

PROCEEDINGS



UNISERVITATE
Service-learning in Catholic Higher Education

UNISERVITATE COLLECTION

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October 29th-30th, 2020

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Reflections on service-learning
in the identity and mission of
Catholic Higher Education

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ABOUT US

Uniservitate

Uniservitate is a global programme for the promotion of service-learning (SL) in Catholic Higher Education Institutions (CHEIs). It is an initiative of Porticus and is coordinated by the Latin American Center for Service-learning (CLAYSS).

The programme's objective is to generate a systemic change through the institutionalisation of service-learning as a tool for Higher Education Institutions to fulfil their mission of offering an integral education to new generations and involving them in an active commitment to the problems of our time.

Porticus

Porticus coordinates and develops the philanthropic endeavours of the Brenninkmeijer family, whose social commitment stretches back to 1841, when Clemens and August Brenninkmeijer founded the C&A company, starting a tradition of doing good while doing business.

Several businesses, charitable foundations and philanthropic programmes joined Porticus and expanded through numerous family initiatives.

Since its foundation in 1995, Porticus has grown to become one of the most committed institutions working to address the challenges of our time, to improve the lives of those most in need and to create a sustainable future where justice and human dignity flourish.

Porticus has two goals that guide the way it works: to listen to and learn from the people it seeks to help, and to act on evidence that demonstrates what works.

CLAYSS

The Latin American Center for Service-Learning - CLAYSS - is a leading organisation for the promotion of service-learning in Latin America, and a worldwide reference. It promotes the development of service-learning in both formal and non-formal education, and advises policy makers, NGO leaders, communities, educators and students.

The UNISERVITATE Collection

The UNISERVITATE Collection is an editorial project of CLAYSS (Latin American Center for Service-Learning) in articulation with Porticus.

It is aimed at Catholic Higher Education professors and authorities, other educational institutions, specialists in Service-Learning, ecclesiastical leaders, as well as the general public interested in education and social change.

With the contribution and collaboration of outstanding international academics and specialists, its objective is to offer contributions from different regions and to share multicultural perspectives on topics of interest related to spirituality and the pedagogy of Service-Learning in the world.

Each digital book is published in English, Spanish and French, and can be downloaded free of charge from the Uniservitate website: <https://www.uniservitate.org>.

THIS PUBLICATION

This publication collects the proceedings of the I Global Symposium *Uniservitate*, held on October 29th-30th, 2020, in virtual form. The texts respect the order of the presentations made during the two days of the symposium.

The “Spirituality and service-learning” section also includes two presentations developed within the framework of the *Uniservitate* Training for Trainers Course.

All the texts have been minimally edited to facilitate their reading. At the bottom of some of the presentations there is a link to the slides used in each case. In addition, a link to the video recording of each of the panels has been included at the end of each chapter. All the audiovisual material of the event is available in Spanish, English and French on the YouTube channel CLAYSS Digital: <https://www.youtube.com/user/clayssdigital/playlists>

5. REFLECTIONS ON SERVICE-LEARNING IN THE IDENTITY AND MISSION OF CATHOLIC HIGHER EDUCATION



Barbara Humphrey McCrabb

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What I hope to do today is lay a foundation for how Catholic institutions in the USA look at and work with service-learning. I will start with someone that we are all familiar with, Cardinal John Henry Newman, now Saint John Henry Newman, and his idea of the university. His motto was *Cor ad cor loquitur*, “Heart speaks to heart”; and for him, reason and faith work hand in hand. How one thinks and how one lives are connected. In the United States, Newman is seen as a patron saint for campus ministry, especially at state schools and private institutions. For him, there was a foundational dimension of relationship. Given this fundamental aspect of working with students, I want to start with the idea of engagement, of heart speaking to heart. Newman, in his “Idea of a University,” places theology at the centre of the university where it radiates out to all disciplines. Theology has something to offer and something to learn from each discipline.

We see further development with the Apostolic Constitution *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* where Pope John Paul II, now Saint John Paul, tells us that, in fact, the university comes “from the very heart of the Church.” That is to say, as we pursue wisdom and knowledge, we do so from the heart of the Church. There are four characteristics that Saint John Paul considers as essential for a Catholic University: 1) that we inspire and are inspired by Christian values; 2) that we connect faith to knowledge and contribute to the growing treasury of human knowledge; 3) that we embody the Christian message in a faithfully Catholic way; and 4) that we serve the people of God in the search for transcendence and meaning. These characteristics root us in Christian anthropology. They remind us that our faith—what we believe—and our reason—what we know—are connected, and through that connection, we have much to offer to our local, regional and global community. That sense of embodi-

ment of the Christian message reminds us of who we are and how we are in the world. Our identity and mission as Higher Education Institutions call us into service and that service

Our faith—what we believe—and our reason—what we know—are connected, and through that connection, we have much to offer to our local, regional and global community. That sense of embodiment of the Christian message reminds us of who we are and how we are in the world.

has implications as to how an institution, college or university, goes about its work.

The next slide takes us a little deeper into *Ex Corde* and allows us to build on those foundational characteristics, but it also takes us to the really intimate work of the university, the integration of knowledge, allows us to draw from many different

disciplines, to address real issues in our time and in our local community. The university through its professors, its faculty, and its students puts learning at the service of others, at the service of the local community. We see a dynamic interplay of faith—what we believe—and reason—what we know. Service-learning provides a way to test our assumptions, a way to explore the reality of situations and to bring the learning that we have to bear on a situation. The idea that those closest to the problem are perhaps the best able to create solutions emerges from this interplay of faith and reason where students and community members have the opportunity to collaborate.



...let us be committed to living and teaching the value of respect for others, a love capable of welcoming differences, and the priority of the dignity of every human being over his or her ideas, opinions, practices and even sins.

Fratelli tutti, 191

As a Christian institution, we are called to consider some ethical concerns. Knowledge serves the human person. There is a primacy of person over things and that reiterates the value of the human person and the dignity of each person. While Newman places theology at the centre of the university, John Paul II reminds us that theology has a particular role to play. There is a certain synthesis and an integration of knowledge required. Theology serves other disciplines in helping to investigate and hone the effects of what we

discover in the societies in which we live and in the larger cultural context. That sense of bringing an outside perspective allows for a dynamic exchange across disciplines that in turn fosters a greater understanding of the human person and the reality of our context.

