

# How to develop a value-based Business Curriculum

## 1. *The Catholic University in the crossroads of contemporary society.*

This is the title of the talk given by Cardinal L. Brugués, secretary of the Congregation for Catholic Education addressed to the presidents of Jesuit universities in a recent meeting held in Mexico City last spring.

Crossroad is the place where two roads meet. It is also an allusion to a time when one does not know what to do in a given situation. Let us study this line of thought. Contemporary society is marked by an intense cultural phenomenon, secularization. In the evolution of ideas this movement emerged, and with it came a judgment against the God of Christianity; a God that produced discontented people, a God that fell into disrepute leading to the placing of Reason on the pedestal that was vacated. All this was an act of faith in Reason which with the evolution of history ended up in relativism and disillusionment. The Cardinal's conviction is clear: this historical process is far from disappearing. On the contrary, it spread/generalizes and impregnates everything. It resulted in a completely new society with an empty heaven where all transcendence is discarded due to its heteronymous and alienating character. And this is the society that has to be evangelized, referring to the new evangelization of John Paul II. A society marked by a strong individualism. No outside control can be exerted on its own autonomy, on its own autonomous conscience. As we can see, it is total supremacy, absolute supremacy of the subject, abandonment and rejection of any reference to the truth. "*What is truth?*" This is an echo of Pilates' words. On the other hand, we read in the gospel, "*you will know the truth and the truth will set you free*". There is no need for teachings. But in this world the phenomena are ambiguous and some of the media express a labor of substitution for truth in a aggressive manner. They try to discredit the church's teachings, even Christianity itself. They reject that which is Christian as something impossible to emulate because of its radical diversity, its claim that a God incarnate is an extraordinary fact and with its claim as absolute, this makes it intolerable to this society of relativism.

This is the context in which one has to think and rethink of the Catholic universities' mission. Can one disregard in life a reference to the truth? In 1993, "*Veritatis Esplendor*" appeared. Beauty is the splendor of truth, with a wink to Plato and to the present Pope Benedict XVI has made of this terminology the guiding line for these teachings. Thus we read in "*Caritas in Veritate*": "*Only in the truth does love shines. The truth is the light that gives meaning to love*".

We started by speaking about society, what do we say now about the University? What is it? Before and above everything else, a school of the truth always stimulates the *gaudium de Veritate*, the pleasure in the search for truth, in its discovery and in communicating it. This is the great stimulus of university work. To look impartially for the truth, this is our mission. To put back the truth in the center of society and of all human life, propose it with humility and conviction. To demonstrate it in one's life is the best form of charity in the innumerable fields of human knowledge. This requires interdisciplinarity, that calls for a vertical contribution since the only thing that regulates and unifies is philosophy and theology. Let us talk about a Catholic University because of its universal curiosity (Catholic means universal) and because it professes a specific faith, the Catholic faith. Does this produce an unbearable tension? Where is the emphasis? To put it in professional excellence for a humanism that alludes to the ordinary, to

Christianity and to a secularized society in this context of secularization runs the risk of making any reference to the Gospel and the church's teachings disappear. These are two ambitions which can be harmonized, the openness to what is universal and the explicit confession to the catholic faith. This means to promote a dialogue between faith and reason and to be concerned with the ethical and moral implications, giving a moral formation in conformity with the message of the church, an expert in humanity. This "and" is essentially catholic.

## **II. Principal affirmations in the Ex Corde Ecclesiae**

The allusions to the Ex Corde Ecclesiae previously mentioned was obvious. Allow me to repeat the most important. These are explained well in Nos. 30 and 37.

30. The principal mission of the University is the constant search for truth through research, the presentation and communication of knowledge for the good of society. The Catholic University participates in this mission by contributing its specific characteristics and its goal.

32. The Catholic University, like any other university, is immersed in human society. To carry out its service to the Church, it is called on to be an increasingly effective instrument of cultural progress for the people as well as for society, but always within the area of its competence. Its research work will include, therefore, the study of the serious contemporary problems such as the dignity of human life, the promotion of justice for all, the quality of personal and family life, the protection of the environment, the search for peace and political stability, the more equitable distribution of the world's resources and a new economic and political order that will provide a better service to the national and international human community. The university's research should study the roots and causes of the serious problems of our time, and its ethical and religious dimensions. If necessary, the catholic university should have the courage to express uncomfortable truths, truths that do not compliment public opinion but also necessary for safeguarding the real welfare of society.

