



PONTIFICIUM CONSILIUM  
DE IUSTITIA ET PACE

World Congress of Catholic Universities (WCCU)

## ***VOCATION and PROFESSIONAL LIFE***

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Belo Horizonte, 20 July 2013

I begin by greeting the Archbishop of Belo Horizonte, Dom Walmor Oliveira de Azevedo, and Auxiliary Bishop Dom Joaquim Giovanni Mol Guimarães, together with all the authorities, organizers and participants. In the name of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, I greet you warmly and thank you for your invitation to address the World Congress of Catholic Universities. Your theme, “New times new meanings” provides a stimulating context for me to address the topic, “Vocation and Professional Life”.

Since I had the honour of participating in the Conclave which elected Pope Francis, and since my vocation now is to assist him in every way I can with his vocation as Bishop of Rome and Successor of Peter, I understand your theme very much in his spirit. When Cardinal Bergoglio addressed the General Congregation before the Conclave, he was rejecting an idea of the Church of “old times and old meanings”. He regretted any ways in which the Church refers to, or seems fixated on, herself (auto-referencial). He vigorously encouraged the Church to go out and evangelize: “For the Church to evangelize, presupposes the dynamic of going out of herself. The Church is called to go out of herself and to go towards the peripheries, not only the geographic ones but also the existential ones: the peripheries of the mystery of sin, those of suffering, those of injustice, those of ignorance and of religious indifference, the peripheries of thought and of every misery.”<sup>1</sup>

Then in his Mass of Installation, sharing his basic calling with people like yourselves, Pope Francis addressed “all those who have positions of responsibility in economic, political and social life, and all men and women of goodwill.”<sup>2</sup> In the same spirit of openness and dialogue, I would like to suggest a contemporary, enriched idea of “vocation” which applies to each and every one of us in this great auditorium, to each and every participant in the World Congress of Catholic Universities, to each and every participant in World Youth day.

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<sup>1</sup> Evangelizzare presuppone nella Chiesa la parresia di uscire da se stessa. La Chiesa è chiamata a uscire fuori da se stessa e ad andare verso le periferie, non solo geografiche, ma anche esistenziali: quelle del mistero del peccato, quelle del dolore, dell'ingiustizia, dell'ignoranza e dell'omissione religiosa, del pensiero, di ogni miseria.

<sup>2</sup> Pope Francis, *Homily*, Eucharist of Installation, 19.03.2013.

The vocation of every man and woman is to receive life from God, to develop and enjoy that life, and to share the gift of life with others. And Pope Francis adds, “... especially on the peripheries.” And at this World Congress, I would add, “to develop and share life throughout that most crucial sector of Catholic formation and education which you so richly represent. The Church wants to encourage and help the educators, professors and formators in today’s difficult and challenging times so that they can educate, orient and form the students entrusted to them towards embracing their great responsibilities as professionals of every type in the society of tomorrow.

If I address you with great enthusiasm today, it is because the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, in collaboration with others, has produced this booklet or handbook, *Vocation of the Business Leader*. Its focus, as you can tell from the title, is on professionals in the business world. But I am convinced that the foundational ideas and values which it identifies are very relevant to you as educators and students. They come directly from our Christian faith, from the Church’s Social Teaching and, especially, from the social encyclical *Caritas in veritate* of Pope Benedict XVI explaining the *gifts of God in our lives*.

So there are three topics I would like to address. The first is about the meaning of call or vocation, which is in the title you have given me. The second is about some basic ideas of Catholic Social Teaching which can give direction to our calling. And the third is to follow the movement from *seeing* and *judging* to *acting* in our educational and professional life. In conclusion, I shall make a plea for dedicated faithfulness to the real hope that every Catholic professional has to offer to his or her people and to the whole human community.

## CALLING AND GIFT

“Vocation” means *a calling*: a calling which comes from God our Creator. Creation and everything created is purposely willed by God. Therefore, the meaning of everything that exists is determined with reference to God. Accordingly, the sense and value of human activity are not fully discovered without reference to the God of creation. All human activity that affects man, his existence and his world, must be related to God and be seen as a contribution to and a continuation of God’s work of creation by man, who is *created in the image and likeness of God*.

All the professions belongs to such human activity; and so professionals – and their educators – should see themselves as called by God to exercise their necessary and important skills and activities in order to assist in continuing God’s work of creation. Properly understood, both leadership and service are indeed a calling, a vocation, a very noble role. The Church takes great joy in supporting and helping *professionals* to respond appropriately to their *vocation* and to find *the place of their activities in God’s design for man and his world*.