Ex Corde closes with this excerpt: “The Church and the world have a great need of your witness and of your capable, free and responsible contribution.” If I think about Newman and the students’ engagement, what *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* invites is for the institution to embrace their mission, their identity, and their charism. Charism roots the institution in who they are and how they carry out their work helping students to embrace what they are learning, and how that knowledge can assist in addressing needs in their cultural context.

I believe Catholic colleges and universities have something to offer and we have something to learn as we engage the local communities and even the wider global community.

The recent encyclical, Fratelli tutti by Pope Francis, speaks about opening our hearts to those who are different and, for me, one of the treasures of service-learning and of Catholic Education is the opportunity to encounter the other.

I am mindful that, at the World Congress on Catholic Education, Pope Francis spoke about going to the margins and doing so because we have something to offer: the learning and the education opportunities that we bring to those on the periphery. He was also clear to note

that we go there also because we have something to learn from the experience of those on the margins, from their lived reality, from their lived wrestling with their culture, their environment, and the injustices they face. The recent encyclical, *Fratelli tutti* by Pope Francis, speaks about opening our hearts to those who are different and, for me, one of the treasures of service-learning and of Catholic Education is the opportunity to encounter the other.

Hopefully, we enrich and enhance the community in which we serve, and, in the process, the students are themselves transformed as they encounter the other, as they experience the other and see themselves. They learn about themselves, they learn about others, they have a greater appreciation for the reality of that experience. I think it is tremendously important that *Fratelli tutti* asks us to be committed to living and teaching a value of respect for others. Pope Francis speaks of a love that is capable of welcoming differences and acknowledging the priority of the dignity of every human person. When the institution embraces service-learning as a pedagogy, it utilises academic learning,

but it also creates a human environment to both learn and to transform lives. Through Service-learning we celebrate the human person and we lift up human dignity; we see opportunity in the flourishing of the human person, both through the student and those who are touched by that experience. In laying this foundation, I hoped to illustrate what Catholic higher education has to offer and how service-learning enriches our institutions. Service-learning provides an opportunity for a dual transformation: genuine encounter with the other and real-world application of what one has learned. Service-learning gives us a way to both grow and to serve.

Links of interest and complementary contents:

https://publications.uniservitate.org/en/proceedings/barbara_humphrey_mc.pdf



Daniela Gargantini

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What service-learning for which mission?

When I received the invitation to participate in this panel, there was an element in it related to how we think about this contribution of service-learning within the framework of our spirituality, in our way of being a university—particularly a Catholic university—that was very motivating for me, and which served as the basis for my presentation.

What service-learning for which mission? Is it possible to think of any kind of service-learning or is there some kind of element that we should add to this pedagogy from our institutional *raison d'être*?

In this sense, I would like to return to what I believe we are all bound by: this double mission of the University in society and also in the Church, because of our academic and confessional identity. From this double mission, from this double orientation—both secular and religious identity—, it entails recovering what we share with other universities (perhaps non-confessional) with respect to professional training but closely linked to an ethical and citizenship training. This is embodied in how we instruct, train and form in a qualified, ethical and socially sensitive manner. It is materialised in how we promote the progress of knowledge and sustainable human development—which are not only attributes of the Catholic university, but of every university that is worthy of its name and that wants to fulfil its mission in society.

It also means recovering, from our confessional identity, from our identity as an institution—central to the Church—, this integral promotion of the human person and the formation towards their transcendence. I believe that perhaps it is from this double function that we must start to rethink what we are called to do today.

My presentation will be marked by two aspects that have been fundamental in my life: on the one hand, I come from a long training process and active work for more than two decades with the Jesuit universities of Latin America, which are an active part of the heart

In Jesuit but particularly in Catholic Education, and in the words of Father Adolfo Nicolás, former Jesuit Superior General, “the depth of learning and imagination accompany, or should accompany and integrate, intellectual rigour with reflection on the experience of reality, together with this imagination and this desire to build a more human, more just, more sustainable and faith-filled world.”

of the Church and of the experience of faith intrinsically linked to the promotion of justice. On the other hand, my subject area has been, since my beginnings, the field of the built environment, especially that of the most vulnerable.

In Jesuit but particularly in Catholic Education, and in the words of Father Adolfo Nicolás, former Jesuit Superior General, “the depth of learning and imagination accompany, or should accompany and integrate, intellectual rigour with reflection on the experience of reality, together with this imagination and this desire to build a more human, more just, more sustainable and faith-filled world.” A link between intellectual rigour, reflection on the experience of reality, imagination and creativity in the construction of something new. I believe that there are interesting variables to highlight and promote.

Let us return to the four dimensions of the Ignatian educational paradigm—the Ledesma-Kolvenbach educational paradigm—, which reminds us of the reasons why, from the Church, we are committed to academic training. That is to say, why do we have schools, why do we have colleges, why do we have universities? Because we could be engaged in other types of works. Then, why did we decide to commit to academic training?

The Ledesma-Kolvenbach paradigm reveals these four elements that I believe are well known to us all but are worth revisiting. Firstly, *utilitas*, which has to do with educating for the good performance of certain professions, with innovation, creativity, with providing intellectual tools for a distinguished professional performance. It is a value shared with other universities—whether they share our faith or not. Secondly, *humanitas*, linked to making the person flourish, promoting personal development, fostering human dignity, providing ethical training. This humanistic education recognises the equal dignity of every human being. Thirdly, *fides*, perhaps very characteristic, obviously, of our Catholic identity, which initially has to do with the defence and spreading of the faith, but which today translates into the search for meaning, into offering an experience of transcendence to the people who approach this formative space. In this line, faith is presented not as an imposition but as a proposal of love for our neighbours that refuses to be a tool of denial, exclusion or even discrimination. It has to do with this search for the meaning of my life and the meaning of life at the service of others. Finally, the fourth element, *iustitia*, involves the quest to contribute to the good governance of public affairs, a committed public action, the promotion of justice and the commitment to the social transformation of structures. It seems to me that these four elements provide us with some key axes to rethink the nature and specific contributions of service-learning from our Catholic identity.

