hand, the University reflects the state of society and its demands; on the other, it can also contribute to its evolution. It is a model.

Let us look at the evolution of the University. We cannot forget that it is a very old institution, the oldest being almost one thousand years old. You young people who are here to reflect on the relationship between faith and the University need to know that the University is an invention of the Church. The Church created the University at the start of the second millennium in order to train clerics. Nowadays the links with the Church have been loosened. The University as an institution was emancipated and became independent, but we cannot forget that it began with pontifical status, and that it was this status that assured its independence from sovereigns, princes, powers and the feudal system. This was the case with the universities of Bologna, Oxford and the Sorbonne. They

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had pontifical status to guarantee their autonomy. I would like to emphasise the importance of this autonomy. You should strive, with others, to be the guardians and defenders against any ambitions for power and money and to suppress them. I think that this is important.

It is true that universities undergo great change over a few decades, just like all of society, because of the interdependence between the two.

The first change is in regard to the quantity. There has been an explosion in the numbers of universities as they have multiplied and proliferated and can be counted in the thousands if not tens of thousands. In the past twenty years there have been as many universities created as there had been in the previous nine centuries. They have arisen in countries that were without universities before, and in countries where it has been an institution for a long time, new universities have sprung up in their hundreds. At the same time, their student numbers have increased. At one time, universities counted their students in the hundreds or a couple of thousand. Now they talk of 10,000, 50,000 or even 100,000 registered students. There has been exponential growth in numbers. I am sure no one could calculate the number of students in the world, but we must at least estimate the number in tens of millions, perhaps hundreds of millions. With such a huge numerical increase, no institution could avoid being radically changed, not only with regard to organisation, but also in the definition of objectives. At one time universities only accepted a small number of elite. Their objective was to train a limited number of officials for society, administration and business. These people generally belonged to the cultivated classes and had little need of qualifications in order to enter into society. Now with the universities of the masses, things are very different. I shall not go into this point in detail, but shall just mention some of the consequences:

Teaching methods have had to change. It is one thing to address a small class of students that have arrived with a certain amount of cultural baggage. It is quite another to teach such huge classes that obviously call for different methods. The consequences for student life and fellowship

can be felt. In the past, students knew each other. They were less numerous, they got to know each other, they made friends and mixed together socially. Nowadays many young students are lost in an anonymous and impersonal world. I have met students who have not even managed to make one friend in the space of a year. They are lost and feel uncomfortable in crowds. This lack of social mixing makes the population more fragile, and I think that movements and particularly Christians have a responsibility here. They should contribute to creating a climate of welcome and to developing fraternal relations. I feel that this is quite urgent. I am just mentioning this to draw it to your attention.

Why has there been this explosion in numbers? There are various factors. One factor is that aspirations and demands rise with the coming of democracy. The right to higher studies today is claimed as a right that stems from the principal of equality. Everyone has a right, and even more so when it is a condition for social promotion. Therefore it is an insistent demand to which society must respond and which presents a challenge to the political powers. Another factor is the increasing need for qualifications due to advances in knowledge. This occurs in public administration and business, and those who do not have higher studies are confined to junior ranks at work or may have difficulty finding a post. Unemployment is a threat. So we have a demand, an aspiration and a need.

This presents us with at least three problems. The first is how to manage such great numbers. Many aspirants to higher studies are not well prepared and not all are equally gifted. It is not certain that they will all be successful in acquiring a qualification, nor that the qualification will ensure employment. Career opportunities do not necessarily correspond with the number of those who have completed their studies. This problem has never been on such a large scale before, and university authorities and political authorities have to find the solution to the question of supply and demand. How can they manage that? The problem is in the selection process. Should they accept everybody? Is there a risk that it



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might lead to failure? What criteria for admission should there be? We have to take into account that it is impossible to foresee the needs of the economy in thirty or forty years time, and its capacity to absorb and adapt. We must also admit that we lack firm criteria in order to discern the aptitudes of young students. This is a sad problem that we have to face. The answer to our first problem is neither to admit everyone who applies nor to impose drastic selection. We must reflect on this, and you too have something to say about how we should respond to this issue.

The second problem concerns the definition of the aims of the university. What is the University for? What is it supposed to do? There was less need to ask this question before because few people questioned it. However, nowadays we cannot avoid the question. The University has several missions. One of these is to ensure the transmission of knowledge. Others are to improve research, the forming of personalities, and preparation in skills.

In times past the University hardly asked the question about professional preparation because people with diplomas always found a place in society. That is no longer true today. Universities would be failing us if they were not concerned with the professional future of the students. They cannot avoid being involved. They have to take professionalisation into account and introduce a certain amount of it into their courses. The responsibility to do this must at the same time be combined with the transmission of a disinterested and freely given body of knowledge. Here we touch on a problem. Society, including employers and politicians, has a tendency to favour professional purposes, and it asks the University to supply executives and manpower to the detriment of other aims. The demands of profitability explain this, because it is getting more and more expensive. Taxpayers are contributing to this and they have the right to ask the University to justify its expenses, to question if it training people for unemployment and if it is using funds to best advantage. To this we add the fact that students today have utilitarian concerns that are legitimate, and they have immediate demands. At one time many came to

improve themselves. It was a way of completing their education, but it was not necessary to go to university in order to have a passport into society. Nowadays most students only aim to get a qualification that will help them find a job. Students themselves exert pressure that could sometimes be to the detriment of the disinterested aim of transmitting a freely given body of knowledge. We see here that this is a problem that no university or society can avoid having to face.

The third problem, as I have just mentioned, is to find the means. It is a double problem that the students themselves have to face: the cost of their studies, and here we come back to the point of the demands of democracy. If access to higher education is really a right, then individuals cannot be denied for reasons other than their inability to benefit from it. Money cannot be the principle of selection. It is necessary then to take in hand the problem of social justice, loans, scholarships and to set up a system of solidarity between students and society.

The other side of this question is that universities must be given the means to develop. They have more and more students and teaching is getting more and more onerous. Mediaeval universities did not have great needs. They say that teaching was done orally and students sat on straw taking notes as they listened. Nowadays they require computers, language laboratories and science laboratories, and these require very substantial investment. Most universities have not been granted enough funds to cover this. In most countries universities are threatened with bankruptcy and this affects the standard of teaching. This in turn reflects on their qualifications and compromises the future of individuals. This is a problem pertaining to society that should be addressed to all of society because it is the result of change, of growth in demands and of new needs.

Another change that also poses many questions is openness to society and to the world. It is one of the aspects of globalisation that universities find was always one of their characteristics, that is, to be places for meeting and exchange. Students went from one country to another and

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universities were happy to welcome students from other nations. In time, universities were nationalised and they played a role in constituting national identities. It is also a problem particularly present in newer countries that have recently achieved independence and are still forging their identity. Universities have a responsibility here. They have to contribute to the building of this identity. Consequently, it is desirable that they keep their best people and do not lose them. They should train them there and keep them there. This does not exclude the possibility of opening up to the rest of the world. In countries with a long history and where identity is not an issue, the problem is not the same. They all have to solve the issue of balance and attachment to the distinctive features of a culture and to an opening up to the world. We have just been listening to what Pope John Paul II said about culture and the links between it and national identity. Universities have a responsibility not to cultivate particularism, chauvinism and turning in on oneself. Balance must be found between attachment to one's own identity and openness to the world. Globalisation affects universities and is functioning there. Now they are all in competition, and that is new. At one time they remained within a fairly closed framework of national unity. Now they compete with each other, and that is a good thing. Once again students move around and teachers too. However, this competition between universities should not be to the exclusive advantage of the best of them to the detriment of the others and bringing about a haemorrhage of the poorest. Neither should it only benefit one culture because it would be impoverishing as the world would become more uniform. The great debate about globalisation today also concerns the universities. Less affluent countries must be able to retain their identity and to keep their own experts and intellectuals, but at the same time they must not close in on themselves. Moreover, competition will inevitably have an effect on the standard of quality and excellence, and that means that we must attach importance to the preservation of excellence or to its development. Students should be as insistent on this point as the teachers are. The only thing universities can give

are qualifications. They have nothing else to give. If they allow the standard of qualifications to drop, they impoverish the students. When they preserve the quality of a diploma in spite of the demagoguery that often tries to lower requirements and diminish criteria, it is acting for the good of the students.

I shall conclude by referring back to my point of departure. My convictions have not varied during this past half century. They have in fact been confirmed by experience when I have gone to other places both as an eyewitness and as an expert. What is the possible role for young Christian students and Christian movements?

First of all, they should be active wholehearted members of the university. Pope John Paul II has just invited us to be precisely that – responsible citizens. It is at the university that we learn general citizenship. If we do not do so there, there is little chance that we can be full adult citizens in the future. This means that one should not just behave as a consumer, a user or as a protestor. I feel that the kind of union that defends categorical interests is not suitable for a university. The relationship between teachers and those being taught is not one of force or class struggle. An approach used in one place should not be simply transposed to another. To behave as an active member means that one is interested in university life and one participates when opportunities are presented. Wherever students have the possibility of electing delegates to participate, this chance should be used. It is sad to see that the level of participation in this is extremely low. Participation shows that people take an interest in problems and join groups, not only to defend immediate interests, but also rights of registration, programmes and statutes. Secondly, students should be aware of standards of excellence and be attentive to the level of qualifications being granted. Thirdly, they should contribute to the preservation of the specific aims of their university, of which there are more than one: there is undoubtedly that of professional preparation and that of preparation for adult life, but there is also the aim of the transmission of knowledge and that of character formation. It is at the uni-

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versity that the building of character is, as far as possible, fulfilled. Finally, you should defend reason. I shall not say more about this because Archbishop Ryłko has just expressed this very well, and it is also repeated in the message you have received from the Holy Father. Today, thank God, there is no incompatibility seen between faith and reason and we are not in a situation where one opposes the other. There is the same striving for faith and as there is for understanding. Christians should be at the forefront of those who defend the use of reason. Reason is the best gift that God has given us. We must exercise our intellect, and also our faith, against ideologies and irrationality. I feel that there is a duty to defend culture and to respect reason.

I have said nothing about the meaning of existence and life, but that will come over the next few days. Finally, I would like to say, as an ex-university student, teacher and spokesperson for teaching associations, that the University needs you and you have duties and responsibilities towards it.

## 4. Young people from around the world contribute to the theme

DAVID MPANGILE, *Tanzania*

African countries are generally facing more or less similar challenges in many aspects including the education sector. The situation I am explaining, therefore, is the reality to many African countries besides my country Tanzania.

### RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

There has been an increase in the number of universities being established which goes together with the expansion and increase of the programmes offered. However this increase has not met the demands and expectations of the people in these countries since those who are privileged to be enrolled are still very few.

There is another problem that has some connection with the mentioned increase. Most of the universities have been under-staffed as the teaching capacity has not been taken into much consideration. Some lecturers are leaving their countries to work in other countries, mainly European and America. Even those who remain in their home countries are dissatisfied with their academic salaries. Kenyan and Zambian lecturers went on strike to demand an increase in the academic salaries. In other countries teaching staffs are either continuously complaining or they decide to engage in a wide range of secondary income earning activities which to some extent affect their teaching efficiency.

There has been also an increase in the number of students involved in exchange programmes. This enables students from one country to

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study in other African countries and in this way helps in one way or another towards African unity.

The involvement of the private sector in the higher learning institutions is another remarkable recent development as far as the African university community is concerned.

#### CHARACTERISTICS

Most African universities have been recently politicized and consequently many ruling governments regard universities as opposition camps. This tendency has led to a culture of dialogue and caused frequent chaos in the universities. The cases of African university students clashing with police forces are not uncommon. It has led to serious injuries to students physically and psychologically.

African universities also still do reflect the community spirit which, for many years, have prevailed in African societies. Students interact easily and help one another in day to day life.

The fear of examination failure is predominant in African universities as students are not certain of completing their programmes, as can be seen by the number of students who either discontinue or are delayed in completing their courses on time. This compels students to concentrate much on passing examinations and deprive themselves of participating in other activities be they social, cultural and worse, religious.

Students' integral formation is, to a great extent, not the priority, but rather the quality of education is measured by the grades students obtain. There is no room for talents to grow as this is not considered as the important part of education. Little wonder that many talents that have been developed in earlier stages of life become stagnant when one enters university. One can correctly compare university with the farm where people hide their talents like that servant who is mentioned in the Holy Bible.

In Africa, service for society was the key motivation for the establishment of the universities. The emphasis was to create elites who would be helpful to their sisters and brothers in the community. This focus has been somehow distorted along the way and it is a challenge for us to see how we can renew this noble objective and reach the destination we all desire, for the betterment of our societies and for the Glory and Praise of our Almighty God. Amen

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JOSÉ DE JESÚS GARCÍA VALDIVIESO, *Mexico*

Hello, everyone. I am Pepe from the Autonomous University of San Luis Potosi in Mexico. I shall give a brief panoramic view of the life we students lead in Mexico and Latin America.

To begin with, pre-university students, having left school, are in need of guidance concerning their future course in life. They do not know how to choose nor have they decided what they want to study or do. They go through a stressful time with entrance examinations, because, as we all know, there are limited university places in third world countries. There is a preference for studies in the humanities, but those places are quickly filled. Few people want to study engineering or the more difficult scientific subjects. However, these are what the globalized market is demanding.

During the first two years at university, students are very disoriented with regard to relating to other students. They also find that their dreams have been dashed. They lose values that had been built up over the years. Students are bombarded in a way that causes them to lose values and dreams and become disoriented. What they are acquiring is a desire to be someone, someone important, a leader, a politician, but this is without any guiding ethical sense and without the spirit of wish-



#### *4. Young people from around the world contribute to the theme*

ing to help others. Many only remain at university for two or three years because there are many drop outs. This happens particularly in the engineering and medicine faculties. Few complete their courses of study.

In my own experience, of the 200 who started out with me, only two or three of us completed the course. Some years there are no graduates. Why is this? There are family problems and lack of money, support, interest and many other problems. Then you come to the end of your studies after four years. The main problems are difficulty in finding work and managing to get by as a student. There is too much competition. It is not easy to get the full degree. There are too few opportunities.

These are the ongoing needs of university students. Now I will speak of four dimensions of these needs.

At the personal level, university students are lonely. They find themselves in competition, and they experience sadness and desolation. They find refuge in alcoholism, drugs and unwise relationships. The problem of sexual orientation is often found among university students.

At the family level, students are a source of hope for their families. They are seen as a way to improve the family, but things do not turn out this way.

At the social level, the university continues to be an establishment that produces leaders and people willing to engage in society and to strive to change things in this world. This will always be so.

At the level of relationship with God, in Mexico the universities are secular and that means that any religion is allowed on campus. But this has led to a situation where they speak of prohibiting religion and worship on campus. Our relationship with God makes us aware of ethics and morals and makes us long to promote good values. This is a challenge for us. These are some of the concrete problems experienced by students in the universities. Thank you.

Distinguished elders, fellow participants, and friends: In my opinion, the most serious problem concerning the universities in Taiwan now is the higher number and the lower quality of the university students.

The Republic of China, also known as Taiwan, is composed of a main island with a few small islands, no bigger than 40,000 square kilometers as a whole. Within the tiny territory, the universities and colleges surged from 4 in 1946 to 151 today, while the percentage of citizens with a bachelor's degree now is 49.4%.

The popularization of education is good, but the excessive popularization of higher education might force the students who are not really interested in university education or not suitable for it to still enter the university under the pressure of traditional oriental society. That is because most of us regard higher education as the most efficient way to obtain good jobs, get higher social status, and to live a better life. In fact, it is not easy now to find a job even with a bachelor's degree. The great quantities may lower the quality of the university students, and make them equivalent to the senior high school students in the past, not only because of the increasing number of university students, but also their immature minds sometimes.

The main problem for the catholic university students is that they often have to make choices between their faith life and their interests. For example, they may like taking part in sports, games, joining clubs, or getting a part time job, more than participating in the church activities and praying. Besides, most of them cannot find their Christian vocation during their busy university life.

In order to respond to this theme to tell about the problems the university students encounter in Taiwan, I just bring you the bad parts. I hope it won't give you a bad impression. Thank you.

4. *Young people from around the world contribute to the theme*

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SAM FLORES, *New Zealand*

Tēnā koutou katoa – Greetings to you all!

I'd like to begin by stating that despite talking today about the issues and struggles that students face at university in Australia and New Zealand, university life in general tends to be a very fun and positive time in a person's life.

One of the main problems of students in Australia/New Zealand is money. University fees are not cheap ... in New Zealand, most degrees are at least \$4000 per year, often more, and not including books and other stationery. A lot of people also move away from home at this time. Most students are not supported financially by their parents which means they need to work part-time, as well as study. This results in students having less time and energy to devote to their studies.

Another issue that students face is the uncertainty of getting a job at the end of their degree. There is no guarantee that the money we spent or borrowed is going to provide us with a job or career. For those of us who get loans to pay for fees, books and living costs, we have a lot of money to pay back. This may take years before we are debt free. This is not right – we should not have to be dealing with such big loans at our age.

Certain degrees are also very easy to pass. This is a struggle for those of us who work hard at getting good marks for our degrees, because we end up on the same level as others who may not have worked as hard. This can be frustrating when applying for jobs.

Emotionally, university life can be very stressful, especially in your first year. It is a big change from High School – we have to do a lot more for ourselves and good help is not always easy to find. We need to advertise that there are people such as chaplains and mentors who can help, even if just to talk to someone, or help them through the enrolment process, which can be tricky at times.

I believe that one of the hardest things that people have to deal with is loneliness and isolation. In lectures of several hundred people, it is hard to meet people ... and when you do, it's hard to find them again the next day! We need to have communities ready to welcome students and help them to find a group they feel comfortable in.

As a Catholic, the hardest thing is not saying that I am Catholic, but the fact is that people's response tends to be very relativistic and indifferent. It is hard to help people understand how important my faith is, as they generally just say something like "Well that's what you believe." Everyone has their own point of view, and you can have your own point of view, as long as you don't impose it on other people. But it is a contradictory message because people are crying out for the truth ... especially young people.

It is also hard to keep focused on God when our society keeps telling us that the most important things are the grades we get and the amount of alcohol we drink. It is also hard discerning what God may want us to do in the future when the messages we get are all about making sure we get a good job that brings us lots of money. What about God's will in and for our lives? Sometimes, it is hard to find the time and place to sit and listen to God ... and when we do, these messages are still loud in our heads.

I hope that in presenting these issues that we do not get bogged down with the problems. I share these in order that we can know of these issues, and hopefully find solutions in order to help the students of the future.

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TANIOS CHAHWAN, *Lebanon*

### 1. *The Arabs and their world*

Following the events of eleventh September, and in attempting to find mutual understanding between Arabs and Americans, Dr James

#### *4. Young people from around the world contribute to the theme*

Zoghbi, an American of Lebanese origin, said in the introduction to his book, “What do Arabs think about? Who are they?”: “The results of a survey conducted in eight Arab countries undoubtedly demonstrate that Arabs are human and that they have almost the same interests as Americans at all levels”. This caricatural statement summarises the anthropological drama being experienced by Arabs in their own countries and abroad.

The Arab world comprises the regions of the Near East, the Arabian Peninsula and north Africa. Its 21 countries are all members of the Arab League. These countries share a common language, and, to a great extent, a common religion which is Islam (the religion of ninety per cent of the Arab population), and a common cultural heritage, but they differ very much geographically, demographically and in prosperity, resources, forms of government and systems of education.

#### *2. Political conflict and the social and economical situation*

Since 1948 the Arab world has been suffering from the Arab-Israeli conflict and its consequences, and it now faces a serious economic crisis. According to the UN development report 2002, the total population of the Arab world was 280 million, and this figure is expected to reach 450 million in twenty years’ time. The sum of the gross national products (GNP) of these countries is 531 billion dollars, while that of Spain is 595 billion dollars for a population that was under 39 million in 1998. The number of illiterate people is around 65 million adults of whom two thirds are women. Moreover, ten million children do not attend school, and the number of unemployed in these countries is 40 million.

#### *3. Higher education in the Arab world*

This is both a complex and dramatic situation in which institutions of higher education are one of the new forms of authentic development in the region. In 1950 there were no more than 10 universities scattered

around the region. Today over 200 higher education bodies have established themselves in this area. In spite of this fact and in spite of the notable progress made at this level, demands for the reform of the higher education system in the Arab world are commonplace around the region. They point out the failure of the universities to respond to the needs of the countries and the people: human and social development as well as the integration of Arab countries in the rapid process of transformation in the world today, both at the level of labour market needs and those of the societies in which these universities serve.

#### 4. *Quality crisis*

According to Muhammad Jawad Rida, "Education in general in the Arab countries is not often credible. It is incapable of modernising the region because of its dependence on its historical conditions and the complexity of interaction between the sacred and profane imposed by Islam". Besides, the disciplines offered by the universities in the region are mostly considered as traditional in nature and limited in domain. The human sciences occupy a higher position at the expense of the natural sciences and technology.

#### 5. *The challenges of reform*

##### a) *Problems and successes:*

The main deficiency in education at a regional level is seen in the absence of systems and structures of trust that a solid and highly esteemed organisation gives to education in general, and to higher education in particular. Moreover, institutions of higher education do not always guarantee quality; they do not give assurance of educational responsibility, and they do not establish criteria for standardised measurement of programme performance or student aptitude. The declaration of Beirut of 2001 states that higher education in the Arab world is undergoing considerable ten-

#### *4. Young people from around the world contribute to the theme*

sion and that impedes it from achieving its objectives. The main problems identified are the following:

- high population growth
- inadequate financial resources
- rigid and centralised organisation
- lack of diversification of institutions and programmes
- inability to respond to the needs of students
- weak communication between institutions of higher education and those of general and secondary education, and also with local communities and the needs of social and human development.

The Beirut Declaration also identified the need for:

- new skills, methods and procedures in teaching and training
- inclusion of new technologies
- promotion of skills in scientific and analytical thought.

To these needs we add the need to expand access to higher education, to demonstrate its relevance and diversity, to intensify regional and international cooperation, and to ensure the quality and standards of accreditation as well as the disseminated documentation and information. The introduction of legislation is urgently required with policies and measures of responsibility for institutions of higher education, public and private, and mechanisms of effective government need to be established. This is all to guarantee the university academic freedom and independence at the level of research and development, and to advocate its significance within the public and private sectors.

As for successes, the secretary general of the federation of Arab universities considers that, “in spite of the general deficiencies in different regions, there are also examples of distinction, some successes, and progress in some countries where, although there have been problems and difficulties, they have been characterised by vast differences within each country itself”.

b) *Trends towards reform*

Demands for the reform of higher education in Arab countries are multi-dimensional and they vary from one region to another. It is also important to remember that the countries of the region do not have the same problems at the level of education and that institutions of university education do not have the same difficulties.

According to the UNESCO regional education office in the Arab countries, three trends towards reform have been noted:

– The first sees the needs of Arab societies at the level of human and social development as being the point of departure for reform.

– The second demands the adoption of new teaching methods as well as programmes based on new information and the technology of communication as a “sine qua non” condition for the transformation of the Arab mentality, and from there to adopt methods to approach social problems and find ways to solve them.

– The third sees that reform depends on freedom of higher education and its institutions from bureaucracy, and from political constraints and those imposed by centralised and authoritarian control.

6. *Towards the transformation of higher education*

In accordance with the Beirut Declaration, higher education in the Arab world should target the formation of independent thought that is confident, qualified and specialised. It must guarantee the advancement of professional and capable citizens who can address social needs in all sectors and levels and can offer expertise and ethical guidelines in social development, science and technology. There is high expectation that there will be universities that can anticipate social problems and contribute to their solution.



## 5. University Students Today: Portrait of a New Generation

Prof. MARY ANN GLENDON  
*Professor of Law, Harvard Law School, USA*

Since most of you are students, I'm sure you know what it is like to be assigned to write a paper in a field where you are not an expert. So I think you can imagine my reaction when the Council for the Laity asked me to give a talk titled "University Students Today: Portrait of a New Generation". I was honored, but a bit daunted. I was even more daunted when I was told that the portrait should encompass developed and developing countries. Then, when I learned that I was expected to cover this vast subject in thirty minutes, I felt like Charlie Brown in the "Peanuts" cartoon where Charlie's teacher gave the class a sheet of paper and told them to write an essay on the causes of World War II. When Charlie looked a little puzzled, the teacher said, "You may use both sides of the paper".

### I. WHAT THE SOCIAL SCIENTISTS SAY

I began my assignment the way you probably would. I went to the library to find out what the social scientists tell us. There I found that there is an enormous literature about the young men and women who were born after 1979, who came of age with the new century, and who for that reason are sometimes called the Millennials. In fact, no generation has been more studied than the cohort sometimes also known as Generation Y.

The social science data tells us that you are blessed in many ways. We are told that you are the best-educated generation in history. More young people from more diverse backgrounds are attending universities than ever before (although large gaps still exist between affluent and develop-

ing countries, and between rich and poor within the more affluent countries). Girls in particular have never had more opportunities to develop their full human potential.

A circumstance that has given a decisive stamp to your age group is that you and the personal computer grew up together. The first computers for homes, offices, and schools were introduced by IBM in 1981, and you are skilled with them in a way that few of your elders will ever be. Another blessing many of you enjoy is that – thanks to improved longevity – no generation has ever had the opportunity to know their grand-parents for so long a time.

In certain other respects, however, Generation Y bears unusual burdens. Probably nothing has had more profound influence on the hopes and fears of your generation than the social revolution that took place between the mid-1960s (when most of your parents were the age you are now) and the 1980s when most of you were born. Beginning in the 1960s, birth rates and marriage rates plummeted in the affluent nations of North America, Europe, Japan, and Australia. At the same time, divorce rates rose steeply, as did the rates of births outside marriage, and the incidence of non-marital cohabitation. The scale and speed of these phenomena were unprecedented – with increases or decreases of more than fifty percent in less than twenty years. When these rates finally stabilized at their new, high levels towards the end of the 1980s, we found ourselves on a social landscape that was utterly and completely transformed. Customary understandings that had governed human sexual behavior for millennia were not only widely disregarded, but openly rejected.

With hindsight, we can see that the changes in behavior and ideas that took place in those years amounted to nothing less than a massive social experiment. Though few realized it at the time, it was an experiment that was conducted largely at the expense of children. We now understand what should have been obvious all along—that when the behavior of adults changes, the environments in which children grow up are changed as well.

By giving priority to adults' quest for personal fulfillment, society changed the whole experience of childhood: More children than ever before grew up in households without fathers. More were left in non-parental care at younger ages. Little thought was given to what these changes might mean for children, or for the future of the societies most affected.

Some of you may have heard reflections on that subject by Father Tony Anatrella, the psychoanalyst who addressed this gathering last year.<sup>1</sup> According to him, the changing experience of childhood has had an adverse effect on the ability of many young people to have trust in others, and even on their ability to have hope for the future. He was rather harsh in his criticism of the generation that came of age in the 1960s. He claimed that while they, like all parents, wanted their children to be happy, many failed to teach their children "the basic rules of social life, the customs that are the treasures of a people, and the Christian life that has been the matrix of diverse civilizations".

The story in the developing world is different, but changes in family life there have been equally rapid and profound. Industrialization, urbanization, and globalization have accelerated the disruption of age-old customs and patterns of family organization. In many countries, the process of industrialization that had been spread out over a century in the West, was accomplished in little more than a decade. In some parts of the world, children have been robbed both of their childhood and their parents by the ravages of AIDS – or by violent ethnic and political strife.

That is the sort of information I found when I looked to see what social scientists tell us about Generation Y. But as a university teacher, a mother, and a grandmother, I felt that something was missing. I wanted to know more about what young people themselves make of their situa-

<sup>1</sup> International convention "From Toronto to Cologne" organised by the Pontifical Council for the Laity, 10-13 April 2003.

tions as they prepare to assume responsible positions in an era of turbulent changes wrought by globalization, conflict, and widespread disruption of family life. And I wanted to know more about how Catholic university students, in particular, see themselves.

## II. SOME VOICES OF YOUNG CATHOLICS

So, to try to get a sense of your own hopes and fears for the future, I asked some colleagues and friends who deal with young Catholics in universities and youth organizations to circulate a little questionnaire for me. Here are two of the questions I asked: What social developments do you most hope for in your lifetime, and what do you fear the most? What developments do you most hope for in your personal life, and what do you fear the most?

What was most striking about the replies I received from Catholic students all over the world was the similarity in the way these young men and women expressed their personal hopes and fears. From the Philippines to Kenya, from Europe to North and South America, the students mainly spoke of hopes for three things: hope to find the right person to marry and found a family with; hope for work that is satisfying as well as rewarding; and the hope to be able to help to bring about positive changes in society, which many express as building the civilization of love. Their chief anxieties concerned their ability to realize these hopes. Thus, one young Spaniard wrote, "I look forward to marriage and the birth of each one of my sons and daughters, and I hope to find the kind of job that will enable me to better society. What I fear are the same things, because these are the most important decisions in my life and I fear choosing in the wrong way". Along the same lines, a German student wrote, "I hope for a great family life and for the kind of work that will enable me to return some of what God has given me, but I fear not finding the right person to spend the rest of my life with".

Anna Halpine, a remarkable Catholic activist who founded the World Youth Alliance five years ago when she was still in her 20s, summed up the reaction of her co-workers to my questions this way: “Our experience is that all young people are searching for meaning and purpose to their lives. Once this has been established, once they recognize the profound dignity that they possess, they are in a position to extend this to others. Before this cornerstone has been laid, they are unable to give any proposal to the world and any rationale to their own existence”.

Last year, the Director of the European branch of the World Youth Alliance, Gudrun Lang, gave a speech to the European Parliament where she described her contemporaries this way: “It is my generation that is the first to experience what it means to live in a more or less ‘value-free’ continent. It is we who witness a society of broken families – you are aware of what that entails for the individual, the spouses, the children, and all the people around them. It is we who witness a society of convenience at all costs: killing our own children when they are still unborn; killing our older relatives because we don’t want to give them the care, the time and the friendship that they need”. She went on to say, “Many young people I work with have experienced this loss of respect for the inviolable dignity of every member of the human family. Our own families are broken, our own relatives are lonely, and many do not see a meaning in life”. But at the same time, she noted the emergence of a determination to change things for the better. Her generation, she said, has “experienced the ideologies of the second half of the past century put into legislation – and we are not happy with them”.

### III. THE QUEST FOR MEANING IN THE POSTMODERN UNIVERSITY

What emerges from these data and impressions, it seems to me, is a portrait of a generation that is searching – a generation of young men and women who want something better for themselves and their future chil-

dren than what has been handed on to them; a generation that is exploring uncharted territory and finding little guidance from its elders. It is only to be expected that, for many members of Generation Y, the search for meaning takes on special urgency when they enter the university, a place traditionally dedicated to the unrestricted quest for knowledge and truth.

What better place than a university, one might think, to pursue one's quest for meaning. What better place to learn how to make balanced and reliable judgments. What better place to acquire skill in distinguishing between what is important and what is trivial. What better place to learn to discern what is harmful even if it seems attractive, and what is true even if defending it makes you unpopular or leads you to martyrdom.

But if those are your hopes, you are apt to be disappointed in many of today's universities. For universities themselves seem to be losing their sense of purpose and meaning. As a young woman from the United States put it in her answer to my questionnaire: "If I could sum up what has been drilled into my generation's minds in one word, that word would be 'tolerance'. While this has resulted in us being pretty nice people, it has also produced in my opinion a generation that has little concept of objective morality or truth. We are equipped with few guidelines for judging right and wrong". A young woman who teaches in Kenya wrote that university students there "need role models and something to believe in and they search for these desperately. There is a constant clash between how their parents brought them up and what society is offering them". Sad to say, the post-modern university seems even to be losing its vaunted regard for tolerance of diverse opinions – at least where religiously grounded moral viewpoints are concerned, and especially if those viewpoints are Christian.

Thus we find ourselves in a curious situation where all too many of the most highly educated men and women in history have a religious formation that remains at a rather primitive level. Have you noticed how many well-educated Catholics seem to be going through life with a

kindergarten level apprehension of their own faith? How many of us, for example, have spent as much time deepening our knowledge of the faith as we have on learning to use computers! I must admit that when I read in the Holy Father's letters to the laity that we are supposed to fearlessly "put out into the deep", I can't help thinking there should be a footnote to the effect that: "Be not afraid" doesn't mean "Be not prepared". When Our Lord told the apostles to put out into the deep, He surely didn't expect them to set out in leaky boats. When he told them to put down their nets, he didn't expect those nets to be full of holes!

This brings me to the most important point I wish to make today: I want to suggest to you that *poor formation represents a special danger in a society like ours where education in other areas is so advanced*. In contemporary society, if religious formation does not come up to the general level of secular education, we are going to run into trouble defending our beliefs – even to ourselves. We are going to feel helpless when we come up against the secularism and relativism that are so pervasive in our culture and in the university. We are going to be tongue-tied when our faith comes under unjust attack.

When that happens, many young Catholics drift away from the faith.

Countless young men and women today have had an experience in the university comparable to that which caused the great social theorist Alexis de Tocqueville to lose his faith two hundred years ago at the height of the Enlightenment. All through his childhood, Tocqueville had been tutored by a pious old priest who had been trained in a simpler era. Then, at the age of sixteen, he came upon the works of Descartes, Rousseau and Voltaire. Here is how he described that encounter in a letter to a friend many years later:

I don't know if I've ever told you about an incident in my youth that marked me deeply for the rest of my life; how I was prey to an insatiable curiosity whose only available satisfaction was a large library of books... Until that time my life had passed

enveloped in a faith that hadn't even allowed doubt to enter... Then doubt... hurtled in with an incredible violence... All of a sudden I experienced the sensation people talk about who have been through an earthquake when the ground shakes under their feet, as do the walls around them, the ceilings over their heads, the furniture beneath their hand, all of nature before their eyes. I was seized by the blackest melancholy and then by an extreme disgust with life, though I knew nothing of life. And I was almost prostrated by agitation and terror at the sight of the road that remained for me to travel in this world.

What drew him out of that state, he told his friend, were worldly pleasures to which he abandoned himself for a time. But his letters testify to a lifelong sadness at his incapacity for belief. How many young Catholics have fallen into those same pitfalls when they had to make the difficult transition from their childhood faith to a mature Christianity. Tocqueville at least was confounded by some of the greatest minds in the Western tradition. But many of our contemporaries are not even equipped to deal with simplistic versions of relativism and skepticism!

Some young men and women, like Tocqueville, may spend their whole lives in a kind of melancholy yearning. Others may start to keep their spiritual lives completely private, in a separate compartment sealed off from the rest of their lives. Still others imitate the chameleon, that little lizard who changes his color to blend in with his surroundings. When parts of their Christian heritage don't fit with the spirit of the age, the chameleon just blocks them out.

How many of these lost searchers, I wonder, might have held their heads high as unapologetic Catholics if somewhere along the way they had become acquainted with our Church's great intellectual tradition and her rich treasure house of social teachings? Today, in the age of John Paul II, there are really no good excuses for ignoring the intellectual heritage that provides us with resources to meet the challenges of modernity.



