

Task Force 2 - Civic and Political Leadership Formation Conversation Reports - Deusto Assembly, Bilbao, July 2018

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Conversation 2.1
Sharing Catholic Social Thought
Moderator: Benjamin Tolosa

Focus: How have we engaged directly the civic and political leaders in order to share Catholic Social Teaching with them and to contribute to social transformation?

1. What are the existing practices?

- a. Directly engaging with political leaders to contribute to the improvement in service delivery and making the institutions more humane. E.g. Regis University working with the City of Denver; in Cote d'Ivoire, the Jesuits working with the government on peace and security (It is important that these programmes are not perceived to be politically partisan)
- b. Research and training institutes training hundreds of civic leaders in social, political awareness especially in rural areas. (India)
- c. Catholic intellectual tradition producing many graduates from schools of theology
- d. Conferences, workshops, retreats with political and civic leaders
- e. Politicians sending their children to Jesuit schools for formation.

2. What have been the major challenges?

- a. It is difficult to judge whether formation programmes have been effective.
- b. Context:
 - i. Society is sometimes very conservative and not receptive to CST
 - ii. Knowledge of Catholicism and especially CST not high e.g. in the USA
 - iii. Students expect to be trained to be “professional” and “successful” and not to be drawn into social and political issues
 - iv. Secularism which does not respond to religious inspiration for social justice
 - v. Sometimes the students who are responsive to social awareness programmes already have their own religions and so are not keen to be told about CST.
 - vi. Polarized situations in which police surveillance is prevalent.
 - vii. Financial challenges
 - viii. When money is raised from rich conservative people and yet it is meant to support the poor and marginalized, there might be tension as the donors may not want their money to be used to support migrants and refugees. (Mexico)
 - ix. CST is not promoted by the official Catholic Church (India)
 - x. Many of the politicians who were trained by Jesuits are corrupt and yet they keep asking for formation programmes from the Jesuits.
 - xi. The economic growth model

3. How can we overcome the challenges?

- a. Collaboration with others
- b. Set up situations for people to learn from experience and to directly meet the marginalized.
- c. Building networks and being careful in identifying networks that are effective.
- d. Transformation of self-understanding
- e. Financial commitment for richer Jesuit institutes to support the weaker ones.
- f. Catholic social learning e.g. introducing donors to refugees/migrant students
- g. Attention to the curriculum – “Curriculum carries the mission”.

Conversation 2.2
Advancing Catholic Social Thought
Moderator: Tom Banchoff

Our group had a lively conversation that highlighted very different approaches to the formation of students for civic and political leadership.

A key issue concerned the content of such formation. Catholic Social Thought is difficult to define. While the group acknowledged core tenets, including the common good and the preferential option for the poor, there was consensus that Catholic and Jesuit perspectives are (and must be) communicated differently across national and local contexts. In Asia, for example, where the Church is in a minority position, it often makes sense to refer to ethics and values in the curricula, and to leave out reference to Catholic and Jesuit altogether. The importance of sensitivity to context is accentuated in autocratic contexts, where the formation of civic and political leaders can only proceed indirectly, by living out our values in practice.

As we delved into the topic, it became clear that communicating “thought” may not be the essence of our formation work. Through participation in service learning and encounters with the poor and marginalized, our students learn to live out the Gospel; they develop their innate capacity for empathy and solidarity – the emotional foundation for lives of service. Institutions that model Catholic Social Thought in action may have the greater long term impact.

A further reflection concerned whether the model of adults imparting values to the younger generations is germane to today’s world. It is wrong to dismiss young people as superficial and materialistic; they exhibit a wealth of idealism and social engagement. Formation at our institutions should involve a two-way dialogue with young people, in which faculty and administrators learn (and not just teach) about exemplifying the Gospel in practice.

Given the diversity of our institutions, these three approaches – advancing thought, supporting practice, and listening to the young – must be advanced in multiple ways. For example, some of our institutions are open to non-traditional and mid-career students; they should be brought into these activities. Others have active alumni bases, who should not be excluded.