In a service-learning activity, I can start from a particular context of need, and generate in my educational-training space an experience and specific involvement. In the case of the workshop experience that I have been conducting from my subject area in the Socio-Housing Service of the School of Architecture at the Catholic University of Cordoba (Argentina), I can promote an experience of engagement—for example, the delivery of materials to improve the housing conditions of vulnerable families—, that can generate a certain transforming action—to build, to continue building and improving those constructions—, but without contributing to effectively thinking about the segregating and excluding modality of our cities, or inviting my faculty and my students to reconvert and transcend that consecrated professional profile. We can continue with this type of outreach activities or, perhaps, we can encourage ourselves to think about what other characteristics derived from this style, the identity of our own spirituality, we can promote and encourage. In this sense, our double mission demands that we go further: we have to promote reflection within the framework of the service-learning pedagogy, in order to effectively fulfil the mission to which we have been called.

At this point I would like to share with you some reflections related to these characteristics, which I believe to be fundamental. Not just any service-learning activity is enough to effectively fulfil this dual mission that we have as a university and as a Catholic university in today's world. First of all, I would like to say that one of the characteristics derived from our style, our identity and our spirituality, is the priority of the experience of the real. We promote experiences inserted in particular contexts because we believe that reality is a place of encounter with the mystery of transcendence. Because God dwells in that reality and because my life and the lives of others are places where that transcendent communication occurs. But not in any reality is this transcendent dimension experienced in the best way. Any reality whose focus is placed on the poor, on their sufferings, on their struggles and on their hopes, will then be a more than propitious context to favour the encounter with God in the beaten ones of the road. This is what Pope Francis means by "the frontiers," the frontiers of poverty, of marginalisation, of injustice, of inhumanity as privileged spaces for this encounter. There is, then, in our way of teaching and learning a preferable way of accessing the truth.

One of the characteristics derived from our style, our identity and our spirituality, is the priority of the experience of the real (...) But not in any reality is this transcendent dimension experienced in the best way. Any reality whose focus is placed on the poor, on their sufferings, on their struggles and on their hopes, will then be a more than propitious context to favour the encounter with God in the beaten ones of the road.

The third characteristic has to do with the importance of critical and prophetic perspectives. It is not enough to provide real experiences, it is not enough to approach spaces of suffering, but it is also important to cultivate this critical perspective. This critical attitude (not judgmental) in seeing the distance between the horizon of justice and dignity that God intended for all of us, and the historical reality that moves away from that ideal. As St. Alberto Hurtado said, "The first mission of the university is to unsettle the world and the student's first virtue is to feel that restlessness, that non-conformity facing the prisoner world."

Because we can also promote experiences, but really, the only thing they do is to strengthen certain charitable activities or even reinforce certain conformity to the status quo. We had a rector at the UCA in Managua who eloquently reminded us that we have to rethink these questions, lest we be training the conformists and exploiters of tomorrow.

Four other characteristics that I would like to share have to do with the search for internal knowledge; that is to say, every service-learning experience must lead me to know a

reality in depth, to try to unravel it (even more so at university). A search that is not only analytical, but one that seeks synthesis. This is also the basis for the co-production of knowledge, the interdiscipline, and the interconnection of agents. This unravelling is not cold, but is affective, mobilising; it aspires to this integrated wisdom. It must also encourage the search to help people: I do not limit myself to understanding reality, to approaching these frontiers, but I intend to open paths of action. From this derives the importance of advocacy, of proposing recommendations, of generating cultural transformations to change economic, social and political power structures from the root, based on the aspiration for greater goods. Not just any action will be recommended, but the best action, the greatest good. For the Jesuits, for those of us who are heirs to this tradition it is the *magis*: excellence understood as the search for the best service and the best of myself in order to reflect on how to help, how to transform reality.

Finally, our education must be able to live in the midst of life's tensions without breaking them. I know the extremes, I know the greys of reality and I am the subject of linking and re-linking between these dissociated and opposing worlds.

Ultimately, our formative experiences should promote critical inquiry into how we should live and help to bear witness to it. They should also encourage reconsidering what University, what professionals, and what kind of development we should promote, and how we can reinvent those cultural bases to change the economy, politics, the unsustainable society in which we live in an ethical manner.

This transforming process must take place both in the personal life of each teacher and each student, as well as in the university structures themselves. We need, then, pedagogical methodologies that are not limited to showing me the reality and sensitising me, but that motivate and incite me to modify the socio-cultural structures that are the basis of the political

and economic structures, based on two concepts that I find very interesting: the intellectual apostolate, which is what we know how to do in the university, and institutional or professional advocacy. That is to say, to place all the weight and credibility of the institution, and even my own self and my professional prestige, in pursuit of this transformation. From these two essential components: on the one hand, a transdisciplinary scientific paradigm such as integral ecology, clearly stated by Pope Francis in *Laudato si*, and on the other hand, from a theological paradigm which is the paradigm of reconciliation. In this way, we promote experiences that generate reconciliation with ourselves, with transcendence, with others and with creation. Ultimately, our formative experiences should

promote critical inquiry into how we should live and help to bear witness to it. They should also encourage reconsidering what University, what professionals, and what kind of development we should promote, and how we can reinvent those cultural bases to change the economy, politics, the unsustainable society in which we live in an ethical manner.

Service-learning experiences should help us to move from the search for knowledge centred on ourselves to this collective, interdisciplinary, plural, interactional search; to go down the difficult road of overcoming a culture of assistance and charity in favour of a co-production of knowledge and solutions where alternatives are built with others—especially with the most excluded—and where we train views and new ways of being in the world. Father Rafael Velasco used to say that we need to foster “an ethic that trains the way of looking, compassion and engagement; that includes the outcasts into the formative agenda. This ethic must form ‘neighbours’. And neighbours are not nature, but nurture.”

I believe that one can start from the same context, promote similar experiences, but it is still a pending challenge in our universities that these actions generate another type of incidence in decision-making spaces and even opportunities for a different vocational exercise. In this sense, we urgently need to generate opportunities for different labour market insertion from this personal and professional reconversion.