No Catholic who takes the trouble to tap into that heritage has to stand tongue-tied in the face of alleged conflicts between faith and reason or religion and science.

In *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, the Holy Father has a message that is highly relevant to the topic of this conference on “Witnessing to Christ in the University”. “For Christian witness to be effective”, he writes, “it is important that special efforts be made to explain properly *the reasons* for the Church’s position, stressing that it is not a case of imposing on non-believers a vision based on faith, but of interpreting and defending the values rooted in the very nature of the human person” (51).

Three implications of those wise words need to be spelled out:

First, those of us who live in pluralistic societies have to be able to give our reasons in terms that are intelligible to all men and women of good will, just as St. Paul had to be “a Jew to the Jews, and a Greek to the [pagan] Greeks”. Fortunately, we have great models of how to do that in Catholic social teaching, and in the writings of John Paul II.

Second, we who labor in the intellectual apostolate need to keep our intellectual tradition abreast of the best human and natural science of our times, just as St. Thomas Aquinas did in his day.

And third, because we live in a time when our Church is under relentless attack, we need to be equipped to defend her. That does not mean we have to react to every insult no matter how slight. But we do need to learn to have and to show a decent amount of pride in who we are.

There is nothing wrong with taking pride in our Church’s intellectual tradition – a tradition that pre-dates and outshines the impoverished secularism that is stifling thought in many leading universities. There is nothing wrong with taking pride in our Church’s record as the world’s foremost institutional voice opposing aggressive population control, abortion, euthanasia, and draconian measures against migrants and the poor. *At a time, and in a culture, where Christianity is under assault from many directions, Catholics do a great disservice when they do not contest*

the *myth* that the history of Christianity in general and Catholicism in particular is a history of patriarchy, worldliness, persecution, or exclusion of people or ideas.

As a university teacher and a parent myself, I am acutely aware of how difficult it is to “witness to Christ in the university”. Thus, I was delighted to read last month of the Holy Father’s proposal to the bishops of Paris for the creation of “schools of faith” at the university level. After all, why should religious education cease just at the point when faith is apt to be faced with its most serious challenges – and just when many young men and women are for the first time away from home? It seems to me that the Church needs to follow her sons and daughters to the university. She needs to find ways to accompany them on that dangerous journey toward a mature Christianity. There are many ways this could be accomplished. In many places, the great lay organizations are already present to university students – they have done wonderful work, showing that formation and fellowship go hand in hand. But much more can and must be done along these lines.

#### IV. CONCLUSION: THE ANSWER TO THE QUESTION THAT IS EVERY HUMAN LIFE

To sum up, then: I would suggest that the “Y” in Generation Y might stand for yearning – yearning, questioning, searching, and refusing to be satisfied with easy answers. No one has understood this better than Pope John Paul II – and that, I suspect is one of the reasons why young people love him so much and why the World Youth Days have been such a transformative experience for so many. As he wrote in *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, “Christ expects great things from young people... Young people, in every situation, in every region of the world do not cease to put questions to Christ: they meet him and they keep searching for him in order to question him further. If they succeed in following the road which he points out to them, they will have the joy of making their own

contribution to his presence in the next century and in the centuries to come, until the end of time: ‘Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and for ever’” (58). Jesus Christ is the answer to the question that is every human life.

It only remains for me to thank you for the opportunity to be with you today. What a difference you Catholic university students are going to make in the world! We don’t yet know how each one of you will respond to your baptismal callings to holiness and evangelization. But we do know that there is no shortage of work to be done in the vineyard. There are families to be nurtured; intellectual frontiers to be explored; young minds to be taught; the sick to be cared for; the poor to be lifted up; and the faith to be handed on to future generations. My wish for you is that the Lord will multiply you, and that each one of you will touch thousands of lives.

## 6. Panel discussion: *The university for our times*

### The method of study: from knowledge to wisdom<sup>1</sup>

Prof. NIKOLAUS LOBKOWICZ  
*Director of the Eichstätt Institute of Central  
and East European Studies, Germany*

If you would make an inquiry among university presidents and ask them whether their institutions stimulate their students to grow in human and cultural maturity, you probably would receive one of four answers. One would be a flat “No”; “We train for professions and do not educate; we neither want to nor are able to replace parents”. Another answer would be: “Yes, of course. The *studium generale* has been an integral part of our programme for decades”. Yet another would be: “We have been discussing this problem for many years but still have not found a satisfactory solution”. Finally, the fourth would run thus: “I have just spoken about it at the *dies academicus* and of course I have mentioned John Henry Newman’s *Idea of a university*”.

Each of these four answers is in its own way dishonest or, to put it more mildly, misses the point if one thinks of the words “from knowledge to wisdom”. Let me begin with the fourth answer. Of course at celebrations the President or another speaker often invokes an idea of the university that includes education and implicitly also an education to wisdom. I have done it many times. However, to put it ironically, the more impressive this festival lecture will be the farther away it will be from the

<sup>1</sup> After Prof. LOBKOWICZ spoke on this topic, a student from Bolivia, Sonia Callisaya, gave her personal views and experience. Her contribution follows.

realities. It is easy to remind an audience of an ideal; but festival lectures are not expected to be realistic. Moreover, as beautiful as the famous text by Cardinal Newman may be, the times when a university could define as its aim the education of Catholic gentlemen is long past.

The first answer, on the contrary, indicates an almost ideological blindness. It suggests that the transmission of value neutral knowledge and professional skills does not educate. It presupposes that language can be value neutral; this may be possible in the case of mathematical formulae but does not work in ordinary language that no teacher can avoid using. And this first answer overlooks the fact that students usually are young people who are still looking for what is true or false, right and wrong. A teacher, especially a good one, educates whether he wants it or not. By excluding everything that is existentially relevant he implicitly suggests to his students that science and/or learning, of course connected with the professional skills, is the only thing that really counts. He conveys the point of view defended by Max Weber. There is on the one hand the realm of facts and laws; this is the only thing about which we can have reliable objective knowledge. And there is the realm of religions, world views, values that may be important for an individual but about which a rational discussion is not possible.

The second answer, the one referring to a special kind of course open to, and at some universities imposed upon, all students is of course more honest. But one has to make a distinction. At most universities the *studium generale* is nothing but an attempt to look beyond the specialization a student has chosen. In this sense, it contributes to cultural maturity. But rarely if ever it stimulates a growth in *human* maturity. Moreover, the overwhelming majority of students is not very interested in this kind of general lectures since each of the teachers will speak only about his own subject. A synthesis never emerges.

Thus there remains the third answer, the one of a president who says that he together with his professors are trying to find a way but found none that seems satisfactory. It is by far the most honest of the three

answers but it holds back a crucial point. Since the end of World War II the universities have become distribution systems for the many professions that a knowledge or science based society needs. Of course they do not transmit only knowledge but also teach skills and thereby train in what one might call “ professional virtues ”: the willingness to work hard, the awareness of the danger of acting without thinking, tolerance for ideas one disagrees with, thoroughness, scrupulousness and the like. Quite often the teachers also will emphasize the importance of finding out the truth and warn of ideologies. But as I said, even this third answer usually overlooks a crucial point. Universities almost inevitably reflect their social milieu and this milieu has in modern societies become extremely pluralist. Some of the students may be devout Christians, or for that matter Jews or Muslims, but the majority of them, in any case in our highly developed countries, either are not interested in religion at all or have cooked up for themselves one of the many intellectual cocktails contemporary society produces. This creates for the teacher a situation that makes it very difficult to communicate or even only to mention his personal convictions, not to speak of the possibility to make of it a part of his teaching. Moreover, the contemporary understanding of tolerance has in many quarters resulted in the awkward misconception that it is better to have no firm convictions at all. The result is that at most universities the overall atmosphere is one of agnosticism, of a vague scepticism, indifference, in any case as far as issues of existential relevance are concerned.

It used to be different at Catholic universities. But the invitation of the Second Vatican Council to engage in a dialogue with the contemporary secular world has in many if not most Catholic universities resulted in an adjustment to the spirit of secular universities. When in the sixties of the last century I was teaching at the University of Notre Dame in the United States we were reminded each year (and had to sign a text indicating that we had read it) that if we would teach something that contradicts the doctrine of the Church or publicly behave in ways that the

Church disapproves of we would risk being fired without notice. Hardly any Catholic university dares to continue this practice, in part because it might lose the ensuing lawsuit. In fact, at many Catholic universities the problem is even deeper. One of the unexpected consequences of the Council's open-mindedness was and is that the mentality of the secular world slipped over into the Church; today, you find little that is common to secular universities that a president of a Catholic university would not have to complain about. This certainly has helped Catholic universities to be less isolated but from the point of view of the Church the costs are so high that one sometimes wonders whether it might not be better if faithful Catholics would look for employment, or stay, at secular universities. It does not seem to me to be an exaggeration to say that the great majority of the faithful, in particular the intellectuals, were not well enough prepared for what the Council invited them to do. They had not realized what Hans Urs von Balthasar, before the Council one of the great fighters for what he himself called *Die Schleifung der Bastionen*, "The pulling down of the bulwarks", wrote a few months before the Council ended: "The opening towards the world, *aggiornamento*, a widening of the horizon, the translation of what is Christian into a thought-language that today's world understands, is only one side of the task. The other side is at least as important. Only a reflection upon the Christian spirit, the purification, deepening, centring of its idea will enable us to represent it in a trustworthy way, to radiate it, to translate it ... Whoever desires more action, needs deeper contemplation; whoever wants to form more, has to listen and to pray in a more intensive way; whoever wants to succeed better, must have grasped the basic unprofitableness of the Eternal Love in Christ and therefore also of all Christian love".<sup>2</sup>

Let me then now try to say what at a university it might mean to lead from knowledge to wisdom. It is obvious that intellectual wisdom does not exclude knowledge and professional competence. It entails it. I

<sup>2</sup> H.U. v. BALTHASAR, *Zu seinem Werk*, Einsiedeln 2000, 44 f.

emphasize this because pious maxims connected with incompetence only bring us into discredit. In this sense Max Weber certainly was right: except in the office of the university chaplain a university is not a place for sermons. In fact, one of the motives for Weber's relativism was his observation that too many professors misused their teaching for broadcasting their private value judgements. But knowledge, even if it is highly cultured, is as such still not wisdom. One can be culturally mature and at the same time be an absolute twit as far as human maturity goes.

Now it is of course not easy to say what exactly we mean by "wisdom". The word has a long tradition and therefore, as it often happens with such words, is used in a variety of meanings that reach from cleverness through an enlightened mellowness rooted in a peaceful scepticism to the awareness of the deepest issues man is confronted with. Perhaps the simplest and most honest way to say what universities would have to do in order to lead their students beyond knowledge and skills to wisdom is that they should confront them with the truly important, deeply existential issues. You probably remember the four famous questions by which Immanuel Kant used to introduce his lectures on metaphysics: "What can I know? What should I do? What may I hope for? What is man?"<sup>3</sup> To lead to wisdom basically means to encourage those who listen to you to ask themselves what is man's destination, for which way of life they should opt, and which consequences the answer has for their life here and now.

You will perhaps object that, on the one hand, these are questions that only theologians and philosophers ask, and to which, on the other hand, there are many wrong and only very few correct answers. Now it certainly is true that the questions I mentioned are, or at least should be, professionally discussed by theologians and philosophers. But as already Aristotle wrote in one of his early dialogues, you cannot avoid philosophising. Either you do it or you have to explain why you are not

<sup>3</sup> I. KANT, *Vorlesungen über die Metaphysik*, Erfurt 1821, reprint Darmstadt 1964, 5 f.



willing to do it; in both cases you discuss philosophical issues.<sup>4</sup> They are questions that puzzle us simply because we are what we are, human beings. And they puzzle, indeed torture us because of the consequences of the answers for our daily life. Of course we can evade them – by making fun of them, by shrugging our shoulders, by returning to our daily “busyness”. The main problem of our time consists in our unwillingness to face ourselves and the issues that really count.

This is why I do not believe that there are many different answers to the really important existential questions. If you would make a public inquiry about how a wise woman or man should act in this or that situation you would of course receive a number of different answers. Such inquiries are nothing but a looking for opinions. If, however, somebody induces you to put this question to yourself and to ask it as radically as you can, the number of honest answers is very small: either nothing makes sense and you could as well commit suicide or else we have a destination that transcends us, transcends the whole of humanity and its history, invites us to what Luigi Giussani has called “the religious sense”.<sup>5</sup>

And a university, even if it may be problematic to teach at it a definite variety of wisdom, certainly is a place where such questions emerge. Each good poem, each great book, each work of art, each important film is an invitation to raise them. And it can be incorporated into each subject of studies. I study e.g. chemistry. Why? Because as a chemist one finds well paid jobs. But why is it important to have a lot of money? Aren't there other values that are more important? O.K., so I want to become a chemist to help mankind. But why should I help mankind and what is the best way to help? What is important in life and what does in the end not count? And what is the sense of all of this?

<sup>4</sup> Cfr. the Berlin edition of Aristotle's works, Berlin 1831, reprint Darmstadt 1960, II, 1484 a 4 ff.

<sup>5</sup> L. GIUSSANI, *Il senso religioso*, German translation: *Der religiöse Sinn*, Paderborn 2003. The book has been translated into many languages.

These are questions. One can answer them in different ways. But the more radically one asks them the deeper they lead us. If he has an interest in wisdom, a university teacher should be willing to urge his students to ask them. There are hundreds of occasions for this at a university: a public discussion, a moral question raised by research and its progress, a personal tragedy, a beautiful day, a quotation of a silly headline in a newspaper, an intelligent joke.

In other words, the way from knowledge to wisdom is at first not more or deeper knowledge, not doctrines but questions that we have to ask ourselves, existential inquiries about myself. In *Gaudium et spes* you find an interesting passage indirectly alluding to it. The traditional way to define man consisted in saying that he is the *zoon logon echon*, the *animal rationale*, the living being that has reason. The pastoral constitution does not deny this. But it somehow pushes it in the background by saying that the deepest hidden centre and indeed holy shrine of man is his conscience.<sup>6</sup> The way from knowledge to wisdom is an invitation to face and to follow conscience – not the kind of conscience we so easily refer to when we try to justify and to gloss over something wrong that we have done, but the real conscience, the one that makes us shiver when we face it.

Let me conclude with the following remark. If Christian faith were not the answer to our deepest yearnings, if it were something coming to us from the outside as an alien message, it would not be worth much, and would be nothing but one of the many ideologies. St. Paul knew this and therefore his apostolate was so successful. But our situation today is in a way more difficult. We have behind us a long history of Christianity and the Church. We should be grateful for and interested in it, and indeed we should love it. But we should not overlook that it is also a terrible burden. Everybody knows what the Christians believe, what they consider true wisdom. And it bores them, and also bores many believers. It seems

<sup>6</sup> VATICAN COUNCIL II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 16.

to contain no challenge, to be immune to fresh winds, constantly repeating the same. In this situation it has become quite difficult to teach Christian wisdom. But to induce people to address to themselves the questions that might lead to this wisdom has remained easy. They are an invitation to let oneself in for, to get involved in, a spiritual experiment that cannot remain hypothetical because it concerns ourselves in a radical way. Knowledge turns into wisdom when it becomes personally, existentially relevant. And there is no knowledge and no skill connected with it, there is no scientific or scholarly subject, in which this cannot happen.

Probably it will be the task of your generation to introduce this perspective into our universities. Your parents and grandparents and many of your older teachers were so busy in adjusting to a changing world and indeed a changing Church that they did not find the peace of heart to achieve the synthesis, both theoretical and practical, that wisdom consists in. Some of you will become university teachers. But as you know quite well yourself, you can start this course already as students. Challenge politely the teachers and sooner or later many of them will be on your side, trying to help you.

\* \* \*

SONIA CALLISAYA, *Bolivia*

Good afternoon, brothers and sisters in Christ.

I am a student at the Major University of San Andres de la Carrera de Victoria. Like all of you, I have set out on my university course or “race”. I call it a “race” because nowadays this is what we do most in our five years of study at university. This is the place where those with most possibilities win out.

In my university the level of studies has not varied over the past few years. The lecturers continue to proclaim their magisterial orations. A

more personal relationship between teachers and students does not exist because there are many of us. Between five and six thousand new students arrive each year in each faculty. There is no way to have closer contact. Neither is there research and development. When students complete their studies they are more concerned about work prospects. They need to find a path to follow and to be consistent with their ideas. The principle of imparting values has been deformed by the fact that people follow negative values and by the selfishness of individuals. We students regard study as useful because it helps to put us into the “marketplace” logic, that is, it makes us more competitive, but nothing else. It concentrates our minds on the “profit” we must attach to ourselves in order to have a future. In general, I perceive great apathy and indifference among students in my university. Sometimes there are certain social situations that are caused by an increase in a general critical outlook and criticism regarding the future. Work prospects are uncertain, and there is a loss of credibility in the institutions that are supposedly going to hire us on completion of our studies.

Regarding our topic on knowledge and wisdom, I think that this has taken a different direction nowadays, both spiritually and professionally. There is no particular interest in my university, a state institution, for the Catholic Church. The Church does all it can, but a person has to make a decision to opt for this religion. The government does not provide this possibility. Of course, at the university we are free to choose a religion. However, we do not give time to making this option.

We were saying this afternoon that many students have jobs. This is not simply a personal decision. It is a necessity. If we want to continue with our studies, we have to work to support ourselves and to pay for our courses. Perhaps this is not an ideal situation, but it is the only choice open to us in my university today. Thank you.

## The contemporary master and disciple: educational dialogue<sup>1</sup>

Prof. LORETO BALLESTER REVENTÓS

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First of all I would like to thank the Pontifical Council for the Laity and the Youth Section for the excellent choice of theme for this Forum.

The ideas I wish to put forward in this panel discussion are to show how, in university life, we can communicate ways of understanding people and our world in the light of God's plan. We must also be able to give the reason for our hope and to make known the **Master** of whom we know we are disciples.

For students and teachers who regard themselves as disciples of Jesus, the University is the place to which we have been sent to "*affect and [...] challenge, through the power of the Gospel, mankind's criteria of judgment, determining values, points of interest, lines of thought, sources of inspiration and models of life, which are in contrast with the Word of God and the plan of salvation*".<sup>2</sup> The Church today sends all of us, you and me, to the *Lord's vineyard*.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> After Prof. BALLESTER spoke on this topic, a student from Bangladesh, Bipul Gonsalves, gave his personal views and experience. His contribution follows.

<sup>2</sup> PAUL VI, Apostolic letter *Evangelii Nuntiandi* n.18, cit. in JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic exhortation *Christifideles laici* n.44. The concern on the part of the Church that evangelisation should impregnate life and culture with the force of the Gospel is constantly present. Examples are JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Letter, *Novo millennio ineunte*, n. 51; Pontifical Council for Culture, "*Towards a pastoral approach to culture*", 1999

<sup>3</sup> 'You go into the vineyard too' (*Mt* 20:6-7). cited in JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic exhortation *Christifideles laici* n. 3

For students, the years spent at university are decisive for what Pope John Paul II called “their desire to be their own person” and “communion”,<sup>4</sup> to be-with-others and to develop awareness of responsibility.

For teachers, all of whom have the dual tasks of teaching and researching, the university is the place where they live their faith, allowing it to grow and communicate in contact with the subject matter of their specialty, in interaction with students, with members of the research teams they conduct, and with the society the university must serve. This work is not merely a job. It is a vocation.

For students and teachers aware of being disciples of Jesus, the university is “*the place in which they receive their call from God: There they are called by God*”.<sup>5</sup>

This is the place for our lay vocation, for “*to be present and active in the world is not only an anthropological and sociological reality, but in a specific way, a theological and ecclesiological reality as well*” where “*the Church entrusts the task of allowing all to better understand the intimate bond that exists between faith and science, between the gospel and human culture*”.<sup>6</sup>

For young people who have not yet discovered Christ, the university is a place of encounter, of human growth, that can facilitate openness to a new dimension of life and encounter with God.

When the Church speaks of the university it uses the words: experience, growth, commitment, link between the Gospel and human culture. During my years of engagement with the university, I have felt strengthened by my awareness of being a presence of the Church in university education and research in various parts of the world. I have also been strengthened by my lay vocation and preparation in the Teresian

<sup>4</sup> Cfr. JOHN PAUL II, *Crossing the threshold of hope*.

<sup>5</sup> *Christifideles laici* n. 15 op. cit.

<sup>6</sup> *Christifideles laici* n. 62 op. cit.

Association<sup>7</sup> which lives according to the inspiration of the Spirit given to Saint Pedro Poveda.

I shall give some points of reflection, useful for discussion, that deal with learning relationships and the conditions that foster this kind of relationship.

Thinking back on my own experience, I asked myself what I understand by “master”. It is someone who teaches us how to live; someone who communicates his/her own self; someone with whom you have had an encounter from which you feel you have acquired something of that person. It remains with you and shapes you.

A *master* communicates a sense of life. We all have special memories of people who have been involved in our education at some stage in our childhood or university days. They are people who did more than simply teach. They helped us to become persons.<sup>8</sup>

## 1. LEARNING EXPERIENCES IN ENCOUNTERS AND INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS

There can be an experience of *encounter* between teacher and pupil in which the student can develop as a moral being. This is where an awareness of autonomy and responsibility emerges and where one acquires a

<sup>7</sup> It began in Spain in 1911. The spirituality is that of the early Christians. The crest says “God, Lord of the sciences”, and there is a representation of a book and a cross symbolising the union between faith and learning, between prayer and study. These are keys to the transformation of the world through the mediation of education.

<sup>8</sup> “Father Poveda made me a person”. These are the words of a cave-dweller in Guadix in Spain where Saint Pedro Poveda as a young priest began to evangelise through education and his efforts to provide conditions that would make it possible for these marginalised people to live as dignified children of God. At a recent meeting with university students at the Foyer du Dôme in Paris where there are young people of ten different nationalities, I told them I was preparing for this Forum. The way these students, from an array of disciplines, recognised authentic *masters* in their teachers was through their passion for their task, their ability to transmit their experience, their respect and responsibility. They give freely, are self-assured, professional, have moral criteria, etc.

sense of the dignity of self and of others. It is where value systems are recognised and personalised.

This relationship takes place within an institution, in this case the university with its physical structures, norms, customs, etc. The master-disciple relationship takes place in any of the academic activities: classes, practicals, tutorials, research experiments.

There are factors that facilitate and others that hinder this interaction while the teacher is teaching, but generally speaking it is a good opportunity to transmit approaches, values and attitudes.

At the same time, a university teacher has many opportunities to interact with students in projects and cultural activities by supporting student or teacher organisations, and by collaborating with other institutions and with transnational academic networks. In all of these cases the teacher has the opportunity to be a *master*. Teachers can relate with other students, not only their own pupils, and these relationships can help young people to develop their human dimension and thus go beyond simply training for their future careers.

We must also consider the possibilities that lie in the new technologies, although in a different way. For some students this may be their only way of accessing a university education. For others it is an additional source of education. There can be a master-disciple relationship here too.

To return to the customary university, we can ask ourselves to what extent the relationship with the master is a formative relationship. The teacher can take measures to form a relationship that is not simply that of teacher and pupil, but that of master and disciple where the personal dimension of the pupils and their capacity for communion is empowered. The teacher also mediates the relationship among the students themselves and helps develop the enormous potential for interaction among equals both in the classroom and elsewhere.

The teacher can find a way to transform the atmosphere of the class from a study group to an *ecosystem* (a word we are familiar with through



ecology and the atmosphere). This can help to provide an atmosphere in which human abilities are developed.<sup>9</sup> It is worth mentioning here the four pillars of education, with their shades of meaning, mentioned in the Delors Report: *learning to know, learning to be, learning to do and learning to live together*.

Christians in the University are very aware that our “being”, the way we live our profession, can transmit a life filled with the Gospel. Moreover, this is how we want it to be. We want our lives to make people question, and we look for ways to *give the reason for our hope*.

For a university teacher, the first dimension, *learning to know*, is particularly important. We try to create the best possible conditions for our students to learn and become familiar with the current level of knowledge in a particular field. In universities nowadays there is an awareness of the responsibility that goes with being a teacher that reduces the teaching task to the excellence of this first dimension.

## 2. HOW TO ACHIEVE THIS

Let us speak now of the art of educating. It is an art where motivation combines reflection on one’s own experience with the use of techniques that facilitate communication. Motivation, when it is strong, makes a university teacher an educator. We Christians have a head start because we believe in the Mystery of the Incarnation. We have a reference that means we can see in the development of human potential, the active presence of God who entered history.

When reflection on one’s own experience goes towards empowering the educating abilities of the teacher, it must go through a transformation

<sup>9</sup> Several months ago at a meeting with young teachers studying educational psychology in the Liceo Pedro Poveda in Buenos Aires, these young people recognised the importance for their education of a climate that provides instruction through “fortitude and love”. Just as the air we breathe can be polluted or clean, the educational atmosphere can, although almost imperceptibly, transmit a system of values and facilitate its absorption.

of attitudes, behaviour and strategies in relating with the students, both within and outside the lecture halls.

By way of example, I shall point out some requirements that come from reflection on the practice of teaching:

### *Cognitive*

- Impart information with authority, but without arrogance. Communicate competence in the subject matter. Dispose the students to obtain knowledge that will enable them to understand and resolve current problems in that discipline.

- Conceive the construction of knowledge from a complex perspective that poses a substantial intellectual challenge: allow for the necessary connection to be made between knowledge- information and knowledge-erudition, or said in another way, between knowledge and the road to wisdom.

- Give priority to the process of learning: students can learn from their own mistakes and experiments. In practice, this means that errors are corrected while demonstrating the potential they may conceal.

- Be explicit in pointing out epistemological suppositions and, when they arise, ethical suppositions that underlie the theories presented or questioned. The epistemology chosen can communicate rejection of relativism, dogmatism, respect for reality, etc. With the ethical position defined, there is scope to communicate commitment in favour of life, for social transformation in favour of greater justice, etc.

- Communicate convictions concerning: the search for truth as being inherent to scientific research; the axiological non-neutrality of science; its connection with political and social programmes; its potential to serve life or to serve destruction and personal interests. We thus present a science that, in addition to being a search for knowledge, pursues the transformation of nature and culture according to the ends we humans choose.

- Communicate respect for other forms of knowledge that are not scientific, like those of art, religion and literature. Neo-positivistic positions, although they have fallen into disuse today, are still latent in some areas that claim that the language of science is the only one capable of describing things meaningfully.

*Being and being together*

Teachers can communicate values through the way they teach and evaluate.

- Be a person with a fulfilled life for whom the task of teaching and researching is supported by a sense of meaning. Be an amiable person who is not intent on seeking power.

- Present the results of science without being dogmatic, thus indirectly removing any tendency towards fundamentalism.

- Demonstrate the results of science with the corresponding methodological rigour, thus indirectly removing any tendency towards arbitrariness.

- Let the students come face to face with the exercise of responsibility in which they are important as persons and not because of their academic attainment. Help them to assume the consequences of actions and omissions.

- The lecture halls and classrooms are laboratories for the exercise of tolerance and respect. Moreover, the multiple interactions that take place there can be opportunities to experience the path from tolerance to understanding. Methodologies used can contribute to preparing professionals who can come up with ideas that favour a world where people can live together.

- In research programmes and teams develop ethical ways of action that are not based on positions of power but rather on those of service.

## *Doing*

It is increasingly common for students to use their years at university to get some experience that is required by their curriculum or to get paid or voluntary work experience. This not only gives them insight into the daily working life of people, but also introduces them to the ways of a profession that some of them may take up after their academic preparation.

In any case, these experiences prepare students for their professional careers. Experience as volunteers is particularly good, whether abroad or in poor areas close to home. They equip young people to enter the professional world with a vision of the complex human needs that abound, and for that reason it is very desirable.

A teacher should always be able to encourage, suggest, recommend, facilitate connections with NGOs, etc.

## *Beyond the academic environment and the university*

The university prepares people for work, but it should also prepare people for action, according to the understanding of this word by Hanna Arendt in her book *The human condition*. It means that one acts while conscious of the fact that this work has an impact on social development and justice. The teacher who is a “master” is aware that he/she is preparing the students to exercise a profession with social and political repercussions.

Even in large universities with many facilities, the lives of students today are constructed like mosaics with diverse experiences each making a contribution. The identity we are defining for a university teacher is not tied to a place of work. It is part of our being. That is why, in meetings with young students, many of whom are probably not our pupils, in Church circles, and where relationships are not based on professional qualification in a particular subject but on mutual recognition through faith in Jesus, new opportunities are opened for communication and encounter.

TEACHERS AND LEARNERS, DISCIPLES OF THE SAME MASTER

The years spent as a university student are years when young people are building their own identities. It is a dynamic process with many influences coming from all sides.

It is a difficult and yet fascinating time when young people need role models. The teacher who is a *master* is a significant point of reference.

These *masters* stand out because of the way they live, not only for their knowledge. The type of life they lead, their role in public life, their personal integrity, their religious or political affiliations, are all significant for their disciples and make new possibilities for their own lives enter their minds. The contribution of a *master* to the education of individuals is something that is beyond measurement.

Occasions to communicate with students and young researchers are something the *master* seeks constantly, as well as the desire to integrate scientific research and the experience of God. The experience of faith gives meaning and is a source of inner energy for the task. The search for truth leads us nearer to God.

It may sound surprising, but teaching and researching are connected with contemplation. The experience of God is in each student, in each attempt to discover the face of God in the human reality we are studying. It is God's design that all of this be brought to fulfilment for each person and for our world.

Taking an idea from Saint Teresa of Avila, we can say that God is among the electronic microscopes and the test tubes.<sup>10</sup> This personal integration builds meaning and the teacher transmits the fruitful interaction that takes place between faith and science. It is also a responsibility felt by the teacher, the *master*, aware that relating with students is an ongoing learning experience.

<sup>10</sup> SAINT TERESA'S comment is that God is among the pots and pans. It is a very comforting thought for teachers and scientists.

*A word of thanks*

What I am today and what I can give to the world, has been built up over the years through personal relationships with people I regard as *masters* and with others I regard as *disciples*. Those who have regarded me in the same way have taught me to discover the marvels of God in young people. Because of my experience, I would like to encourage those who feel called to be teachers – *masters* – in the university, to take this fascinating road.

\* \* \*

BIPUL GONSALVES, *Bangladesh*

During my admission period one day I went to my University Campus. The first day I had a problem about getting admission, so I looked for a teacher who could help me in the admission process. I stepped toward the teachers' room. I found one teacher and asked about my admission. He was busy and told me to come the next week. The next week I met that teacher to seek his advise about admission. But he was busy again and told me to come the next week. Every time I met that teacher he gave a lame excuse and did not help me. I didn't know when the next week would come.

In my opinion a master is not only the explainer of a little point from a textbook; he is the philosophical decision proposer of the whole answer. He is a philosopher, and his disciple formulates philosophical thought based on his teaching. The relationship between a master and disciple must be learned. One has to be engaged in austere ascetic practice to become a good master. A master teaches his disciple through his life style in every sphere. A master guides his disciples to the way of success and helps him/her to achieve the goal.

On the other hand a disciple is a follower of his master. He follows

every command and instruction of his master. He comes to his master to learn many things and decide on his future. He learns the life style of his master, his attitude and values. A disciple has eagerness to learn and discover new things and ideas. So relationship between a master and disciple is deep; it is a relationship of faith, trust and love. Teaching is a good exercise of love.

But society does not remain the same always; it changes for social, economic, cultural and many other causes. This change is also being observed in the relationship of a master and a disciple. Today a master is not concerned with morals; he is business minded. An educational institution is more like a commercial zone now. There is no relationship between master and disciple but money and desire for good results. A student's success depends on how much money was spent. There is a lot of corruption in our education system.

Most of the masters have no personal relationship with their disciples beyond classroom and study. Society today is losing moral norms because our future citizens do not get any moral education from their educational institution. So disciples do not show respect to their master. This is the situation in Bangladesh. Bangladesh is a poor country and a master in tertiary and university level colleges earns a very poor salary. There are no proper guidelines and no policy in the education sector. So teachers have to think of other ways for their income. As a result classroom teaching is almost absent and teachers recommend their students to go to their coaching centre to obtain a good result. In fact the pleasant relationship between a master and disciple breaks down.

There are some reasons for this situation.

1. Commodification has entered all phases of life. Humanism has been replaced by materialism. Day by day our demands are increasing to meet up to the sensual needs of the present world. To fulfill these excessive demands they need more money and look for ways to increase income.

2. A lack of proper government plans is also responsible for this situation. Our government is busy finding ways of prolonging their power; they have no time to think of the welfare of the country. Our opposition party also does not play a constructive role.

3. Poverty is also a cause of this situation. Bangladesh is a poor country belonging to the third world. Most of the people are poor. There are very few opportunities for jobs, trades and any employment. Life is very hard and competitive, so corruption is everywhere in our country.



# Can we speak of a university “community”?<sup>1</sup>

Prof. Dr WILLY BONGO-PASI MOKE SANGOL  
*Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities,  
University of Kinshasa*

Can we speak of a university “community”? This is our central question, and it refers to the relations that should exist among people who are present each day in the university. These include teachers, students, and administrative, technical, medical and other staff. In the light of our experience in the University of Kinshasa – and this is, *mutatis mutandis*, similar in other universities – I wish to demonstrate that relations among the various members of a university are not simply functional, but are also capable of creating a climate of communion, collaboration and dialogue proper to a real community of people. We might wonder how it is possible that communities arise in universities, places normally known to be resistant to interpersonal relations. These communities are different from crowds that have no identity, ideals or structures.

My talk will centre on three points. The first two will deal with the foundations of a university community and the third will give an example of the university community in Kinshasa, my university.

## 1. IS THE UNIVERSITY A COMMUNITY?

First of all we look at the term *university*. It actually implies community if we look at the meaning of the two words *university* and *community*. In fact, the etymology of the term *university* refers us to *community* and to

<sup>1</sup> After Prof. BONGO-PASI spoke on this topic, a student from Poland, Katarzyna Ryznen, gave her personal views and experience. Her contribution follows.

a *body* of masters entrusted with higher education at various levels. It is almost a tautology to speak of *university community*.

1.1. The noun “community” derives from the adjective “common” and it is also polysemous. It refers to a number of people (or things), where something is done together .

With this explanation as a basis, “community” could also be understood as a social group in which the members live together, possess goods and interests in common, follow the same objectives and share the same tastes, same customs and similar opinions concerning external problems.

1.2. “University” comes from an abbreviation of the Latin expression *universitas magistrorum et scholarium*, that is, “Association” or union of teachers and students. The students belong to colleges where they come together to share university facilities and residences (cfr. *Le Petit Robert*, 2003). Public or private establishments of higher education are composed of one or several faculties and decentralised entities and they are authorised to grant diplomas.

The university has always been organised in a way that will achieve mutual advantages for members and assure them legal protection, even in the case today where we have virtual universities and distance learning. The definition we have retained of ‘university’ since the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century comes from classical Latin. *Universitas* derives from *uni-versus*, that means ‘totality’, and *universus* comes from *unus* which means ‘one’ or ‘unity’. From this etymology, we can conclude that the university is a **community**.