We know that professionals are faced with intense competition in every field. Graduating with a good degree is no longer a guarantee of success. But we also know that the “logic of the market”, with its competition, efficiency and profitability, are not enough by themselves to foster the development of people in the world of work. What is needed is the “logic of gift” that can order the logic of the whole market (professional, entrepreneurial, all the arts and all the sciences) toward the good of all.

This “logic of gift” arises in the great social encyclical, *Caritas in veritate* (2009), where Pope Benedict XVI observed that:

- Every Christian is *called* to practise charity in truth in a manner corresponding to his vocation and according to the degree of influence he wields in the public sphere;<sup>3</sup> and that
- The principle of gratuitousness and the logic of gift must find their place within daily human activity and relationships.<sup>4</sup>

This logic of gift highlights the importance of acknowledging that our very lives and the entire world we inhabit are gifts freely given by God – and this gift should inform how we act in our professional endeavours. It is precisely this “law of gift” that humanizes and civilizes the professions. Here, professionals see themselves as stewards of their talents, resources and wealth, meant to serve common rather than just private purposes. Here, employers, employees, colleagues, students or clients are respected and treated as persons rather than only as factors of production, consumption and advancement.

This challenging teaching led the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace to collaborate in two very interesting conferences exploring the implications of Pope Benedict’s *Caritas in veritate* in the realm of business. The outcome was a decision to write a handbook or *vademecum* for entrepreneurs that applies specific principles of Catholic Social Teaching, such as the dignity of the human person and the common good, to practical ethical guidelines for making business decisions in daily business life.

The *Vocation* handbook has already come out in *Portuguese*, first in Portugal and now in Brazil, and also in *French, English, German, Italian, Arabic, Polish and Spanish*.<sup>5</sup> The *Chinese, Korean, Thai, Russian and Ukrainian* translations are under way. The work was begun by an international group of some fifteen business people, managers, researchers and educators. I thank them all heartily, and many others who have worked on the document and its different language versions which are published in collaboration with various partners. For us, this illustrates the important principle of *subsidiarity* which fosters initiative, creativity and a sense of shared responsibility (cf. §48).

The danger for businesspeople and indeed for all educated people is that too often we take our gifts as our own private possessions rather than as gifts entrusted to us to serve others. In Catholic social teaching, this logic was expressed in *Gaudium et spes*: “Man, who is the only creature on earth which God willed for itself, can fully find himself only through a sincere gift of himself.”<sup>6</sup> Benedict XVI explains that locating the logic of gift within the various professional sectors is one of the great challenges before us; and if this logic of gift fails to animate business and other institutions, which is where much of the world works, we will do great damage to the larger society.

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. Benedict XVI, *Caritas in veritate*, § 7.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *Caritas in veritate*, § 36.

<sup>5</sup> The different language versions of *Vocation* can be downloaded in PDF format at <http://www.justpax.va/> under the heading “Documents”.

<sup>6</sup> *Gaudium et spes*, § 24.

Nearly 150 institutions of tertiary education are participating in this World Congress of Catholic Universities. All of them are involved in helping young people to discover and develop their professional vocation in life: how they will both earn their living and serve society. Therefore the ethical formation of future professionals is of major concern. The *Vocation* handbook serves as an important resource for faculty and administrators in schools and programmes of business education,<sup>7</sup> and I hope that fundamental points I share with you are just as relevant in every other field of human endeavour.

An important insight of the *Vocation* document is the conviction that every professional, like the businessperson, is called not just to *do* business, but to *be* a particular kind of leader in business. Every profession must confront what John Paul II called the “subjective dimension of work”. Work changes not only the external world, but also the interiority of the one who does the work – the heart, soul and mind. Our actions at work as well as in life shape our destiny – they move us to a place with eternal implications.

In the Gospel, Jesus tells us: “From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked” (Lk 12:48). Everyone who can go to University has been given great resources and the Lord asks them to do great things. This is their vocation and profession, and it is also a gift which carries social implications. Professionals have received and possess significant means to undertake something, and with this comes a corresponding responsibility. The *Vocation* text sees business not in terms of a legal minimalism – “don’t cheat, lie or deceive” – but rather as a vocation that makes “an irreplaceable contribution to the material and even the spiritual well-being of humankind.” It is about a meaningful life that opens every professional to God’s will, and not simply their own will, in the day-to-day decisions of ordinary life. It is about the readiness to share goods in common and therefore the capacity to build community.