The reality of religious pluralism is a starting point for all this work. Where our institutions are embedded in minority-Christian cultures, respect for the majority makes the translation of Catholic Social Thought into neutral/secular categories often prudent. More explicitly Catholic formational efforts might be directed at self-identified Catholic youth groups.

The conversation culminated with suggestions of two potential, practical next steps.

A first is to distill from Catholic Social Thought a core set of principles. Where consensus emerges across institutions and regions, it may enable new forms of pedagogical collaboration.

A second, more inductive approach is to gather testimonials from teachers and students about what practices work (and do not work) at our institutions around the world. These might be shared on a global online platform and serve as a spur to collaboration across our network.

Conversation 2.3
Promoviendo el Pensamiento Social de la Iglesia
Moderador: Pablo Reyna Esteves

The 4 levels that the TF presented as relevant to the Civic and Political Formation were well received. It was evident that the 4 levels are interlinked and the participations frequently overlapped the different levels. Catholic Social Thought was lengthily discussed in the group. CST is one of the forms to promote transformation in our societies but it's not the only way. Pope Francis' thought and also practice, mainly the one showed in Laudato Si, could promote new approaches to CST.

Conversation 2.4
Catholic Social Thought and Research
Moderator: Roy Pereira, SJ and Midori Okabe

Questions:

How to interpret CST in each research projects?

Do we need intensive attention to multi-religious society? If so, how can we collaborate across countries of variety?

Discussions:

- Needs for re-wording CST? Reconfirming that CST is originally meant in North and Western cultural context.
- Is “The Common Good” as a term replaceable? (negative reaction) The Common Good is an indispensable part of CST.
- Distinction of Catholic Social Teaching from CST is necessary.

Case studies:

- Ed Peck (John Carroll University): Our university has grants for students to advocacy in social research. Interns for the summer. Services and advocacy. It brings about a positive feedback.
- Alex Ekka (Indian Social Institute): Put humanitarian factors in research projects for development (ex. Hydro project). Feedback on broader civic scale.
- Rene Padilla (Creighton University): CST incorporation should rather be formation-oriented, researchers and students needs to share the CST value, but on the stage of application, it needs to be implicit. (several arguments on this. i.e. whether the Catholic value should be explicitly stipulated in the projects or not)
- Antoine Garibaldi (University of Detroit Mercy): Started a Masters of Community Development - provides Jesuit research team but also opens its doors to non-Catholic people. Faculty tenure depends on their research being within the local populace which is marginalized
- Omaha: desertification, health care and foods are costly, would lead research relevant to the situation (solving). Neighbourhood

Joe Marina SJ (Le Moyne): Global Jesuit Case Studies Series also offer a minor in CST.

Q: How do you judge it

A: Tied to learning outcomes.

Robert SJ (St. Xavier’s Ahmedabad) Since the scholastic theologians are nearby they are involved in teaching CST to the tribal Catholic students who make up ten percent of the student population

Also, Campus Ministry

Selvaraj SJ (ISI Bengaluru): Labour and Migration department created... distress migration... survey’s done and available online. Next step is working with origin state of migration and destination state of migration to ensure safe migration and to ensure that atrocities against migrant workers are addressed.

Yoshiami (Sophia University): Remake our educational... (didn't get it)

John Fitzgibbons SJ (Regis): Since it is a health care college serving marginalized population nurses and pharmacy and physio therapy students and faculty do research on hunger, diabetes prevention and hunger, thus expressing CST and for tenure they have to do research in the community.

Hilarion (Madagascar): a country of poor people so CST is easy, so university works with these people constantly.

Challenges:

- Central tension: whether exclusive or inclusive identity (Catholic, Jesuit)
- Jesuit Mission (to social commitment) should be stressed. Not the identity itself.
- Faculty are extremely motivated to understand CST as a tool (medium) for pursuing the mission (for non-Catholic countries)
- But then a counter argument arose. Can we really separate identity from mission because both these are dependent on one's understanding of anthropology and theology, etc.
- Also for the US. There is growing suspicion for faith. North-Western part of US is composed of non-Catholic population as majority. We should not presume that we can talk about Catholic in the same way we used to. We want to be informed too.
- For practice (of CST in research projects), clearer goals are needed. Also, approaches are to be specified.