1.3. In all countries, the university is considered to be an **Alma Mater**, a mother, a source of nourishment, a cradle of culture. Our apostolic nuncio in RD Congo, Msgr Giovanni d’Aniello, says that “*the University has an educational function, but the aim is not merely instruction, but also the training of the new generations... Through education, one’s individuality*

is discovered in the various sectors of existence and one consequently becomes a person at the psychological as well as the ontological level”. (cfr. Homily given by Msgr Giovanni d’Aniello, 15 January 2004 on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the University of Kinshasa, ex-Lovanium).

We should see the University as a series of units of instruction and research, institutes, centres and laboratories, that can be public or private, confessional or secular. To quote the Apostolic nuncio, we feel that the University should mobilise its members to *love, research, cultivate, study and teach the truth so that they may achieve inner growth and lead their disciples to grow in culture and truth* (Ibidem).

The University is noted for the excellence (from the Latin *excellere* meaning ‘to excel’) of its members and services as most university mottos imply, for example: *Lumen requirunt, Duc in altum, Sedes Sapientiae, Scientia spendet et conscientia, Lumen in flumen*. The University always aims for the heights and peaks. The Latin term *altus* from the verb *alere*, gives the idea of rising up, and seen together with the corollary of making grow and of nourishing, it is appropriate for people and entities that attain a high degree of perfection. By removing mediocrity, they form a “corps d’élite” which is a group of people who are considered to be the best in a community. These people are first rate in education and culture.

1.4. All the meanings contained in the definition of the word “University” refer us to the community. A university is a **community**, a **corporation**, a **collective** and a **grouping** of individuals. These members form an intellectual elite, that is, a body of people brought together socially and naturally to exercise the same profession as teacher, educator, researcher, instructor, a profession characterised by excellence. It is a social group in which the members are united through a common aim and who have common interests: education, instruction and training. We feel that the university milieu is composed of people who are privileged, in a way like those present at the scene of the Transfiguration. To be pre-

sent at the Transfiguration, you have to be chosen, but an effort is required in order to climb the mountain. However, one does not leave the world. One continues to belong to the world, but one is transformed. It is a human community, but a special one.

As Msgr Giovanni d’Aniello said: “ From the beginning the University was conceived as a universal institution open to all without distinction dedicated to promoting all forms of knowledge and to studying the truth in all its expressions. The University ... has the fundamental task of **studying the truth**. It is only through **knowledge of truth** that correct criteria are derived in order to organise and give meaning to studies in the different fields” (ibidem). The truth is the correspondence of idea and fact. Right opinion is distinct from rumour, error and untruth (cfr. PLATO, *Theaetetus*).

1.5. Following in this tradition, the University plays a prophetic and missionary role. It is also an epistemological function and a catharsis that focuses on excellence both in its courses of study and in active life. A focus on excellence covers three spheres that interconnect: knowledge, *savoir faire* and knowing-how-to-be that impart a style of life that can further development. The University essentially fulfils a fourfold mission:

1. To ensure the formation of conception frameworks in very diverse areas of life. For this reason it administers the courses in its programme in a way that will favour the flowering of new ideas and the development of professional abilities;

2. To organise scientific research, both pure and applied, taking into consideration the evolution of science, techniques and technology around the world. Research is very often directed to solving specific problems in the countries concerned. It is at this level that the University is involved in the development of nations and peoples;

3. To confer legitimate grades that conform to legal stipulations concerning the conferral of academic grades of first degrees, the second cycle or master’s degrees, and the third cycle for doctorate degrees. The University also confers scientific and other diplomas according to its faculties;

4. To be at the service of the local population.

From these two concepts “community” and “university” we come to the notion of “university community”. It comprises all the people who daily frequent the university and who are involved in fulfilling its objectives. It is a concrete group of people composed of particular individuals who assume functions or exercise precise activities within specific structures or organs. They maintain functional relationships among themselves that build up interpersonal relations of ongoing collaboration and dialogue in order to be effective. Dialogue in the Platonic and Hegelian sense is a dialectic, a fruitful exchange and frank discussion. The collaboration that results from this dialogue means working together to gain results (cfr. JOHN RAWLS, *The Law of the Peoples*).

## 2. FROM A FUNCTIONAL COMMUNITY TO A RELATIONAL COMMUNITY

The university community, in addition to being functional, is above all a relational community. The university with its teaching staff, students, administrative, medical, paramedical, para-academic, technical or working staff, is a true community involved in carrying out the threefold mission of teaching, research and service to the nation. To carry out this mission based on education, instruction and training, the university has established an administration, that is, a structured organisation that is more than functional because it is also relational. An atmosphere of collaboration, dialogue and shared ideas characterises a real community of people of this kind. At the university, the other is the person who will help me to succeed. He is not an obstacle for me, nor a damnation. He communicates with me. (Cfr. JEAN PAUL SARTRE, *Being and Nothingness*).

## 2.1. *The university community is a functional community*

To achieve the intended results, the university must be functional and formalised through an organisation chart that flows from top to base showing the organisational structure, administration council, university or academic council, management committee or education officer, faculty council or research centre, department council and various services. There are also formal or informal associative movements that are scientific and cultural, religious or ideological.

All of these official or private organs are created to fulfil the practical function of exercising some responsibility. The members of the university community are joined by several links of dependence, interdependence and reciprocal and communicational forces. These links make the university community a gathering and originator of complex networks of varied relationships. Among these relationships we can identify several functional relationships, vertical or horizontal, internal and external.

Functional relationships are connections between people who exercise complementary functions within a community and who mix and meet together. These relationships can be vertical or horizontal, internal or external.

**Internal vertical relationships** are the links between those higher and lower in the organisational hierarchy. Examples are the relations between the Rector and other members of the university community, between the parish priest and parishioners, heads of departments and students, heads and members of their faculties, head administrator and those working in administration, etc.

The same relationships can also be **external vertical**, that is, between a head and colleagues' subordinates. Examples are relationships between a head of faculty and the members of other faculties that are not heads, between a director and those working under other directors, etc.

The **internal horizontal** relationships are those that link those who work together in the same service. Examples are the Academic Secretary General and the Administrative Secretary General, the Heads of departments in the same faculty, university deans, etc.

There are also **external horizontal** relations between people in similar jobs in different entities. Examples are the heads of department in different faculties, assistants in different faculties, teachers and students in different faculties.

In universities there are **professional relationships** that link people who exercise the same academic or administrative function or scientific activity. These professional relationships are numerous and varied within the university community. They come together through functional relations to the extent that certain services in the university are considered to be professions or jobs. This is the case with all the regular teachers, laboratory assistants, tutors, doctors, information workers, electricians, dentists and all assistants.

## *2.2. The university community is a relational community*

All of these relationships are functional, but they soon become interpersonal. They make the university community a relational and intersubjective community. A relationship is only possible between people who have some point of contact, either of attraction or even of mutual exclusion. The intersubjectivity of “I – You ” according to Martin Buber creates new individuals who confide in each other and esteem each other. Intersubjectivity goes beyond frameworks imposed by functions and professions and goes towards exchange of minds (cfr. G. MADINIER *La conscience morale*). This kind of relationship can exist between two people, between masters and disciples and even between superiors and subordinates outside their professional obligations. These links are durable and permanent and continue to exist even after the end of studies or termination of service.

Such relationships lead to friendship, fraternity and companionship. Relationships among friends are those that grow between two people who esteem each other and can be seen to have warm and cordial relations. This occurs between two people and seldom among more than that. It can exist between brothers and sisters, two colleagues, superior and subordinate, director of thesis and student, etc.

Fraternal relations are mostly felt between members of religious associations who consider themselves to be “brothers and sisters and children of God “ born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God ” (*Jn* 1:13). These relations are based on the love of God, manifested in Jesus Christ, and so they give assurance to Christians that cannot be shaken. Christians are brought together because they are joined to God through Christ (cfr. *Rm* 8:38-39). As long as one keeps faith in Christ and in God, these relations are eternal.

At the university, this kind of relationship is truly a sacred union. Teachers consider themselves to be colleagues, and medical doctors see themselves as honoured confreres. The basis of such a relationship is purely pedagogical and anthropological, as Marcel Jousse says in *La manducation de la parole*. While teaching is taking place, the master and the lesson are being literally “eaten ” by the disciple. This “manducation ” of the lesson and master by the learner makes the presence of the teacher indispensable to the university. It is a real communion, for in a Eucharistic celebration the word and body of Christ are “eaten ” with a view to abundant life.

Relations between companions are those forged through the familiarity that grows between people who have certain activities in common. Students build this kind of fellowship among themselves. This also occurs with members of a management delegation or university professional associations.

Another kind of interpersonal relationship is that of solidarity, built on the mutual responsibility and collaboration of members towards the



local or national community or towards their group and their future. These relationships require a certain awareness of a danger that hovers over the group. Students, for example, build relationships of solidarity during examinations, public demonstrations or uprisings. Teaching staff build relationships of solidarity to protect their common interests and to insure the future of their professional body. All of this can be illustrated by taking as an example the community of the University of Kinshasa.

### 3. THE UNIVERSITY OF KINSHASA, EXAMPLE OF A UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY?

Not all of these characteristics are always visible in our universities. Sometimes they do not exist at all. The various people involved in the University are often selfish and each one wants to defend his or her rank, so there are no longer true interpersonal relationships. These relationships are not impossible, but they can exist if we want them to. In some cases, this is something we have seen in the university parish in Kinshasa.

The University of Kinshasa is the largest teaching and research institution in RD Congo and in all of central Africa, under the authority of the Ministry for Higher and University Education. The University of Kinshasa was founded in 1954. It was formerly known as the “Lovanium” University. Today there are over 25,000 students of whom one third are women and one tenth are foreigners of 12 different nationalities. There are almost two thousand on the academic staff: 10 doctors honoris causa, 17 emeritus professors, 217 professors, 175 lecturers, 273 associate lecturers, 457 tutors, 588 tutorial assistants on first and second terms, 22 practical instructors. Kinshasa University also employs over 2,000 administrative, technical, medical, paramedical, workers and para-academic staff.

The history of this university covers three main periods:

1. The period as the Lovanium University of Leopoldville (Kinshasa), a Catholic university with the motto “Lumen requirunt”, 1954-1971;

2. The period as the National University of Zaire (UNAZA) Kinshasa Campus, a state university with the motto “*Scientia splendet et Conscientia*, 1971-1982;

3. The period as the University of Kinshasa (UNIKIN), a state university with the motto, “*Scientia splendet et Conscientia*, from 1982 to the present.

The University of Kinshasa is situated on the Hill of Mont-Amba, known as “the inspired hill”. It overlooks the western part of Kinshasa City. It covers an area of almost 5 hectares, and over 40,000 people frequent it daily: Academic authorities, teaching staff, administrative staff, workers and technicians, medical and paramedical staff, students, the sick, and over 600 families of personnel that live in the “Plateau des Résidents”.

A high percentage of the students, girls and boys, stay in the purpose-built students’ residences. Married students also stay there. During the academic year, the university organises cultural and sporting activities. There are conferences, theatre, cinema, music, athletics, gymnastics, swimming (there is an olympic-sized pool), tennis, volley-ball, football, handball, boxing, judo, wrestling, karate, etc.

The university has fifty-eight departments and research centres within the ten faculties which are: Law, Arts and Humanities, Medicine, Pharmacy, Engineering, Psychology and Educational Science, Agronomy, Economics, Social Science, Administration and Politics, Exact and Natural Sciences. There are sixty-four auditoriums in seven faculty buildings, a large hall with a capacity of 800, and an outdoor amphitheatre with over 6,000 seats, and an academic senate house.

The University of Kinshasa also has two regional third-level colleges, two Unesco seats, fifty-seven laboratories, university clinics (tertiary level hospital), a neuro-psycho-pathological centre (tertiary level hospital), a hospital centre (secondary level hospital), a health centre (primary level), university museums, a construction company, school (kindergarten, pri-

mary and secondary levels with the following sections: literature, commerce, science/maths-physics and biochemistry, education science), medical technology institute (level A2), a central library and ten faculty libraries, a bookshop and publishers, and a research centre connected to the internet. These structures could not function if the people working them did not know how to work together and collaborate.

Outside the official structures established by law, there are many other para-academic structures in university life. Social-professional associations and unions (APUKIN, ACS, APAT), religious groups and chaplaincies (Catholic, Protestant, Kimbanguist, Moslem, Salvationist, etc); student movements; NGOs of every kind and other non-profit associations with the aim of awakening people’s awareness to the need for self-sufficiency and so to the ongoing development of the community.

Such an intermingling of people forms a very nice human community on the “inspired hill”. External members of the university community also participate actively in all that goes on in the university, and thus transform purely functional relations into true relationships.

Note that the University of Kinshasa started out as a Catholic institution called the Lovanium University. An imposing church was built in the centre of campus and there were Eucharistic celebrations and other religious gatherings. Since it was nationalised in 1971, the university became secularised, and it opened its doors to all religious confessions. The most dynamic of these then built churches on site, the most notable being the Protestant, Kimbanguist, Salvationist and Muslim chaplaincies.

The university parish, “Our Lady of Wisdom”, NODASA, has been there since January 1954, the foundation of the Lovanium University, and it was canonically erected in 1957. It is within the jurisdiction of the Archdiocese of Kinshasa and the National Bishops’ Conference of RD Congo. Its ministry extends beyond the campus to include members outside the university community and totals over 40,000 people.

Apostolate in the university is organised according to Canon Law and the pastoral governance of the Church in Kinshasa through various

commissions and groups: IMCS (International Movement of Catholic Students), MPC (Catholic Professors Movement), BYM (Bilenge ya Mwinda – Youth of the Light), Charismatic Renewal, KA (Kizito – Anuarite), Legion of Mary; Catholic Church commissions including the Commission for student ministry, catechesis, family ministry, justice and peace, liturgy and its sub-commissions for altar servers, sacred music (choirs), base Church communities (CEVB), etc.

It is usual to see a professor, a student, a mother, a wife of a professor, forming part of the same commission. Teachers and students are active and dynamic in the various activities of the parish and they assume a variety of functions. I personally found it difficult at first to except that a young student had to be my assistant in a project financed by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) on reproductive health in the university milieu. This was a condition for the financing of the project, the reason being that the young people should be involved and learn how to manage it. It is a community composed of people of diverse backgrounds: men and women, teachers, clerks, students, young and old, Congolese and foreigners (Marriages are frequently inter-ethnic and inter-racial), lay, religious and clerics, all coming from different places, regions and tribes of RD Congo and elsewhere.

The parish of Our Lady of Wisdom is a striking example of a human community, a living Church and a family of God according to the will of Our Lord Jesus Christ. It stands out among other groupings that are ethnic, religious, political or cultural. The reasons are:

1. It is the family of God. God does not belong to any one people. He makes of us a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation. One is not physically born into this family but rather through a birth from on high, through baptism of water and the Spirit and through faith in Jesus Christ.

2. It is a messianic people, the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Jesus Christ, God's Anointed, the Messiah, the Head of this

family, anoints us with the same oil making us free and obedient to the new commandment of love and charity (cfr. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*).

## CONCLUSION

I shall conclude by stating a conviction. All university communities worthy of the name are, or should be, basically relational and human. They are founded upon a Christian metaphysics that affirms that God is One and Triune. God is relational and communal when He says: "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness" (*Gn 1:26*). God is the Truth that the University is seeking. There is one truth, but it is perceived in a multiple fashion, according to Husserl.

We can conclude by saying that the university community is a communion characterised by relationships of all kinds that exist between different people present daily on campus. Relationships are formed through the various official structures of the university, formal or informal. This produces a truly human community founded on relationships that, although functional, are also interpersonal. Through various opportunities for collaboration and dialogue, these relationships can be professional or social.

It is possible to create a real community according to this definition. It is possible that all of these relationships make it a living community, a community of spiritual, pastoral, student, ecclesial, national and international, and finally, universal and human life. The Magnificat Community, to which I belong, is composed of teachers, students and administrative staff who live their Christian faith together and try to make the university milieu more Christian. The Catholic Professors' Movement (MPC) have an important part to play in building a living community that includes all the people on campus.

In an era of globalisation when all are searching for a new kind of

humanity that has more fellowship and solidarity, it is important to emphasis the role played by the universities.

As we can see from the experience of Kinshasa University, the university is one of the best places nowadays to mould mentalities with human values so that people will be open and sensitive to the sufferings and aspirations of others. It is a place where new world citizens are shaped: people who can say with the Latin poet, "*Homo sum, et nihil hominem alienum est*".

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KATARZYNA RYZNEN, *Poland*

My name is Katarzyna Ryznar. I'm from Poland and I'm a student of the third year of English Philology at the University of Warsaw.

When it comes to my experience of present day university life, it seems that one of the major problems that students face is the lack of mutual understanding between the academic staff and students. In fact the relationship among various individuals on campus is limited to merely functional contacts. I can say that nothing like a "university community" exists. Instead of help and support, the atmosphere of understanding, collaboration and a dialogue between the professors and students, there is a feeling of alienation, loneliness and impersonality. There is no solidarity.

Students are not treated personally. They are seen rather as objects, as consumers of information who came to the university only to gain knowledge, read books and participate in lectures. They are not treated as individuals who have a strong desire to search, who want to find answers to so many questions that youth ask, who want to find themselves, find their vocation and learn responsibility in order to be prepared for adult life.

Even worse is the fact that sometimes it is difficult to speak of a "uni-

iversity community” among students themselves. They see each other during classes and lectures and in fact that is all. They do make friends and spend time together but only with a very small group of people, while others are treated as if they did not exist.

In my opinion, great responsibility to change this situation lies on us – students. We cannot be indifferent toward this problem and stay passive. I do not claim that it is an easy task to do, but we have to try. If we are deeply rooted in Church, if we play an active role in our ministries and Christian movements and then share our experience and work together with people at the university, we can achieve success. As John Paul II said, we must be builders of the Church inside the university. I strongly believe that if we show our faith in everyday life and we testify about Christ among our peers, then communion will be established.





## II – STUDIES AND LIFE

Thursday 1 April



## 1. The university years as a time of integral human growth

Prof. GIORGIO VITTADINI

*Dept. Statistics, Milan University*

When I started at the university I was already a Christian, but it was at the university that I had an encounter that made me discover humanity. In the same way that a person 2000 years ago saw the small group of apostles, I observed a group of friends. Although I was in a Catholic university, it was not easy to make friends because people at university tend to be alone. However, I saw students who were friends, people who got on well together during our course, happy people as friends often are. Professor Lobkowitz several years ago said that friendship is a virtue, that is, it is not instinctive. It is genuine friendship when someone is fond of you and is interested in how you are getting on. That group of people approached me, showed an interest in me and in what I was, and so we became friends. I wondered why they would take such interest in a stranger. Actually, it can easily happen that people take an interest in you, but it is almost always for a motive. I could not say that about those people, so I continued to wonder why they wanted to be my friends, why they wanted to know where I had been or what I was doing, why they invited me to lunch with them, why they shared their time with me. That was the beginning, and in that friendship there was a strange and mysterious human fascination, a secret to be discovered. It was not a sentimental friendship, but it was deep and serious. Struck by their friendship, I began to go around with them and I discovered the first secret: the most important class for them was a class that students do not usually follow very closely, and that was ethics, and the teacher was Monseigneur Luigi Giussani. I joined them at those classes and I discovered that they spoke of unusual things during those lessons, unusual even for a Catholic

university. They spoke of the desire for happiness, the fact that each one can know the truth, the fact that the human person has an instinctive need to follow the meaning of life, the fact that the human person cannot always manage to follow the positiveness for which he was created. In a word, that course spoke about what I was. As I followed those classes, I felt that I was being read, because I too, in my first year at the university, had a great desire for something I did not yet know about life and fulfilment. I had asked many about this desire of mine, but they more or less told me: “you have this desire, but it means nothing. It is because you are young that it seems important to you. When you are older you will see which things count, life, the law of economics, difficulties in relationships. Don’t waste your time!” Whereas there, in that class, my desires for goodness, beauty, friendship and love were taken seriously, and it was explained why it was so difficult to live according to these things. My humanity was at the centre of those lessons. This really struck me and fascinated me. Those young people did not just leave it there. Once a week, in the middle of the courtyard of the Catholic University, they met to discuss all that interested them. They were young people like the others, full of life, and they spoke about life, comparing everything to the demands of their hearts. When I joined them I was interested in something new I had heard in Church during Mass. I had often heard it said that Jesus spoke about things like happiness, truth and charity, but it seemed to me that to live by these things would be impossible. The words of Jesus were relegated to Mass.

So, my first query was about this friendship full of questions and truth that immediately became life.

Many of the students I met were poor. They came from the south and found it hard to study because they had to work. Assistance was now being given to those who needed it. To help those in search of low-cost accommodation, we went around Milan looking for apartments to rent. To help those who had to work in order to study, we took notes for them, typed them out and distributed them. We also got together to buy books

### *1. The university years as a time of integral human growth*

at lower cost. This later became the University Cooperative for Study and Work: the CUSL. Today there are one hundred thousand of these in Italy. They began as a way to help a group of friends in need. In this way we discovered that charity means that when you are happy, you cannot stop there, but that you have to give others a hand. This cooperative gradually assumed an important role in the life of the university. Those in need went there, not only to find material help, but also to be helped with their studies. We began to organise study groups to help them all to keep up with their university courses. A strange thing happened. Even those with difficulties with studies or who had little interest, soon learned to keep up and achieve good results. Even now that I am a teacher, I believe that the best thing is not to be alone in your studies. When you study and revise topics, it is important to have someone to listen to you who will help you understand and correct you. In that way we invented a way to study together, to help each other, to follow courses, especially with those who are most disadvantaged.

Those were difficult years. At the end of '68 terrorism was making an appearance. Professors were being threatened in the universities and journalists in the streets. In a dramatic situation like this, a question arose naturally: what is the origin of this friendship? With the help of Monseignor Giussani we began to understand that the friendship we shared was not just natural friendship, but that it was a Christian community, that is, a friendship that existed because Christ was in its midst. We began to speak about Jesus, not as a distant concept, but as the God who became flesh and who lived in a mysterious way among us. Jesus thus became the centre of our friendship and we became passionate followers of his. Through him we practised charity and through him we helped each other with our studies.

Our friendship became more secure for each one of us, and it made us ask the following question: how can we live as a Christian community and not see things in a different light?

On the one hand the terrorists said that society is evil, violence and

power. On the other hand there were those who wanted the repression of these things. The violence of ideology, of an evil thought to be good (something we see now all over the world), existed at that time. Speaking with Don Giussani and discussing things among ourselves, we asked ourselves: what opinion do we express on what is happening in the world? We realised then, especially after reading the letters of Saint Paul, that we ought to examine each thing and check its worth. We should not judge according to the mentality of the world, but that we should look to our experience for the criteria in force with which to confront reality. From this we got the idea of writing leaflets and posters in which the opinions that came from the life of the Christian community would be expressed on all issues. I remember a very significant one entitled “terrorism is not born; it becomes”. A man shoots when he has been previously told that it is right to shoot, when human life no longer counts, either because charity is lacking or because he thinks that he is responding to that need by bringing about a change in power.

We began to distribute leaflets born of our experience and to hang them at the entrance to the university. Something began then that never ended during my lifetime: the attempt to see things from the standpoint of Christ. Even still I try to write in newspapers, to give opinions on life, reality, the world, from my Christian experience in which human beings are made for life but they look for death. Human beings long for what is good, but they do not do it. The question about goodness is put aside and they discard any encounter with God who became man, and so they embrace violence. That which the student movement was unknowingly searching for, to the extent that fanaticism became terrorism, is a response that we put into practice: “come and see”, we said to whoever we met in the university, “you will immediately find new life”. Freedom was in Christian life and we were offering it to everyone. We began to speak in universities even though that was difficult. Public assemblies were forbidden in state-owned institutions and they sent out anyone who was not ideologically a leftist extra-parliamentarian. We began to sell

newspapers to diffuse our opinions in all ways possible. We broadcast the position of the Holy Father on issues. It fascinated us to see that one could speak about injustice in the South in different ways without having to have recourse to interpretative criteria of capitalism or Marxism, but by stressing the fact that we must begin with love and that the decisive factor is the transformation of the human person. We founded a newspaper, and then we opened a radio station, and little by little this presence could be found in the courses in the universities. There were many small groups in the classes who spoke about everything, even about studies, because they slowly discovered that the most interesting thing was to look closely at what we were told and to ask the teachers what they meant. In this way we were doing what they themselves asked for: active presence in class.

I was studying economics, and because of this experience of reasoning things out, I began to ask myself if economics was simply a question of laws, numbers and curves, or if it entered into the state of humankind. Of course there are laws to be studied, but what are the people behind those laws saying? In this way, I began to realise that even in Italy there was a tradition of idealistic positions within the economy. From the Catholic world and the workers' movement there arose – and continue to this day – popular banks, agricultural banks and savings banks, and that there were people who started businesses to make a living, but also in order to do good. Within the economy there have been and still are people who as entrepreneurs had ideals, like Michelin, one of the largest worldwide entrepreneurs in tyres, and this is seen in his story as an entrepreneur with faith.

Even in the Catholic University it was not easy to discuss these things and find the ideal way to view economics. I was dealing in particular with a topic concerning the financing of the university and I did a thesis with Professor Mazzocchi from the political economy department on how to finance the university in a way that would allow for the participation of the students. This idea arose after noticing that many students had to

work and so found it impossible to be present in the university. I took this problem seriously and I asked if the resources could be distributed in a different way in order to help out students in need. In this way the passion for study and its critical confrontation arose in our friendship.

As I went along confronting each aspect of reality, the company of people I had met were constructing my identity, a “me” of questions for truth, the discovery of faith, friendship, love, concern for others and for the poor.

Another thing I began to do on Saturday afternoons was something we called “*caritativa*” or “*charitable*”. Each of us went to a parish in the province of Milan where there were poor people. I used to go to Borgo Lombardo, a village in South Milan where there were mostly immigrants. There were broken families and fifteen-year-old delinquents. As a university student, I went to Borgo Lombardo each Saturday afternoon to help the priest and to be with the youngsters. In this way I learned that life is given freely and that as we have received life, intelligence, health and friendship from God, I wanted to give all of this to others.

Not only charity, but culture too was part of our experience. At that time we read in the newspaper “*Corriere della Sera*” about a very famous man in Italian theatre, Giovanni Testori, who had been fanatically anti-clerical but who spoke in a very human way. We phoned him and got to know him. He was converting to Christianity at that time. He met Giussani and decided to write a new play as a result of that meeting. In this way we became friends with a great man of the theatre who was one of the greatest in the history of Italian theatre, and we were very enthusiastic about his new play. Some of us became actors. Once in the central railway station in Milan, Testori put on a play about the death of a drug addict. It was a real life play in the place where it had actually happened.

With these examples I am describing an “explosive” life that is about a Christian encounter that gradually made me a person by making me take a passionate interest in everything around me. When we read in



the Acts of the Apostles the part about the Gate of Solomon to show the visible unity of Christians – so visible that everyone pointed it out – we realised that we were experiencing the same thing in the university.

Although people pointed to us, they liked us because we were like a burst of joy and positive outlook that did not stem from ourselves. As we experienced this friendship and accepted the challenges of reality, we began to understand what it meant to encounter Jesus and that it changes us. We were growing up, and meanwhile we came to the end of our university studies. We started to work, and some got engaged and married. Our adult years were beginning. I personally, on finishing at the university, went through a period of difficulties including the illness of someone close to me, and I was forcefully made aware of the question of the meaning of life. Faced with illness and my feeling of helplessness, I realised that either everything is absurd or else there must be someone who can explain all of this, and that someone could only be God. From that dramatic experience was born my vocation to virginity in the world, and the desire to live the meaning of life with the One who could explain joy and sorrow. At the same time, I decided to try for a career in the university. Older friends advised me to go for statistics. I did so because there was a teacher there that I knew and who would give me the opportunity to make a start. I had studied statistics, but it was not my major, so I had to start from the beginning. Among other things, I went through an uncertain three years at university before I could begin my doctorate. During those years I made another decisive step. I often asked myself what I was doing in that dark institute with a book of statistics in English and with formulae, when I could be outside in the sun. I liked the humanities, and I found the materials I was dealing with very dry. I remember going to lunch one day saying to myself: “I don’t want to be here. This is it! I must do something else. I need open air and not confined spaces”. One day, Msgr Giussani said to me: What does a useful life mean to you? Do you think it was any different for Jesus? Is it different for millions of other Christians? Does obedience to reality mean choosing what you want?

Do you think it was different for Our Lady? You have not yet given your “yes”. At that moment I understood that the starting point has to be like this, because undertaking a course of studies is to say “yes”, “yes” to diversity and to formulae, and because Jesus had to go through a similar period before his activity in the community. Many years later I realised it was like that for everyone. Each person has to accept that reality is different from the way they imagined it to be. Life means saying “yes” with faith or else it means escaping, always searching for a different life partner or for something better, but in fact it is not better.

It was thanks to this challenge that I realised that it was only by offering those seemingly arid hours that I would become useful for the world. It was this that characterised the personality of Saint Therese of the Child Jesus who is the Patron Saint of Missions without ever having left her convent. She offered to Christ her daily life, and in that way she became useful for the world. My university career was born that way, by saying “yes” to the formula of Bayes’ theorem or by seeing abnormal distribution as an object of piety. I gradually became very enthusiastic about these things according to the three characteristics now contained in my university work:

- The first is the idea that formulae, of which my work consists, are a way in which I enter the mystery of reality. I think that the great scientists did not find it any different from what I am experiencing. They perceived that their great discovery is a way to enter the secret of reality. I feel elated each morning when I have to get down to making an infinitesimally small step towards understanding how certain formulae can be resolved. This is the first characteristic of my work: the certainty that a desire for truth can exist when faced with a mathematical formula. Mine is faith because I know that there in that formula lies the Mystery. I shall never know the way, but I know that it is there and so my work is to discover the Mystery in that formula.

- The second characteristic can be compared to what a mother does each day. As she takes care of her child or washes the dishes, she has to

humble herself to do tasks she may not have chosen. Even scientists have to deign to do things not specifically theirs to discover something great and wonderful. I am one of the most disorderly people in the world, but each day I must humble myself to take care to write a letter in a particular way, because if the accent is facing the other way, it is a mistake. I have to revise my work 150 times to see the mistakes I have made, and so stoop to do things I do not like. This is obedience to the reality of my work, and creativity results from this obedience, like a mother caring for her child, like a person in the mines, like someone doing a job that can become difficult. The second characteristic of my work is therefore obedience to reality. Through this I understood what it meant when Jesus said he was obeying his Father, to be *au fait* with reality. All my creativity actually comes from saying “yes” to each given circumstance.

- The third characteristic of my work consists in bringing to university life the passion for humanity that springs from the Christian life. At the university I first met many of the people with whom I now work. In fact, much of my work did not initially start out from a scientific hypothesis but rather through contact with some person. For example, in the institute I met one of the greatest professors in the field of human capital. Many were sceptical, but I went to listen to him because I liked what he said and did. That professor and I became acquainted and he asked me to work with him. As time progressed, he asked me to add my signature to his work. Another example regards a German professor whose method of work impressed me very much. Here again the greatest resource was friendship that then became a scientific friendship, but first of all it was human accord. I am very persistent, and that means that I can see into the cracks of formulae in order to find a way out of the problem. This persistence is something that I have been given through Faith.

I shall conclude by saying that, during the second part of my life, through that Christian life experience, I began to take an interest in work, to be concerned about what my friends were doing, to draw them

together, to study the economic and social life of Italy, to create places where one could find work. We founded the “Compagnia delle Opere” that has a membership of thirty thousand businesses, believing that what is experienced in the Christian community and in the university could offer new thought on the economy and could also be a different way of doing business. What at first seemed like a dream, later became reality. The “Compagnia delle Opere” consists of many businesses that try to live their christianity. They do so by collecting food for the poor, like the Food Bank, by working in cooperation in the third world, like AVSI, by creating small businesses to provide employment for people, by creating training centres, by expressing opinions about reality. One of the cultural battles that has had positive results has brought about the introduction of the principle of horizontal subsidiary (a principle present in the Social Doctrine of the Church) in the Italian Constitution. These activities are not so different from my initial experience in the University. It is the same experience that has grown. I met the Christian community at the University, it saw me for who I was, it reached out to me, and it showed me how to find Jesus as a real presence. The rest has burst forth from that life. When the dynamics are like this, a life embracing the destiny of humankind, the result is necessarily like that which happened to the Apostles, Saint Francis Xavier who travelled the world, Saint Francis, Saint Vincent, Saint John Bosco and all who carried out Christian works. They did so simply because of the desire for new life within their hearts. This is a principle indicated by the Pope when he came to the 1982 Meeting – “do works through the love of new life” – and this is the principle that continues to characterise my whole life.

## 2. Panel discussion: *Studies and life in harmony*<sup>1</sup>

### The desire for authentic human relationships

KATIE PIERCE, USA

Thank you. When coming to this forum I was very nervous. I had never been to Europe before or out of North America. I felt very honored to be a delegate for this forum. While flying here I was still worried as I got no sleep on the airplane and I really need my sleep and I was lost wandering around the Paris airport praying that the Lord would just help me get to Rome. I had heard that all roads lead to Rome, but at this point I was praying that all airplanes did as well! After arriving I was nervous again, because of the drive to where we are staying. It was so scary. A lovely English girl told me that it was because Italians are known for crazy driving, but I was still scared! There were cars everywhere and I truly felt I was going to die on the way there. I had never seen so many small cars before or that many small lanes either. But we did arrive here safely. As I staggered my crunched self out of the car I was again struck with anxiety. As there were many people speaking different languages, and none that I could understand! I was asking myself.. how am I going to communicate with these people? Thanks be to God I got my own room and being able to relax helped me to approach this forum with an open mind and heart.

Something that has really struck me so far about this forum is that the worries and the nervousness that filled my heart before I arrived here were unfounded. I realize that all of us, although from different cultures and background, are so similar. We kept hearing it over and over yesterday – we

<sup>1</sup> Personal witness by some of the students present at the Forum.

are all searching – we are all struggling with secular world struggles – we are all in some respects dealing with isolation and loneliness, but on a positive note we are all students and even better... we are all Christian. Our Christian heritage is what unifies us together. I found it so cool that although yesterday during the Mass half of us could not understand exactly what was being said, we all knew what was going on. We all knew the importance of what was taking place. There is a real need for all of us and our peers to come to authentic human relationship in our Christian faith; to answer our call from God to be apostles for one another. From the North American perspective I believe that there is a lack of strong relationships in general because of a lack of self-esteem and from living a comparative lifestyle.