Finally, I would just like to recall, perhaps based on the experiences of many universities that have made this commitment, something that Ellacuría, the martyred rector of the Central American Catholic University of El Salvador, reminded us. He used to say that, indeed:

responding [to these requests and demands for the future] genuinely entails the university permanent creative act, which means a great collective intellectual capacity, but above all, a great love for the popular sector, an indeclinable fervour for social justice and a certain courage to overcome the attacks, misunderstandings and persecutions that universities will undoubtedly come under, which in our historical context set their work according to the demands of the popular sector.

Consistent and conscious living of our dual mission in society also has its cost and its cross, and we must be prepared for it if we truly want to glimpse the resurrection morning of a formation such as our mission demands of us.

Thank you very much.

Links of interest and complementary contents:

https://publications.uniservitate.org/en/proceedings/daniela_gargantini_en.pdf



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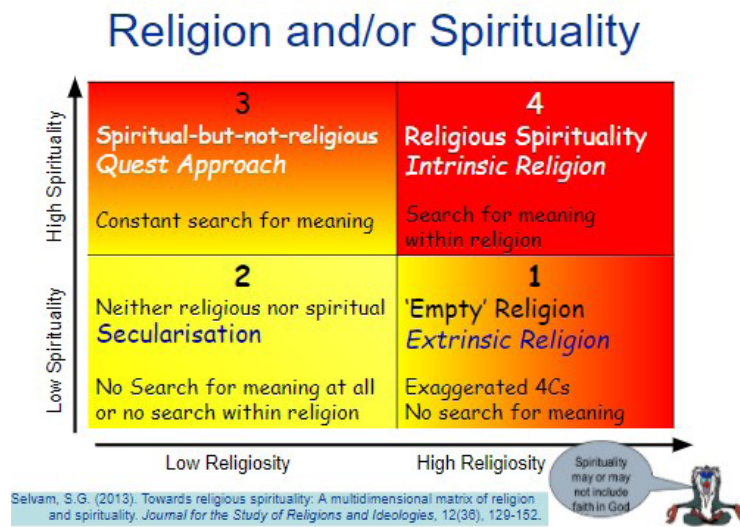
Motivation for Social Transformation through Spirituality in Service-Learning

One of the core aspects of the mission of Catholic Higher Education Institutions (CHEIs) is to form agents of social transformation. In the Apostolic Constitution on Catholic Universities, *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* (no. 34), Pope John Paul II asserts, “The Christian spirit of service to others for the promotion of social justice is of particular importance for each Catholic University, to be shared by its teachers and developed in its students.” It is important to note that CHEIs are not merely carrying out service to others, but they are intrinsically engaged in the formation of agents of social transformation.

Social Transformation can be understood from a Christian perspective “as a set of processes in which individuals and groups of people bring about large-scale social change with an aim of enhancing quality of life” (Pierli & Selvam, 2017, 1(1), p.1-12) in the light of the gospel values.

How can CHEIs accompany their students in such a way that their graduates will become agents of social transformation? The aim of this paper is to reflect on the relationship between spirituality and service-learning that will motivate learners to become agents of social transformation. Since I come from a psychology background, my focus is on motivation.

What type of spirituality is relevant for our discussion in the context of service-learning and motivation? Increasingly today, spirituality gets isolated from religion. In terms of their spirituality/religion affiliation, people tend to be situated—consciously or unconsciously—within one of the four quadrants:



1. *Extrinsic Religiosity* is marked by an exaggerated religious sentiment towards the creed, code, and cult of the institutionalised community of believers, with no search for meaning. Here faith is not integrated into life;
2. *Secularisation* is characterised by total abandonment of search for meaning in life, with no belief in anything transcendental;
3. *Spiritual-but-not-religious* is marked by a sincere search for meaning outside the domains of institutionalised religion. Here one might belong to a fluid community that seeks the transcendental by means of mindfulness and practice compassion towards humanity.
4. *Religious-Spirituality* seeks meaning for life and all that surrounds it by means of the creed, code, cult and community of a religion.

Research suggests that when adherents of a religion such as Christianity adopt a contemplative approach to their faith and practice, they develop a four-dimension religious spirituality that is marked by specific virtuous expressions that are intrapersonal, interpersonal, transcendental and ecological (Selvam, 2015). This is how I define spirituality as the motivating factor to produce agents of social transformation among our graduates.

One of the intrinsic components of spirituality is meaning. From a psychological perspective, according to Martela & Steger, meaning can have three interpretations, understood as sense of coherence, significance, and purpose (Martela & Steger, 2016). Coherence is that I find a sense of order in the things that exist around me; the second is significance, the feeling that things around me make sense; and, thirdly, purpose in life, that my life has a *telos*, a goal,

something larger than myself. So, let me expand that meaning of *purpose*, which will be connected to spirituality and motivation. According to William Damon (2009), “Purpose is a stable and generalized intention to accomplish something that is at the same time meaningful to

Purpose is an overarching value that provides intrinsic motivation in life. For Higher Education students, extrinsic motivation would be grades and graduation. But intrinsic motivation that is a result of spirituality makes social transformation a purpose in life.

the self and consequential for the world beyond the self.”

This definition of Damon makes a distinction between *purpose* and *goals*. Goals could be short-term targets, often focused on a career. Goals are milestones on the journey of life. On the other

hand, purpose entails a long-term commitment that focuses on a value beyond the self. Purpose is an overarching value that provides intrinsic motivation in life. For Higher Education students, extrinsic motivation would be grades and graduation. But intrinsic motivation that is a result of spirituality makes social transformation a purpose in life. Damon further suggests that (young) people who develop a clear purpose in life are those who have a spiritual base and consider life as a “calling.”

When spirituality becomes the underpinning force of one’s goal in life, there is a transition from extrinsic motivation to intrinsic motivation (De Klerk-Boshoff, et al., 2006). Intrinsic motivation is likely to be more persistent because when the external stimulus or reward is removed extrinsic motivation is likely to fade away (Snelgar-Renard et al., 2017).