33. Priority should be given to the study and evaluation, from the Christian point of view, of the dominant values and norms of modern society and culture and to the responsibility of communicating to today's society those ethical and religious principles that give full significance to human life.

34. The Christian spirit of service to others in the promotion of social justice has particular importance for each "Catholic University and should be shared by the professors and fostered among the students. 'The Church firmly insists on the integral growth of the whole man and woman. The Gospel, interpreted in the light of the Church's social doctrine urgently calls for the promotion of the people's development.

37. The Catholic Universities, together with other private and public institutions, serve the common good. They are one among various types of institutions necessary for the free expression of cultural diversity. They try to promote the meaning of solidarity in society and in the world.

As we can see, there are many important topics. Let us keep that of affirmation which is essential to our purpose, the allusion to the Gospel as interpreted through the Church's social doctrine.

### **III. Proposed Thesis:**

*In order to develop a Business Curriculum based on the development of real values, it is necessary, first of all, to incorporate the Christian Social Thought which is explicitly imparted to the students. At the beginning the faculty should be trained in its principles and later they will bring its inspiration to the rest of the subjects (most especially those with ethical content).*

### **IV. Justification: The principles of STC (Social Thought of the Church).**

I will try to justify this affirmation. When Mr. Michel Camdessus spoke in Deusto during the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the International Association of Jesuit Business Schools, he expressed his appreciation for the Social Doctrine of the Church (SDC) with these words: "after going around the world, visiting more than 180 countries, I can say in all honesty that the most relevant system of thought that I have encountered is the Social Thought of the Church".

Doubtless, the former executive director of the IMF knew what he was talking about when he referred to it, since he is the actual president of the Social Weeks in France, where its contents and applicability are studied. But in referring to this, are we not getting an almost exceptional testimony of it? John Paul II used to complain with much regret in more than one occasion that the Social Doctrine of the Church was practically unknown. And this is because the body of teaching that constitutes the social teaching of the church is neither understood nor appreciated, not even sufficiently communicated. Perhaps the recent publication of the "Compendio de la Doctrina Social de la Iglesia", by the Papal Council for Justice and Peace can fill the gap and help make this cultural patrimony known, "the best kept secret", as Cardinal Renato Martino its president, jokingly said.

What can be the reason for this lack of knowledge and appreciation? Could it be due to the fact that the underlying principles of the Catholic Social Doctrine have not been accurately and concisely formulated? This is an integral part of the church's evangelization ministry (compendium no. 66 of the SDC) resulting from the encounter with the Gospel and its demands with the emerging life problems of society. Nevertheless, the church remains strictly faithful to its proper mission (Ibidem no. 64). Thus, it is a useless exercise to synthesize these principles. Without trying to recite from the 10 commandments, the 8 beatitudes nor the 4 cardinal virtues, we wish to go in this direction, specially in proposing those which we think would be the essential principles for the economic and business life.

We now begin. Everyone, whatever his race, sex, age, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, health, intelligence, accomplishments or failures is always deserving of respect. It is not what one does nor has that gives him the right to demand respect. This respect is based on one's being a person. To have been created by God and blessed by Jesus Christ gives to man his incalculable value, making him worthy of this consideration as a member of the human family. But although each person has his own dignity this does not lead to individualistic consideration but as a member with full rights of a community of equals; the human family created and loved by God. This inherent dignity of man granted to each person the right to a life according to his status, from birth to death. This person who is holy is also a social being. The organization of a

society into the legal, economic and political order reflects the capability and need for each person to grow and develop into a community.