In North America there is a strong emphasis on appearance and consumerism. We have to have the best of everything, not because there is a need, but because we want to try to make ourselves feel good and complete with material things. Not only does our Catholic heritage say this is no way to live, but common sense would tell you that you can't put your trust in worldly things because really the cliché is true: money does not bring happiness. Material things and consumerism drive the way we feel about ourselves. This negative view of self forms when one feels that if they don't have one particular thing they are less of a person. It can be clothes, cars, houses, physical beauty (or what is viewed as physical beauty) or anything that others have that our society says we should have too. Our self-consciousness is only furthered by the comparative lifestyle in which we live. People compare themselves to one another trying to build themselves up, while tearing others down. This way of living is very transparent and in the end only makes you feel worse. If a person lives a comparative lifestyle, they will have a lower self-esteem because the reality is that someone will always have more material and societal pull. Someone will always have more. This type of living is very destructive to our ability to form lasting and earnest human relationships.

While living a comparative life all one does is feebly attempt to build their self-esteem but all the while holding themselves back. They will

never truly reveal their true selves to people or possible life-long friends because they are afraid or maybe even convinced that they are not good enough. These people feel that the person that they are and that God created is not worthy of true friendship- they think that no one will like the “ real ” them. This as you know is very destructive to humanity. I would wager that you all have experienced this within your own country, because unfortunately this is part of humanity.

So how do we combat this, my friends? We must strive to love ourselves wholeheartedly, constantly striving to grow spiritually and work towards a true sense of the person that God created us to be. We must stop comparing ourselves to others and try to lift up our brothers and sisters who are stuck living a comparative life as well. Helping each of them to discover their gifts and talents so they too can grow closer to discipleship with Christ. The cold hard truth is that we were created for relationship. The Lord blessed us with the capacity for love, the finest human attribute. God wants us to love ourselves and to nurture our gifts and talents. Jesus reminds us that we need one another. We are interdependent beings called to examine our own lives critically, but also called to communion with others. Through the love of Christ we find authentic human relationship. The only way to begin the process of forming these relationships is to start loving ourselves and all those around us as Christ loves us. In our studies and life we should hold Christ at the center; true happiness stems from this. No amount of money or material possession can bring the ideals of true self-acceptance and the thirst for beauty to resonate through our lives; these can only be acquired through God.

Let your life be an example of love, laughter, and peace through your relationships with others. Give of your gifts and help others to realize their own. Through these things you will grow in Christian maturity and be more in tune with what God asks of your life. In closing may God bless you all and may this forum bring many great things, and our similarities as Christian students bring us closer in Christian camaraderie to learn and grow spiritually.

## **Involvement in “associative life” i.e. groups, societies, etc.**

MICHELA SCAVONE, *Italy*

Hello, everyone. I am Michela and I am a member of Catholic Action in Italy. In my town (Potenza in the south of Italy), I am mostly involved in the Student Movement of Catholic Action. I also form part of a team of young people who organise the youth section of Catholic Action. This means that I am very involved in associative activities and have to make it fit in with my studies at the university. I often find myself swamped with things to do and have to make choices and establish priorities. At times I think I should adapt myself to leading a double life, but then I wonder if this is possible. Can we live two aspects of our lives separately?

Then I think: I belong to a lay association that is engaged precisely in promoting Christianity in daily life – at school, at university, in the work place.

Unfortunately, I realise from the circumstances in which I live that the greatest difficulties are to be found at the university, the very place where young people should build their civil and moral awareness.

Yesterday, Professor Remond told us that the university should form good citizens. I feel that this can only be done through the active participation of each one in academic life.

It is a mistake to spend your university life locked up in an ivory tower, separating yourself from the social dimension that surrounds you. One way to avoid this is through the ecclesial associations and move-



ments. Their fundamental characteristic is ongoing communion among those who share the same life experience.

Many young people at university move away from the Church, probably because they have been attracted by new interests and they lose sight of the fact that they are Christians and of all that this implies.

In my opinion, this is where the Church should be most involved. Campus ministry should be incisive and should work in the universities through the associations and movements. Campus ministry, including associations and movements, should bring the word of God to the university lecture halls and foster a rediscovery of the “truth of the universe and of history, the meaning and the destiny of human existence, the foundation of all reality” that the Holy Father spoke of in his letter to the participants in this Forum.

However, the associations and movements, and I would say the university too, need us young people and our conscious – and at times courageous – choice.

I invite you all, and especially myself, to respond to the Holy Father’s exhortation and to share the experience we are having now with all of those who have not had this privilege but who share our everyday life experience. Tell them: “Whenever possible, seek out sound University professors and lecturers. Do not remain isolated in what are often difficult environments, but play an active part in the life of Church associations, movements and communities operating in the university environment... You must build the Church within your Universities”.

## Engagement in society

JONATHAN RAVAT, *Mauritius*

Allow me to introduce myself. I am Jonathan Ravat. I am 23 years old and I am a final year student of law and business studies at the University of Mauritius. I am the eldest in a family of two. My brother is a student at the same university. I went to a Catholic secondary school called Holy Spirit College. As is usual in this kind of institution, I received an education that centred on the integral development of the individual. On completion of my secondary studies in 1999, I was engaged in voluntary social work in my country. I worked with youth groups helping with their human, social and Christian education and I organised fund-raising activities and social campaigns. At present I am president of a diocesan group called “Youth for Solidarity and Justice (JSJ)” and of two informal youth groups: “Altruistic Teenagers in Solidarity group” or GASA (which I myself founded) and “Genesis”. I am also a volunteer in a “Supplementary School” which is a project aimed to promote community development in an underprivileged area, a member of the social commission in my diocese, a member of a recently started group of young Christian university students called “Team Directly Linked to Emmanuel (ELIE)” and of an NGO called Solidarity-Unity-Development (SUD). Finally, I am close to a Community of lay Catholics called the Fiat Community, and I was immensely honoured by being elected President of the Students’ Union in the University of Mauritius last October.

Parallel with these activities, I have also had time for my education and to develop as a person and as a Christian. Over these past years I

have been much in contact with the Spirituality of the Fiat Community mentioned earlier. Their name comes from “Fiat Voluntas Tua” which were the words of Our Lady at the Annunciation, and their aim is to gather lay people and educate them in the faith so that they will learn to see the Will of God. In order to recognise this Will, we must be attentive to events in daily life, to read the signs of the times, to allow ourselves to be moulded and transformed and from there to find inner resources and be spurred on to action and conversion. This is the technique of “daily events” that is at the heart of the Fiat Spirituality.

The reason for telling you all this is because I want to develop my talk by taking the events of my life as a basis, not only to give witness to this Spirituality but also to show how our engagement in society can be motivated by specific events in my life. Time is limited, so I shall choose two events that gave rise to my present engagements.

The first was in the year 2000. At that time I was giving free classes to a group of seven children aged about ten who were about to finish their elementary schooling the following year. This was part of the “Supplementary school” project. One Tuesday afternoon in August, I was telling these children about the experiences I had just had a few days earlier in Rome at World Youth Day. After I had finished, I set them homework to write about what they had done during the holidays in August.

A week later I asked who had done the homework. They looked at each other and smiled: “Homework? What homework? There was no homework.” I could not oblige them to do it. It is not easy to instill a sense of discipline and responsibility when you know that some of them live in very poor and even miserable circumstances where they are in frequent contact with drugs, alcohol, prostitution, unemployment, frustration, robbery, etc.

One child, Gabriel,<sup>1</sup> stood up and said, “Me, sir. I have done the homework”. Surprised but pleased, I asked him if he wanted me to cor-

<sup>1</sup> Not his real name.

rect it. “ Yes, sir ”, he said and came to my table. I took his copybook and read the following that was all misspelt: “ I WENT TO CAUDAN IN PORT-LOUIS. I VISITED THE MILLS OF CONCORDE. I WENT BY BOAT ”. I looked into Gabriel’s eyes and could see a look of satisfaction, determination and accomplishment with what he had written, especially since he was the only one to have written anything. He was so happy and proud. I asked him if I could keep his work. “ Oh yes, sir! Of course, sir! ” By keeping his work I showed that I was happy with what he had done. In other words, he had accomplished something – a little boy from a working class area treated as second class by the process of economical development in his country.

From that moment on, my faith in humanity, my desire to serve others, my conviction to work to help the underprivileged of our society, were reinforced. I had received so much freely – from God, my parents, my education, society – I was lucky to be in good health, to have friends and to grow in a milieu with people who love me and pay attention to me, to have been to school, college and now university. I am able to express my values and convictions without fear of reprisal, and I cannot and do not want to be indifferent to the fate of those around me. This is out of respect for all I have received and for all those people who have been less fortunate than I have, and for those who suffer and are victims of an injustice that degrades, kills, stifles... Gabriel reinforced my ideals and he changed my life.

The second event took place on Wednesday 25 June 2003. That day, a friend of mine, Nadine Dantier, a student at the University of Mauritius and past member of the JSJ, was found dead and in an appalling condition 500 metres away from her home. She was on her way home from a course in the town and had taken the bus as usual. After speaking to her friend by cell phone, she got off the bus and walked towards her house... She never arrived. Her body was found the following day near her home, in spite of the search the previous evening by her family and others who had realised she was missing. She

had been sexually assaulted and raped and there were bite marks of broken teeth all over her body.

Her sudden death caused great commotion among us. Three days later, with the help of a friend, we obtained a meeting with the Registrar of the university. He gave us his full support in obtaining the go ahead to organise events in reaction to what had happened. We had a march within the campus, a press conference, a national march with college and university students, and an inter-religious prayer meeting for peace. Through all of that, a new team was formed that is composed of students of all religions, cultures, ages, social background, faculties who did not know each other beforehand. This same team, united by the same aims of engagement, unity and solidarity, went forward for the elections of the University of Mauritius Students' Union, and they were unexpectedly successful. It was a mixed team with students of all religions and cultures, but they were victorious over the tensions and the racist tendencies that are present under the surface on campus. Unity had done away with racism and made way for a meritocracy, inter-religious dialogue, human respect, and love for the other, whoever they are. A new page in the history of the University was created. Since then, that experience has allowed me to listen to, mix with and work with students of all religions and cultures in the country (you might like to know that Mauritius is a small country of less than two thousand square kilometres, but there are believers of seven of the twelve great religions, without counting the various sub-denominations and religious confessions!). It gave me the opportunity to experience real unity and to live daily in an inter- and intra-religious dialogue. My desire for this dialogue has been strengthened and has become part of my life. Together with this dialogue comes the obligation to give witness, through my way of living, to the teaching power of Love, the ultimate mission of a Christian.

There are certainly other events that have influenced me and deserve to be mentioned, but I have chosen the two that have had most impact

on my life. They touched me deeply and urged me towards what are now my main poles of social action. These are very simple: the complete and integrated development of the person (DIIP) and inter- and intra-religious dialogue (DIIR). This is how the Spirituality of Attention and the Will of God, as formulated by the Fiat Community, through concrete events, could develop my faith in the human person, every human person and the whole human person (cfr. PAUL VI, *Populorum Progressio*, n. 42), and in that which is most beautiful, most noble, and truest and deepest within myself and each one of us so that all our engagements with society should serve for only one thing: Love.

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## To Give Meaning to Study

NIGORA IGAMBERDIYEVA, *Uzbekistan*

My story does not seem to be as lofty as the previous ones. It is about how the trivial circumstances of day-to-day life can lead the human being to the path of faith.

My first close acquaintance with the Church happened because of quite mercantile reasons, when we, the students of the Institute of Oriental Studies were sent to do annual volunteer work. I decided to try my luck in Church, as for me the word “volunteer” was always associated with faith and religion. At the first appointment with the Ordinary of the Catholic Church in Uzbekistan Rev. Christopher Kukulka I was really nervous and scared, for I was expecting to see an angry and very serious official. But I was pleasantly surprised when I saw a smiling face

of just an ordinary person, who showed his sincere interest in me and offered me a real work. The work which, I can say now, helped me to grow not only academically but also spiritually. I was offered to translate the documents of Church history and social teaching into my native Uzbek and Russian languages.

Through the work I began to understand and was absorbed by Christianity, the values offered by Catechism and Bible.

Although I still stay quite “pagan”, as Father loves to joke, acute changes already occurred in whole aspects of my life, and especially study. My ambitious desires to become professional in the chosen field, to gain the senior rank of diplomat gave their place to the heartfelt dream of becoming a real human person in the Christian sense. The person who would be open, loving and respecting the dignity of neighbours. These are the most important things in each person, whatever his/her field is. And that is not merely my opinion. You, the students sitting here can also prove that we prefer to deal with the teacher who would respect our personality, would be open to us and would care. We would always prefer this teacher to the “crispy” professor however much a genius he/she would be.

We can blame that mercantile reason that tells us to use our knowledge only to our benefit: to take high status in society, to get a good job, to own all kinds of commodities and conveniences etc. But on the other hand, reason tells us that knowledge does not merely lead to these “achievements” – it also leads us to our formation as a mature human person – the human whose initial vocation is to respect the dignity of others, to seek for truth, to love God and to follow Christ. The only thing for us is just to hear this voice of reason. Faith takes here its role of interpreter and link between reason and us.

So, as a conclusion I would say that our knowledge in the first place should serve for enrichment of our spiritual life, thus contributing to the fulfilment of our original commitment.

## **Entering the world of work**

ANGELO STORACE, *Peru*

For every university student, the goal of obtaining remunerative employment is undoubtedly one of the major concerns during their time at university. In my country we first have to evaluate the possibilities of this outcome as that is an essential component to the question.

Basically, most young Peruvians have to work while they are students, so their entry into the world of work begins quite early. They have to work to pay their own way as well as help out with the family expenses. This happens in both public and private universities.

I must stress that this temporary employment does not usually help students develop professional skills. They mostly take part-time jobs in fast food restaurants, cinemas, discotheques, etc. that have no bearing on the courses being followed at the university.

In our country we have a great number of employees and few employers, so there is heavy competition, and often it is not the most qualified or brightest person who is chosen. This is the reality facing young professionals as they graduate from their universities.

This situation means that universities should provide a good all-round education from the beginning to prepare recent graduates to face a world of work that may not be related to the course studied but that answers to immediate needs.

How do Peruvian universities give a solid all round education to students and instil human values to help them face the future?

I have gathered some opinions on this and the conclusions are similar:



– Peruvian universities are solely concerned with professional training and to produce the most skilled professionals for a highly competitive market so that they will be successful in entering the world of work directly after completion of their studies.

– The consequences are that a human all-round education is often neglected. In some cases these courses are overtaken by routine and monotony and do not reach the desired objective which is to develop a young person's character and perspectives on life to help them face their professional future.

To follow up on the second point, I think that, although in the various faculties in Peruvian universities they offer courses from the humanities like philosophy, psychology, sociology or national studies, these are not sufficient tools to give a student an adequate all-round education. These programmes are usually offered during the first two years of basic science. After that the courses are entirely “related to the profession”.

Young Peruvian students need to study for a profession, but they also need to acquire a culture of human values so that their professions can be a vocation in service to others and to themselves.

I personally like to see how the universities are concerned to give the best professional training. It is something that cannot be denied, and in fact I say so with pride.

However, my ambition as a future professional is to be useful to my country and to offer service to my compatriots, with a sufficiently humanistic background to understand the principle of reciprocal need within each person.

As a future professional, I do not doubt that I am receiving the best technical training but that the humanistic preparation is much inferior. I feel that Peruvian universities should give students a preparation based on human and Christian values that will prepare them to enter the world of work, even though, as is often the case, it is not within their professional field.

How can we young people do this?

We should not limit ourselves to only taking these courses during the first two years. We should continue them until we graduate. The medical faculties, for example, should emphasise a well structured course on bio-ethics that continues throughout the years of study.

There could be cultural activities of various kinds like university forums to study the national scene and form criteria adapted to the needs of our society. Another alternative I heard was that young people should be involved with the world around them early on and from the viewpoint of a future professional.

Finally, I think that the intervention of the Catholic Church, by using campus ministry as a means of evangelising youth, is essential so that each young person, animated by the Holy Spirit, can discover in Jesus Christ a role model to follow as a leader faithful to his principles and perfect in his mission.

### **III – UNIVERSITY AND TRUTH**

**Friday 2 April**



## 1. University, truth and freedom

PROF. ALEJANDRO LLANO

*Lecturer in metaphysics, University of Navarra, Spain*

To quote an expression used by the Mexican Nobel prize winner in literature, Octavio Paz, we could say that the climate in which the university institution is moving at the beginning of this century is a “clouded time”. The lights and shadows alternate in a cultural panorama where, on the one hand, knowledge has become the most precious merchandise in the so-called *knowledge society*, and on the other hand, hardly anybody is interested in researching the intimate nature of things in order to achieve firm truths about what exists.

It seems that knowledge and information are valued more than ever, and that translates into an unprecedented proliferation of universities in every corner of the world. There is no region or province that does not claim to be a centre of higher studies. But all of this localised and superficial agitation reminds us too much of the gloomy diagnosis made by Ortega y Gasset concerning the Spanish university in the third decade of the last century: “a sad, listless, opaque thing almost without life”.

The ambiguity of the situation is explained, in my opinion, if we realise that the university is being brutally *utilised*, and that there are very few, within or beyond, who make any effort to recoup an *autonomy* that is not merely administrative. Autarky, authentic self-sufficiency, is solely that which belongs to life. A living being, the classical thinkers told us, is one that moves by oneself and is capable of being born, of growing, reproducing and dying. When an institution is content to just *survive*, then it is hard to distinguish between vital agility and the shudders of agony.

The University today is being utilised by the state, the market and the means of ideological manipulation. It is being asked to be efficient in achieving power, money and influence. In turn, the managers of a great number of universities are concerned above all about the financial prosperity, efficient material organisation, the abundance and sophistication of the equipment that serve the new technologies, the professional heights their alumni can reach, etc., and above all maintain themselves – their parties, businesses, teams – at the top of such problematic ventures.

Something that is notable for its absence, thereby causing a nauseous vacuum, is the disregard for education. It is the soul of the University, and it is not ruled by the parameters of *efficiency* but by those of *fecundity*. Nowadays the student is regarded as a client who pays a tuition fee, swells the numbers for the official statistics and goes from year to year through the labyrinth of ever changing study plans, changed because of regional, state or international decisions. As for research, it is mostly a quantifiable and quantified magnitude according to arcane procedures, inspired almost always in the experimental sciences. The teacher who is dedicated fully to education and the free search for truth is looked on with commiseration: he or she is incapable of doing anything else. While the student who is concerned more about growing in knowledge rather than about preparing for a brilliant professional future is regarded as being a bit strange. “An interesting youngster, but a bit odd”, will be the opinion.

The most urgent task for the University at the start of this new century is this: ensure that the imminent danger of triviality and subjugation that is lying in wait for the academic institution be converted into a unique opportunity to raise the question of its fundamentals, to project the primacy of knowledge over production into the new post-industrial culture, and to place the new technologies at the service of helping the human condition to flourish. To succeed in making the University rediscover its soul in such a complex and fragmented society as ours is an arduous undertaking.

## 1. *University, truth and freedom*

The new mission of the University must centre on the crucial factor for renewed vitality: the people who think, study, teach, learn, research, and discover. The University is the institution that channels the progress of knowledge in western culture, and that is precisely because it is in the University that it is lucidly perceived that the human person is the only source of the innovations that occur in the intelligent world. The materialistic motto, “strength comes from below” presents a slight problem: it is false. The most powerful thing in this world is not money, nor social pressure, nor the hope for success, nor the threat of being sidelined, and not even the destructive ability of weapons. (In recent months we have been confirming once more the astuteness of old Tallyrand when he said at the start of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, “with bayonets you can do anything except sit on them”). The most worthy, the most valuable, the most powerful thing is – in addition to love – thought. “Let us therefore strive to think well”, concluded Pascal. But let us admit: if there is anything today that is *politically incorrect*, it is precisely to think for yourself. The most dangerous thing you can do is publically express what you freely think. Thinking is not approved of. However, whether we like it or not, the function of the University is to provide home ground for thought, to give it fertile soil, a favourable atmosphere for the hard and joyful exercise of thinking in order to lead us to that loftiest of values: truth.

The strength of a university does not come from its financial resources nor from its political support. The origin of its power is found in the ability of its members to think originally, freely, and with creative energy. Certainly, the fomenting of this disposition requires some essential material means and a favourable environment. It requires, most of all, that the people who work in the academic institution or that support it with help and encouragement, be prepared to put their abilities for reflection into play.

Along the lines noted recently by the Italian sociologist, Pierpaolo Donati, each university should really understand what is specific to it, the added value it can contribute to the society in which it lives,

through the inspired principles that guide the various research undertakings and the transmission of knowledge. A frequent danger in all organisations is precisely a lack of the ability to reflect, the poverty resulting from “doing things” without exactly knowing what one is doing or why one is doing it in a certain way, without assessing its usefulness, and without analysing consequences and possible ways of improvement. If in a university it is known who I am and what my mission is in the field of research and teaching, and if there are established systems to assess if what I am doing really forms part of the mission, then it is easy to clarify what should be done and how it can be improved. The process of assessment leads to conclusions that can be applied immediately. It is a case of continually reintroducing the added value brought about by what is specific to the university in order to improve the activity being undertaken.

This will give rise to universities with individuality where each establishment will have its own character, research tradition and recognisable *culture*. In all probability it will have to deal with some tension with the academic freedom of each of its academics and researchers. When an appraisal of what is specific to an institution declares it to be incompatible, it is really being measured against the presumed “neutrality” of the universities, and that leads to intellectual desertification in which nothing can flourish. To aspire to having all universities cast in the same mould is the same as doing away with the pluralism that is required by the democratic structure of society. This is a model that is hardly likely to stimulate the potential to innovate, something that should be part of the make up of every academic institution.

This is a character or *ethos* that is incompatible with pragmatism, and with the extreme utilitarianism that has entered many universities, both old and new. I go into deep depression when I visit some of these prestigious universities with the illusion that I will find there a centre of dedication to the disinterested cultivation of knowledge and a haven of academic freedom. The panorama has been narrowed, and instead of being



universal it has become localised, or at most, cosmopolitan. They no longer believe in the search for truth nor in the education of studious young people. Instead of finding these classical university ideals, one is more likely to come across the activism and banality of some insignificant people who are only concerned about their own ambitions for power, their financial interests, their self-importance and their pathetic prestige. They are just vocational schools of the fourth degree without books or readers that no longer care for their libraries with the false excuse that “nowadays everything is on the Net”. (In actual fact, you will not find the one-thousandth part of a good library on that famous Net). They are just departments of the Public Administration, professional business enterprises, sports clubs, places to meet socially, places in which the old allegory of the “Tree of knowledge” remains a metaphor empty of meaning. We are faced with efficiently organised ignorance, technocratically orchestrated, and of course, digitalised and multilingual.

Let us return to the lofty humanistic and Christian assessment of each and every *person* which is where every innovation arises and to where every innovation returns. Let us assist them with tranquillity, time, motivation and means so that they can dedicate themselves to thinking, so that they can stop to think, so that they are not tediously tied to doing things as instructed, so that they are not exhausted by the trivialities of stereotypes, but that they can consider other possible worlds and look at reality from unprecedented perspectives. It is a case of fostering stimulating environments in which study and reflection will not be considered to be abnormal, because this is nearly always the opinion in those environments where they use different means to prevent us from contemplating reality and meditating on our own condition. On the gates of the universities there should be a notice clearly prohibiting any attempt at sectarianism, relativism, politicisation, short term pragmatism, inconsiderate pressure, authoritarianism, and corrupting activities that use power, money or reputation. The issue here is not sanctimonious puritanism but simply freedom.

The accusation of ingenuity that these considerations usually receive goes against the cynics who state them.

What these impoverished times need is not to throw more wood on the fire of disenchanted positivism, of technologies that destroy the environment, of social sciences involved in justifying economic inequalities that cry out to heaven.

Our times long in silence to go through life towards the truth and to open up pathways to the practice of justice. This in turn requires that people be well educated in the virtues and values that confer distinction on the women and men who have decided to seek unselfish excellence.

In an information and knowledge society, the value par excellence should be truth. This is why the most worrying thing about a social framework in which knowledge should constitute the very core, is the fact that the question of truth has been trivialised. The worst problem is not that there are too many lies; it is that people live according to those lies. It is taken for granted that whatever is said and taken as certain is not quite the truth, but rather what is plausible, convenient, suitable, allowed, correct... The aspiration to direct one's life towards the truth – a concept that took some hard knocks from Nietzsche at one time – is considered to be Utopian and even harmful. They say that maintaining this position could lead to attitudes that are dangerous, arrogant, totalitarian and even fundamentalistic; that truth is a risk and it is better to substitute it with lighter variables that are less committing. Insofar as this attitude prevails, the new universities respond to the description of the Italian writer Claudio Magris: “Unshackled by demands of value and significance, they are likewise magnanimous in their immense indifference and in their condition as consumable goods; they are free and idiotic, with no demands or discomfort, graciously exempt from resentment and prejudice. The uniformity and changeability of their values cause overall imbecility, the emptying of all gestures and events”.

The relativisation of all values – ethical relativism – is presented as the only possible way to overcome this root evil that (according to some)

is caused by unconditional moral convictions. They claim it is the only way to remove the sense of culpability that accompanies every serious action, and so reach a longed-for “new innocence”. However, nothing comes after relativism: relativism leads nowhere at all. Whoever adopts ethical relativism can only take one step: the one that leads to pure and simple nihilism.

A situation like this presents us Christians with an undertaking that is, in a certain sense, a step towards the *new evangelisation* that Pope John Paul II has been requesting of us with particular intensity at the start of this new millennium. It is the commitment to produce and spread a humanistic culture in which the primacy of the spirit over matter is affirmed, people over things, ethics over technology. This is an indispensable task for every university that aspires to remain faithful to these Christian roots that they are now trying to remove from the European identity as if it can be done with a conjuror’s trick. To try to articulate a Christian vision of the human person and a non-relativistic conception of culture on an economy-based and pragmatic focus of society is a notable exercise in incoherence, and one to which I personally am not prepared to contribute in any way whatsoever.

Let us remember the opening words of the encyclical *Veritatis Splendor* written by Pope John Paul II ten years ago: “*The splendour of truth shines forth in all the works of the Creator and, in a special way, in the human person, created in the image and likeness of God. Truth enlightens human intelligence and shapes people’s freedom, leading them to know and love the Lord*”. This is the climate, serene and firm, of the new narrative, of the new history of the University. In order to understand this history that is projected into the future and that we ourselves have to foster, it is necessary to live a life imbued with the love of truth. However, so far in our times, hardly anyone seems to know exactly what “love of truth” means.

It is not we who possess the truth; the truth possesses us. Truth will not accept any valid substitute. It is the only constituent need of human

beings, their essential nourishment, the unconditional air they breathe. This necessary truth does not tie us down: it frees us from the unbreathable air of subjectivism, consumerism, the slavery of dominant opinions, all of which present decisive obstacles for a seriously human dialogue.

“The truth will make you free”, we read in the Gospel. The liberating force of truth is a humanist and Christian value. Faith should never be a constriction or a barrier. It should be an incentive for research and openness to possibilities that are inaccessible to diminished reason, that utilitarian and relativised reason that only seeks immediate satisfaction and in the long run, an increase in power.

Many are afraid of the truth. They fear that its discovery will uncover the illusions of a fictitious and selfish life. They are not prepared to run the risk of making their small-minded conception of life vulnerable. The search for truth, on the other hand, goes forward to find the fullness of reality. It is not afraid to find a treasure for which you must give up everything in order to obtain. Those who seek the truth do not seek recompense. On the contrary, they mean to make present knowledge vulnerable because they aspire to finding out more and better. Paradoxically, it is this openness to risk that, to a certain extent, makes men and women invulnerable, because their minor interests are not involved here, but rather the ascertaining of what is real.

The adventure of truth is not a cold and neutral task. It has an inseparable ethical meaning. One's virtue is the anthropological growth that happens when a person, in doing any action, is *obeying the truth*. Virtue is the gain in freedom obtained when one orients one's life towards the truth, and that is the university ideal par excellence. Virtue is the trace, the sediment that leaves us the liberating strength of the truth.

The University is a Christian discovery, an historic invention by the disciples of Jesus of Nazareth. It is a place where the words of Saint Paul should be made reality: “Living the truth in love”. In a free climate of cultured coexistence, professors, staff and students should help each other with generosity to attain the goal of a good life, a life of achieve-

ment, an authentic and true life. This truth lived and put into practice and central in the ethics of classical inspiration, is only possible if freedom is not in conflict with truth. To put freedom and truth in opposition is a superficial error typical of the immaturity and frivolity that society as a spectacle feeds us through television by-products and, increasingly, through the seductions that occupy a large part of the digital space.

It is advisable – and possible – to “live the truth in love”. The truth that is lived or “done” freely is practical truth, moral or ethical truth. Love is far more than mere physical attraction or a psychological desire. It is a rational tendency that seeks a true good, a good that responds to the profound naturalness from which it acts and, definitively, the essence of things. To act according to the truth implies enhancing freedom and intensifying one’s own life: self-realisation.

The University should be a place of freedom in which they teach that the field of action for men and women is not a kind of amorphous gelatine, but that it is built on moral laws that express what is suitable and what is not suitable for a person. For example, maintaining pre-matrimonial sexual relations does serious harm to those who practise it. “We aren’t doing anyone any harm”, they say. No, that is not correct. You are harming yourselves, and having a detrimental effect on many because you are giving bad example. A University in which no one has the courage to say, “this is good”, or even less, “this is bad”, has become a corrupt and corrupting institution, and with its dictatorship of the *politically correct*, it cancels out the moral freedom of its members. It makes young people docile consumers incapable of denouncing the injustices of a society in which the poor, those who have nothing or almost nothing, are more and more subject to the powerful. It is not strange then that in a society like this violence is spreading and we are suffering from the scourge of terrorism.

We know from the time of the ancients that there is a conflict between *Ethos* and *Kratos*, between morality and power. One way of resolving it is to eliminate *Ethos*, giving in to a technocratic policy that

idolises procedures and ignores people and their inalienable freedom. To the extent that this tendency prevails, a model of descending *colonisation* takes over, which is the penetration of the public administration in all ambits of social and private life. If, on the other hand, it is understood that power arises from the accepted freedom of the citizens, then there are steps taken towards a model of ascending *participation* in which ethics has primacy over political and economic mechanics, and basic solidarity – like that of the University – will recover its original active role.

Possessive individualism – typical in our self-satisfied societies – is pre-totalitarian because individuals who are isolated and seemingly satiated by consumerism are docile instruments in the hands of the techno-structure, that is to say, of the emulsion between State, marketplace and mass media. Ethical individualism is fiction, and it is fiction that we cannot live with any longer. Self-enclosed individualism is misunderstood to be the only and nontransferable nature of personal conscience that first of all reaches a peak and then dissolves. Moreover, it is not generally recognised that an ethical life is only possible in community. As the Scots thinker Alistair MacIntyre demonstrated, only within an accessible community (like the University) can one embark on practices receptive to learning, correction and perfection, that is, in ethically noteworthy practices. The ethical and social unviability of individualism turns into the present widespread condition that could be called “permissive totalitarianism”. It entails a kind of dividing up of territory according to which the techno-structural powers dominate the whole public field into which the social is subsumed. Meanwhile, by way of compensation, they tolerate individualism to disperse itself in the fickleness of private pleasures. This is how we enter what the Italian philosopher Vittorio Mathieu called a “society of unlimited responsibility”.

The arrival of the information and knowledge society has brought back to the fore the importance of encouraging the Humanities: history, philosophy, literature and classical languages. The oblivion of humanistic lore leads to a lack of communication, the absence of communication

leads to isolation, and isolation leads to social autism and docility which, it seems, it what it is all about. The best way to be sure that nobody will think anything disturbing for the established powers – for example, that we should treat immigrants like human beings and we should not be racist or xenophobic – is simply that nobody should think. In this way we shall have the peace of graveyards and prisons.

In my opinion, it is sad that many families today in some countries – families so permissive in many ways – forbid their children to study the humanities or pure sciences because they are afraid that their financial future will be inferior to that of those who follow technical or administrative professions. It seems that the Irish thinker Edmund Burke had a sharp vision of the future when he said two centuries ago that money would turn into the “technical substitute for God”.

The exciting task awaiting the University of our times is that of thinking, articulating, projecting and transmitting a new vision of humankind and the world that responds to the dignity of the person, that opens up to the saving plan of God, and that is equipped to lead an increasingly globalised society towards more balanced and fair principles. It is a task that will take time, that requires the interdisciplinary collaboration of thousands of researchers and the principled education of new generations of young people prepared to place their talent at the service of an objective that transcends the limited goals of personal advantage. It is unquestionably a case for international effort that requires more communication between groups of scholarly students in the five continents. This kind of exchange is possible today thanks precisely to the availability of new information and knowledge technologies. Without forgetting that the creative impulse, scientific progress, is achieved first of all by a scholar alone, with great effort. Teams stimulate, organise, coordinate and publicise, and put together what researchers contribute one by one. So, without personal work there is no research. Let us hope that among the Christian students, and among so many other young people who anxiously search for the truth, there will arise vocations for the university life, to dedicate all one's

effort to enlightening a science so that it will be at the level of the dignity of the human person. It is not enough for the Church and society to have the enthusiasm of young people of good will, but they need people to prepare themselves seriously – and to achieve international recognition – in the field of the Theoretical Sciences and the Humanities, to defend the Faith from within, in which the reason for our hope is given, and it demonstrates that the truth about the human being requires respectful ethical behaviour with the sacred character of human life.

Certainly, professional preparation is one of the objectives of the University, but it is not the only one nor the most important. Besides, an effective professional training is only possible in an atmosphere in which there is simultaneously the cultivation of knowledge that has no immediate operative projection. Only in this way can professionals who graduate from these schools be creative, innovative, able to transcend the facts and go beyond assumptions.

It so happens, in the end, that the new task facing the University is essentially linked with the mission that traditionally belonged to it, and at the same time it has to take on the new challenges and possibilities that are presented to it today. Perhaps the historic success of the University as an institution is due to the fact that a synthesis has been found there between tradition and progress which has permitted it to advance without losing what it has gained. The University, with all its crises and ups and downs, has managed to give community organisation to the genesis and transmission of knowledge that has been and continues to be its new and old task.

We should not expect this revitalisation of the University to come from politicians, businesspeople or educational authorities. The “*ex officio*” actors of the university drama are the students and teachers, and we have to take on the responsibility of reinventing the University in a time of profound change, being faithful to its genuine inspiration. A small group of people can overturn a whole academic corporation. Each one of us can do very much if we cultivate within ourselves the transforming power – Christian and humanist – of university animation.



## 2. Faith and reason: Science and faith in evolving culture

Most Rev. JÓZEF ŻYCIŃSKI

*Metropolitan Archbishop of Lublin, Poland*

The profound transformations which have taken place in recent years in the mutual relations between the natural sciences and the catholic faith are due in large part to John Paul II's encyclical letter: *Fides et ratio* and his *Letter to Fr. George Coyne*, the director of the Vatican Observatory. Both documents postulate a close cooperation between science and faith in discovering the truth about the universe and the human person. For instance the participation of many prominent scientists at the Jubilee celebrations in Rome for the world of science can be seen as a sign of this new climate of cooperation in scientific and church circles. John Searle, a Californian agnostic and a specialist in the area of artificial intelligence, who is involved in the study of the differences between human thought and computerized processing of information, shared with me some of his impressions of the Rome meeting: "Up to then I was convinced that there existed a long-standing antagonism between the worlds of science and of the Church. I used to think of Galileo as the symbol of the tragic misunderstandings between them. During the Rome celebrations I saw that all that now belongs to history. The present situation is now quite different from what I had thought it to be. I was impressed when I saw so many signs of cooperation and dialogue".