In the context of CHEIs, the temptation is to focus on employability and career. However, to form agents of social transformation, CHEIs have to integrate the spiritual dimension into achieving a motivation for a long-term commitment to society.

In the context of CHEIs, the temptation is to focus on employability and career. However, to form agents of social transformation, CHEIs have to integrate the spiritual dimension into achieving a motivation for a long-term commitment to society. How can spirituality

that will provide an intrinsic motivation be grown? Often CHEIs have religious practices integrated into their monthly and weekly timetable. Spirituality is often seen as the domain of campus ministry (Welch & Koth, 2009). While this might as well be necessary, they run the risk of separating one’s religious life from social engagement. Therefore, a spirituality around service-learning might be a viable means for promoting a motivation for being agents of social transformation.

Service-learning, that is distinct from sporadic community service and professional career oriented internship, is a reciprocal relationship between the learner and the beneficiary (Jacoby, 1996), in which the learner is accompanied to integrate into their learning the encounter with the beneficiary by means of reflection. Initially, the learning opportunity itself might be the extrinsic motivation for the learner to engage in service-learning. Eventually, it is the connectedness and altruism that might motivate the learner. Ultimately, the higher purpose

Initially, the learning opportunity itself might be the extrinsic motivation for the learner to engage in service-learning. Eventually, it is the connectedness and altruism that might motivate the learner. Ultimately, the higher purpose of participating in the creative and redemptive work of God would provide the intrinsic motivation.

of participating in the creative and redemptive work of God would provide the intrinsic motivation.

As Kotho (2003) suggests, service-learning might provide a euphoric response to social justice, but it is spirituality that will provide a lifelong commitment to social transformation. In order to achieve this, in service-learning, there

has to be a movement in methodology from reflection to contemplation; a movement in goal from economic development to holistic wellbeing, and from the focus on better society to the reign of God.

In summary,

1. The goal of Catholic Higher Education Institutions is to create competent graduates who will be agents of social transformation.
2. This can be achieved through well-accompanied service-learning.
3. Service-learning becomes a lifestyle when coloured by a deep spirituality.
4. Spirituality has the potential to generate intrinsic motivation, which will sustain the graduates in social transformation.

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Links of interest and complementary contents:

https://publications.uniservitate.org/en/proceedings/sahaya_selvam.pdf



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She is a member of different service-learning networks in Spain and of the ECONOMIUS-J research team at San Jorge University.

Service-learning in Catholic Higher Education Institutions: an opportunity to contribute to the promotion of integral education

It is an honour for me to share some brief reflections on the contribution of service-learning to the educational work that we—as professors—carry out in our universities. My reflection is based on the experience I have acquired in university teaching (degrees in early childhood and primary education and master's degrees in teaching, as well as in the training of professors in the field of health sciences), and on the experience I have gained from the responsibility I have assumed in the design and implementation of degree programmes in Education. Both the direct contact with students in the classroom and my management work, have allowed me to experience first-hand that the training that we offer our students must be aimed at the promotion of their whole-person development, not only as excellent students but above all as responsible citizens who contribute to the improvement of their immediate environment.

In this sense, one of the keys that should drive our teaching activity is asking ourselves about the opportunities we offer our students to look at reality from perspectives that are different from the most widespread in our immediate environment. What reference point do we constitute for them, for each of our students and colleagues, when looking at the reality of the world around us? This applies to the field of study in which we teach and research, and also to the way in which we conceive reality in a broader sense and our role as agents capable of contributing to its improvement. These questions should also guide us in our daily lives as educators in Catholic Higher Education Institutions. Especially in a multicultural context such as the one we live in, in which the countries of the North and

the South face so many social, cultural and economic challenges that are increasingly interrelated, which challenge us as a society and require that we, as Higher Education Institutions, take a courageous and committed stance. And in the face of these challenges, we can ask ourselves about the type of formation we are called to offer. What should this formation be like so that it is meaningful, so that it keeps them willing to engage with this reality that we observe and that is not equitable for all people? We must also analyse the education that we are actually able to offer from our institutions, from the subjects we teach and the research we promote. Is it an education that responds in a courageous way, committed to the immediate and more distant environments, or are we entities that preserve and perpetuate the established order? If we are detecting what the problem is, what is hindering us from fulfilling our mission of transforming our environment through our educational work within the framework of the identity of our institutions?

As professors, we are aware that we will only be able to tackle the great challenges that our society faces if we work towards interdependence and fraternity, towards an encounter with the other.

As professors, we are aware that we will only be able to tackle the great challenges that our society faces if we work towards interdependence and fraternity, towards an encounter with the other.

As Catholic Higher Education Institutions (hereinafter CHEIs), the conviction of the need to incorporate a vision of the other and the needs of the environment, as well as the commitment to include them in the university education of-

ferred in our academic programmes, should be what differentiates us from other Higher Education Institutions, with which we share the commitment to carrying out excellent work at the academic, research and social outreach levels.

In this context, service-learning appears as an educational tool with enormous pedagogical potential to make the social responsibility of our institutions a reality and to encourage students to become involved in educational activities related to their environment at the same time that their learning is enhanced.

Traditionally, Higher Education Institutions have focused their attention on a vision of progress based on positivism and the rational progress of knowledge and science, considered to be the main goals of their academic and research work. This has given rise to a conception of Higher Education in which teaching, research and community engagement were the fundamental pillars, with a predominance of research and teaching. Teaching

and the civic and social mission of university institutions, being areas to which relevance has been given because they shape the University, have been regarded as serving the advancement of research, as they were considered to be one of the main contributions of the community of university professors and researchers.

In the case of CHEIs, this demand for research and teaching is clearly an obligation that we must assume, but our task is different, it is grounded in something else.

There are numerous ecclesial documents that clearly show us what our foundational purposes should be, and all of them insist on the relevance of our contribution to the integral education of our students so that, drawing on all they have been able to learn during their university years, they can put it to work for the transformation of their environment. In this sense, recent ecclesial publications speak of the challenge that we Catholic institutions take on in relation to the integral education of our students. The urgency for working towards the common good is also evident in the Ecclesiastical Magisterium. As CHEIs, we are called to educate in hope, in the encounter, in interdependence, to offer new references on how to live in reality.