The principle of association has an important place in the Catholic tradition, involving also participation. Without this participation, without being an active member of society, a person does not develop, he does not enjoy the benefits that naturally go with the right to associate with others. This is a right as well as a duty: to participate in society for the common good especially that of the most vulnerable and the poorest. The Catholic tradition, as a world marked by a great division between the rich and the poor feels the need to remind others about the Last Judgment and urges the whole of society to consider, before anything else, the needs of the under privileged. This is an essential requirement of the common good, since this means the good of the whole society. The opposite of being rich and powerful is being poor and destitute. To look after the needs of everyone is to agree that the common good can only be achieved by preferential treatment of those deprived of their dignity. Only thus can society avoid being fragmented. This is to be avoided at all cost if only for selfish reasons, since it will be to the detriment of everyone. Everyone loves God the Father, thus the preferential love for the poor is not exclusive as John Paul II has often reminded us. From this viewpoint follows its logical conclusion: the principle of solidarity which necessarily means that we are a big family. Therefore we owe consideration and mutual care to each other. The practice of solidarity today means the practice of this virtue at an increasingly bigger scale, considering who is our neighbor in an interdependent world in increasing dimensions going towards globalization. The common good has this total dimension and therefore the Social Doctrine of the Church insists on the responsibility of all who live today for their patrimony and of those who will come after: the created nature. The concern for the environment is the duty of the solidarity of intergenerations and also the expression of the principle that man is the administrator of a given gift of all created things and not its owner.

These three more principles plus that of subsidiarity, equality and common good complete the list. The first has to do with the responsibilities and limits of public government in its relation to volunteer organizations.

This solidarity principle means a restriction on government action, because no organization should exercise a function which can be effectively and efficiently carried out by an organization of a lesser rank. It is the latter's proximity and the natural right of social organizations to attend to the things at hand. The temptation for the government people to be in everything, to do everything make them aggressive and even oppressive. They often overreact, thus violating this principle which is tantamount to ignoring the capability and responsibility of the citizens. Clearly the error lies in excess. But for the SDC this is not true about the Social Security system. On the contrary, it is a different story when judging each social protection system evaluating economically and socially its sustainability, its financing, and all its consequences, whether favorable or not.

From this set of principles explained emerge the last two. The equality of everyone comes from his inherent dignity. Although we are all different in our talents, no discrimination is justifiable. A persistent inequality in the distribution of income frequently shows the existence of the poverty problem. This is but a situation sustained by deprivation which makes us think of other discriminations such as a situation of injustice that has to be remedied. The social conditions that

allow the people to develop in order to reach their potential and thus express their human dignity is a common good. Among these conditions must be included that respect for each individual, the wellbeing of all society in sustained conditions of peace and security. Today, in this increasingly interdependent world, this principle demands international structures to promote it globally. As we can see, each time there is an argument on what conditions to include. But what is certain is that the lack of sensitivity and concern for the common good is always a sure sign of moral sickness. Where there is no sense of community, individualism reigns, the most wicked selfishness where, as a result, there can be no balance in society itself.

## **V. Validity and Relevance.**

The importance of this relationship between principles that we have explained is that they naturally require concrete actions. We are at the point between what we should believe as to the basic essentials and what we should do (*credenda et agenda*).

However, it is right to believe that this set of principles can enlighten the socioeconomic life. Consequently, the North American bishops published in 1986 a pastoral letter on the catholic social teaching and the United States' economy, "Economic Justice to all". In expressing their firm conviction of the reasonable and balanced character of their recommendations, the analysis was free from ideological extremes. Its starting point was the fact that the North Americans live in a mixed economy as a result of a long history of reforms and social adjustments. Aware of the fact that some of its proposals would cause controversies, they felt the need to express judgment on the concrete North American economic situation, on its conditions and accomplishments since the Church's teachings cannot remain the realm of mere generalizations. Thus, the four big themes will be treated extensively: the labor market situation such as unemployment, poverty, agriculture and the North American economy's role in the world.

This statement regarding the most advanced economy at present centered on the concern for the most vulnerable and deprived, those that can be considered poor in the fundamental context of searching for the common good. Ten years later, in referring to this written document during the deepening of the internationalization process soon to be considered as globalization and faced with the worsening income disparities in the North American society, the Episcopal Conference felt obliged to explain the ten principles on which to base a moral evaluation of the North American socioeconomic situation. This is found in a brief summary called "A Catholic Framework for Economic Life".