### DIALOGUE AND THE DIFFERENCES IN LANGUAGE

It does not follow that scientists' reservations about religion belong only to the past. Such reservations still exist today. They are not merely the result of scientific principles, but are also the result of differences of lan-

guage and of the different methodologies used in the scientific, philosophical and religious approaches to reality. These differences are well illustrated by the anecdote in which three travellers, going in a train through the Scottish countryside, look out the window and see a black sheep grazing in a field. The first to speak was the philosopher who was concerned with the search for universal truths. As he had never been to Scotland before he said: "All sheep in Scotland are black". In the same compartment was a physicist who expressed his opinion more cautiously. "In Scotland there are some black sheep". The most cautious of the three was the mathematician who said: "In Scotland there is at least one meadow in which there is at least one sheep, which is, at least on one side, black.

This story spontaneously evokes a certain sympathy towards mathematicians. There are many areas of science, in which the use of the language of mathematics and of logic have led to important discoveries. Nevertheless there exist many areas of human culture and life, in which one can say very little with the aid of mathematical formulae. How could one in mathematical language express one's wonderment at the sonnets of Shakespeare or the mood evoked by the setting of an autumn sun on a Scottish moor? How could one possibly express mathematically the experience of human suffering, loneliness, friendship and love? It sometimes happens that first-year mathematics students try to define love saying that it is the ratio of affections by reason, when reason goes to zero ...

In a similar way one could attempt to express the reality of Haydn's string quartets by defining the magnitude of strength of the bow as it strikes the strings. Such a description in no way evokes the feeling of fascination and wonder which we feel as we return home from a concert. There is a truth about human life which cannot be defined by mathematical formulae. This truth can only be discovered by philosophical search, theological reflection and by wonderment and the contemplation of human life. Newton and Einstein made great contributions to science.

We have been able to deepen our knowledge of the world with the help of the work of Euclid, Gauss and Kurt Gödel. This knowledge however would be incomplete and very much the poorer were it not for the philosophical contributions of Plato and Thomas Aquinas, the theological works of Saint Augustine and Karl Rahner, the mystical experiences of John of the Cross and Thomas Merton's reflections on spirituality. If one were to eliminate these latter elements from human culture, then we would be left with a profoundly warped and one-dimensional culture. In the past there were attempts to introduce such an amputation of culture; for example one thinks of Leninism which led to the removal from libraries of the great classics, simply because Marxist orthodoxy did not agree with them. History has unambiguously condemned such ideological practices.

At the beginning of the 20th century Arthur Eddington warned his colleagues, that the physicist who considered his wife exclusively as a physical object and described her solely in the language of physics, ran the risk of experiencing a very sudden change of matrimonial status. The one and same woman can be described from the point of view of physics as a collection of orbiting electrons, from the point of view of biology as a member of the species *Homo sapiens*, and from the theological point of view as a child of God endowed with the possibility of enjoying eternal life. These points of view are not mutually exclusive, rather they complement one another. One should not therefore create artificial conflicts, but rather seek to go beyond the limited perspective of each of these disciplines in order to arrive at the fullness of truth about reality.

#### THE COSMOS – A FOREIGN PLACE OR MAN'S HOME?

The change in the Church's attitude towards science does not convince everybody. Czesław Miłosz, expressing the fears which are typical of many humanists wrote not long ago: "I do not understand how the

Vatican can recognise the theory of evolution, because the biological sciences are the crowning point of the Enlightenment and create almost insurmountable difficulties because they blur the line dividing human beings from other living creatures”.<sup>1</sup> This statement of Miłosz is a typical expression of the humanist opposition to those attempts, which try to reduce the contents of human culture to the level of the scientific notions of physics and biology and which ignore the cultural Rubicon which divides man from the rest of the animal world. Consequently, one should not ignore the cultural Rubicons, but search for the full truth which is so important both for scientists and humanists. Another factor, which leads to the humanist opposition to the evolutionary vision of nature and of humankind, is the necessity to move away from the notion of the “cosy” universe, which is seen as a well-known family home. Darwin’s contemporaries tried to defend the opinion that the cosmos is not more than six thousand years old. Even Darwin himself did not differentiate between the content of the Old Testament and the naïve calculations of the Anglican archbishop James Ussher contained in “*Annales Veteris et Novi Testamenti*”, according to which the cosmos was created on 28 October 4004 BC. Today we realise that the cosmos in its present form is about 15 billion years old. In the course of the years since Darwin’s death it was necessary to multiply the age of the universe by a factor of 2.5 million. The palaeontologists who were contemporaries of Darwin realised that Archbishop Ussher’s estimates were false; they believed however that it was enough to multiply them by a factor of about a hundred. At that time the discovery that cosmic evolution has been taking place for billions of years would have been unthinkable. However God has endowed our human species with the courage to imagine and the ability to reflect, so that we be able to discover the full truth of the work of creation which has been marked by the stamp of God’s wisdom.

<sup>1</sup> CZESŁAW MIŁOZ, “Polskie zceymania”, “Znak”, 53 (2001, n. 557) 25.

THE HUMAN PERSON AND EVOLUTION

Philosophers disagree in interpreting the same biological theory of evolution. On one hand Pope John Paul II in his address to the Papal Academy of Science of 26 October 1996 publicly and unambiguously expressed his acceptance of Darwin's theory of evolution. In the Christian milieu, this theory has also been accepted by such academic authorities as Arthur Peacocke, John Haught, Michal Heller, William R. Stoeger SJ. On the other hand, however, biblical fundamentalists, who seek to prove the literal truth of Sacred Scripture and also secular humanists who traditionally consider faith to be the enemy of science, are constantly attacking this theory. Philip E. Johnson who sees himself as a defender of creation science has become one of the leading authorities in the world of fundamentalist criticism of the theory of evolution. The problem is that Johnson who is a professor of law is competent neither in biology nor in Christian philosophy. His criticism of scientific theories might be appropriate as a response to the ideological commentaries of Richard Dawkins, who frequently seems to play the role of a personal opponent of God himself. In relation to contemporary evolutionary theories of nature however his criticism is without foundation. However, all this tends to create a climate in which the unavoidable clash between faith and science impedes the full implementation of the Pope's metaphor describing faith and reason as the two wings which allow us to come to a greater knowledge of reality.

Saint Augustine already in his theory of *rationes seminales* (initial embryos) shows the possibility of reconciling the Christian and the evolutionary notions of the creation of nature and of humankind. According to this notion, God the Creator has endowed matter with certain predispositions for its further development and has defined the laws of this development. Christian writers, referring to this theory in the context of contemporary cosmological theories accept that the universe has been developing into its present form over the course of the past tens of bil-

lions of years according to a plan described by contemporary cosmological theory. A turning point in the evolutionary development of our planet occurred with the appearance of protein forms of life more than three billions years ago. Even more important was the emergence some two hundred thousand years ago of human consciousness with its ability to create culture and the coming two thousand years ago of Christ with his Redemptive mission which reveals God's profound solidarity with humankind.

The human person created by God in accordance with the natural laws of evolution far transcends the rest of nature through our ability to reflect, which gives us access to the wealth of the spiritual world. Transcending the biological struggle for life and survival, man has developed an ethical sensitivity. As opposed to the lower animals, man has developed his ability for metaphysical reflection in which there is no direct practical gain. Thanks to his self-awareness man has developed a rich spiritual world, in which an important role is played by aesthetic and religious experience. Only man, endowed as he is by God with the breath of immortality has created contemporary science and has stressed the role of altruism in our culture. While remaining an element of created reality and remaining subject to the laws of biology and physics because of his physical nature, man has been able to create a rich world of spiritual values, art, poetry and beauty. At the same time however human beings have been able to create concentration camps, threaten people with the charge of being an enemy of the working class, and to seek the final solution of the Jewish problem by completely exterminating them. The process of evolution continues. In our time evolution is happening to a large extent on the level of human psyche, spirituality and values which make up our natural environment. It will depend on us whether the search for success and pleasure will dominate our world or whether respect for human dignity, sympathy and solidarity with other people will become our principal values.

The future of the evolutionary process is not the result of cosmic

determinants; it depends to a large extent on the quality of cooperation of our actions with the influence of the Divine Creator. The future shape of human culture, the state of consciousness of future generations of *Homo sapiens* and the existence of a civilisation of meaning which is stronger than evil depends on this cooperation. We trust that the evolutionary process which only relatively recently created consciousness and culture, will surprise us by the wealth of future forms which will reveal the beauty of human life, if only we join in the search for this beauty.

#### THE CREATION OF THE WORLD ACCORDING TO HAWKING

Not all the natural scientists who are seeking to describe the development of the universe are interested in God or in the wealth of the human psyche. Some of them limit their interests merely to the description of the physical mechanics of creation. Stephen Hawking, the well-known cosmologist and the creator of the physics of black holes, has not been able to resist this temptation. Using scientific methods and the calculations of quantum cosmology, together with James Hartle he presented the concept of a universe which created itself. He maintains that it emerged out of nothingness according to generally accepted mathematical principles. Hawking was so proud of his findings, that he presented them in the presence of John Paul II during an academic meeting in the Vatican. According to many of his own statements, Hawking had expected to be condemned just as Galileo had been many centuries before. John Paul II disappointed him, because he listened to this account of the creation of the universe in which there is no mention of God the Creator without a word of condemnation.

Some time later while talking with the Holy Father during an academic meeting in Castel Gandolfo, I mentioned how Hawking had been disappointed by the lack of papal condemnation. John Paul II smiled and asked: "Why should I have argued with him? A physicist does not have to speak about a creator-God; that is the task of the theologian. However

the physicist cannot prevent the theologian from asking such questions as: “Why are there certain laws which rule the universe and why is it possible to use the language of mathematics? I don’t think that Hawking would be opposed to such questions. Because of that I do not see any reason for a conflict.” The wisdom of these words is confirmed by the fact that many theologians have written works in which they develop the theology of creation using Hawking’s model. Harmony and creative cooperation are now flourishing there, where the author of the model had sought to create a conflict.

#### EVOLUTION, SUFFERING AND MEANING OF LIFE

None of the serious scientists will now maintain that there is an opposition between the Christian faith and the theory of evolution. A fundamental question which arises in this field concerns the problem of suffering, which the human person experiences more intensely than any other being in the universe. How is one to explain that the human person who is endowed with consciousness must experience deeply the pain of life which is so important for our stage in the development of our culture? Why is it that the more sensitive members of the species *Homo sapiens* suffer more than those who seek relief in thoughtlessness or in drugs? Such questions are very important when we consider that we are not merely dealing with biological pain which is also experienced at the lower levels of evolution. The response to evil in its many different forms: absurdity, injustice, violence and powerlessness, is a specifically human experience. One could envisage the possibility that we could have been spared the problems of evil and suffering if the evolution process had taken a different direction and if the human person had emerged either as a more perfect being or as a less sensitive one. Should we be angry with God then because He did not make evolutionary laws which would have led to the emergence of man-like beings which would never experience the struggle with suffering?



COSMIC EVIL AND AN ALTERNATIVE EVOLUTION

In our attempts to find answers to the above-mentioned questions, one issue emerges as being very important. What is the price that we would have had to pay for an alternative version of evolutionary process, in which the human person would not have experienced suffering? Would we still be fascinated by such a possibility when we realise that such an evolutionary process would have led to the emergence of beings whose reactions were like those of television characters which have been invented for the least discriminating audience. Would a world of mediocre plastic beings, who even though they react to physical stimuli, are devoid of human sensitivity and never have an uneasy conscience? If we were to find ourselves in such a world, would we not hanker for a different form of evolution of culture, in which one can suffer, show solidarity, create works of art, and search for meaning in a world marked by the struggle with suffering. Would we really want an alternative form of evolution in which there would be no human suffering, because the human person would have become like those people suffering from Alzheimer's disease? Would we really wish to have a form of evolution in which man would not feel the suffering of young Werter, because on the purely pragmatic level of development he would not ask questions about fidelity, solidarity or heroism, because his ambitions would be satisfied by experiences of pleasure artificially created in a technical civilisation by the pressing of buttons.

When we become angry towards God, we tend to think of Him as an all-powerful ruler, for whom absolutely everything is possible. Our generation often wants an evolutionary process with a happy end, just as the apostles looked forward to the return of the earthly rule of Israel. However in His solidarity with man, the God of evolution influences our culture but at the same time He expects our cooperation. On the level of cultural development we are to use all the predispositions with which we have been endowed as a result of our biological evolution. However

instead of cooperating with God in a spirit of co-responsibility for the work of creation, it is easier to dream of the simple world of our childhood and of a literal interpretation of Scripture in its description of the colourful scenery of paradise in Eden. This nostalgic yearning for a lost paradise can in turn lead us to reject both the biblical and scientific descriptions of the origins of mankind. In such a case, instead of doing palaeontological studies of our ancestors who lived millions of years ago, we will tell stories about the apple which Adam ate so as to defend the naïve explanations, the purpose of which was to explain the origin of evil and of sin. Note that in the biblical account there is no mention of an apple. The fruit is however a metaphor of those values which man wanted to possess while ignoring God's plan of creation. The Papal Biblical Commission stressed that a Catholic is not bound to accept the literal interpretation of Sacred Scripture. Our task however is to care for the divine ecology as expressed in the beauty and goodness of the created universe.

#### HUMAN ECOLOGY

This paradox is all the more painful because of the fact that “not only has God given the earth to man, who must use it with respect for the original good purpose for which it was given to him, but man too is God's gift to man. He must therefore respect the natural and moral structure with which he has been endowed”.<sup>2</sup> According to this vision the world is a sacred reality entrusted to us, to be preserved with a sense of responsibility and brought to perfection in love and in the gift of ourselves to God and to our brothers and sisters.<sup>3</sup>

Basic to the Pope's concern for human ecology is a Christian anthropology, which affirms that man is a being who is not nourished by bread

<sup>2</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Centesimus annus*, 38.

<sup>3</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Evangelium Vitae*, 2.

alone but also by transcendental values. In order to develop fully, the human person needs not only bread, air and sleep, but also a sense of meaning, beauty and goodness. Our response to the nihilistic trends in contemporary society should be the evangelical message of hope, which allows us to build up a human world by affirming the fundamental truth of the Incarnate Son of God.

The pontificate of John Paul II, which is marked by a concern for the presence of the Gospel in the cultural transformations of our age, is an expression of the Christian response to the evolutionary crossroads which we are facing. This has been mentioned among others by Florian Znaniecki, who wrote: we will either develop a human civilisation which embraces all people or we will experience emptiness and the collapse of national civilisations. The dialogue with the contemporary world, in which John Paul II has played a leading role, is an expression of a determined attempt to overcome this emptiness and a striving for the axiological community which is essential for the next stages in the development of culture. As an alternative to the extreme forms of contemporary individualism the notion of being for others frequently occurs in the Pope's teaching. To live out the message of the Upper Room means to live in a way that one is a gift for others; to build a culture of life, by which we become fuller human beings; to build up unity both in social life as well as in the spiritual, treating one's own existence as the Church's path to the Father.

### 3. Panel discussion: *Faith, ethics and culture*

## The mystery of the universe

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I consider myself to be very fortunate because I am doing the kind of work that has always been my dream. From the time I was a child I have been fascinated by the vastness of space and the mystery of the universe. I am presently involved in scientific research in the field of astrophysics, in particular in cosmology which is the study of the universe as a whole. We are studying what is technically known as the *cosmic microwave background*, the fossil light that comes to us from the outer reaches of the observable universe, and which brings us direct images of the cosmos soon after it was born 14 billion years ago.

Scientific progress has brought us to a sudden awareness of the structure and vastness of our cosmic atmosphere, and of our infinitesimal smallness. Advances began when the earth was no longer considered to be the centre of everything. Then it was realised that the sun is one of the 200 billion stars that make up our galaxy. Now with modern instruments we explore space at distances measured in billions of light years and populated by billions of galaxies. From the time the telescope was discovered, the measured dimensions of the universe have increased by 15 orders of magnitude, that is, one million billion times larger.

Some recent developments give further evidence of our marginal position in the cosmos. Observations of distant supernovae and of the

outer edges of the cosmos indicate that all known forms of matter and energy (the matter and energy that form the stars, galaxies, ourselves and every known thing) make up only a small fraction (around 4%) of the entire contents of the universe. In other words, 96% of the universe is made up of something unknown and radically different from anything with which we are familiar.

We are almost nothing in a cosmos with a vastness and variety that goes far beyond anything we can imagine.

But long before scientific cosmology came on the scene with its high precision instruments, the ancient Hebrew people looked to the sky and expressed the most central question with marvellous precision: “*When I see your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and stars that you set in place. What are humans that you are mindful of them, mere mortals that you care for them?*”<sup>1</sup> After three thousand years, modern science makes us ask the same question – with a new awareness, different language, perhaps more dramatic force. What is man in this great immensity? As we ride along on our small planet we feel as if we are thrown into the vastness of space and apparently serving no use. What is the meaning of that enormous abyss out there? We are built of materials that are marginal in the complex “budget” of nature. Why is so much of existence, apparently superfluous, extraneous to our human experience?

Then the psalm continues by immediately taking the other side of the paradox: “*Yet you have made them little less than a god, crowned them with glory and honour*”.<sup>2</sup> Humans are unquestionably very special creatures. The “I” of each human being – whose body is an infinitesimal fragment of the physical world – is a point in which nature assumes unprecedented properties: self-awareness and freedom. Each single person seeks a meaning for themselves and for each and every thing.<sup>3</sup> In every single

<sup>1</sup> *Psalm* 8:4-5.

<sup>2</sup> *Psalm* 8:6.

<sup>3</sup> Cfr. LUIGI GIUSSANI, “Il Senso Religioso”, Rizzoli, Milano 1997.

person, the entire universe is reflected. In the words of Saint Thomas Aquinas, “*Anima est quodammodo omnia*”,<sup>4</sup> each individual soul is somehow all things.

Many scientists of every epoch have clearly expressed their amazement at the enigmatic and incredible position of humankind in nature.<sup>5</sup> The great Blaise Pascal, for example, said, “*Man is but a reed, the most delicate in nature. There is no need for the entire universe to arm itself in order to annihilate him; some steam, a drop of water, would be enough to kill him. But even if the universe should crush him, man will always be more noble than that which kills him*”.<sup>6</sup>

Maria Mitchell said: “*The great spaces of creation cannot be measured by our limited power; [...] but the very vibration of the words we shout fill all of space, and its tremors reverberate for all time*”.<sup>7</sup>

Even an infinite multitude of infinite worlds, a concept put forward in recent cosmological speculation, would be totally insufficient to fill human desires and aspirations. Infinity, towards which the human heart tends, is found at a far deeper level than any unlimited measurement of space, time, material and any other physical property. The Italian poet Giacomo Leopardi expressed this situation with great intensity: “*The inability to be satisfied by any earthly thing or even, so to speak, by the entire earth; to consider the unfathomable extent of space, the number and amazing mass of worlds, and find that everything is small and petty compared to the capacity of the soul itself; to imagine the number of infinite worlds, the infinite universe, and feel that the soul and our desire could be even greater than the universe; and to forever claim that things are insufficient and unessential, and to suffer loss and emptiness, and hence boredom,*

<sup>4</sup> ST THOMAS AQUINAS, “De Veritate” in *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 14, art. 1; I q. 16, art. 3.

<sup>5</sup> Cfr. M. BERSANELLI – M. GARGANTINI, “Solo lo stupore conosce”, BUR, Milano, 2003.

<sup>6</sup> B. PASCAL, *Pensées* (Pensieri, Guaraldi/Gu.FO. Rimini 1995, p. 193).

<sup>7</sup> M. MITCHEL, cit. in M. LIVIO, *The Accelerating Universe*, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., N.Y. 2000, p. 256.

*seems to me to be the supreme sign of greatness and nobility that can be seen in human nature*".<sup>8</sup>

It is strange that the human creature, while having such a deep need to embrace the totality of things, should appear so insignificant at the cosmic level. However, during the last few decades, scientific progress has added new and unexpected elements in this regard. Nuclear physicists have discovered that the heavy elements necessary for biochemistry (like carbon and oxygen) are the result of very delicate thermonuclear processes that took place within stars that are now extinct. In other words, we are literally "children of the stars". Besides, many parameters at the basis of the structure of the physical universe, like the intensity of the four fundamental forces, the mass and charge of elementary particles, the rate of expansion of the primordial universe, the number of spatial and temporal dimensions, all appear to be balanced precisely in a way that allows complexity and life to emerge.

At all observable levels, from atomic nuclei to galaxy clusters, nature appears far more involved in our lives and to be actively participating in them in a way that we could never have imagined before the advent of science. All citizens one thousand years ago knew that they owed their lives to the sun, rain and the regularity of the seasons, and they were right. Today we also know that we could not exist without cosmic expansion, dark matter, primordial fluctuations, exploding supernovae, tectonic plates, neutrinos and the list goes on and on.

So, unexpectedly, the very universe from which science seemed to have almost alienated us, today seems to have recovered its wholeness as an atmosphere capable of accepting life, and even of giving hospitality to beings gifted with consciousness and freedom. In the Old Testament the perception of the cosmos as a home that welcomes and sustains life is

<sup>8</sup> G. LEOPARDI, "Pensieri" LXVIII, in *Poesie e prose*, Mondadori, Milano 1980, vol. 2. p. 321.

expressed wonderfully: “*He stretches out the heavens like a veil, spreads them out like a tent to dwell in*”.<sup>9</sup>

Cosmology probes the mystery of the universe, the mystery of “the totality of that which exists as being experimentally observable” as Pope John Paul II stated, and “it naturally leads to the question about totality itself, a question that finds no answer within this totality”.<sup>10</sup>

Scientific knowledge, in my opinion, is not equipped to respond to the ultimate and fundamental questioning of humanity and our religious sense. Nevertheless, it allows us to come closer to reality with an approach that is specific and narrow, but yet extraordinary, and through it we can admire from closer up the beauty and greatness of creation. Once again it is John Paul II who emphasised how “scientific reason has come a long way and has let us discover things with renewed wonder. It makes us ask again with new intensity some of the great questions of all times: From where did we come? Where are we going?”<sup>11</sup>

In our universities and research centres, what we need most of all is to find men and women who are “educators” that teach about reality by including the totality of its factors, and who awaken and keep alive the great questions of all times that nourish human activity. For far too long it was thought that scientific research had no need of these questions. Openness to meaning and destiny is necessary in the long run for the survival of science itself, to preserve its fascination and maintain its credibility and future.

We Christians who are familiar with the name and face of the One who responds to the insatiable longings of humanity, Christ who is present, have a particular responsibility in this kind of education and a very fascinating challenge.

<sup>9</sup> *Isaiah* 40:22.

<sup>10</sup> JOHN PAUL II, 28 September 1979, addressing participants at a conference on “The problem of the cosmos” sponsored by the Italian Encyclopaedia Institute on the occasion of the centenary of the birth of Einstein.

<sup>11</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Ibid.*



Personally speaking, the passion that has sustained me in research work and the main reason for my engagement in this field, is the experience, even if only initiating, to see in the beauty and power of the universe and its delicate transformations, the sign of the hand of the Creator that moment by moment makes all things new. I am sustained by the hope that my work and that of my collaborators and students can be a special way for us to give homage to the Infinite Mystery, the Lord of heaven and earth. May we repeat with feeling and full awareness the ancient exclamation of the psalms, “*O Lord, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast thou made them all*”.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> *Psalm* 104:24.

## The growth of biogenetics

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First of all I would like to thank you for this invitation. I identify very much with the experiences of all of you. At times I have the impression that this is a kind of Mount Tabor, a place where you experience the tangible presence of the Lord and of others, a place where the glory of God shines brightly. It is a place that also speaks about each one of us. However, the important thing about Tabor is not to remain there. It is a place of sending forth.

I have been asked to speak on a topic that would normally take me six months to develop with my students, but here I have to do it in ten minutes. When I submitted it by e-mail, I was told they would prefer a testimony of my experience in the world of science. Although you may not think so, as I am from Argentina, it is actually difficult for me to speak about my own experience. However, they insisted. So, here beside me I have the development of biogenetics, and over here I have my experience. I shall try to put together something that you will find practical and I shall try to respond to some of the questions you have been asking during these past few days.

On the development of biogenetics, I shall very briefly point out the milestones and its significance during the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Gregory Mendel's experiments demonstrated that hereditary characteristics are entities, they function as entities and are inherited independently. His observations are still valid. Mendel was an Augustinian, and he worked solely in the garden of the abbey, assisted by his great intellect and his desire for truth.

The first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was a period of great endeavour with the elements of biochemistry. It was a field that was undergoing a phase of great development at that time, and they were beginning to identify the elements that are inherited. The passage from hypotheses to confirmation is quite an amusing story. This is because the search for truth usually takes us to places that were not so apparent when we first set out to think about it. My students enjoyed seeing how it is important for honesty and truth to be discovered through concrete facts, and the real, true and sincere desire to find precisely that truth, the substance and meaning of things. The discovery that DNA was the basis of heredity was made by Avery around 1940, and this was also quite explosive because the scientific community had all its hope in proteins. They seemed to be the most important molecules of cellular biochemistry, and they still show their relevance today.

As regards the structure of DNA, we all know that the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the presentation of the model of the double helix took place in April 2003. After that there was an impressive rush to see how those elements were inherited, expressed and manifested in observed characteristics.

This whole area of genetic expression and the understanding of genomes and how they function, was very soon put into practical use. The field of genetic engineering arose. This is something that I have emphasised very much here: the fact that we know a thing means that we have the possibility of manipulating it. Knowledge of something can be confused with the right of its appropriation. The first thing scientists do is become familiar with DNA, how it functions and how it is expressed. The development of these experiments, asking questions about the material and testing them, is in effect to manipulate this DNA. In the laboratory we call this “tailor-made”. You take a strand of DNA, cut it to measure, bind it as you want to one of the known gene sequences of transcription regulation, places where repressors and stimulators can function, and assemble a new artificial chromosome. If this chromosome possesses sequence insertion in a new genome, as well as information about

a particular characteristic, it is then possible to introduce a new characteristic into a pre-existing organism.

In the mid-eighties they assembled new organisms. You all know that bacteria and micro-organisms in the ecosystem are capable of a number of operations, but none of them could degrade hydrocarbons. The first patented bacteria, the first patented organism, was a bacteria that digested hydrocarbons and that grew to become the oil company Exxon. The person who developed it was an Indian researcher, Chakravarti. This first patent underlines another human attitude: learn, manipulate, appropriate.

The patenting of living beings and the patenting of DNA sequences have given rise to much conflict in recent years, but yet it continues. By taking this path, curiosity to learn the truth produces ignorance, and I am using these words deliberately. The appropriation of knowledge, the appropriation of genetic sequences, the appropriation of organisms that carry genetic sequences, seems to be ongoing in a science that does not ask itself very often if what it is doing is good or bad. The experimental sciences today and the scientists who develop them consider that the freedom of scientific research is essential to human progress. Unfortunately, many examples in recent years show that it is not always so.

From all of this we see that from the development of genetics, from the enormous potential that these developments have given to humanity and from the attitudes that result from this, we clearly see the danger in a science without ethics. Today it is not possible that scientists should be the only ones to have permission to work outside ethical boundaries. This does not limit their work nor the resulting progress of humanity. In fact it is quite the opposite, because there is progress when it follows a course that will benefit humankind. Manipulation or appropriation, or such considerable modifications of nature through genetics, can only be positive if associated with the inherent benefit of humankind and awareness of the environment.

Now, in five minutes, I shall speak of my own experience.

How did I come to study at the University of Exact and Natural Sciences? It was really because I had a notion that I was interested in nature. What do you need in order to study science? You need an indomitable curiosity and a great desire to learn. I am immensely fascinated by all living beings. Curiosity is very important for a researcher. It is like a motor.

In my case, choosing a career was not easy. My family believed that a woman who studied would have to give up ideas of maternity, and that marriage and worse things would not happen because people in the exact sciences are too rational. You might laugh, but we do not come from cauliflowers but from families, and families have their traditions.

University was an important step for me. It really opened up new possibilities. Meeting people from the exact sciences challenged me in many ways. It also happened during the first two or three years that I lost my religious sense. Later on I realised why that happened. It was because it completely contradicted a series of truths that I was learning by scientific method at the university.

How do you return to faith? In my case it was through the personal example of a classmate who was a consecrated lay person. The way he lived, understood things, and even in small things, I saw that his life had something special. It was this, to a certain extent, that brought me back to the Church. I realised then that I had matured a lot. In a way, the fear of losing one's faith again – because one becomes too rational – can be well founded, but it implies growth.

I would like to emphasise that we can find something special through the attitude of certain people that we meet. Many times I have been asked how we can bring the faith to places that the Church cannot reach. The only thing I can say is that a Christian who lives the faith takes it everywhere and makes a difference without even realising it. People notice things that are different about this person, and I think that this is very effective.

I could have left university after graduation, but I was very involved in scientific research. I began my doctoral thesis in an institution that was at that time heading for a Nobel prize, the Campomar Foundation. I was interested in cellular biology because I was already working in microbiology. I was studying and working there for six years and had some memorable experiences that I shall tell you about.

Remember that in Argentina 90% of the people are baptised. It was strange that my colleagues used to ask me secretly in places where we could not be heard, questions about the existence of God, about life, and important questions about whether or not to have an abortion. They used to ask me and not other people. It made me feel that I was a person of reference. It was a situation I did not look for because it was not seen as a good thing for a scientist to be Catholic or for a person who went to Mass to have a place in certain institutions. We do not usually publicise our faith so that we can keep daily interaction more natural. Under these circumstances people remain silent about their feelings, but they need someone to give them an answer to the more difficult questions of life. During my doctorate years which were extremely intensive, I became more aware that there is something missing in an atmosphere that is basically secular – and moreover willingly and mandatorily agnostic. One cannot live well without faith. The answers furnished by science are insufficient. People continue to ask about the breadth and depth of their lives in all circumstances. There is no rational explanation for human suffering, but suffering is part of life. In the way people look for scientific answers, they continue to search for light, and they search for it in whatever way they can. The human spirit is an untiring searcher and a seeker of depth. I often remember the expression, “my soul thirsts for you, Lord, and will only find rest in you”.

Years later I had the chance to do research in the Catholic University. Until that time I had been in state universities. That was the time of IVF [in-vitro fertilisation] and they wanted to introduce legislation on this in Argentina. It was necessary to define as precisely as possible the moment

of conception, the moment in embryonic development that one could call it a person. Well, this was really the other side of the story. The situation was exactly the opposite. At times in religious circles it is difficult to speak scientifically. It also coincided with the formation of the Bioethical Institute in which all of this need was classified in the triangular method, in the personalised method, and it left plenty of room for the explanation of the fact, scientifically speaking.

One of the things I learned was that people, driven by interests, are capable of sustaining and making mental pirouettes to justify what suits them in the meetings about IVF. Scientists and colleagues that I had known at university and that I respected professionally, were capable of saying anything, and they still are. They said absolutely absurd things to suit their purposes, usually financial interests. It was very obvious that ethics in research was something that would have to be developed. Just as they teach ethics in medical courses, they need to do so too in scientific courses. There is no human activity free from moral control because human beings are moral beings. Research ethics is needed in undertakings like the Human Genome Project and In-vitro Fertilisation.

There will be progress always and whenever values are involved and they match the reality of what humankind is. We cannot speak of scientific progress if we do not incorporate the anthropological concept, if we do not realise who the human person is and what is good for that person.

Therefore, whether through the development of biogenetics or through my own experience, it is evident that the world of today needs and cries out for values. The simple fact of the development of bioethics is a way of saying to society: let us search for an ethical framework to carry out many activities. It is a framework that obviously can only be enriched by a Christian anthropology, because Christian anthropology sees humanity as we really are.

I would just like to mention one other thing that I heard here. The students were speaking about loneliness. I think that loneliness is part of life. I feel that a person can feel alone when confronted with certain cir-

cumstances, including big challenges. However, solitude can be seen from different perspectives. It can be viewed as a good opportunity for inner growth. It is sought by a hermit who only in solitude can find certain conditions in which to live in a particular way. It can be seen in the way described by Mamerto Menapace in a lovely story. He tells us that when a person dies, the Lord in welcome says: let us look at your life. They both look at the life journey of that person who says: Lord, I usually see two sets of footprints, but when I was suffering most, there is only one set. You left me alone. God said: no, my child. I was carrying you in my arms.

One hundred years ago, an Argentinian president, Julio Roca, wrote to a friend: it is very lonely when you are in power. On the high peaks, strong winds blow. You are on the plain, my friend. I think that famous people and great personalities feel this loneliness at times. But this solitude is a sign that we have been called to great things. Of course we do not search for isolation. We continue meeting people who mark our lives and with whom we can share some of the riches that God has given, our teachers and companions on the road.



## Current thought in the humanities

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In 1980, in the prestigious Unesco headquarters, a symbolic place for the promotion and development of culture in the world, Pope John Paul II in his seminal speech, spoke of the relationship between humankind and culture:

“The human person is always the primary factor in the cultural sphere; the human person is the primordial and fundamental factor of culture... Each individual lives integrally in the sphere of material values and at the same time in the sphere of spiritual values... In order to create culture we must consider, right to its ultimate consequences and integrally, the human being as a particular and autonomous value, as the bearer of the transcendence of the person”.

The Christian message has always touched human beings directly because it addresses them as it comes into contact with their culture. The Gospel, like leaven in the dough, transforms it from within. It is what Karl Rahner defined as “the embodying structure” of the Gospel message. This “structure” is found in various periods of the history of Christianity. Faith is not exhausted in any one culture, and at every turning-point of history it takes its missionary path once again through the cultures of the world. It is not a case of faith arriving and attaching itself to culture like an appendix or a separate entity. It is from within culture that it brings about the emergence of values and new elements, especially the centrality of human beings and their freedom. Throughout the centuries, in the Christian perspective, the centrality of the human person has always been of utmost importance even if also the most humble. The

human person is not only the subject but also the reason, end and measure of every culture.

In fact, the relationship between faith and culture has been present from the start of the apostolic preaching. The first generations of Christians experienced this in their contact with the Greco-Roman world. The Apostle Paul invited the recipients of his letters to discernment of the culture in which they, the first Christian communities, lived: “Test everything; retain what is good” (1 Th 5:21) he told the Christians of Thessalonika, present day Salonika. We ask ourselves now if this relationship between faith and culture is still valid today or if belongs to another age long past.

I am convinced that this relationship is also at the basis of my teaching at the university as a lecturer in contemporary history and also as a committed Christian in an ecclesial movement, the Saint Egidio Community. The question I often ask myself is how to refrain from making faith a private affair and to make it the leaven in the humanistic culture in which I am immersed.