In his Apostolic Constitution *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, John Paul II already stated that the challenge of Catholic Higher Education was to integrate knowledge, promote dialogue between faith and reason, promote an ethical concern (ECE, 1990) not only as a research object, but by taking a step further educating our students and also educating ourselves as researchers and professors in the engagement with our daily reality. In this sense, the integral education of our students becomes central and this causes our institutions to be open to the environment, search for answers, and commit to addressing those needs that we have previously identified in the research we have carried out and in the teaching we promote.

The need for openness of educational institutions is in line with Pope Francis' call to be a Church "which goes forth," "on the periphery," always attentive to the needs of others, knowing that what happens to our neighbours is also our priority, our concern.

This mission that we embrace as CHEIs is embedded in the importance we give to the integral education of our students, which is the goal of our institutional work. In order to educate our students integrally, it is necessary to open our institutions to the

needs of the context and to search for answers through our formative and research work, as a characteristic and constitutive feature that defines us as institutions and gives meaning to our teaching, research and social outreach work.

The need for openness of educational institutions is in line with Pope Francis' call to be a Church "which goes forth," "on the periphery," always attentive to the needs of others, knowing that what happens to our neighbours is also our priority, our concern. In the most recent Vatican documents, there is a clear commitment to the engagement with the real, and we professors are asked to bear witness to the integral education that we promote for our students, a deep reflection of our commitment to the foundational purposes of our institutions, which are sometimes relegated to the background when priority is given to the demand for scientific production and the requirements of a much more pragmatic world that demands research results.

Sometimes, we do not have the necessary resources to respond to this great challenge in CHEIs. Consequently, and with the intention of favouring social engagement experiences for the academic community, we promote voluntary service and educational ministry experiences, as well as community engagement projects with an enormous potential for transformation but which run parallel to our research and teaching work, without transforming them. Here we are called to try to link the work we do in accompanying our students in teaching and in our scientific production with a real commitment to improve the needs of the environment, seen not only as an object of study.

Throughout the 20th century, and especially since the late 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century, we have witnessed an important change in the way we understand the work of CHEIs: there are more and more publications, research projects and international networks that suggest that the University must establish links with its environment. In this new scenario, the social dimension is not only considered as an object of study or research, but also as an area from which to make student learning, teaching and research meaningful.

In this line, the work is being very encouraging, very intense also, and we link it to what we have called "university social responsibility" and that in this sense matches our institutional and foundational purposes very well. In the case of CHEIs, and each one according to its formative project, its charism and its own identity, this call to engage in community development is presented as an opportunity to reinforce the specific aspects of the identity of each institution.

Pope Francis calls us to be spaces of education for solidarity and encourages us not to do it in a neutral way but with deep, critical, committed and courageous reflection. He invites us to reach out to the peripheries, and this should clearly challenge us both personally and professionally, in our teaching and research, so that our students may also be a reflection of what inspires us as their professors.

This openness of CHEIs through university social responsibility opportunities also coincides with a moment of pedagogical renewal involving educational institutions at all stages. We are taking on unprecedented challenges that have already been referred to as the “educational paradigm shift” (Stiefel, 2008). In the specific case of HEIs, the development of new and more active methodologies is multiplying, in which the objective is to give students a voice and a leading role, so that they can apply everything they have learned to their immediate environment. Everything seems to be aimed at reminding us that service-learning as a tool, as a methodology, as an educational philosophy, is beginning to be one of the most valid tools to respond to these calls that we are receiving from different areas to open the University to the community, to commit ourselves to it, and to do so through pedagogical proposals that have a long and proven track record at the international level.

In this sense, service-learning as a proposal that links research, teaching, and community engagement, provides us with a platform from which we can naturally establish a link among the missions of promoting quality curricular development that is efficient but engaged with the community. In the case of CHEIs, this way of incorporating active methodologies in our teaching is also based on a much deeper basis: not only in the pedagogical or methodological renewal that contributes to more effective approaches to teaching and learning, but in our mission, that of integrally educating our students, helping them to become people with

This reminds us of Pope Francis' call to combine head, heart and hands: it is not merely a critical reflection, an intellectual development, but also a practical application of what we are learning in order to transform our environment.

a vocation that contribute to improving the society they belong to by applying all the skills they acquired in their learning process.

as educators because it links the educational contents with a critical reflection on those contents that we have been covering in the subjects we teach. It allows us to carry out initiatives in collaboration with other educational agents that open our eyes, that allow us to see realities from other perspectives and give us opportunities for personal and social transformation because they offer students possibilities to apply what they are learning to reality.

Service-learning, called in different ways according to cultural and social realities, is a very natural language for us

This reminds us of Pope Francis' call to combine head, heart and hands: it is not merely a critical reflection, an intellectual development, but also a practical application of what

we are learning in order to transform our environment. This approach to understanding learning is related to the intrinsic motivation that makes learning meaningful for our students. It is necessarily linked to the importance of promoting time and spaces for the critical reflection, which we must strive for as university professors in each of our work fields (research, teaching or even management). Through our position on issues, such as vulnerability, injustice, poverty and inequality, we become a reference for our students, who open themselves to the possibility of asking themselves the big questions that our society often hides or does not address causing learning to remain superficial knowledge.

Therefore, service-learning in the context of CHEIs is an educational philosophy that unites the curricular goals that we pursue in the different courses and academic degrees with our mission of promoting an integral education that necessarily involves being open to an increasingly inclusive, participatory and fraternal society to which we want to contribute. Service-learning, in turn, offers us tools, resources, proposals, projects, and thousands of international experiences that unite us with other institutions, other educational agents, other educators and organizations that have been working for several decades in this same direction.

As can be observed in international research (ZIGLA, 2019), there are numerous CHEIs that develop service-learning projects as a way of implementing their commitment to social responsibility. In this favourable context of dissemination of service-learning, one of the current challenges is the institutionalisation of these experiences so that they do not become one-time experiences that are not sustainable over time, that do not always meet quality criteria and that cause the impacts to be specific but are not maintained over time or that do not allow for all the transformative and learning potential that they could. An increasing number of institutions are making progress in this process of institutionalisation, and the development of the *Uniservitate* project will make a significant contribution to the systematisation of this process at the international level. The progressive institutionalisation of service-learning, linked to the founding mission of CHEIs, will contribute to the systematisation of the process of connecting the university to the community.