We then remained silent for a couple of minutes and allowed the head stuff to flow into the heart... People were then asked to share their feelings about all that had been discussed.

One said that he was very happy because mission / poor / CST were now topics being talked about in university circles rather than just curriculum and tenure etc.

Another said he felt motivated and inspired.

A third felt that the affective and cognitive discourse has to be taken into consideration.

A fourth felt that we need to have a clear idea of what we want to achieve in our institution. We are called to be Catholic and Jesuit. We want to inform we want to form. The curriculum carries the mission. If we will inform and form we will transform.

Conversation 2.5
Pensamiento Social de la Iglesia e Investigación
Moderator: Pablo Reyna Esteves

On conversation Universidad as Proyecto Social. It was remarked that the preferential option for the poor is an epistemological perspective that universities should prefer and that it goes way beyond of the social responsibility perspectives. This proyecto social perspective makes visible some hidden tensions in Jesuit universities: students do not study (and pay) in our institutions because they are proyecto social but to find a well-paid job.

Conversation 2.6.
The University as “Proyecto Social”
David Kaulem

I facilitated the conversation on the University as a 'proyecto social'. The following points came up.

- there are very different ways and attitudes towards the idea. From outright septicity to very enthusiastic acceptance. Those who embrace the idea and are implementing it demonstrated different approaches of doing so; service learning; community-based learning; community engagement; learning through experience;
- the major challenge is how to assess the success or otherwise of the various efforts. It is not clear what success would look like. It is also not clear whether success would be seen by what happens in the University (e.g. students' social awareness) or in the community in which the University works (e.g. social transformation)
- there may be structural reasons why Jesuits may find it difficult to work with other Jesuits institutions. There has to be genuine synergies. Will administrators in Jesuit institutions be open to this networking?
- is the language of networking simply a way of avoiding the need to make painful choices about resources, personnel etc.?
- as a way forward, collaboration must be based on specific and practical projects.
- there is need to get away from the attitude of competitiveness.

The majority, particularly people working in India, East Asia, Africa and South America tend to be supportive of the idea the University as a 'proyecto social'.

Conversation 2.7.
La Universidad como “Proyecto Social”
Susana Di Trolio

Our group had a very interesting conversation on the different approaches to the Catholic Social Thought (CST), and the ways universities try to promote it through their curricula and other academic activities.

The participants agreed on the idea that the CST is not a theorem. On the contrary, they understand CST as a permanent search for the truth and the common good. Therefore, Jesuit universities, as catholic institutions, have the mission of encouraging a permanent reflection, formation and research on the major problems of humanity from a Christian point of view.

However, given the complexity and global interrelations of almost every major problem (e.g., social, economic, environmental, political, human security. etc.) it is impossible that any Jesuit university alone can tackle any one of these problems. The participants agreed that this is one of the major reasons that justify the creation of a global network as IAJU, which can promote collaboration.

Likewise, the participants highly emphasized the differences among the social and cultural contexts (especially the situation of the Church and secularism) among their countries and their impacts on the promotion of the CST. The cases of the EE.UU and Chile were discussed as examples of the major negative impacts of the child sexual abuses cases on the credibility of the messages of catholic universities among their students, faculty, parents, etc.

Most of the participants also agreed that CST is not explicitly present in their universities' curricula. For instance, professors do not explain CST or organize discussions with their students about what CST has to say on economic or political topics. In one university (Pontifical Javeriana University of Cali, Colombia) the organization of different seminars and workshops with faculty, students and administrators on the “Laudato Si”, has showed to be an excellent mean to promote CST. Two additional experiences that have been successful, as a mean to indirectly introduce students to CST, are the social learning service programs that most Latin American universities and the EEUU offer for their undergraduate students.

Finally, the participants agreed that the experience of their research centers can be used to promote reflection and research on CST.