The past is rich in examples of men and women of faith, of saints and martyrs who have influenced the culture of their time through their faith. Among us there are many young people who come from what was once termed eastern Europe. I would like to give the example of saints Cyril and Methodius whom Pope John Paul II named as co-patrons of Europe. On his visit to Bulgaria, when speaking of the work of the brother saints Cyril and Methodius, Pope John Paul II reminded us of how they had introduced the Gospel into the specific culture of the people they evangelised. So much so that they are considered not only as apostles of the Slavs but also as “the fathers” of their culture.

On that occasion the Pope gave an example using a metaphor to express his conviction that faith must become culture: “Culture and faith not only do not contradict each other, but have a relationship between them similar to that between a tree and its fruit”. The cultural patrimony that Cyril and Methodius have left the Slavic people is, according to the

Pope, the fruit of the tree of their faith. If we look at western culture and Europe it is easy to recognise its Christian roots. But other cultures too throughout the centuries have been influenced by the communication of the Gospel right up to our times. “The proclamation of the Christian faith”, the Pope said in Bulgaria, “has not crushed, but rather integrated and exalted the authentic human and cultural values typical of the genius of the countries evangelised”.

The relationship between faith and culture is also central in the teachings of the Second Vatican Council. It called on the Church to dialogue with the contemporary world, and it recalled the early Christian insights of “the seeds of the Word” and “evangelical preparation”. Referring also to the spiritual patrimony of the peoples, there was a call to discern, assume and illumine in the light of the Gospel, the spiritual and moral values present in the various cultures. We see this, for example, in the conciliar declarations *Lumen Gentium* and *Gaudium et Spes*.

What does it mean for us today, in the circles in which we move – the university world -, at a time in history characterised by speed and secularisation and the fragmenting of so many cultures, to live our own Christian identity in contact with the current culture? I see so many students around me, or university lecturers who call themselves Christians, and they feel threatened by this kind of world, so they adopt an attitude of defence in maintaining their positions or points of view. This is a serious problem with which we have to deal. The Pope reminded us in the message sent to the 8<sup>th</sup> International Youth Forum:

“It can happen, even among those who profess to be Christians, that some in the University behave as if God did not exist. Christianity is not a mere subjective religious preference, which is ultimately irrational, and relegated to the private sphere”.

We should be grateful to the Pope for these words because they shake us up. We keep our Christian lives “too private” in the university world, and there is a lack of that serenity we find in those who commu-

nicate their faith with friendship, attractiveness and love with whoever they meet.

This brings to mind the words of an auxiliary bishop of Rome, Bishop Pietro Rossano, who died some years ago. In a book written in 1985, “Vangelo e cultura” (Gospel and culture), he wrote, “A faith that is satisfied to close in on itself within the private sphere or to conceal itself in the secrecy of the heart without mingling with others, without reacting to what is openly said by others and to the ways it affects individuals and communities, would no longer respond to the vital implications of the Christian message nor to the internal dynamics that is inherent to it. It would be as written in the Letter of James: ‘Faith without works is dead’.”

This reminds us of what the Apostle Peter said: “Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope” (1 Pt 3:15). It is an invitation to which Christians try to respond as they live in today’s society, in its culture, in its rapid pace of change, in its multiple expressions and specialisations. How can we live our faith beyond the private realm and allow it to interact with human activity at the individual and community levels? Is it possible to live our faith in contemporary culture? Is it possible to overcome the rupture between Gospel and culture that is, as Pope Paul VI wrote in *Evangelii nuntiandi*: “the drama of our era, as it was for others too”?

These are questions that should not be posed in an academic or scholastic fashion but should be lived from day to day among the many people we meet, discovering their problems and dramas, trying to respond to questions, to the many human needs, existential and religious. In my experience as a university lecturer, I have found the answers in the Gospels. Some fundamental aspects of Christian culture today appear more communicative than in the past: those of solidarity, the defence of life and human dignity, dialogue. They are aspects that make up the large picture of reconciliation between Gospel and culture. Faith in Jesus and in his Word urges us to love this world and its cultures, and to widen our

knowledge and comprehension of so many human circumstances far and near. For our faith to be like this we need to research, study, think and love knowledge. Love for others, and learning to meet their culture, brings us beyond the cultural spheres of our existence. The Church in all its manifestations within the university milieu should become more and more a place of debate, encounter and study on many themes that are important to us and that are “leaven” of our faith.

We should also realise that there is a rupture between Gospel and culture that provokes dramas and causes division in a person’s life and in their relationships with others: selfishness, self love, violence, indifference, and resignation are some of the evils that we face daily. Besides, especially in recent years, it has become evident that there is not only one culture. There are very many. The University seems more and more fragmented (especially since the end of the period of totalitarian ideologies) and it is difficult to infuse Christian values there. Perhaps the social and religious frameworks of the past were more tranquil for Christians, at least in Italy. Of course, looking beyond Europe, we discover so many situations of suffering, difficulties and problems far greater than ours (in all the poor areas of Africa and Latin America). This is why European Christians should be more aware of the grace and the responsibility of living as Christians in the western world. It is here that the models for laws for the whole world are made.

Faced with this very un reassuring picture, the communication of the Gospel – on which Pope John Paul II has insisted so much throughout his pontificate – represents a force that cannot be found elsewhere. The Gospel can live freely with contemporary men and women and with their culture. This freedom is first of all represented by the love with which we live with others day by day. It is a love that leads Christians to go beyond any reason to hold back. It urges them on to be extrovert and attentive. Then there is evangelical freedom that generates serenity in the human and spiritual way of being of so many people. Pastoral work, which is the starting point of culture for many Christians, is carried out by being with

people and accompanying them, in a gentle and understanding struggle that can proclaim and witness, yet with an awareness that there is always a struggle. A serene struggle.

I would also like to add that it is necessary to make the humanism of the future rediscover the profound link between freedom and holiness. The love of God is the space of freedom for the person who is freed from selfishness and resignation. The Second Vatican Council drew up a document on freedom of conscience. This topic was taken up by Pope John Paul II: "Freedom of conscience is essential for the freedom of each human being. No human authority has the right to intervene in the conscience of another person". He adds, "a serious threat to peace is intolerance that is seen in the refusal to give freedom of conscience to others. From the events of history we have sadly learned where excesses can lead".

This is not the occasion to deal with the topic of Christian freedom, but there is no doubt that it is a theme that concerns the younger generations and contemporary culture, because they often misunderstand it, and this maintains a radical incompatibility between authority and the personal autonomy that is inherent in Christianity. This is obviously not to deny the deviations of history, but it should be pointed out that we owe to Christianity the fact that freedom is still considered today the essential reference point of western culture. However, when we speak of autonomy and freedom in the Christian tradition, the two terms should be understood within a specific spiritual framework, and this identity should not be reduced by contemporary secular thought.

All of this, however, does not enclose Christians in a cultural ghetto, but rather spurs them on to a closer dialogue with secular culture. In any case, Christian thought should be able to demonstrate the meaning of being enfolded by the Spirit of God, and in what sense in practice freedom can coincide with obedience and autonomy with dependence.

In biblical reflection Christian freedom is described, in addition to its dramatic relations with sin, more especially through its close links with the Christ, who "was obedient unto death, a death on a cross", thus

definitively closing the period of slavery and opening that of obedience. In this sense the supreme obedience of Christ is the culmination of the freedom of a Christian. Therefore there is no contradiction between the Gospel and obedience to it, because this word, according to the Second Vatican Council, “reveals man fully to man”. For a believer, “subjectivity”, that is, conscience, is decisive because it is there that there is a direct relationship with the Gospel.

The Book of Deuteronomy says significantly, “For this commandment which I command you this day is not too hard for you, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that you should say, ‘Who will go up for us to heaven, and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’ Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, ‘Who will go over the sea for us, and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’ But the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it” (Deut 30:11-14). Augustine might have been thinking of this passage from Scripture when he wrote that “*in interiore homine habitat veritas*”, truth resides within the person.

Religion is no longer seen as an enemy to be overcome, or a negative hangover from the past that should be abandoned, but rather one of the most effective forces in order to give sense to life. There is no doubt that the millions of believers who have come through these recent centuries when atheism was on the rampage, and who also sustained history with their adhesion to God and life, in spite of all the contradictions, allow us today to pick good fruit for all from this tree, even for those who in the past certainly did not yet look benevolently on the religious dimension of life. According to many secular people today, to retrieve what is best about the power of religion does not necessarily mean to believe in a personal and transcendent God. In synthesis, “Religion yes, God no” and they hypothesize a sort of religious atheism or, if you like, a religion without God, an “intra-worldly” transcendence. Ethics becomes the new sphere in which to pour the value and weight of religion, obviously emptied of its “theological” content. Here I should mention the risk – also

present in catholic currents – of reducing religion (Christianity in particular) to ethics. It is easy to perceive the presence of an obstinate moralism that tries in every way to constrain the Gospel to be no more than engagement with the world or to reduce it to honest behaviour, throwing away the theological dimension of Christian experience.

There were so many Christian martyrs in the early centuries, and there were many in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (defined as the most secularised century of history), who gave their lives for the Gospel, the “new martyrs” as the Pope called them during the Jubilee of 2000. These all showed how faith can ask for an act of obedience to God that goes beyond the objectivity of general ethical norms, as when Abraham was asked to sacrifice his son Isaac. This comes under the total primacy of a relationship with the absolute, and it cannot be regulated by general abstract norms that remove the believer from the requirement of always having to obey and especially having to obey God. Christians cannot ever stop loving their Lord and their brothers and sisters.

However, we must recognise that ethical questions have returned unexpectedly to the fore and many secular people ask, and rightly, where to find a solid foundation for the long list of moral commitments necessary for personal and associated life in this new millennium. To give just a few examples, we go from the need of morals in economic and political life to the struggle against all kinds of racism, from the urgent concern for the protection of the environment to the fundamental norms for bio-ethics, from the struggle to protect children to the sustaining of the countries of the Third World, and in general to the exorbitant increase in selfishness that could overwhelm the lives of individuals and communities. In other words, although ethics needs faith, you could also say it needs the mysterious. For believers the mystery has a name and that is the Lord. In this perspective, belief in God is the dimension that makes it obvious that we recognise that all people are children of the one God, thus giving the foundation to that inalienable dignity that guarantees to all the supreme rights of all human beings.



# The communications revolution

GREGORY BURKE

*Rome correspondent for Fox News USA*

The best thing about not being first to speak is that you can steal things from the other people. That's what journalists do. They don't think on their own. They report on what others say.

When I accepted Fr. Kohn's invitation some months ago I agreed to come even though I wasn't sure if I could actually be here. In fact, I was in Kosovo until late last night. I am very happy I could come to be with you. I feel that this is like the United Nations. You have been listening to all the serious people speak, professors and researchers, and now, with me you have television, and that is a name for show-business. I probably won't speak for more than twelve minutes because I am used to speaking for one minute and forty-five seconds. When speaking for the camera live I have a little plastic earpiece that is invisible to viewers and after one minute and thirty seconds a voice says in my ear, "wrap!". If they really want me to stop immediately they say "hard wrap!" and I have to say something like, "thank you. Goodbye".

I wish to speak to you about three things:

- The revolution in communications
- The professional vocation
- Share the joy.

## 1. THE REVOLUTION IN COMMUNICATIONS

I am not a "theory" person. I'm a practical person. In journalism you do not theorise much. You just "do it". There is no doubt that there is a rev-

olution going on. I can feel it. I am one step away from being a “one man band”. When something newsworthy happens, like an earthquake in Turkey, they send me there with a video-phone. This is a satellite phone attached to another phone that has a camera incorporated in it, and with a big enough battery or car, you can be anywhere in the world and transmit live. It is very likely that this may be a hand held set some day in the near future. Nowadays it fits into two very big suitcases (and this sometimes causes difficulties in airports!). These video-phones are getting smaller, and this is part of the revolution. The internet is another revolution, and I think it’s good (not all revolutions are good!) One of the Pope’s social encyclicals talks about opening up the market to the developing world. There is still a long way to go in this. However, the marketplace of ideas is open. This is good news for Christians and for all those with good ideas. Of course there is a lot of trash on the internet. It’s a free market. Nowadays there are few organisations, businesses, parishes or other entities without a website. Whether you like it or not, you have to learn to communicate or you will be out of the market. In Kosovo they are having difficulties getting things working, but in my hotel there was free internet service – as long as there was electric power. This is a positive revolution. I have come across websites connected with World Youth Day. That is the way to communicate a message as widely as possible.

## 2. THE PROFESSIONAL VOCATION

Whether you work in journalism, communications or anything else, learn how to do your job well. This should not be taken for granted. We Christians should give good example of human virtues. If we know how to work well and are competent, we give good witness. Lack of competence can have far-reaching effects. I realised that one day when doing a live broadcast for Fox News. I was waiting in front of the camera with the plastic earpiece in my ear waiting for the studio to say, “and now we

pass over to our correspondent in Rome”, but I could only hear a buzzing noise in my ear. There was something very wrong. What was it? Someone didn’t change a nine-volt battery! This is one of the small but essential jobs that should be done at the beginning of each working day. In general, competence attracts respect. Friendliness and good example are other ways of showing a Christian presence in the workplace.

There are ethical questions that must be faced in journalism just as in any other profession. Questions of honesty frequently arise. In a conversation I had recently, another journalist spoke of being able to acquire certain information by means of telling lies. That’s not right. Another important question for us is that of respecting other people and their privacy. We must never promote evil or violence. It sometimes seems that in our profession we only do what makes money. On occasions I have tried to dissuade my employers from promoting people who are not ethical in their business.

### 3. SHARE THE JOY

There is much talk about the film “The Passion” in recent months. We all need to be reminded sometimes about the meaning of suffering. But we also need to be reminded of the joy our faith brings us. A colleague told me she stopped going to Church because the priest made her feel guilty. I asked her if she’d ever heard of the Prodigal Son. We should help people to see that aspect of our faith. These are topics that come up when people are deciding if they should baptise their children, or when there is suffering in the family. We should remember to offer some words of joy on these occasions.

With all the joy I can see in this room, it is obvious that we have much joy to share!

## The new world order

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In order to identify exactly what we mean by “new world order”, we shall briefly look at the contrasting aspects of the three words contained in the expression. It is a term that refers us to globalisation, that vast phenomenon of the internationalisation of economies and societies. By extension, it is therefore a movement directed by geography and trade; from the exchange of goods to cultural exchange, passing through capital, workers, intellectual property, etc.

I. Is it a “*new*” globalisation? It is more like a new stage in a phenomenon that began in the 16<sup>th</sup> century with the first colonial conquests and the development of maritime trade. Each stage along the way was stimulated by a specific advance in technology, as it is today by progress in information technology. This new expansion of trade goes together with the expansion of democracy, particularly since the collapse of the Soviet block.

II. Is it now really an “*order*” to the extent where the economy (claiming to be autonomous), politics (undergoing enthusiasm for democracy) and ethics (with its instructions as well as its abdications of responsibility) dispute, sometimes violently, the destiny of humanity?

III. Finally, is it a new “*world*” order at a time when economic globalisation is still only accessible to a minority of the planet’s inhabitants? At the present time, almost 2.5 billion people live on less than two euro per

day, living under conditions and at levels of development (education, health care, infrastructure, etc.) that go against human dignity.

COMBINING FAITH AND REASON: MY FIRST STEPS AS A YOUTH

Under different names, these questions were already present twenty years ago when I was a university student: We spoke of a new international order, the continuing existence of a “third world”, social controversy over certain technological advances, etc. These questions, and my desire to contribute and respond, very likely guided me in my choices: to become an agronomist and to do two years voluntary work in Africa, then to prepare for a doctorate in economics. It was actually with a mixture of exuberance and deep conviction that I made a presentation stating the need for a critical stand regarding a science of economics that was too normative. I also presented the possibility of Christian lay involvement in that domain. It was also at that time that I had a strong spiritual experience following a simple reading of the parable of the talents.<sup>1</sup> This gave me a clear picture of the call and mission of lay people in the world. This realisation went from my head to my heart, and the Lord called me to a more generous service in the Church and to give a sort of “missionary dimension” to my budding professional career.

This availability of heart was soon called upon. Soon after my marriage to Brigitte and shortly before our departure for Ivory Coast, I decided to take the competitive examination to enter the INRA.<sup>2</sup> I chose the option of agricultural economics, a discipline that, in the eighties, was still largely dominated by Marxism, but was gradually giving way to a liberal ideology, a sort of economic determinism that often abruptly assimilated the natural law into that of the market. While preparing for the examination, I became interested in the social teachings of the Church. I

<sup>1</sup> *Mt* 25:14-30.

<sup>2</sup> Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique (National Institute for Agronomic Research).

learned that questions related to the development of peoples or to agriculture mostly bring us back to the demands of social justice: *an economic crisis is first of all a crisis of justice that has not been granted.*<sup>3</sup> Being a “green” inexperienced economist, I thus discovered little by little that my vocation was to promote economic justice. The oral examination consisted of a presentation of my earlier papers. I put into the bibliography two references from Catholic magisterium,<sup>4</sup> just to inform the examiners of the nature of the “goods” being examined. After a long debate, I was accepted. Was this a wink from the Holy Spirit? During my first meeting with my new director, he gave me the following advice: *“the essential thing in research is to believe in it!”* In a certain way and without changing the nature of my duties, he was inviting me to integrate in my role as researcher and teacher, this fruitful dialogue between reason – the many and various ways that humans rationalise – and our faith. Of course all of this required fidelity to the daily responsibilities. The students I teach remind me of my first profession of faith and of the fact that economics should be at one with ethical questions. The students’ ideals generously given, their concern for fairness, their idea of the just and good, in short, all of these ethical questions are part of building their personalities as men and women. It is my joy to accompany them on this road.

#### ETHICS AND ECONOMICS: A DIFFICULT ALLIANCE

For all that, ethics and economics are not to be confused. Economics is a positive science that analyses the exterior and visible face of human actions, thus bringing the various kinds of individual and social determinism up to date as they must be taken into account in the building of ethical judgement. Ethics, however, is like a science of morality and views personal action from the viewpoint of their interior dynamics: intention,

<sup>3</sup> HUDE H., 1992, *Ethique et Politique*, Ed. Universitaires.

<sup>4</sup> *Gaudium et Spes* (1965); *Laborem exercens* (1981).

free choice, concern for others, personal behaviour towards duty, truth, the good ... so many categories that no human science can hope to cover them all.

In forming a collaboration between economics and ethics one comes up against practical difficulties. Between these two orders, there is in fact a historical tension from the fact that both claim to be universalistic and normative. Today, the accelerated globalisation and “financiarisation” of the economy appear as a concrete manifestation of the economic order at a universal level. The claim that economic science is normative theoretically justifies the moral and observable autonomy of the economic order. On the other hand, although ethical demands are equally universal in scope, this cannot be claimed from the outset. Ethical consciousness needs mediation, particularly political and juridical, that allow it to exist in situations of positional ethics and to progressively take on universal scope.<sup>5</sup>

#### IS MORAL UNIVERSALISM STILL RATIONAL?

This ethical aspiration is strongly called into question nowadays, especially in view of our collective inability to block the neo-malthusianisms that come with economic globalisation. To call it moral universalism today would be hypocritical in view of the facts: “*The globalised economy operates a “trriage” between the privileged who have the right to universalism and the poor who, purely for economic reasons, are eliminated, relegated to the margins of a system that, although it always claims to have universalist values, is more and more unequal*”.<sup>6</sup> This leaves the greater part to ethical relativism – which negates the possibility of a rational moral universality – and, through successive abdications of responsibil-

<sup>5</sup> For more on the subject, see Ladrière J. 1997, *L'éthique dans l'univers de la rationalité*. Artel-Fides.

<sup>6</sup> RICHARD RORTY (1997), *Universalisme moral et tri économique*, *Futuribles*, p. 29-38 [Moral Universalism and Economic Triage]

ity, it leads to sacrificial utilitarianism: the interests of the greater number, and that implies the sacrifice of those “without a voice” and divests human persons of their individual dignity.

For want of a moral imperative, the economic order takes the place of universal reference, and it is expressed in the unrestrained globalisation of the economy. However, this universalism comes up against, on the one hand, the demands of social justice, a constitutive element of the dignity of the human person, and on the other hand, the lack of natural resources that impedes the universalisation of the western way of consumption. Besides, there are also ecological concerns. Because of these pitfalls in human rationality, our contemporaries now acknowledge, in the words of Jean-Pierre Dupuy, that: *“Modernity must choose what is most essential: its ethical demands for equality, which lead to the principles of universalisation, or else keep the way of development it has now. Either the present developed world isolates itself, which means that it protects itself more and more through protective measures of all kinds against the increasingly cruel and abominable aggressions developed through the resentment of those left behind; or it invents another way of relating to the world, to nature, to things and to beings that has the property of being able to be universalised at the scale of all humanity”*.<sup>7</sup>

#### THE “CHINKS” IN MODERNITY, MISSIONARY FIELD OF YOUNG LAY PEOPLE

Young Christians should be concerned with this: *“May the faithful, therefore, live in very close union with the other people of their time and may they strive to understand perfectly their way of thinking and judging, as expressed in their culture”*.<sup>8</sup> It is actually in connecting fully with the world in renewed dialogue between faith and cultures that new missionary insights arise. We can consider these pitfalls of human rationality as

<sup>7</sup> DUPUY J.-P., 2002, La Cité-Machine Working paper GRISE.

<sup>8</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*, 62



“cultural chinks” where some day the light of God may pass. Msgr Ancel uses the word “chink” with regard to the apparently insurmountable difficulties facing evangelising efforts by missionaries in Japan: it is a case of finding “*the chinks in the impenetrable wall of materialistic and atheistic paganism: one day the light of God may pass through these chinks*”.<sup>9</sup>

If we transfer this to our own cultural context, human reason must refute the rationalities that simply imitate it, and testify with great courage so that these cultural chinks can be “apologetic chinks”, that is, new features for dialogue between faith and reason. It is there that the young lay person should be, in these chinks of modernity, to humbly accompany the quest for truth of their young contemporaries.

To search for truth is to search for God, Edith Stein reminds us. Everything that happens shows that human reason never closes itself off from the transcendent, but rather goes to it naturally. It is a question of exercising our reason with lots of courage, proposing rather than imposing our faith in God the Creator, Saviour and Redeemer... a Faith that is very rational and acceptable, because in the heart of each person there are “stepping stones” to welcome the light of Faith. It is very encouraging for evangelisation nowadays to see that the courage of faith finds itself confirmed and supported by the courage of human reason. Human reason when correctly used opens us up to hope: it is certainly a fragile and uncertain hope, but it is nonetheless a chink of light within reason itself.

It is also ecclesial from two points of view. On the one hand, the Church is strengthened only by being faithful to its missionary calling, especially in the preliminaries it proposes to dialogue between God and humanity. On the other hand, humanity is more or less aware of a nostalgia for an *ethos*, that is of a community of convictions and of shared

<sup>9</sup> Cited by Mgr DE BERRANGER (1988), ALFRED ANCEL, un homme pour l’Evangile, Paris, *Le Centurion*, p. 269-275.

values, and these are upset today by ethical relativism. As the etymology of the term “ethical” suggests, a disposition to act freely and fairly therefore supposes a “disposition”. The Church for us believers is definitively the true *ethos*, the disposition of the Father who calls each of his children to the true freedom of children of God (cfr. *Jn* 8:36). The Church will be recognised as such in the measure in which, once the preliminaries are over, people of goodwill will be touched by fraternal charity and testimony of lives sustained by the grace of the Resurrected Christ.

## **IV – UNIVERSITY AND CHRISTIAN WITNESS**

**Saturday 3 April**



## 1. Christian presence in the university world

Most Rev. ANDRÉS ARTEAGA MANIEU

*Auxiliary Bishop of Santiago, Chile*

*Vice-chancellor, Pontifical Catholic University of Chile*

*President of the Episcopal Commission for Campus Ministry*

I wish to thank the Pontifical Council for the Laity and its President, Archbishop Stanislaw Rylko, for inviting me to take part in this international youth forum. I come from Santiago de Chile, from that distant southern land beyond the Andes, a land of both desert and ice beside the Pacific Ocean at the southernmost tip of the American continent. The Gospel arrived there too! I have come to this place near Rome and the Holy Father and his collaborators, in communion with the universal Church, to share our simple experience of witnessing to Christ in the milieu and culture of the university. For over two years I have been serving in the archdiocese as auxiliary bishop with the special task of attending to lay associations and the evangelisation of culture, and also as vice-chancellor of the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile. My experience is with the university and Church of our archdiocese, country and Latin America<sup>1</sup> where there is a long tradition of lay and youth commitment. This experience has been guided by the inspired magisterium of the Church since the Second Vatican Council and the clear words of authority from the Holy Father Pope John Paul II who has shown special interest in university culture and life during these past 25 years. He has invited

<sup>1</sup> In the archdiocese through an active Campus Ministry Vicariate, countrywide through a National Campus Ministry Commission of the Bishops' Conference; and in CELAM a Campus Ministry Sector in the Education Department. In 2003 it held the 5<sup>th</sup> Campus Ministry Meeting of Latin America and the Caribbean – see the journal *Medellin*, March 2001 produced by ITEPAL of CELAM, particularly the article by Leonidas Ortiz, *Pastoral Universitaria. Antecedentes históricos*, *Medellin* 27 (2001), 5-32.

us to set out into the deep and to fearlessly open the doors to Jesus Christ as ‘sentinels of dawn’. Today we can hear Jesus say as he said to Jairus’ daughter: “*I say to you, arise!*” (Mk 5:41).

At the dawn of a new era, we rediscover the importance of the University for the Church and society. It is of “decisive importance”, a question that is “vital”, “disconcerting”, with “unprecedented problems” and “challenging”, as we were told in an interdicastery document published about ten years ago, “*The Presence of the Church in the University and University Culture*”.<sup>2</sup> It correctly stated that new and serious problems are rapidly emerging “*for which those responsible are at times unprepared. The usual pastoral methods often prove ineffective and even the most zealous are discouraged*”.<sup>3</sup>

We shall never be able to calculate the extent to which culture is in debt to the University. We certainly cannot discount it as a major player at the start of the third millennium, especially in modern society that is characterised by globalisation, risk and knowledge. Although the university as an institution has faced considerable change during the last century (what happened in 1968 was a milestone), it has more than ever to say at the present moment of history and will have in the future. In spite of the many threats that hover over it and that sometimes weaken it as a place where masters and disciples strive to find the truth, we can feel the surge of a new “pastoral impulse” that urgently needs to be strengthened.<sup>4</sup> The pastoral programme of *Novo Millennio Ineunte* should find

<sup>2</sup> Published at Pentecost 1994 by the Congregation for Catholic Education, the Pontifical Council for the Laity and the Pontifical Council for Culture. It begins as follows: “*The University, and, more widely, university culture, are of decisive importance. In this field, vital questions are at stake and profound cultural changes present new challenges. The Church cannot fail to consider these in its mission to proclaim the Gospel*”.

<sup>3</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>4</sup> The above document has an important section dedicated to the *Situation of the University*. Among the difficulties mentioned are “loss of prestige”, “positivism”, “scepticism”, “indifference”, and others. There are also positive situations that are hope and opportunities for pastoral action. “*The presence of Catholics in the University is, in itself, a*

## 1. Christian presence in the university world

creative outlets in the university milieu: contemplate the face of Christ, live in ecclesial communion, give witness to the charity generated by the Spirit when the Gospel is accepted. The instruction to “set out into the deep” in the tempestuous sea of university culture, living the priority of grace and in search of holiness, is an instruction that is totally valid and necessary.<sup>5</sup>

In this period of history that we could describe as a “liquid” and belated modernity, we need someone to help us search “passionately” for the truth, to counteract the overwhelming globalising market forces, to overcome the temptation to change institutions of higher education and reduce them to job markets or simply centres for job training or technological specialisation. We must study reality in depth through the integration of knowledge, and proceed from phenomena to fundamentals and let knowledge mature into wisdom, as we are told in the apostolic letter *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* and the encyclical *Fides et Ratio*. The Church has experience of great worth, and it was in the heart of the Church that the University was born. “*The University was, in its earliest origins, one of the most significant expressions of the Church’s pastoral concern ... The Church’s presence in the University is not, in fact, a task that would remain external to the mission of proclaiming the faith*”.<sup>6</sup> The intervention of the Church in the University is a significant presence that must

*question and a hope for the Church. In many countries, this “presence” is, indeed, at one and the same time, numerically impressive and relatively modest in its effect. Too many teachers and students consider their faith a strictly private affair, or do not perceive the impact their university life has on their Christian existence. Their presence in the University seems like a parenthesis in their life of faith. Some, among them even priests or religious, in the name of university autonomy, go so far as to refrain from any explicit witness to their faith.*” (Ibidem).

<sup>5</sup> I must mention the importance for the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile to have had among our students and academics a man outstanding in faith and charity who helped bring the enriching presence of Christ to the university, Blessed Alberto Hurtado, s.j. (1901-1952).

<sup>6</sup> The Congregation for Catholic Education, the Pontifical Council for the Laity and the Pontifical Council for Culture, *The Presence of the Church in the University and University Culture*.

offer “ a real opportunity for encountering Christ ”. It cannot be limited to a cultural and scientific contribution. This is a central conviction that is essential for all pastoral work in the university milieu.

We do not need any other programme. “*The programme already exists*”, the Holy Father tells us. “*It is the plan found in the Gospel and in the living Tradition, it is the same as ever. Ultimately, it has its centre in Christ himself, who is to be known, loved and imitated, so that in him we may live the life of the Trinity, and with him transform history until its fulfilment in the heavenly Jerusalem. This is a programme which does not change with shifts of times and cultures, even though it takes account of time and culture for the sake of true dialogue and effective communication*” (*Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 29). The solution to the crisis of culture in general and of university culture in particular will not come from the market (financial regulations) or from the State (legal regulations), but from the university institution itself and the recovery of its deepest identity, as Professor Alejandro Llano reminded us.<sup>7</sup>

To do this we must overcome the anxieties that often paralyse or weaken the presence of Christians in the University. Obviously it is not the same in all circumstances and places. This international Forum is witness to the variety of experiences and situations in which we find ourselves and that we hope we have been able to share with each other. There are differences in how things are done in Catholic Universities and in state and private establishments, but there is a common identity in all higher institutions of education in the “ search for truth ”. In this undertaking as Church, we should not see any conflict between subjective aspects: the evangelisation of people (students, academics and managerial and administrative personnel), and objective aspects: the dialogue between faith and culture. Neither should it matter whether we under-

<sup>7</sup> Cfr. ALEJANDRO LLANO, *Repensar la Universidad*, *Humanitas* 33 (2004), 33-41. Extract from a conference by the author of the book *Repensar la universidad. La Universidad ante lo nuevo*. Eunsa, Madrid 2003.



stand the task more as “a pastoral approach to culture” or as a “specialised youth ministry”. It is a special place for the “synergy” we have hoped to see between clerics, religious and laity, and in territorial questions between movements and new communities and the local Church. It is a task that must care for *identity*, *openness* and appropriate *discernment*; the religious education of individuals, spiritual guidance and social and political projection of campus ministry.

In view of the extent of the material and the time available for this intervention, I shall limit myself to giving some reflections on these questions that can shed light for a renewed pastoral commitment of Christians in the university milieu. Hopefully we can overcome any kind of discouragement, or feelings of helplessness or unpreparedness. More than ever today, the words of Jesus will be heard saying to young students, “*I say to you, arise!*” (Mk 5:41).

## 1. UNIVERSITY IDENTITY AND CHRISTIAN IDENTITY

The presence of the Church and of Christians in the university milieu should be oriented towards emphasising the identity of the University in culture and society, something that is being attacked from all sides nowadays. It is not a passive presence but rather a particularly qualified one, like that of the early Christians in their culture, and like so many witnesses of the faith throughout history. The disciples of Jesus – the Way, Truth and Life –, must not give way to despair in their search for the truth about reality, the world and humanity, necessary for the development of culture. Today we must be the first, with humility and courage, to witness to the power of reason and the ultimate orientation of human freedom. These convictions regarding the human person, society and human activity, derive from an *encounter* with the living Christ, who manifests in all truth and plenitude, the greatness of the human vocation (cfr. *Gaudium et Spes*, 22). The encounter with the living Christ is the source of conversion, communion and solidarity, as we are reminded in

the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in America*. The university is, in a way, a “soundbox” of all that happens in society. In fact, many times things happen on campus before they occur in social life. It is therefore a privileged place for preaching, welcoming and witnessing to the Gospel. It is a “cultural laboratory” that helps to gestate the culture of new times,<sup>8</sup> and we cannot fail to be present there with qualified Christian witness.

All pastoral activity can highlight the goal of university life, the “passion and joy of truth” that can help to build a better world, for the University is an unparalleled centre of creativity and diffusion of knowledge for the good of humanity. In this sense the University has a undeniable social projection as “servant of the truth”. As the Holy Father pointed out in the apostolic constitution *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, Catholic universities can contribute in a special way to maintaining this search, especially in the quest for dialogue between reason and faith. While the system of higher education continuously reminds the Catholic University that it must maintain academic rigour and quality, the Church institutions remind each university of the importance of its search for the truth and its “catholicity”.

Campus ministry in state and private universities is not usually hampered. It is permitted and even encouraged by many authorities. The university world should not be neglected by Christians and their faith witness. This also applies to students who are learning about their faith and growing in Christian maturity with vitality, courage and energy at an important stage in their lives; and to academics in their noble work of

<sup>8</sup> As the Puebla document reminded us 15 years ago, *Evangelisation in the present and in the future of Latin America*, the conclusions of the III General Conference of the Latin American Bishops. The Church as school of those who forge history: “For Christians themselves, the Church must be a place where they learn to live their faith by experiencing it and discovering it incarnated in others. More urgently, it must be a school that educates people capable of making history, so that with Christ they can effectively move the history of our peoples towards the Kingdom” (274).

research, teaching and diffusing knowledge in its different expressions, characterised by thoughtful deliberation and serenity. It applies too to managerial and administrative staff who provide a favourable atmosphere for the development of university life.

Today more than ever we need *witnesses* and *masters*. They are the true *disciples* in the universities who go beyond the ‘dogmatism of science’ that sees science as being the only way to find out what is real and consequently fails to ask the ultimate questions and seek the corresponding answers. They are people who confirm ‘freedom of belief’ and never tire of seeking and understanding. However, the first testimony by Christians should be *kerygmatic*. By their very identity, they should speak *of Christ and from Christ*, with the hope that his word will continue to shine on this new century. Any other starting point would be a waste of time. The social relevance of the University will only come through its *identity*, and the contribution of Christians to the university identity is the faithful transparency of Christian identity. Today as in previous times there are many who ask to ‘see Jesus’ (cfr. *Jn* 12:21).