In this process of institutionalisation of service-learning, another of the fundamental axes, together with the work carried out by other agents and entities involved in the development of the projects, is teacher training. Professors who take on the role of facilitating projects and accompanying students in the process of connecting curricular learning with the experiences of community engagement, will be able to carry out their educational work more efficiently if they have the necessary resources and training. We can approach this work from our institutions through the many tools that already exist and the new ones that we will encourage them to be courageous in accompanying students in their

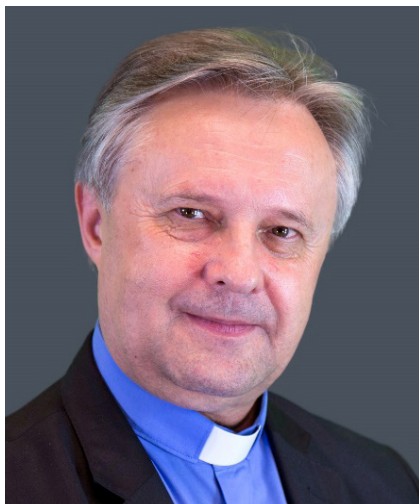
process of opening up to other realities, so that they are not frightened by the suffering generated by injustice, inequality and poverty, and so that they are courageous in showing the faces of these people. It is about approaching them and letting them question us so that, responding to Pope Francis' call for fraternity, they can make us more human.

We cannot conceive of an education that is not oriented towards challenging us, towards questioning us about the reality of the poverty that surrounds us, about the suffering that urges us to ask ourselves what is it that we have to offer. Because, if as a university community we take this position, our teaching, our research, our management and our community engagement projects will be different and this will also be reflected in our work of accompanying and educating our students. That is our work, that is our call to transform education, to transform the personal and social life of our environment. Let us hope that together we can take the necessary steps to make this possible. Thank you very much to all of you for your attention.

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I would like to start with Pope Francis' words, offered on June 25th, 2018, to the *Gravissimum Educationis* Foundation of the Congregation for the Catholic Education. It is then that I heard, for the first time, his famous statement: "Only by changing education can we change the world." *Uniservitate*, to my mind, is prophetically responding to this end.

Talking on the identity, Pope Francis said:

[Identity] calls for consistency and continuity with the mission of schools, universities and research centres founded, promoted or accompanied by the Church and open to all.

Those values are essential for following the way marked out by Christian civilization and by the Church's mission of evangelization. In this way, you can help to indicate what paths to take, in order to give up-to-date answers to today's problems, with preferential regard for those who are most needy.

Again, I find the proposal of *Uniservitate*, as truly responding to what the Catholic Higher Education Institutions are supposed to be and to offer for the transformation of our world into a common home for the universal fraternity.

1. Service-Learning: bringing fruits and (thus) becoming disciples (John 15:8)

Thinking about the Service-Learning that has its soul in solidarity, I have already had an occasion to say that in the Gospel of John (15:1-8), we find an interesting passage in the known parable of the true vine (Jesus) and the branches (His disciples).

"You cannot bear fruit unless you remain in me," says Jesus (v. 4). The parable ends with these surprising words: "This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples." Almost as wanting to say: to the measure you bring fruit, you become disciples. We are used to thinking the other way around: first learn, then act, first get your

qualifications, then use your skills. Jesus is (almost) suggesting: live your gift in Me, bear fruit and grow in becoming my disciple, my friend, my brother...

Service-learning certainly has its foundation in the Bible message. This verse of John's Gospel is just one of the examples. And it brings about... spirituality!

2. Spirituality: divine grace always preceding human response. Focusing on spirituality, I find that we all need to pay better attention to the concept of spirituality itself. Sometimes it has been too easily assigned to our human activity, narrowing it merely to our "devotional practices." Such a spirituality would refer basically to all our generous attempts to reach God and remain in God's presence. Here our best "arts" and "techniques" of prayer, of silence, of spiritual combat, and so on, would play an essential role.

Without neglecting our human agency, this needs to be inverted and completed with a more "original" approach, where the Origin is God himself. In this "inverted" sense, the spirituality would be more about what God does in order to reach us and to establish His divine dwelling in us and among us.

Sure, at the level of being, there is no comparison, between the Creator and the Creature. Yet, by grace, we have become Children and true Partners, God's dream, even a "Par-

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adise for God," situated in a fragile human heart, as St. Alphonsus Liguori, my founder, would claim.

Indeed, whatever we believe to know about God, especially from the Sacred Scriptures, is by itself a "soteriology": a story of God saving us. Here God precedes us always! Accordingly, even the truth we might like to define as a doctrine is in its nature a "salvific truth": God would use every means possible in order to save us!

God's initiative is truly preceding any effort. Ours is a response to a call. And even this call we are enabled to intercept only by God's gift. This has always been called "the primacy of grace."

So far it was a Biblicist in me talking. Now the Moralist in me is asking for a word...

Our morality and moral systems aim at liberating human conscience towards a joyous response to the gift God makes to us. We are called and enabled to respond to the Love

made manifest in Christ. Our response is to “bear fruits of charity for the life of the world.”

Those who work in morals recognise immediately the teaching of the Vatican II Council. Christian moral theology is here presented as our loftiest (grandest, highest) vocation: to be persons in Christ and respond to love with fruits of love (*Optatam totius*, 16).

A new question arises: is spirituality to be found only in action? We know that it is much more: we are supposed to become spiritual beings. How does it happen?

3. Mutual indwelling. Spirituality is first of all the question of being.

We are supposed to “awaken in God” and discover that “in Him we live and move and exist;” as even some of your own poets have said, “For we also are His children” (offspring) (St. Paul’s words in the Areopagus, referred by Luke in Acts 17:28). Discovering ourselves as existing “in God” brings us to another amazing statement, again of St. Paul, written to the Ephesians.