## **FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES**

This vision of professional life is grounded in the Social Doctrine of the Church. At its centre is the fundamental dignity of all human beings because we are made in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:27). This expresses God’s infinite love for us. Faith denies that a loving God would wish untruth, bondage, injustice and strife for us. Rather, based on divine love and human dignity, our faith compels us to embrace four fundamental values: truth, freedom, justice and peace. Clearly these values are not unique to our Catholic perspective but common to the three great Monotheistic faiths and other religions, too. But because they are grounded in our divinely and lovingly created human nature – as taught by Catholic Social Doctrine – we have an absolutely firm response when such values are challenged or denied.

Catholic Social Doctrine enunciates many other principles, some of which are especially pertinent to professional life. Service to the *common good* comes before serving narrower interests. The goods or resources of the world have a *universal destiny*; creation is a gift to the whole of humanity, not just a part. We are called to act in *solidarity* with those who lack access to these goods and

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<sup>7</sup> For example, 8<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Catholic Social Thought and Management Education, “Renewing Mission and Identity in Catholic Business Education,” University of Dayton, 18-20 June 2012.

services – with the large portion of humanity, on various peripheries, who suffer in the midst of plenty.

This vision of a vocation is not without significant tensions and is not easy to execute in today's world. There are many external obstacles that can prevent a professional from shaping institutions in this way, such as the absence of the rule of law or regulations, corruption, tendencies towards greed, or poor stewardship of resources. Chief among the obstacles at a personal level is a *divided life* which is one of the more serious errors of our age.<sup>8</sup> The split between religious faith and day-to-day professional practice, whether in the university or in the world of work, can lead to imbalances and misplaced devotion to success, prestige and profit.

### **SEEING, JUDGING, ACTING**

So, what to do? These challenges demand more just and human structures, regulations, policies and practices; and they demand virtues from professionals – those habits of work that make both oneself and the world better. For every professional, one of the most important virtues is practical wisdom – how to be wise in practical affairs. The *Vocation* handbook is structured on a framework that shows how a prudential leader can encounter the world of work by *seeing* the situation clearly, *judging* with principles that foster the integral development of people, and *acting* in a way which implements these principles in light of one's unique circumstances. I will explain these three stages one by one, though it is clear that *seeing*, *judging*, and *acting* are deeply interconnected.

**Seeing:** The challenges and opportunities in the professional world are complicated by factors both good and evil. Three of these major “signs of the times” are globalisation, communications technology, and cultural changes, all significant issues facing professionals and leaders in every field ... certainly today and even more so tomorrow.

- *Globalisation* has brought extraordinary new opportunities with its efficiency and enhanced mobility of persons, goods, capital and ideas; but the drawbacks include greater inequality, economic dislocation, cultural steam-rolling, and governmental incapacity to assure a just social order.
- *Communications technology* has enabled connectivity, new solutions and products, and lower costs, but its amazing velocity also brings information overload and rushed decision-making.
- *Cultural changes* in our era have led to increased individualism, more family breakdowns, and utilitarian preoccupations with self and “what is good for me”. As a result we might have more private goods but are lacking significantly in common goods. Business leaders increasingly focus on maximising wealth, employees develop attitudes of entitlement, and consumers demand instant gratification at the lowest possible price; similarly in other fields. As values have become relative and rights more important than duties, the goal of serving the common good is often lost.

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<sup>8</sup> See *Gaudium et spes*, § 43.

**Judging:** The principles of respect for **human dignity** and pursuit of the **common good** are the foundations of the Church's social teaching. The objectives and characteristics that define the goods of business, can easily be rephrased to apply to other sectors of professional activity:

The first objective is to produce Good Goods. Businesses *attend to the needs of the world* by producing goods that are truly good and services that truly serve. They make *solidarity with the poor* a facet of their service to the common good by being alert for opportunities to serve otherwise deprived and underserved populations and people in significant need.

Second, businesses should provide Good Work. By organizing good and productive work, businesses make a contribution to the community by fostering the special *dignity of human work*. Businesses are communities, not mere commodities! Further, they contribute to the full human development of employees by applying the principle of *subsidiarity*; that is, by providing them with opportunities to exercise appropriate authority as they contribute to the mission of the organisation. They also allow workers to influence the overall direction of the business and accept their right to participate in intermediary bodies such as unions. For according to subsidiarity, a higher, more distant or broader authority should always respect the competence and responsibility of lower and more local units that are more directly connected with the reality.