As Professor Pedro Morandé said in the Jubilee of University Professors, “the possibility of a new humanism passes through the holiness of the intellectual and university life. We must ask ourselves if it has managed to penetrate the universities through the roles of teacher and student, if holiness as a goal in life has entered the lecture halls, laboratories, libraries and curricula or if it has stayed outside in the grounds and in the extracurricular activities. It might seem that the staff have found a substitute for holiness in the concept of ‘academic excellence’ which is usually defined as social acceptance, prestige, third party accreditation or self-evaluation. There is no place for the action of grace. There is only one’s own effort”.<sup>9</sup> The Holy Father has continued to insist

<sup>9</sup> PEDRO MORANDE, *A new humanism for University life*, in the Congress of University Professors, Jubilee, 9 September 2000, Vatican City. Jubilee of University Professors, *The University for a new humanism*.

on prayer and the primacy of grace in our pastoral programming (cfr. *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 38). It is Jesus Christ who takes the initiative and who invites us to collaborate in this task. “*I say to you, arise!*” (Mk 5:41).

## 2. TO OVERCOME ANXIETIES

We must not only reach out to individuals, but to structures and ideas as well. In this work we can attend to the students and at the same time carry out authentic ‘university’ ministry in the sense of evangelisation of culture. Ministry of students only is not enough. Pastoral attention of the few becomes something marginal and irrelevant. That is a defensive attitude lacking in missionary impetus. Like the Good Shepherd, we must go and look for the one sheep (and at times the 99) that are lost. We must go out on mission. This is why the university is missionary territory. It is the new areopagus. The University needs an internal mission and it also needs to go out on mission towards the marginal areas of the Church and society. Christian witness not only contributes to the *identity* of the University but also helps it fulfil its social role more effectively. This testimony should come from community prayer, celebration and liturgy and reach out toward projects of research in the dialogue between faith and culture. This will not function without *creativity* and without courage, and creativity and courage require a strong *identity*. For this, the individuals need to be well prepared in Christian life and the evangelisation of culture. There is also need for spiritual guidance in all creative and courageous initiatives.

As regards activities, the most important ones are those that strengthen Christian identity, and also those that reveal this identity through outreach towards others, especially in solidarity and volunteer work. We must not forget those activities that belong specifically to the university, that of evangelising research, teaching and all that goes with

it. We must give more care and attention to the activities that God causes to arise among young people. Youth must be the first apostles of youth. "I say to you, arise!" (Mk 5:41).<sup>10</sup>

### 3. THE SPIRIT AS THE INITIATOR

Every university, and Catholic universities more so, are special places for the apostolate of the *Laity* that has come into its own in our times. Rather than speaking of the laity as being the prime movers, we should speak of an ecclesiology of communion and the role of the Spirit as the initiator. Students, academics and administrative staff are all actors and agents. So too are priests, religious and laity according to their specific role in Church life. Pastors and faithful need each other (cfr. *Lumen Gentium*, 32). There is mutual help and co-responsibility in the contribution of each one. "If communion expresses the essence of the Church, then it is normal that the spirituality of communion will tend to manifest itself in both the personal and community spheres, and awaking ever new forms of participation and shared responsibility in the faithful of every category" (*Pastores Gregis*, 44).<sup>11</sup> Priests working together can eliminate many remaining traces of clericalism and the laity can rediscover that the presbyteral ministry is irreplaceable. The chaplain has a key role in the religious education and spiritual guidance of teachers and students, and the more this is carried out from within the university rather than being served from outside campus, the more they will be able to do better and lasting work. Times demand that a priest be close to people and be specific. It is much more than just a simple chaplaincy. They, like the

<sup>10</sup> "If Christ is presented to young people as he really is, they experience him as an answer that is convincing and they can accept his message, even when it is demanding and bears the mark of the Cross" (Novo Millennio Ineunte, 9).

<sup>11</sup> "The Church is an organic communion that is fulfilled by coordinating the various charisms, ministries and services to achieve the final goal, salvation" (ibidem) See also *Pastores Gregis*, 10.

apostles, are approached by people with the request: “*We wish to see Jesus!*” (Jn 12:21).

Whatever is done in a university is just like work done in a laboratory. It is intended to be projected outside to all of society. In this organic collaboration between laity, religious and priests, the experience of new communities and ecclesial movements has much to offer. This is only possible if the Holy Spirit has a more important role in pastoral work, because sometimes one notices a resounding absence of the Spirit.<sup>12</sup> In addition to the clear *identity* of the presence of Christians, *openness* is also required, and courage and creativity that are granted by the Spirit as a gift. Although it is the responsibility of everyone, there is a special task for teachers who should be “masters”, and their “warmth and generosity may even make up for the deficiencies in structures”.<sup>13</sup> Today we need authentic “masters” and “witnesses”.

#### 4. TOWARDS THE SYNERGY OF ECCLESIAL COMMUNION

To express *identity* and *openness*, we need *discernment*, and to have some basic ‘structures’ necessary in pastoral ministry, especially those that can integrate the tasks of many different people. These are the local Church, the parishes, the new communities and ecclesial movements, and the various localities including those off campus like university colleges and residences. National and diocesan commissions of campus ministry can help

<sup>12</sup> Cfr. ROBERTO CALVO, *El déficit pneumatológico de las prácticas pastorales*, *Lumen* 49 (2000), 375-408; Idem, *La pastoral, ‘acción y fuerza’ del Espíritu*, *Estudios Trinitarios* 36 (2001), 325-371.

<sup>13</sup> The Congregation for Catholic Education, the Pontifical Council for the Laity and the Pontifical Council for Culture, *The Presence of the Church in the University and University Culture*. “*This witness of the Catholic teacher certainly does not consist in filling disciplines that are being taught with religious subject matter. Rather, it means opening up the horizon to the ultimate and fundamental questions, with the stimulating generosity of an active presence for the often inarticulate demands of young minds in search of points of reference and certainties, of guidance and purpose*”.

the Bishop to achieve synergy in pastoral work. They can find out about existing activities and propose new ones and go to where students and teachers meet. This ecclesial communion in university life is the best way for service to the common good in social life, important for the students when they exercise their professions after leaving the university, and the goal of research and university outreach.

Ecclesial movements and new communities are a gift from God, as Pope John Paul II said at Pentecost 1998, “they are the answer from the Holy Spirit to this dramatic challenge at the end of the millennium”.<sup>14</sup> Their vitality will bear fruit to the extent that they are integrated within the synergy of ecclesial communion. They are not *the Church* but are *in the Church*. They remind the Church of its vitality, and the Church reminds them of their ecclesiality. Cooperation in this sense is essential. “*The individual apostolate of Catholic lay people is ‘the starting-point and condition of the whole lay apostolate, even in its organized expression, and admits of no substitute’ (Apostolicam Actuositatem, 16). Nevertheless, it remains necessary and urgent for the Catholics present in the University to give a witness of communion and unity*”.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> An excellent commentary on the theme can be seen in the work by Germán DOIG, *Juan Pablo II y los movimientos eclesiales. Don del Espíritu* (John Paul II and ecclesial movements. Gift of the Spirit), Vida y Espiritualidad, Lima 1988. It points out some of the characteristics, contribution and newness, and the important ‘criteria of ecclesiality’ from *Christifideles Laici*, 30. Cfr. Cardinal SCHÖNBORN, *Le défi du christianisme* (the Christian challenge), Cerf, Paris, 2003, 53. It points out that Ecclesial movements and communities are characterised by being new phenomena, but they rediscover Church tradition while overcoming the categories of conservatism or progressiveness. They are often international and thus guarantee the universality of the Church, its universal catholicism. They show new forms of collaboration between laity and priests, and make new places for women in the Church. Finally, the future will recognise their profound influence on society. In spite of these contributions there are also dangers. They might consider themselves to have the only way and answers, but this can be overcome through collaboration and complementary roles, and by putting themselves at the service of the local Church.

<sup>15</sup> The Congregation for Catholic Education, the Pontifical Council for the Laity and the Pontifical Council for Culture, *The Presence of the Church in the University and University Culture*.

Identity, openness and discernment are basic criteria for the efforts of Christians in the University. We know this from experience and from the wise words addressed by the Holy Father in our Pontifical Catholic University of Chile some years ago as he addressed the world of culture: “*On the other hand, it is beyond all doubt that in their service to culture they must keep certain principles clearly in mind: the identity of faith without adulteration, open generosity to whatever exterior sources of knowledge can enrich it and critical discernment of these sources in keeping with that identity*”.<sup>16</sup> From what we are, disciples of Jesus, with the creativity and openness that the times and circumstances demand and with the discernment given by the Spirit, we can give adequate witness to Christ in the university milieu in the Church and with the Church. We will be concerned about preparation in the faith, spiritual guidance and social outreach in our work in the university.

May Our Lady *Sedes Sapientiae* help us to come close to Christ, and to advance in fidelity to ecclesial communion so that we may be able to show the benefits of witness of charity in our respective countries, there in the places where we carry out our mission. She accepted the Word of her Son and kept it in her heart and gave it life. The service of the University to truth is to give life to the world. In our times more than ever we must hear the call of Jesus, “*I say to you, arise!*” (Mk 5:41).

<sup>16</sup> “Without the immutable identity of the Christian faith, everything we receive will become facile transitory syncretisms that dissipate with time. Without adequate openness to the varied and rich sources of our times, Christian thought will be narrow and get left behind. Without the indispensable critical discernment, there may be apparent syntheses, but they are ruinous and cause so much damage to the conscience of the faithful today” (JOHN PAUL II, *Address to the world of culture and builders of society*, Pontifical Catholic University of Chile, 3.4.1987).



## 2. Panel discussion: *Ways of witnessing and proclamation in the university world*

### Campus ministry

REV. LORENZO LEUZZI

*Director of the Campus Ministry Office  
of the Diocese of Rome*

#### A. THE MAGISTERIUM OF THE POPE

- Address to the clergy of Rome, 8 March 1982
- Apostolic exhortation *Ecclesia in Europa*, n. 59, 28 June 2003

#### B. THE STRONG LINKS BETWEEN UNIVERSITY AND CHURCH

##### a) *Why the Church needs the university*

The reason for this is rooted in the very mission of the Church. The faith taught by the Church is a *fides quaerens intellectum*: a faith that must penetrate human intelligence, that must be thought of through human intelligence, and that must find place in human intelligence for persuasive reasoning (yet still remaining a freely given gift).

One of the foremost places to find this process is the University because from its origins the University as an institution has been intended for the pursuit of the scientific knowledge of all truth: “The absence of the Church from the University world is a cause of great harm for religion in the modern world” (Pope John Paul II).

The Church, therefore, has need of the University because, in addi-

tion to thought and reflection concerning faith coming from within the Church, faith also needs to meet the paths of those in different places who try in every way, consciously or unconsciously, to search for God (*intellectus quaerens fidem*).

b) *Why the university needs the Church*

The Church proclaims and testifies to the ultimate meaning of life, Christ, in whose mystery is revealed completely the mystery of each human person and all things (cfr. *Gaudium et spes*, n. 22).

“Unless there are close links between Church and University, it is the human person who will be harmed: faith will not generate culture and culture will not be fully humanising. Within civilisation the covenant with creative Wisdom will not be rebuilt, even though everyone today, consciously or unconsciously, regards this as an urgent need. There will be no progress made towards a civilisation of Wisdom and Love” (Pope John Paul II to the clergy of Rome, 8 March 1982).

C. LOCAL CHURCH AND CAMPUS MINISTRY

“Convinced of the importance of academic institutions, I also ask the various local Churches to promote an adequate pastoral care of the university community, favouring whatever corresponds to present cultural needs” (*Ecclesia in Europa*, n. 59).

Pope John Paul II is entrusting those in campus ministry with the great challenge of renewing the ties between Church and University.

How can this be done?

By ensuring a renewed significant presence of the faithful in universities:

– so that the light of the Gospel may be seen to open genuine perspectives of research and to make them more humane

– so that university culture, oriented and animated in a Christian way, may be a model of learning and civilisation.

Campus ministry in this new perspective is not limited to educating university students in the faith. It provides a variety of experiences and types of presence that help bring about a culture that can have a positive influence on the ecclesial community and on society.

In this sense campus ministry is an excellent way of testifying to the benefits of the Gospel in history and of giving creative impetus to the new evangelisation.

a) *Proposals for campus ministry*

1. Get to know about the universities in the diocese:

- State universities
- Private universities
- Catholic universities

2. Get to know the universities attended by youth from ecclesial groups

3. Encourage the local Church to communicate with the university at the institutional level

4. Start courses for parish youth groups that will equip students to witness in the universities

5. Involve all institutions and groups that work with students: university residences, cultural centres, movements, associations, ecclesial groups and new communities

6. Promote the preparation of a diocesan programme of campus ministry for all those in universities: students, teachers, administrative and technical personnel.

b) *The prime movers of campus ministry*

This includes all university students, but here we shall take the institutional aspect:

- University chaplaincy, campus ministry centres, university parishes, etc.
- University residences
- Associations, movements, ecclesial groups and new communities
- University student groups in parishes

c) *Essentials and priorities for ministry*

- Involvement of the local Church and Bishop
- Communion
- Missionary aspect
- Academic competence

d) *The heart of campus ministry: the university chaplaincy*

The university chaplaincy (university parish, campus ministry centre) is a place of encounter and spiritual dialogue, of personal and group education in the faith, and it is a centre for qualified Christian cultural animation. The need for this is not diminished in our multicultural society, but rather it opens up to wider challenges and perspectives:

The specific tasks of the university chaplaincy are:

- to help the university to fulfil its specific function on the cultural and social level
- to be a visible and effective sign of evangelisation, of authentic ecclesial service, and to go beyond the tendency to keep one's faith a private affair

- to be a place of welcome and service for all Catholics, individually and associatively, who are witnesses of unity and ecumenical relations and charity towards all in the university community. It maintains close dialogue with all in the university and has expertise in individual spiritual care, and so the chaplaincy responds to the academic and pastoral demands of the Christian community to keep the search for God and witnessing to the faith culturally alive

- It promotes community type education in the faith expressed in different ways. It is one of accompaniment, welcome, availability and friendship, attentive to evangelical discernment. It teaches about the spiritual life, rooted in the Word of God, assimilated and shared in sacramental and liturgical life.

“The chaplaincy – each university chaplaincy – thus proceeds on its path of ministry intensifying the apostolic dedication with which it has always been characterised. It is a *place of the spirit* where believers in Christ pray and find nourishment, guidance and support, and conduct their lives differently from that generally expected in the university. It is a *gymnasium of Christian virtue* where baptismal life grows and develops and is expressed with apostolic zeal. It is an *open and welcoming house* for all those who listen to the Master within and search for the truth, and who serve humankind through daily dedication to learning that is not satisfied with narrow pragmatic ends. In this period of post modernity, it is a very *alive and impelling centre of Christian animation of culture* where there is respectful and frank dialogue, clear and motivated explanations (cfr. *1 Pt 3:15*), and living testimony that makes people wonder and feel convinced” (JOHN PAUL II, *Homily to university students in Rome*, 12 December 1997).

e) *Working proposals: cultural laboratories*

“Today the most attentive epistemological reflection recognizes the need for the human and natural sciences to enter into dialogue once again, so

that learning may recover the sense of a profoundly unifying inspiration. Scientific and technological progress in our day puts into human hands possibilities which are both magnificent and frightening. Recognition of the limits of science when moral demands are considered, is not obscurantism. It is a guarantee that research will be worthy of the human person and will be placed at the service of life. You, my dear friends who are involved in scientific research, must make universities “**cultural laboratories**” in which theology, philosophy, human sciences and natural sciences may engage in constructive dialogue, looking to the moral law as an intrinsic requirement of research and a condition for its full value in seeking out the truth” (JOHN PAUL II, *Address to the participants at the world meeting of university professors*, 9 September 2000).

**Cultural laboratories** are a response to this desire. Witnessing to the faith, particularly in the University, is for the most part cultural in nature.

- From deep conviction: “It is time for greater comprehension of the fact that *the generating nucleus of every authentic culture is formed through its approach to the mystery of God*, in which only a social order centred on dignity and personal responsibility can find an unshakeable foundation... This is the point on which to build a new culture. This is the main contribution that we as Christians can give...” JOHN PAUL II, *Speech to the ecclesial convention in Palermo*, 2).

- In a style of dialogue and sincerity:
  - Reopen spaces for the search for truth and let them be the normal ambience of the University
  - Never let the density of meaning of the Christian faith be lessened in its cultural expression
  - Look to the perfection of the whole person and to the good of society
  - Educate for a well-rounded culture in dialogue that is open, frank, respectful and serene

– There should be no sense of superiority nor of cultural inferiority. Cultural pluralism is the model that describes the present situation. It is full of opportunity, but also of conflict. We must shun both romanticism (theological) that only sees the interesting and positive aspects in cultures, and euphoria for multiculturalism in which praise for differences surreptitiously removes content and identity and leaves a vacuum.

#### D. CAMPUS MINISTRY IN ROME AND EUROPE

- April 1998: First European Chaplains Congress and founding of the European University Chaplains Committee
- September 1999: World meeting of national campus ministry delegates (the Pope asked that there should be coordination in every continent promoted by the Episcopate )
- September 2000: Jubilee of University professors
- June 2001: the European Committee of University Chaplains becomes part of the Catechesis- University section of the Council of European Episcopal Conferences (CCEE)
- March 2003: First European University Students Conference: Intellectual charity, the soul of the new Europe
- July 2003: European symposium “ Church and University ” promoted by the CCEE
- March 2004: Second European University Students Conference: “ Christ, hope for Europe ”

#### E. TOWARDS COLOGNE 2005

- Proposed theme: intellectual research, a way to meet Christ! (Like the Magi, you too are pilgrims impelled by the desire to find the Messiah and adore him! from the message of Pope John Paul II for World Youth Day 2003)

- Involvement of the European University Chaplains Committee and the national and diocesan structures of campus ministry for the preparation and encouragement of university students at WYD 2005
- The drawing up of a course for university students stemming from the Holy Father's message and the promotion of university activities of proclamation, prayer, reflection and study.
- Specific activities
  - Open cultural laboratories in universities on the theme of WYD, particularly on the relationship between faith and culture
  - the reading and study of the Encyclical letter *Fides et Ratio*
  - introduction to Saint Albert the Great and Edith Stein
  - Twin the universities of Rome with those of Cologne
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> European University Students Conference (March 2005): day of prayer and awareness of WYD 2005 for university students.



## **Ecclesial movements, associations and communities**

Rev. KONSTANTIN SPIEGELFELD

*Director of the Campus Ministry Office, Vienna*

The following is a brief description of campus ministry in the diocese of Vienna, the “mission in the city” of 2003, and the various groups that are involved.

### 1. BACKGROUND

There are about 120,000 university students in Vienna. Campus ministry comes under the jurisdiction of the diocese of Vienna. It is called the Catholic University Community (Katholische Hochschulgemeinde) because, just like a parish community, the basic structure of pastoral ministry, it is intended to be a community led by a priest.

Universities in Austria are mostly state institutions. Some private universities have been established in recent years. Universities belonging to the Church are considered to be higher institutes of theology. The main university of Vienna was founded in 1365, and it is situated right in the centre of the city. The Catholic University Community is an associated institution of the university, and therefore not an integral part of it, but there is good collaboration between the two.

The basic concept is “God in everyday life”. There are four centres for students to meet that are basically student residences with additional facilities. The one nearest to the university can lodge 200 students. There is a chapel in each of the centres. In our centre, Edith Stein House, there is a chapel, canteen, bar, a small library and quite a few rooms where students can study and meet. Encounter, guidance and religious education

are our three “keywords” for ministry and our programme is structured around them. The daily Mass, talks, group debates, excursions, free time activities and Sunday Mass in the Cathedral of Saint Stephen are the main pillars of our ministry.

## 2. MISSION IN THE CITY AND COLLABORATION WITH DIFFERENT GROUPS

I shall now speak of our campus ministry which is youth ministry, conceived in the first place for students and secondly for teachers. We regard the “togetherness” or unity among the students as very important, and the students are certainly very diverse.

### 2.1. *Halls of residence for over 200 students*

Students that stay in our halls of residence are chosen according to two criteria: involvement in the Church, past or future, and social need. A written request and presentation by a priest can give an idea about the student. The selection is made by a small group according to a system of points. There is a personal dialogue with a priest. Some of the students in the residence have a particularly strong commitment. They pray together once a day, spend one evening together and are active in the Catholic University Community. The experience of the Community with diverse charisms is a formative experience for young adults and gives them experience of community life.

### 2.2. *Collaboration with other groups: the groups involved and their cooperation*

In our university centres there are places of encounter. First of all I shall speak of our regular activities and then I shall tell you of a particular occasion.

The groups that regularly collaborate in campus ministry are: Communauté St Jean, Loretto Gebetskreis (“Loreto” prayer group),

Communion and Liberation, Legion of Mary, Katholische Hochschuljugend (Catholic University Youth), YOU! Magazine, Gemeinschaft von Lamm (the Lamb Community).

The *Communauté St Jean* are concerned with philosophical and theological education and are very qualified in spiritual guidance. Together with the “Loreto” prayer group we have developed a programme called “Duc in altum”. In a course that takes six weekends during the year in addition to a summer course, there is study on the themes of the human person, being a person and love; with the instruments of philosophy and in the area of theology, topics include the Church, Bible, sacraments and prayer. Various priests collaborate, and lecturers of theology in the university of Vienna and the Theological Institute “Zisterziener” in Heiligenkreuz near Vienna.

*Communion and Liberation* help very much with campus ministry through the community school, seminars and discussions on books by Luigi Giussani, and especially with debates and talks. As a charitable activity they visit elderly people in a retirement home together with other students.

The “Loreto” prayer group take part in the “Alpha” course which is an introduction to the fundamental principles of the Catholic faith, and lasts for ten weeks. They are also involved in week-long encounters on topics concerning the university and also with times of prayer.

*The Legion of Mary* have a large student presidium. The magazine YOU! proclaims the Catholic faith to young people by using clear modern language and plenty of personal witnessing and pictures.

*The Lamb Community* invite students to take part in their apostolate in the town squares and in prayer.

*The Catholic University Youth* has a student choir and a structure for personal dialogue with students, and they organise talks.

Some things are done directly by the Catholic University Community, and many in collaboration with other groups and ecclesial communities. Then there are projects in common and pastoral projects.

### 2.3. *Relations with the university*

We are invited to all major events. As the university chaplain, together with another priest and a university professor, I teach in the Philosophy Faculty by giving a seminar on the philosophy of religion called “The God question”. In this seminar they read, present and study the writings of well-known authors of the Church.

### 2.4. *Together*

How can we create *togetherness*? How can we find unity in diversity? The “Stadtmission” (mission in the city) is a good example.

All of us together invite the students to Mass on Sunday evenings at 7 o'clock in Saint Stephen's Cathedral and also to daily Mass in our chapel. An important event in our lives together is the pilgrimage from Vienna to Mariazell. It is a four day pilgrimage that takes place annually.

The priests and other full time collaborators in campus ministry meet regularly, some of them weekly and others four times a year, to exchange and share experiences and talk about common activities and plans.

### 2.5. *Mission in the city of Vienna (23 May - 1 June 2003)*

The mission in the city in May 2003 was an idea that came from several cardinals. The theme was: “Open the doors to Christ”. There was very much collaboration and unity between the diocese and campus ministry.

Our Catholic University Community took part in several ways.

We arranged it in a way that the students themselves were the main players in the activities proposed and they were the ones to invite and give witness of Christian faith and of Jesus. It was seen that a goal and task in common strengthens unity. From the outset the students worked on the preparation of the programme together. Their initiatives, vitality and fantasy were very necessary if we were to reach out to other students. From this point of view unity is not only necessary and

a practical advantage, but above all a spiritual reality that allows us to see the working of the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit who touches and transforms the hearts and minds of young people. For that reason it was essential to have prayer at the beginning and during the whole day and Eucharistic adoration.

In particular, we collaborated on a youth programme that was part of the mission in the city by setting up information stands and meeting points in the four university centres. There were always four students present and a priest. There was an information board giving the programme for the week and invitations to events. We had prepared and distributed a questionnaire before the event. This was useful for opening a conversation with students, and it also gave us interesting points to analyse in terms of mission. Small snacks and drinks were offered. This university activity was organised through the collaboration of three different groups. Morning began with prayer together and time for dialogue and exchange. The main activities took place from 11 until 2 o'clock in the afternoon.

The motto for the week was “A beautiful mind”, the title of a well-known film that was shown on one of the evenings. We picked out a key phrase: “He saw the world in a way no one could imagine”. That evening we invited the audience to a discussion on “University and Christianity”, with the participation of two university professors of theology (one from Vienna and the other from Milan), an expert in philosophy and religion, a parliamentary deputy and an assistant lecturer. The day's programme concluded with prayer meetings and a musical programme.

## *2.6. Our evaluation of the experience*

*Positive aspects:* God gives different gifts and charisms that are signs of the variety of paths of faith in the one Church. The Church could be felt and recognised as the “Body of Christ”, and our concept of the

Church was widened. World Youth Days have surely contributed in this respect.

*Challenges:* to favour the community aspect rather than personal interests: “ We want to lead people, not only to our group, but first of all to Jesus ”.

Respect on the part of the group or movement towards a particular concrete situation of ministry, “ Inculturation of the charism of the foundation and the founder ”. (In active movements at the international level there should be a person responsible in the diocese or at least at the level of the Bishops’ Conference).

Togetherness is possible, even if not always easy. However, the effort brings forth many fruits, and those fruits are desirable for everyone!

With that, I would like to invite you all to visit our campus ministry centres in Vienna.

# Ecumenical dialogue

TANIOS CHAHWAN

*Joint Secretary general  
Council for Lay Apostolate, Lebanon*

## 1. A SIGNIFICANT STORY

Back in 1983 I was a first year student in the science faculty in the Lebanese University. I was 18, and I was involved in the campus ministry that had been established in 1979 by the Assembly of Catholic Patriarchs and Bishops in Lebanon (APECL). We were summoned to the campus ministry office in our faculty, and our chaplain informed us of a very delicate situation. The colleague that we had elected two months previously was obliged to leave Lebanon because his family were having difficulties, so we had to elect another to take his place. There were about one hundred of us, the majority Catholic, yet we decided to elect our friend Georges who was Greek Orthodox and from the north of the country. The day after the election, early in the morning, we were surprised when our friend told us bitterly that he would have to decline the position in order to be faithful to his Church because his bishop regarded the result of the election to be a form of proselytism. We tried to meet the bishop to convince him, but it was a lost cause from the beginning. He had “theological and canonical” reasons against our friend’s accepting. Caught between the bishop’s reasoning and our desire to elect our Orthodox friend, we chose a “Lebanese” third way. Georges stepped down and we elected a Catholic, but it was Georges who unofficially led the animation team of our faculty. This story is significant in the way it illustrates one of the aspects of the ecumenical experience in Lebanon.

## 2. THE LEBANESE CONTEXT

Lebanon has a unique position in the Arab region. As we can see from its history, even from antiquity Lebanon was considered to be a place where assorted groups of people lived. Since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century it has been an oasis of democracy and free expression in that region of the Near East. It has also been noted for excellence in the region for the level of its general and higher education. This tradition was inherited from the Maronite Church. From the year 1736 when the patriarchal council known as “the great Lebanese council” opted for the compulsory education of children, the first schools in the Near East were established. These schools were the centres of the Arab renaissance and nationalism at the beginning of the last century. As mediator between east and west, Lebanon has had different roles and functions within the Arab mosaic. On the one hand, it has welcomed all the Christian and Muslim minorities in the region, a total of 18 communities. On the other hand, it has favoured a de-compartmentalisation among the various oriental Catholic Churches, especially the Antiochian churches. It has also strengthened ecumenical dialogue between Catholics and Orthodox which together have played an important and decisive cultural role in the Arab world from the time of the emergence of Islam until the present time. This is a role that has given rise to the various forms of Muslim-Christian dialogue.

## 3. EVERYDAY ECUMENISM OR “POPULAR ECUMENISM”

This said, ecumenism in Lebanon is an everyday kind of ecumenism that is expressed in everyday life in neighbourhoods, streets, businesses, social and political life, schools, parishes, etc., and particularly in the universities. Ecumenism is therefore not an elitist initiative but rather a “way of life” tradition that is independent of theological and canonical dialogue. It is expressed in its popular form by the desire of Christians to meet and together form a “model of unity”.



In this spontaneous and informal circle of influence, the young Christians of Lebanon are also involved as they express their faith and witness in everyday life, and in particular in the university. Young Catholics and Orthodox intermingle in the private and public universities. There are 6 private Catholic universities, one Orthodox, and 3 American of Protestant tradition; and the Lebanese University which is public. Most of them feel that belonging to Christ is more important than belonging to specific confessions, that the individual confessions are concerned about their own interests, that unity is essential and that the confessional conflicts of interest are an impediment. Those engaged in the movements as well as those in parish and diocesan communities assimilate the fundamentals of their Church membership and believe that “union is possible in diversity”.

Both advantages and drawbacks arise from this situation. The advantages lie in the rejection of confessionalism and in the desire of young people to belong to one Church that goes beyond the limits of their particular churches. The drawbacks are seen in the confessional perceptions that young people have of their churches, perceptions that dismiss the sacramental aspect and dominate it. Moreover, in all this intermingling there is an illusory form of “Christian unity” that confuses with cultural, social and political Christianity something that in the near future could contribute to a loss of a sense of belonging to the particular churches.

### 3. OFFICIAL ECUMENISM OR “INSTITUTIONAL ECUMENISM”

Although “popular ecumenism” occurs spontaneously and eagerly in everyday life in the universities of Lebanon, official ecumenism is expressed both by openness and reticence. On the Catholic side, campus ministry is intended to accompany young people in the Catholic, Protestant and the Lebanese University, and has no hesitation in reaching out to youth from all the Christian confessions. Meanwhile, the MJO, the Young Orthodox Movement, concentrate their pastoral work in the

parishes and among those at the Orthodox University of Balamand and in some of the faculties of the Lebanese University, and they are content if the Orthodox students take part. In spite of the remarkable efforts in the field of ecumenism since the nineteen eighties that have given rise to an annual meeting between Catholic and Orthodox Patriarchs, and an agreement to publish a Christian catechism in common, and in spite of the involvement of all the eastern churches in the activities of the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC), official and institutional ecumenism is not visible in the universities.

On the other hand, the council for the apostolate of the laity in the APECL, on the initiative of its ecumenical commission as well as its national commission for youth ministry, has been able to “break the ice” with the MJO by means of World Youth Day. In fact, beginning in 1997, the participation of young Lebanese in World Youth Day increased in scale. Previous to that date the Catholic Church in Lebanon had participated in WYD with a symbolic group of about ten people, but in 1997 three thousand young Lebanese registered to take part. 15% of these were Orthodox, most of them university students. The Council for the Lay Apostolate in Lebanon was encouraged by this and saw it as an opportunity not to be lost. Contact was immediately made with the MJO to tell them about this unexpected situation in order to avoid any misunderstandings. To our surprise, the MJO were very understanding and they decided to send an official delegation of 20 young people to WYD in Paris. Since then, the MJO have participated in several of our council activities.

## 5. HOPES FOR THE FUTURE

Ecumenism in the university wavers between, on the one hand, the enthusiasm of young people to belong to a single Church that goes beyond the particular churches and that would have a model of unity and communion within the university, and, on the other hand, “the theolog-

ical and canonical reasoning” of the hierarchy. While the aspects of popular ecumenism seen in the university are worthy of consideration “in truth and charity”, so too are the attitudes and positions of the ecclesial authorities. Should there not be close dialogue between the youth who innocently declare their objections to the sin of disunity, and the Church which has all of eternity to accomplish its mission of healing, in order to soothe the impatience and objections of the youth? This would give witness and it would be the mission of the Church in accordance with its nature as well as its ecumenical vocation. The urgency of witness and mission of the Church in the university world is being emphasised more and more, and so too is the urgency of ecumenical witness. It is a form of witnessing that should “start afresh from Christ” who embodied divine and Trinitarian ecumenism in love and communion and preached the unity of all humanity because “either we will be Christians together or we won’t be Christians at all.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Pastoral Letter of the Eastern Catholic Patriarchs, Easter 1992, n. 39.

## Interreligious dialogue

TITY ANTONY

*Jesus Youth Movement, India*

It is truly a great privilege and a blessing for me to be a participant in the 8th International Youth Forum as a representative of the Jesus Youth of India and to give this presentation on the theme of Campus Ministry, from the point of view of religious dialogue, with reference to the Asian context.

Let me begin by fixing the Asian context. Firstly, Asia is a continent of teeming masses. Its lands are home to about two-thirds of the world's population. Nearly 60 per cent of this population is below 25 years of age. It is, therefore, the world of the youth; the future of the world.

Secondly, Asia is largely characterized by degrading and inhuman poverty along with its injustices and inequalities, scarred by riots, wars and suffering, and recently troubled by an economic crisis which in turn has precipitated severe unemployment and social unrest. On the other hand, many countries in Asia are, at the same time, in the process of nation building, development, industrialization and modernisation. With this comes the wave of urbanization, trans-national migration, worker exploitation, financial mismanagement, family disintegration, environmental pollution and a host of other problems. Globalization has also created negative impacts upon the people of Asia, many of whom have been seduced by materialism, consumerism and have tended towards individualism and secularism.

Thirdly, not only is Asia the birthplace of Buddhism, Hinduism, Taoism, Shintoism, Sikhism, Confucianism and Jainism, the continent is also home to the other great religions of the world such as Judaism, Christianity, Islam and Zoroastrianism. There is also present in signifi-

cant numbers communities of what is today called Primal or Traditional Religion. Additionally, Asian immigrants have brought their religious traditions with them wherever they have settled, making many of these religions truly global in scope and practice. These religions of Asia have moulded the lives and cultures of Asian people for several millennia and continue to give meaning and direction to their lives even today. On the other hand, they have also served as stumbling blocks to change, at times even legitimizing oppressive regimes for the preservation of the status quo. The resurgence of religious fundamentalism and new religious movements is also a very real phenomenon in Asia.

Fourthly, except for the Philippines, the Christian community is but a minority in all Asian countries, which are predominantly Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, Shintoist, Confucianist or Taoist. The Catholic community of Asia constitutes a mere 2 to 3 per cent of the total Asian population. If we do not include the Philippines, Catholics do not even make up 1 per cent of the total population. In other words, in most parts of Asia the Church is present in communities where 99 per cent of the surrounding populations are adherents of other religious traditions. Put another way, for every one Catholic walking a particular street of Asia, 99 others who walk that same street are believers of other religions.