The Apostle presents here the other face of the coin, talking about “one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all” (Eph, 4:6).

The surprising thing is this mutual indwelling: we in God and God in us. This would be here the highest imaginable spirituality.

This mutual indwelling is “super-active,” because it expresses, in the Christian vision, God’s own inner life as the Trinity of Persons, to which we are allowed to enter, by the mediation of Christ.

Jesus indeed prays:

As you, Father, are in me and I in you, let them also be in us... I in them and you in me, that they may be perfect in unity, and that the world may know that you sent me and that you loved them as you loved me... That the love with which you loved me may be in them and I in them. (John 17: 21.23.26)

Of course, service bringing to learning (as well as learning bringing to service), as an academic dimension of life, is a value in itself. And yet, we see here, it is not exclusively academic.

The whole life is a learning experience and the service appears to be one of the best “athenaeums of life.” Service allows us to keep learning till the final opening of our eyes in the beauty of the Heavenly Jerusalem.

4. An important component of spirituality: a joyous meeting. While still remaining in our earthly time, I just wanted to point out to one more dimension of what we call “spirituality.” It goes along with what the German theologians have formulated a scheme: Gift–Task–Dedication (*Gabe–Aufgabe–Hingabe*). It is about joy as an essential component of the vital tension between the Gift and the Answer, in assuming the Task. Before becoming our Dedication, there must be something like a... surprise, and above all, a meeting!

I think something truly spiritual happens between the Gift and the Task. In Christian terms, it is not an automatic passage like pressing the Enter key on the keyboard. It is not a military way of passing from a command to action, by a simple immediate reaction “Sir, yes Sir!”

It is instead a dialogue, full of surprises. Not always easy! We remember the Annunciation Scene (Lk, 1:29-30). Listening to Gabriel: “Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favour with God.’” At the end Mary pronounces her *Fiat*, which in

The spirituality of service-learning must have this special joyous meeting time between the anticipatory initiative of God and the welcoming attitude of the receiver.

Greek sounds *Genoito*, implying: “Yes, I wish it, I desire it to happen!”

In spirituality, the Gift is not only a “Thing” that we find ourselves to be endowed with, but it is indeed wrapped with the overwhelming and amazing Dedication of the Giver. This changes everything. This transforms the existence like a smile transforms the face...

In spirituality, the Gift is not only a “Thing” that we find ourselves to be endowed with, but it is indeed wrapped

The spirituality of service-learning must have this special joyous meeting time between the anticipatory initiative of God and the welcoming attitude of the receiver.

After all, the Gift of Gifts is God Himself! Jesus’ words confirm: “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word. Then my Father will love him, and we will go to him and make our home within him” (John 14:23).

Saint John Paul II used to think about these gifts with a primary reaction typical of him. He called it “amazement” (*stupore*), accompanied by gratitude. Even with the reference to the Eucharist, John Paul II talked about the “Eucharistic Amazement” (*Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 2003).

5. My last step, in this kind of spirituality, would point to what follows after such an amazing meeting of Gift and Task. It is about what happens between Task and Dedication.

Pope Francis offers us here, in *Evangelii Gaudium* (272) a surprising hint, relating to the necessity of moving towards the others. It is to be found in the section dedicated to the “pleasure of being a people” (EG, 268-273). The central part of the quotation reads:

[...] When we live out a spirituality of drawing nearer to others and seeking their welfare, our hearts are opened wide to the Lord's greatest and most beautiful gifts. Whenever we encounter another person in love, we learn something new about God. Whenever our eyes are opened to acknowledge the other, we grow in the light of faith and knowledge of God. (EG, 272).

In Pope Francis' words, this kind of “mysticism of encounter” is a part of our “daily” and “normal” lives. It even “risks” to be identified with “worldliness!” In such a case, this “mystique” would even perhaps lose its reserved, almost exclusive belonging to some ex-

In Pope Francis' words, this kind of “mysticism of encounter” is a part of our “daily” and “normal” lives. (...) Now “mystique” would be available to all! Whenever we draw nearer to others seeking their welfare, that means serving them, God enters this experience and we learn something new about God, we grow in the light of faith and knowledge of God.

ceptional persons, experiencing a sheltered, direct and not common contact with the divine. Now “mystique” would be available to all! Whenever we draw nearer to others seeking their welfare, that means serving them, God enters this experience and we learn something new about God, we grow in the light of faith and knowledge of God.

Perhaps this is the reason why translations have such a hard time dealing with this expression, to the point that some of them change it (English, Chinese: spirituality) or drop it altogether (Polish).

But we are not afraid of such a “worldly” spirituality: simple, immediate, transforming...

Living in solidarity which becomes an expression of dedication, service and care, fulfils us with transcendence that allows us to learn much more than mere educational programmes (technicalities) could ever dream to offer!



We thank Neill Penullar, Academic Service Faculty member at De La Salle University, Manila, and Director of the University Community Engagement unit at the Center for Social Concern and Action (COSCA), for his excellent moderation of this panel.

Links of interest and complementary contents:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mbuq6RXkex0&t=1690s>



UNISERVITATE
Service-learning in Catholic Higher Education





In support of the Global Compact on Education

Uniservitate is a global programme for the promotion of service-learning in Catholic Higher Education. It aims to generate a systemic change in Catholic Higher Education Institutions (CHEIs), through the institutionalisation of service-learning (SL) as a tool to achieve its mission of an integral education and formation of agents of change committed to their community.

“Only by changing education can we change the world”

Pope Francis

1 **I Global Symposium UNISERVITATE**

This first volume of the Uniservitate Collection is dedicated to the I Global Symposium Uniservitate, whose objective was to initiate a series of meetings within the framework of the Uniservitate programme, as a multicultural, global and plural space, based on the contributions of the pedagogical proposal of service-learning to integral university education. The event, held in October 2020, sought to facilitate the exchange between experts, authorities and professors from Higher Education Institutions from diverse cultural contexts around the world, on university community engagement and service-learning practices and programmes. The present Proceedings are a compilation of the reflections and experiences shared there.

Uniservitate is an initiative led by Porticus, with the general coordination of the Latin American Center for Service-learning (CLAYSS)

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