The third objective is Good Wealth. By being *good stewards* of the resources given to them, businesses create sustainable wealth through efficient and product processes producing healthy profits. But creating wealth in a business is insufficient without the wider context of *stewardship* for the natural and cultural environment, and *just distribution* to all stakeholders who have made the wealth possible: employees, customers, investors, suppliers, and the larger community.

Let me elaborate on the principle of *subsidiarity*. It has played an important role in Catholic Social Teaching, and is a familiar theme in modern governance. Pope Pius XI first said, "It is an injustice and at the same time a grave evil and disturbance of right order to assign to a greater and higher association what lesser and subordinate organizations can do."<sup>9</sup>

This insight of subsidiarity needs to be applied to the organisation in which university graduates exercise their professions.<sup>10</sup> In well-defined functions, the front-line and middle levels should exercise authority and should receive the needed training and resources in order to succeed. In a time when knowledge and information as well as their acquisition and processing are becoming increasingly important factors, applying the principle of subsidiarity can play a crucial part in strengthening "the initiative, innovation and creativity, as well as the sense of common responsibility" (§ 48) in every human undertaking.

**Acting:** Leaders can put aspiration into practice, word into deed, by following their vocation and letting themselves be motivated by much more than individual success or formed only by the "logic of the market." What this kind of action calls for is that professionals *receive* and accept what God has done for them and to have this gifted life inform and order the way they *give* and enter into communion with others in their professional life. When prayer, the Sabbath, the scriptures, the gifts of the spiritual life, the virtues and ethical social principles are integrated into their life and work,

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<sup>9</sup> Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno*, § 79.

<sup>10</sup> It is noteworthy that *Vocation* is the first Vatican document to connect subsidiarity to business management.

professionals can overcome the *divided life*<sup>11</sup> and receive the grace to foster the integral development of all stakeholders. It is precisely this life of faith that can strengthen and embolden professionals to respond to the world's challenges not with fear or cynicism, but with the virtues of faith, hope, and love.

This handbook aims to encourage and inspire professionals and all stakeholders

- to see the challenges and opportunities in their work,
- to judge them according to ethical social principles, illumined by a religious vision of the world, and
- to act as leaders who serve God and neighbour.

## CONCLUSION

I have introduced the main elements of our *Vocation of the Business Leader*. I have touched on the main principles of Catholic Social Doctrine and the beautiful *logic of gift* that applies to the calling of professionals as co-creators with God, when they provide good goods and good work and act as stewards of good wealth. I hope these introductory words have made you curious and now motivate you to read the handbook; to incorporate it into the seeing, judging and acting of your professional lives; and to introduce it to others.

Having begun with the mystery of each one's vocation, the dialogue between faith and profession is what we most wish to enhance, so that together they strive towards the common good. May every professor, student and professional witness to God's love in his or her daily efforts. We encourage the incorporation of Catholic Social Teaching into education and formation for future professionals, and the ongoing formation of those already active.

When I spoke recently about "vocation" in Africa, I quoted Pope Benedict XVI addressing leaders in Angola. I believe that his challenge is relevant to all those who, like ourselves, are privileged to be educated. I invite you to make his words your own as you think of your own nation and people:

All upright human conduct is hope in action. Our actions are never indifferent before God. Nor are they indifferent for the unfolding of history. Friends, armed with integrity, magnanimity and compassion, you can transform [any] continent, freeing your people from the scourges of greed, violence and unrest and leading them along the path marked with the principles indispensable to every modern civic democracy: respect and promotion of human rights, transparent governance, an independent judiciary, a free press, a civil service of integrity, a properly functioning network of schools and hospitals, and – most pressing – a determination born from the conversion of hearts to excise corruption once and for all.<sup>12</sup>

Through the intercession of Nossa Senhora Aparecida, may Almighty God bless the World Congress of Catholic Universities. May He inspire generous desires in each one of us to embrace our vocation and to serve the common good.

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<sup>11</sup> See *Guadium et spes*, § 43.

<sup>12</sup> Benedict XVI, *Address to Political and Civil Authorities and the Diplomatic Corps*, Luanda, 20.03.2009.