The Holy Father examines the diverse and complex realities of the Asian situation in chapter 1 of *Ecclesia in Asia* and concludes that despite all this there are many positive elements and causes of hope that strengthen our expectations of a “new springtime of Christian life”. Coming to the theme of youth in the universities, we see that today, more than ever, young people are conscious of survival in this fast-paced, competitive world. The process of preparing themselves for a career begins quite early in life and every bit of energy is focussed on attaining a lucrative position. Each priority in life becomes centred on this goal – a goal that seems perfectly compatible with today’s success oriented glitzy world. Yet the Holy Father has always spoken of his faith in generosity and commitment of young people, and in Article 47 of *Ecclesia in Asia*

he remarks, “ To them the church offers the truth of the Gospel as a joyful and liberating mystery to be known, lived and shared, with conviction and courage ”. Today’s society, especially the Church, is focussing on the youth for they are not only the future of the Church and society but also the “ present ”. Very often families, society and the structured church seem to have some difficulty in relating to the youth and guiding them effectively to face the many complex problems of a fast changing world. It is here that we see the relevance of Campus Ministry, which is highly effective among this fast-paced, trendy segment of society. The great access to and the special effectiveness with youth that the campus ministry enjoys may be attributed to its being an “ apostolate of like towards like ”. (Vatican Council 2, Lay People, 13). It goes without saying that the most effective instrument to minister to youth are youth themselves. Youth always look for challenging models. When they see and listen to people within their age group living and witnessing to the reality of Jesus, it is very convincing. Like I mentioned earlier – Asia, in particular India where I come from is a cauldron of different religions. A person’s religion in Asia is not a personal and private decision as perceived by the Western world. In Asia, one’s religion is part of your distinct social identity. It is what binds you to your family and immediate community. The various festivals and rituals stand testimony to this fact. Religion is part and parcel of your identity as an individual in society. And there is no escaping this reality. The colleges and universities are no exceptions. My college, a Christian institution, has a good percentage of students from varied religious and cultural backgrounds. Therefore it is only inevitable for me to interact daily with friends and acquaintances of different religions. It is a natural part of my social life in the college. From this point of view, I hope you are able to comprehend the importance of interreligious communication and dialogue.

Here I speak from my own experience as a university student. I was challenged by the Jesus Youth Campus ministry to become a more committed Christian. After my graduation I volunteered for a one-year “ full-

timership ” where, after a 40 days’ training period I was placed in a college to work in the campus ministry. This training and formation created in me a thirst to spread the Good News, welling from my own experience of the love of the Heavenly Father. I also realized how salvation is open for all, irrespective of religious and cultural barriers. This personal God experience proved to be the turning point as well as the foundation for my first steps towards communicating this love of the Father with the people around me.

In the modern day campuses, interreligious communication and dialogue takes place at many levels. There are vocal expressions as well as silent interactions. One of the main factors leading to the actual process of dialogue is the witnessing or living of our values in our day-to-day situations. Many are the circumstances wherein we are forced to take a stand according to the Christian values we preach and propagate. Here is a case in point. Divya, a classmate of mine had a strong tendency to tell untruths even for insignificant matters because of her inner fear of rejection. During one of our term exams, the answers were being passed around on a slip of paper for all to cheat. I was the only person who did not look at it. This action of mine caught Divya’s attention. Later on in different situations, God gave me the strength to be truthful in spite of very strong temptations. These situations influenced Divya a lot. She slowly started making an effort to tell the truth in all circumstances. During the term, she also came to know more about Jesus through my sharing and the Christian counselling by an elder. Now she asserts that she loves Jesus!

This kind of witnessing leads to the actual process where we are able to speak freely and openly about our values and also interact with other people. Another classmate of mine, Mamtha, an orthodox Hindu Brahmin was known for her irritable, confused and aimless nature. To add to this she suffered from acute inferiority complex. Because of this she did not have many friends. I took an effort to befriend her. She had

endless problems because of her nature, particularly with her husband. She found me to be a good listener, which helped her to open herself more towards me. I prayed regularly for her and shared my spiritual experiences with her. I found a gradual change in her attitude and in the way she handled things. Her relationship with her husband also changed for the better. I am happy to say that she got introduced to Jesus as a living God. Though she has not changed her faith, the seeds of Christian values have been sown in her.

There are innumerable cases of students active in campus ministry in different parts of India being able to actively dialogue with fellow students from other religious beliefs and bring in a palpable change in their lives.

Priya is very active in the campus and Christian ministry. Ngodeep, a Buddhist who studied with her once remarked that Priya was one of the few people she had seen who radiated love. Priya took this opportunity to talk to her about her relationship with God. Ngodeep was moved by her words. She started exploring her relationship with Jesus. She fell in love with Mother Mary through the Rosary.

Sruthi, a campus team member in Bangalore shares about Simran who is from a Hindu family. Simran had attempted suicide several times by taking poison etc. due to her broken relationship with her fiancé. Sruthi was instrumental in helping her experience the unconditional love of God. Though Simran has not been baptized due to family restrictions, she is a Christian through and through.

Vijay is the core group leader of a prayer group in his college. Umae, a Muslim studying in Vijay's class was an alcoholic and a drug addict. Umae says it is through Vijay that he found the fullness of joy. Even though it is hard for him to believe that Jesus is the only Lord, he was touched by Vijay's lifestyle and readily gave up his bad habits. Now he is a changed person.

It is evident that all the initiatives and activities of evangelization and inter religious dialogue proceed from the zeal and commitment of young



people to the Lord. This is the case not only in catholic campuses but also in the secular environment of professional and government campuses where there is no support from the management and faculty. The campuses in India are a testimony to the fact that young people with a genuine personal experience of Jesus can stand up to the challenge of being different. Without being swept away by the deceiving currents of the world and accepting responsibility for the future of society and the church, young people are witnessing for Christ in all spheres of life. It is a sign of great hope that young people are carrying out the task that the Holy Father so confidently set them at the World Youth Day in Canada. “ I have entrusted to you dear young people.....the task of offering the world this consistent evangelical witness ”.

## Dialogue with non-believers

Prof. ALEXEJ JUDIN  
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To give an epigraph to my intervention, I would choose a quotation from the encyclical by Pope John Paul II *Ut unum sint*: “Dialogue is a necessary path on the way of human self fulfilment, of each person as well as each human community” (28).

I do not know about you, but the topic we are speaking about, dialogue with non-believers in the university world, raises many questions. This is not to suggest that I have any doubts about the value of this topic. On the contrary, I am extremely interested in clarifying the contents and so to raise awareness of its validity nowadays. I warn you that you will hear more questions than answers in my talk. But it is precisely the fact that these questions are posed that makes dialogue with non-believers indispensable, and they determine the content of this dialogue to a certain extent. Dialogue in itself should serve as a means to find a solution to these questions.

First question: From where do Christians begin a dialogue with non-believers? They take a realistic and possibly impartial look around, and through their habit of asking rigorous questions, they ask themselves, “Why are there so many people around me who do not believe and are indifferent to the faith? They are hostile or indifferent to something that is of vital importance to me and that is closest to my heart. These are people who include my good friends and relatives. Most of them are nice pleasant people and not in the slightest like monsters. Why are they indifferent to the Truth when they are as good if not better than I am? What causes this difference?” Dialogue and the attempt to respond to these serious questions can naturally make us feel frustrated and discouraged

because we realise our helplessness. This is something that happens often. However, a sincere search for answers to these troubling questions, in my opinion, should become a test of courage for a Christian. It should give them the strength to “remain in the truth”, and consequently to make them realise how real and indispensable it is to dialogue on topics concerning humanity. They have to be opened up to another reality, extraneous and sometimes hostile to Christianity, but human. To try to understand this reality from one’s own point of view and from that of others does not mean passive acceptance. At this level dialogue is a model of relating with the wider world, with concrete people, who demand from Christians a new kind of thought with greater courage and spiritual “resistance”.

It is superfluous to point out that, for Christians, dialogue with non-believers is the order of the day. In fact, all Christians every day in their own hearts and minds fight a hard battle against incredulity. I once heard of a Catholic professor who was a person with a notable level of Christian culture who never failed to conclude each day with the prayer, “Lord, thank you for helping me again today not to lose my faith”. This interior battle against the lack of faith *ad intra*, accompanied by the prayer, “I believe, Lord, help my incredulity”, is the start of dialogue with the absence of faith *ad extra*, that is to say, from oneself and through oneself to reach others, to a different experience of faith and to the absence of faith. We can only come well equipped to this exterior dialogue if we first have an interior crisis, which is a rigorous checking of our own points of view. I have used the word “crisis” in its “pre-Cartesian” sense, so to speak. This is not the current interpretation that we associate with compulsory doubts that are intended to prove something wrong, but the meaning that brings to life the original meaning of this concept, its Greek roots, κρίσις, meaning sieve, decision. The response to the question, “are we ready for this encounter?” depends on the response to another question, “have we had an authentic crisis?” These questions, in my opinion, provide the indispensable conditions for dialogue with non-

believers. Dialogue is inevitably κρίσις, a filter and comparison of my proposal with that put forward by someone else or something else. Authentic dialogue allows us to become more decidedly aware of our own faith. When self-awareness is uncertain, it transforms critical dialogue into a politically correct compromise. It is precisely this kind of compromise that appears to be the most acceptable and desirable model in this post-modern culture that dogmatizes relativism and declares “non interference” in the field of Truth (but which essentially ignores the very existence of Truth). In this way, authentic dialogue with those who do not believe becomes a challenge to today’s amorphous culture of pragmatic relativism.

The challenge for Christians in the present postmodern culture, the challenge of dialogue, becomes a struggle for the authentic values of human life. By challenge I mean the initiative of dialogue. This initiative is expected from Christians themselves because it would be strange to expect the challenge to come directly from today’s culture. It is relativistic and affected by the “political correctness” complex, a pseudo-democratic culture that tends to level everything that exists and thus paralyzes authentic values and transforms them into a kind of merchandise.

It is rare in our world to encounter positions that could be defined as absolute atheism. We usually come across practical atheism, a sort of unaware “life without God”, or different kinds of religious indifference. Theoretic and absolute atheism is becoming rare even in the post-Soviet regions. In my experience of working in a university in Russia, I have not met any convinced atheists among those who studied after the Soviet era, although I know that recently there have appeared in Russia several associations of a new generation of atheists with their projects. New groups have emerged of Russian atheism and Russian atheist movements. There are now specialist publications on atheism like “The New Without-God”, “Good Sense”, “Atheist Pages” and the magazine “Scepticism”. Even though it may seem strange, the representatives of this current are the first potential partners for dialogue. They are the ones who challenge us and do not hide their own attachment to values that differ from ours.

Certainly, their atheism is intellectually superior to that rather stupid and smug version that marked the ideology of the Soviet era. However, convinced atheists make up a very small segment of the intellectual Russian society today and it is rarely found in the universities. Moreover, the Russian university environment today is little different from that in western Europe.

The culture of technocratic pragmatism and liberal relativism seems to dominate. You can always find a certain interest in religious topics, but these are mostly approached as purely “cultural” phenomena. On the whole, the level of religious consciousness, including Christian, is very low. Less than fifteen years of freedom from imposed ideology is not enough to form a new generation of Christian intellectuals. They suffered most from the consequences of that anthropological catastrophe that, in seventy years of the communist experiment, almost totally destroyed the religious culture of society. The statistical data given (mostly by the Orthodox hierarchy), and according to which 60% of the Russian population is Orthodox, are often just a facade and do not reflect the real picture of Christianity in Russian society today. In this panorama it is alarming to see the “orthodoxisation” syndrome, which is the obligation to insert the “orthodox factor” as an inalienable component of the Russian national identity. Declarations of ethnic-confessional loyalties, when there is no true evangelisation, sometimes lead to absurd results. You can sometimes hear people making odd declarations like, “I am not a believer, but I am orthodox”, or even, “I am an orthodox atheist”.

The second question concerns the promoters of dialogue with non-believers in the university. As we are reminded in the document, *The Presence of the Church in the University and in University Culture*, “Within the University, the Church’s pastoral action, in its rich complexity, has in the first place a subjective aspect: the evangelization of people. From this point of view, the Church enters into dialogue with real people: men and women, professors, students, staff, and, through them, with the cultural trends that characterize this milieu” (II, 1).

At this point I wish to point out that dialogue does not exist for itself and is not an end in itself. It is an instrument of evangelisation. Without any doubt, evangelisation of contemporary university culture, like evangelisation in general, passes through interpersonal relations. At this level, the contemporary university represents a field that is anything but easy for dialogue. The university today continues to claim that it is an open space for dialogue in the search for truth. On the other hand, we can see in the dominant positivistic ethic that there is a dogmatisation and instrumentalism of “pure conscience”. Students and teachers entering a secular university should abandon their own “higher convictions”, in particular the religious ones, as if they were garments to be left in the lockers. It is usually not possible to proclaim publically, and besides, direct evangelisation often produces the opposite effect, repulsion. One thing that opens dialogue and consequently leads the way to evangelisation is witnessing, both existential and intellectual. Christians through their lives and way of thinking should be witnesses of these values that were “set aside” in secular university culture.

At this point you would be quite right to say, “That’s all fine, but how do you give witness?” I am, of course, far from the ideal of holiness. However, when I examine my conscience I always reflect on how I witness to the Gospel in my teaching profession. Besides, I remember this admonishment: “even the figure of the Catholic intellectual seems to have almost disappeared from certain university contexts, where the students feel painfully the lack of genuine mentors whose constant presence and availability would provide a “companionship” of high quality” (*The Presence of the Church in the University and in University Culture*, III, 2).

First of all, as a potential initiator of dialogue with non-believers, on the professional level I should be a person that students of the most diverse origins feel drawn to, that my colleagues on the academic staff feel comfortable with, and I have to know my subject very well.

Then I must prepare my lessons, and relate personally with my students in a way that a problem is opened up and clarified and gives them

new insights, and this needs a preparation that is far more than a pure accumulation of facts. As a rule, at the professional level I have to help them to be aware of the presence of the Inexpressible, the Mystery. The first glimmers that reveal to individuals the presence of that Inexpressible which accompanies them always, opens up dialogue on either personal or professional questions.

The fundamental methodological problem of the contemporary university in approaching knowledge was well formulated by Enzo Arnone in his article *Education for faith*, “In the eyes of our young people today there is the image of a world that contains no mystery. This is not because there are no longer any, but because reason is no longer defined as the capacity of humankind to search for the sense and first cause of all that exists, to probe the deep nature of being, the contemplation of which instils amazement and curiosity. Therefore, any proposal regarding ideals or morals end up falling into an atmosphere suffocating from knowledge and the spirit of research, and arouses as a response the most acritical repetition of processes already known...” (Russian translation in “*Novaja Evropa*” n. 13 (2000), p. 107). Consequently, students make an effort and have some experience of analysing information received, that which has been transmitted by the teacher. Nevertheless, they are then unable to reflect on the experience that comes after the awareness that came with the first experience. On the whole, this task is not given to them since the aim of the instruction is primarily to carry to perfection instrumental knowledge in a strictly specialist field. Therefore, one of the fundamental tasks of dialogue with non-believers promoted by Christians in the university milieu is, in my opinion, the attempt to restore a system of “integral knowledge”, a system that presupposes the presence of absolute values. The emergence of consciousness in the field of methodology is in practice the direct way to build that new “synthesis of culture and faith” spoken of in the documents of the Church.

It is time to return to the document *The Presence of the Church in the University and in University Culture*, and to quote the part where it

speaks of the guidelines for pastoral activity of the Church in the contemporary university: “But one cannot forget the objective aspect: the dialogue between faith and the different disciplines of knowledge” (II, 1). In my opinion, it is precisely this “objective aspect” that demands that all Christians involved in university life should deepen their knowledge on questions related to the relationship between “faith and culture”, religion and science”. Nowadays there are numerous research papers and manuals written by believers on this theme.

The perfecting of one’s own “professional” religious approach to the various branches of scientific knowledge should become a compulsory element in the Christian education of a Catholic teacher or student. Where can one acquire this kind of preparation? Here we open a wide spectrum of activities that Catholics can legally conduct in the universities, based on the rich experience of pastoral initiatives in this field. The only thing that is absolutely indispensable is the desire that each person who makes the most elementary examination of conscience can feel within their Christian vocation.

The answer to the fundamental question, “of what use is dialogue with non-believers?”, can be found partly in the words of the encyclical *Ut unum sint* that I chose as an epigraph. It is an effective way for people of faith to develop as persons through the many ways they relate with others. Furthermore, dialogue with non-believers is indispensable as an instrument of culture, as a means of transmitting a message that urges non-believers to reflect and recover the authentic values of the intellectual life. These values of the intellectual and spiritual life found in life with God are recalled by Saint Bonaventure in the introduction to *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* when he invites the reader to recognise the inadequacy of “reading without repentance, knowledge without devotion, research without the impulse of wonder, prudence without the ability to surrender to joy, action divorced from religion, learning sundered from love, intelligence without humility, study unsustained by divine grace, thought without the wisdom inspired by God” (cfr. *Fides et ratio*, 105).



## Challenges in situations marked by conflict

EGIDE IRAMBONA

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**H**ello, everybody. I am happy to be the last to speak because “ the last shall be first ”. I am Irambona Egide from Burundi and I am a student at the University of Bujumbura.

Burundi is a small country in central Africa bordering on the Democratic Republic of Congo to the west, Tanzania to the east and Rwanda to the north. Burundi is known as being the most southern source of the Nile river. It is also known as the country of one thousand and one hills, and is sometimes called the African Switzerland because of its pristine countryside.

However, Burundi is also known for another reason, and that is for its “speciality” in killings, massacres and exterminations. We have been living in a state of civil war since 1993, an inter-ethnic war in which thousands and thousands of people have been exterminated. This awful inter-ethnic hatred has led to genocide. My university has not been spared from this hatred. There were massacres there in 1994.

The people of Burundi come from three ethnic groups: Hutu, Tutsi and Tua. The conflict is mostly between Hutus and Tutsis. The Tuas are a minority group and they do not cause much trouble. During the massacres of 1994 many people fled the country. The situation improved somewhat three years later, but the consequences of those massacres are still very much felt. Even today you will seldom find a Hutu and a Tutsi sharing a room on the university campus, or sitting on the same bench in the lecture hall. Yet everyone sings together in the university choir. It

really is a mystery in Burundi. You can see people of different ethnic groups chatting together on the street.

Since the time of the massacres in 1994, each ethnic group has been suspicious of the other, and this creates a climate of distrust and wariness. In the university this can be seen during student elections. Students feel more secure when the leaders of the various associations belong to their ethnic group. Hutus vote for Hutus and Tutsis vote for Tutsis.

In the year 2000 I was elected president of “Catholic Coordination” in the University (80% of the students are Catholic) in this kind of climate. At that time we asked ourselves what could be done to bring the situation back to normal and to remove the atmosphere of distrust. We sat down together with our Protestant friends from the university Bible Group and agreed that we could not remain with arms folded and watch the university fall apart. We discussed how we could influence the representation of students in that association. We looked for a candidate who would not stand on a Hutu or Tutsi platform, but who would be known as a Christian. This would reassure everyone. We set to work. I contacted the leaders of Catholic Action movements and explained that we were looking for a candidate that everyone would accept. They found one and we supported their choice. We went around spreading awareness among all the Christians. That candidate was elected. Since that time, we Christians choose the leaders of student associations, and now there is trust in our representatives.

Then we began to say to ourselves that it was time that we Catholics set about gathering all students and go beyond inter-ethnic divisions, hatred and distrust. We should witness to the fact that we are Christians and that Christ is alive on campus. We formed a prayer group that would offer up prayers of praise. Eight of us began it and met in my room. Now there are about 500 of us.

This prayer group meets every Tuesday from 9 until 10pm, and they are undoubtedly an instrument of reconciliation and forgiveness. At the beginning I wanted to invite a good friend of mine from the same ethnic

group, but he said to me, “Brother, what are you doing with those Hutus? Why are you with people from the other ethnic group?” I told him they were in the prayer group. At first he did not agree and he avoided me for some time, but now he is one of the most faithful members of the prayer group. This friend of mine had a huge problem. He confessed to me that, back in 1993, he had killed a very large number of Hutus. He said that he had battered an old lady and left her for dead, but she was not dead. Later when she recovered, she told people that it was he who had beaten her up. Now he would have to face the law and he did not know what to do. He could not face God, he was afraid of priests and of going to church. I told him, “Do not be afraid, brother. Divine mercy is as immense as the ocean”, and I prepared him for the sacrament of reconciliation. Since then he has been a staunch member of our prayer group.

Beyond all of this, in spite of hatred and all of the difficulties that we have spoken of here, we must take courage. Because of the example given by that friend who had killed, the prayer group organised a day for the sacrament of reconciliation. That day, instead of our customary prayer of praise, we invited a large number of priests. It was marvellous. Almost the whole campus lined up to confess. We had been preparing them for the sacrament, and you could see how the students longed to be reconciled with each other.

As we heard in one of the talks this morning, it is Jesus who is saying to us today, “stand up and walk”, in spite of difficulties, ethnic hatred, divisions. Thank you.

### 3. Concluding address

Most Rev. STANISŁAW RYŁKO  
*President, Pontifical Council for the Laity*

1. The eighth International Youth Forum on the theme “Youth and University: witnessing to Christ in the university world” is coming to a close. It is now time to sum up and draw conclusions from an event that was culturally very rich and, above all, extremely spiritual.

For each one of us, the eighth International Youth Forum was a special adventure of the spirit. It was a deep experience of faith and fraternal communion, and a very great experience of Church. For the past few days we have been able to appreciate the true meaning of catholicity, for it means universality, Church. Although we have different languages, cultures and nationalities, we felt united during this Forum, just as if we were the coloured tesserae that are placed together to form a multi-coloured mosaic. We became more conscious of the fact that we are members of one organism: the Church of Christ, our Church. We could almost touch with our hands the mystery and miracle of its catholicity!

The Forum was also a kind of epiphany of the youthful face of the Church, a face that fascinates and radiates hope. These were a wonderful few days, and I am sure that they will remain in our memory for a long time to come. We have been able to open our hearts to dialogue, to share our hopes and concerns, to witness to our faith. University students could compare experiences with those who live in very different circumstances and with those who live in places where it is not at all easy for Christians. These have been days of deep prayer, both personal and in community. I think that the penitential service on Friday was particularly moving. The presence of Christ could be felt among us and the signs of his loving mercy for us were tangible. Altogether, they were days filled

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with the happiness of being among friends and the joy of seeing so many new friendships being made.

Precisely because of all that we have been experiencing together, as we now formally close the eighth International Youth Forum, I am asking you to take its message back with you to your countries. The challenge you have been presented with is to witness to Christ in the university world. This is how you can continue the Forum in your universities and your Church communities, and I am asking you to do this. It is an extremely demanding task, but you can do it. The reason you can do it is because you are not the same as you were before. After this Forum, you are returning home knowing that you are not alone. Now you know that there are many young people around the world who think like you and who share your ideals. Now you know that there are very many of you. You also know that the Church is with you and accompanies you as a mother and teacher. The Church depends on you people who are present in the universities around the world. These “Areopagi” are of special pastoral concern and, today more than ever, they are fields for urgent evangelising work.

2. This Forum has been a great sign of hope for us all. As I look at you, I remember the words from the book of Isaiah the prophet in which God says: “See, I am doing something new! Now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?” (*Is* 43:19-21). You are this “something new”! You are the new youth who continue to fill the ranks of what has come to be known as “the John Paul II generation”. It is a generation that has found a trustworthy guide in the Pope. He is like a father, a friend that you trust and follow wherever he goes, and for the past number of years this has led you along the fascinating trail that has crossed continents with World Youth Day.

In the year 2000 in Tor Vergata in Rome, Pope John Paul II called you “sentinels of dawn”. This is what you should be in your universities today. You can build a new future for this great ancient institution,

because in our days it is in great need of renewal. It is an anonymous and depersonalised place that is not infrequently dominated by old or new ideologies. The university of today often betrays its lofty vocation to serve truth, thought and wisdom, and is far removed from the ideal model of *Alma Mater*, the “mother” that nurtures her young and helps them grow. During this Forum on the university and the academic world, there has been harsh criticism. However, we Christians do not wish to, nor should we, confine ourselves to accusations, no matter how much it is merited. Instead, we wish to, and should, do something about it. The Church has a long tradition of involvement in this regard and plentiful experience. Its values correspond to the deepest longings of the human soul, and from these can be born a concrete project of reform. We are convinced that the university can be different, but that depends on each one of you, believe me.

What does it mean, therefore, to be “sentinels of dawn” in the university of today? Let us attempt to draw up an identikit.

a) “Sentinels of dawn” have the courage to be themselves and to defend their identities as individuals and as Christians. The young people of our times are often extremely fragile and confused, and they are voracious consumers of a fragmented, superficial and mindless life. They do not know what they want, and this lack of projection and goals – this absence of meaning – leads many into a painful nothingness and it frightens them. It can then lead them to seek refuge and solace in drugs, alcohol and sex. Even among young Christians there are so many watered-down personalities that are feeble and contradictory and plagued by doubts. There is so much ignorance of the contents of our faith. For young Christians today it is more important than ever to rediscover the fascinating beauty of their own vocation as baptised persons. It is a vocation of which they should be proud. It is a gift for which they should be grateful. It is a treasure to prize and defend from the pressures to seek approval from our contemporary culture. Have the courage to go against

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the tide! Rebel against the dictatorship of prevailing thought and “politically correct” practice! Dare to be yourselves!

b) “Sentinels of dawn” have the courage to be demanding, especially with themselves. You have heard the Pope so many times encouraging you to fly high and not to be afraid to be holy. So, rebel against mediocrity, minimalism and superficiality! “Sentinels of dawn” take study seriously. In the face of difficulty they do not try to escape and to avoid the issue; they face it and give the best of themselves in order to resolve it. They give themselves wholly to the task. Christ wishes his disciples to be people who live life to the full, who are mature and strong; people of integrity who are distinguished by the serious way in which they approach their studies, and by their professionalism and competence in their work. At the university, “sentinels of dawn” make a special effort to go deeper into their faith. In this context we can see the importance of the “binomials” faith-culture, faith-reason, faith-life. How often we spoke of these during the Forum! It is up to you to search for “educational spaces” that will help you to grow: the chaplaincies, communities, ecclesial movements. Even if you are filled with good intentions, when you are alone and isolated there is a risk of being disoriented, discouraged and of being sucked into the vortex of “standardisation”. Never trust false prophets! Look for true friends and true teachers! When you identify them, do not be discouraged if you find them demanding. Accept the challenge because it is this that will shape your life. The Pope once said, “I am a friend to young people, but a demanding friend.

c) “Sentinels of dawn” at the university have the courage to witness to their faith. You have to be ready to stand up to easy religiosity and to resist the pressure to confine faith to the private domain. Let faith regain its visibility. Christ trusts in the clear and persuasive witness of each one of you. “We wish to see Jesus”: this is precisely what many of your peers long for as they search for the ultimate meaning of their life. They expect

people like you who call yourselves Christians to show Christ to those who seek him.

Witnessing always arises – in fact, only arises – from a personal encounter with Christ, an encounter that is life-changing. This Forum was a clear example. The Pope wrote; “ We are certainly not seduced by the naive expectation that, faced with the great challenges of our time, we shall find some magic formula. No, we shall not be saved by a formula but by a Person, and the assurance which he gives us: I am with you! ”.<sup>1</sup> My sincere hope for all of you today is that you can say with the prophet Jeremiah, “ You have seduced me, Lord, and I have let myself be seduced ” (*Jr 20:7*). To allow oneself to be captivated by the Lord is the most beautiful adventure that you can imagine. It is the most beautiful adventure that can happen to us.

d) Finally, “ sentinels of dawn ” at the university have the courage to engage with tenacity in transforming their surroundings, but first of all and most of all in changing themselves. If you return to your university after this Forum at least a little different, then you will be able to change something in your university. You should believe this! And you should know how to avoid the traps presented by ideological visions that try to deceive us with a mirage that says that change can be simply and instantaneously brought about, and with illusions that the world can be magically transformed from hell into paradise. We know how much genocide, how many innocent victims, how much suffering has been caused in the 20<sup>th</sup> century because of these visions! Yet the era of ideologies has not passed away. They continue to circulate in the thinking and mentalities of the present time. We Christians, however, are convinced that the world can only be changed in Christ. By nature we are bearers of hope, and we know that if the world and humanity are to change, it can only be through the Cross, and we know that there is a cost. We also know that great transformations

<sup>1</sup> JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Letter, *Novo millennio ineunte*, n. 29.



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put down roots when people change. Each person, therefore, counts. Change in the world and humanity passes through each one of you. Each one has an important role to play. We are confirmed in this when we see that Christ looked at people individually and spoke to them as individuals. Unlike the reformers of each age, the Lord does not see us as a mass to be manipulated. We are always a singular “you”.

3. “But you will receive power when the holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses [...] to the ends of the earth” (cfr. *Acts* 1:8). As we conclude this 8<sup>th</sup> International Youth Forum, Christ invites you to be “sentinels of dawn” in your countries and in your universities with the same words with which he sent out his apostles. As he said to them, he says to you: “You are the salt of the earth [...] you are the light of the world [...]. Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father” (*Mt* 5: 13,14,16). The world is like an immense ploughed up field awaiting the seed of the word of Truth and Life. More than any other thing, the world is in need of Christ. As the Vatican Council said, “only in the mystery of the incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light”.<sup>2</sup>

In today’s secularised society, baptised Christians are becoming a minority, even in countries with a long-standing Christian tradition, and they live in a kind of diaspora among non-Catholics, non-Christians and non-believers. But, as one noted Catholic journalist once said, becoming a minority is not our most serious problem. Salt is a minority, but it gives flavour to food. Yeast is a minority, but it ferments a large quantity of dough. Our most serious problem is that of becoming marginal and insignificant in the world because of our mediocrity, our fears, our laziness.<sup>3</sup> The Russian, Alexander Mien, a well-known dissident Orthodox

<sup>2</sup> VATICAN COUNCIL II, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the modern world *Gaudium et spes*, n. 22.

<sup>3</sup> Cfr. V. MESSORI, “Confessors of the faith in our time”, in: Pontificium Consilium pro Laicis (ed.), *Rediscovering Confirmation*, Vatican City 2000, p. 22.

priest, during the years of religious persecution under the soviet regime, told his congregation that the greatest enemy was not atheism, as it might seem, nor was it the enemy that attacks, but it was the mediocrity and heresy that we carry within us. For Christians, therefore, the gravest danger is that of becoming pseudo-Christians: people who appear on the register of the baptised, but who have nothing to say to the world. They are like salt that has lost its flavour, yeast that no longer ferments, a lamp that is switched off. This is the great challenge awaiting us at the start of this millennium: to find the courage to be Christians through and through, in truth and integrity. We must therefore preserve our “flavour”, hold on to our ability to ferment, defend the light that is within us – Christ! We must return to being salt, yeast and a lamp for the world. This is the task, the mission, that Christ is entrusting to each one of you at the conclusion of this Forum. Christ sends you out as his apostles, and he counts on you. So you can see how demanding this is, but also how beautiful and exciting it is to be “sentinels of dawn” in the university.

4. During our Eucharistic celebration we gave thanks to God for this Forum, a precious gift for all of us who have taken part. It was not by chance that we came here. It was as if the Lord himself had called us together, calling us by name and gathering us to teach us with his word of Life. As we thank Christ for “sowing these seeds”, we all accept the commitment to take care of each seed that has fallen on the soil of our souls and to strive to make it bear fruit in our lives.

As we close the eighth International Youth Forum, we wish to express our deepest gratitude to the Holy Father who made himself present through his message. It is an important “signpost” to take away with you. You can meditate on it often, read it to your friends, publish it in your magazines and newsletters. We thank Pope John Paul II for the memorable gathering on Thursday evening in Saint Peter’s Square with the youth of Rome, and, in anticipation, for the celebration tomorrow, Palm Sunday, the 19<sup>th</sup> World Youth Day, the climax of the Forum. We

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also thank the Pope for another gift he has reserved for us: the gift of a rosary beads. This is an invitation to us to contemplate the image of Christ together with Mary, and in her school.

To conclude, I wish to thank all the speakers, the participants in the panel discussions, the moderators; the bishops, priests and teachers who have accompanied the young students throughout these very full days; the team from the Emmanuel School of Mission for all the services they rendered and especially for animating the liturgies; the volunteers, including the young people coordinated by Fabio Donegà who took care of transport between the airport and Rocca di Papa; the translators, whose excellent work enabled us to relive the miracle of Pentecost with communication in different languages; the Oblate Fathers for their hospitality in *Mondo migliore*, a name that means “a better world” and will hopefully be a suitable name for the university world of today! I especially wish to thank the staff of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, particularly the Youth Section: Father Francis Kohn, Giovanna Guerrieri and Elizabeth Hawkins, for the work that does not end here but that continues with the preparation of the much requested publication of the proceedings of the Forum. Particular thanks to the “Gioventù Chiesa Speranza” foundation and its president, Marcello Bedeschi, for the support given in so many ways during this Forum.

Finally, special thanks to you, dear young university students, who were the main players in this extraordinary event. The success of the eighth International Youth Forum is above all due to you. Thank you for the dedication, intelligence and enthusiasm that has marked your participation. After this intense experience you will be eager to return to your countries and universities as “sentinels of dawn”. So, *Duc in altum!* “Put out into the deep”! May the Lord protect and bless you!

Easter greetings to you all!



## Appendix

### 8<sup>th</sup> INTERNATIONAL YOUTH FORUM

#### Countries and territories represented

Algeria	Costa Rica	Ireland
Angola	Croatia	Italy
Argentina	Czech Republic	Ivory Coast
Australia	Dominican Republic	Jordan
Austria	England & Wales	Kazakhstan
Azerbaijjan	Estonia	Kenya
Bangladesh	Finland	Latvia
Belgium	France	Lebanon
Benin	Georgia	Lesotho
Bolivia	Germany	Luxemburg
Botswana	Ghana	Macedonia
Brazil	Greece	Madagascar
Burundi	Guinea-Bissau	Malaysia
Canada	Hong Kong (China)	Marocco
Chile	Hungary	Mauritius
China	India	Mexico
Congo (Rep. Dem.)	Indonesia	Moldova
Congo (Brazzaville)	Iran	Mozambique

*Countries and territories represented*

Netherlands	Russia	Taiwan
New Zealand	Rwanda	Tajikistan
Nicaragua	Scotland	Tanzania
Niger	Senegal	Tunisia
Nigeria	Slovakia	Turkmenistan
Norway	Slovenia	Uganda
Palestinian Territories	Spain	Ukraine
Peru	Sri Lanka	USA
Philippines	South Africa	Uzbekistan
Poland	Sudan	Vietnam
Puerto Rico	Sweden	
Portugal	Switzerland	
Romania	Syria	(Total: 90)

## **Movements, Associations and Communities**

Beatitudes Community  
Catholic Christian Outreach, Canada  
Chemin Neuf Community  
Christian Life Movement  
CICS/CICG – International Catholic Conference of Guiding and Scouting  
Communion and Liberation  
CVX – Christian Life Communities  
Emmanuel Community  
FIAC – International Forum of Catholic Action  
FIMCAP – International Federation of Catholic Parochial Youth Movements  
FIUC/IFCU – International Federation of Catholic Universities  
Franciscan Youth  
ICCRS – International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services  
JECI/IYCS – International Young Catholic Students  
MIEC/IMCS Pax Romana – International Movement of Catholic Students  
Neocatecumenal Way  
OIEC – Catholic International Education Office  
OMAAEEC Youth – World Organization of Former Pupils of Catholic Education  
Opera di Nàzaret  
Regnum Christi Movement  
Salesian Youth Movement  
Schönstatt  
St Egidio Community  
Teresian Association  
UIGSE – International Union of Guides and Scouts of Europe  
World Confederation Ex-allieve/i Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice  
Youth Eucharistic Movement  
Youth for a United World (Focolare Movement)

(Total: 28)

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