Up to here, we have given what could be considered as a set of principles to underpin the Catholic Social Doctrine and its application by the North American bishops to clarify the social issue. But let us go further.

More than ever, we talk about the Christian praxis of liberation. This is the real nature of the social doctrine of the Church. In the "Instruction on Christian liberty and liberation", which begins with the saying, "the truth will set you free", it asserts that the big challenges of our time is an urgent call to practice this doctrine of action.

We were saying that the social teaching of the church has been developing from the encounter between the evangelical message and its demands – included in the highest commandment of love of God and one's neighbor – and in justice with all the emerging problems in society. This

constituted a doctrine using all the resources of knowledge and of the humanities. It is channeled towards the ethical aspects in order to judge, but always from the moral point of view.

This teaching which is essentially geared towards action is developed according to the changing circumstance of history. As a result, although it is based on principles which are always valid, it also involves contingent judgments. Far from being a closed system, it is always open to new questions that keep on arising. Furthermore it requires the contribution of everyone's charismas, experiences and skills. We believe that we can synthesize and apply the principles, allowing us to reach important conclusions with them.

The supreme commandment of love leads to the full acknowledgment of the dignity of all men, created in the image of God. From this dignity comes some rights and natural duties. In the light of God's image, liberty, an essential prerogative of a human person, is known in all its profundity. The persons are the active and responsible subjects of social life. On this basis, which is human dignity, the principles of solidarity and subsidiarity are intimately linked.

Due to the first, man and his fellowmen should contribute to the common good of society in all its levels. Thus the church's social doctrine is against all forms of social and political individualism".

Due to the second, neither the State nor any society should be a substitute for the initiative and responsibility of the persons and of the society groups on the levels where they can act, nor destroy the space needed for their liberty. As a result, the Church's social doctrine is against all forms of collectivism.

Aside from the above, it follows that the Church does not hesitate in denouncing the living conditions that go against man's dignity and liberty.

As we can see, the criteria of judgment is also concerned with the economic, social and political systems. The Church's social doctrine does not propose any specific doctrine but, in the light of its fundamental principles, it can see up to what extent the existing systems conform or not to the demands of human dignity. This is important for justifying the validity and relevance of the STC (the Church's Social Thought). Besides, do not all this support the market social economy?

## **V1. The formation derived from these principles. Application.**

How do we apply all this to the formation of our students? Today, the business schools' curricula veer away from the world of ethics. The theories, very "mathematicalized", describe persons who are merely maximizing their expected usefulness. It is understood that the economic agents are only selfish people who have no concern for others. This approach leaves no space for ethics in the classrooms.

All of us are conformers because of cultural forces; we should therefore provide the space for talking about values that shape correct cultures. If the prevailing value is avarice, the corresponding culture to this will be developed; but if the principal value is justice and cooperation, the natural result will be concern for the common good.

My thesis which I took from P.W. Byron, is the following; *“the principles of corporate responsibility and business ethics, if they are explained well for the students to understand and assimilate, will make the students develop ethical behavior in their future professional lives.”*

The principles guide the actions and choices. According to Bernard Lonergan, culture is a set of shared principles and values. They thus define the different cultures. The shared values create the links that make them identifiable but without eliminating individual differences. The traditional American business culture, among others, was characterized by values like liberty, individualism, competence, loyalty, frugality, efficiency, self-confidence, power and profit. If there is no social control of its own, the pursuit of any of them might be nourished by unworthy values like avarice or the desire to dominate instead of to serve. In the most recent corporate culture new values have appeared. Today, there is a more community-oriented perspective, more attuned to the dictates of the common good. This coexists also with an increasing individualism in many companies everywhere. This is the culture that will confront our students. We want to teach them the principles of the Christian Social Thought not only to protect them but particularly to prepare them to succeed in improving this culture.

The principles are convictions that produce actions. They guide us and our choices. They define us. Some principles are virtues, others are not. Virtue is a power, a force for good. All virtues are values but not all values are virtues. Avarice is the value that dominates and governs what we do like fame and power. We do not see these values as virtues.

Can the above-mentioned principles of Christian Social Thought play a role in the business culture of today? Yes, I think it can lead to something of value in itself, estimable from all points of view. They are the foundation of the usual ethical principles applicable to all situations. The ten ethical principles are:

- 1) Integrity, understood in terms of totality, fidelity, honesty and responsibility.
- 2) Veracity, to always tell the truth, with transparency in the presentation and settling of accounts
- 3) Impartiality, to be fair to all, giving to each one his due.
- 4) Acknowledgement of human dignity, a value inherent to all
- 5) Participation, acknowledging everyone's right not to be ignored.
- 6) Commitment with fidelity and loyalty
- 7) The principle of social responsibility which considers society as naturally interested and affected by what the private company does.
- 8) The principle of the common good, as the antidote to egoism, putting private interest in line with social welfare.
- 9) The principle of subsidiarity like delegation and decentralization as the expression of respect for its own autonomy.

- 10) The ethical principle of love, the strong conviction that leads to sacrifice oneself for the good of others.

These principles are communicated through conversations. If we want the future executive to be always ethical, we must talk to them about these principles. Business education should be done within this context of the humanities if we wish to “produce” men and women with a broad vision and ethical sensibility.

The principle of human dignity is the foundation, but today workers are treated as if they were disposable objects. Their human rights and dignity violated by avaricious executives. The principle of respect for life is constantly at stake in business’ the security of summers, of medicines, of the work place, etc. The participation principle acknowledges the right of each one to be taken into consideration in the decisions that involve him. Any father knows the meaning of the principle of preferential protection of the poor and vulnerable. The weakest child requires more care. This is preferential love but not exclusive. Thus, the “stakeholder”’s analysis, so common today, should include the poor as well as those affected by good and bad decisions. We are all brothers and today this solidarity principle has global dimensions in an interdependent world. If globalization means something, it is for its promise of development with justice for all.

The administration principle today is geared towards the moral responsibility in protecting the environment. The subsidiarity principle today means that the actions and decisions should not be taken by those in the higher levels of the organization but from the lower. The individuals should not be crushed by impersonal major forces wielded by the upper ranks. The principle of the equality of men refers to justice due to each one. One cannot be fair if one loves easy money, is secretive and violates confidence. The gifts, bribes and extortion show the degrees of compromise made with that deadly combination. An inappropriate gift corrupts the relationships in the work place. The same is true with bribes, The common good principle is the pillar without which chaos reigns. It refers to a place that supports and fosters the development of man’s potential carefully avoiding all individual excesses. The governments are there to protect and promote them. For the principle of association, it is essential to have the right to organize, to form labor unions to protect their dignity. There are the ten principles that we must inculcate in our students. That means to evangelize and to do it in a manner so loved by St. Ignatius, through dialogues.

## **VII. To evangelize in this superficial culture**

Again nos. 48 and 49 of the Ex Corde ecclesia show us the way.

48. The Church’s mission is to announce the Gospel in such a way that it guarantees the relation between faith and life in the individual person as well as in the socio-cultural context of the person’s life...Evangelization means to bring the Good News to all spheres of humanity and transform them from within, renew humanity itself...It is not just a matter of preaching the Gospel in increasingly vast areas nor to an increasing number of people. It is about reaching and changing, by means of the gospel, the criteria of judgment, the values, the opinions, the line of thought, the sources of inspiration, the lifestyles of humanity that run counter to the word of God and the plan for salvation.



49. According to its very nature, all Catholic universities greatly help the church in its mission to evangelize. Curiously we are revealing the shocking fact that to form our students in this way is demanding and a labor of evangelization.

We started by alluding to the meeting in Mexico of Jesuit university presidents. There the well-known Father General made a clear appeal: that we offer a profound and solid training since our secularized world of globalization, of interdependence and obviously is a world of superficiality of thought, of missions, of dreams, of relations and convictions. Perhaps this is so for its lack of references in its search for values and because of its individualism and atrocious egoism. Our education should challenge first our professors, then our students to change it. It is not easy, but our mission always sends us to the frontiers, to a world which is a world of grace and sin at the same time. It is a place of struggle between the good and the bad, exactly the way this is explained in the meditation of the two banners. (Decree 3, no. 18).